

When the thief died on the cross, he had but just believed, and had never done a single good work. But where did he go? He ought to have gone to purgatory by rights if ever anybody did. But instead of that the Saviour said to him, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Why? Because the ground of the man's admission into Paradise was perfect.

C.H. SPURGEON — MTP Vol 12 pg. 562



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When God calls a sinner, He does not repent of it. God does not, as many friends do, love one day and hate another; or as princes, who make their subjects favorites and afterwards throw them into prison. This is the blessedness of a saint; his condition admits of no alteration. God's call is founded upon His decree, and His decree is immutable. Acts of grace cannot be reversed. God blots out His people's sins, but not their names.

THOMAS WATSON



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Holy, Holy Holy, is the LORD of hosts
The whole earth is full of His glory. ...and the doorposts and thresholds trembled and the temple was filled with smoke."
Isaiah 6: 3,4



As a result of the proliferation of questionable theology and a certain worldliness among ourselves, this site is NOT an exhaustive Christian portal but is an attempt to direct the user to classic articles and resources of historical orthodoxy. This is done in the hope we will embrace, and recover the true Biblical doctrines of the historic faith. It is not a search engine but a navigation tool to point you to the best theological resources on the web. Furthermore, thethreshold does not usually point to specific Websites, but rather, to "MUST HAVE" articles, books, audio resources and sermons. Disclaimer: The links are also not a positive endorsement for everything on the site it points to. .

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The Church
on the threshold

When God calls a sinner, He does not repent of it. God does not, as many friends do, love one day and hate another; or as princes, who make their subjects favorites and afterwards throw them into prison. This is the blessedness of a saint; his condition admits of no alteration. God's call is founded upon His decree, and His decree is immutable. Acts of grace cannot be reversed. God blots out His people's sins, but not their names.

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Isaiah 6: 3,4

Highly Recommended
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About Monergism.com

Monergism.com is an Internet based ministry with the following goals:

- To equip Christians in the truth by making available the finest classic articles and resources of historical orthodoxy. This is done in the hope that the church will embrace, and recover the true Biblical doctrines of the historic faith.
- To encourage the church to always be reforming its thoughts in order to be more God-honoring & consistent with the Word of God. To teach the whole council of God and not just aspects we feel comfortable with that the Gospel would affect and transform all areas of our life. To stress important doctrines that have been lost or set aside in the belief that it will help us in one of the most urgent tasks facing evangelicals today - the recovery of the gospel.
- Bring glory and honor to God by stressing that the Scriptures are a divine Self-disclosure that is God-centered, not man-centered and that the work of salvation is a [monergistic work of grace](#); that, prior to grace, man remains passive, unable and unwilling to turn to God until regenerated by the Holy Spirit. That salvation is not based on the fact that God knew which persons would believe of their own free will, *for there is no person which fits that description* ([1 Cor 2: 14](#); [Rom 3: 11](#); [Rom 8: 7](#); [John 1: 13](#); [Rom 9: 16,18](#)). The decision was based in eternity upon God's sovereign good pleasure alone ([Eph 1:4-6](#); [2 Tim 1:9](#), [Titus 1:2](#))

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed in the Scripture alone to the glory of God alone.

More about Monergism.com

Building Monergism is kind of like painting the Golden Gate Bridge (which has to be repainted every year). Once I go through to add new material as well as fix a multitude of broken links I have to start over from the beginning because the Internet is a dynamic and constantly changing place. It is a joy to build this site in my spare time. I am married to a beautiful wife and live in Portland Oregon. Studying the Bible and theology is a great passion for which I've spent many years. The infinite riches of God's wisdom is something we will never cease searching the depths of. So, contrary to some who may envisage theology to be technical and dry, I believe the study of theology to be a devotionally enriching activity. Theology means nothing more than the study of God and, it is my belief that Christians ought to find great delight and wonder in studying Him.

When I was a college student I had a dramatic conversion out of the occult and eastern mysticism when the Holy Spirit awakened my faith while reading [Deut 9: 18](#) & [Rom 9: 16, 18](#). After undergraduate studies I worked and lived overseas as a missionary/church planter for

ten years. Both my wife and I have returned to the US to further our theological education. I currently attend [Reformed Theological Seminary](#) so, if you haven't guessed, I am reformed in theology and have the goal of leading people to a God-honoring understanding of the Bible. I am concerned very little about small matters of doctrine that divide churches but have a zeal that the church be continually reforming its view of God and His grace. I believe that many evangelicals have replaced the Gospel with a substitute product, perhaps unwittingly, so my hope is to point us back to Jesus as He revealed Himself in the Scriptures.

The issues I currently feel the need to be recovered are a biblical understanding of [God's grace](#), [regeneration](#), [freewill](#), and [man's condition before regeneration](#). I do write some of the articles on Monergism.com but most of them are gathered from the greatest theologians and preachers that the church has ever produced. This includes people such as Augustine, [Calvin](#), [Luther](#), Knox, [the Puritans](#) of the 17th century, [Jonathan Edwards](#), [George Whitefield](#), [C.H. Spurgeon](#), Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and many others who God has blessed the Church with.

I am currently the sole designer and maintainer of the website and so I need your help!!! This is a massive undertaking. There are many gracious brothers and sisters who write me to submit articles or offer suggestions. I welcome all such inquiries or submissions. Furthermore, anyone with technical skills or the willingness to point out broken links or grammatical errors could also be of GREAT assistance to me.

From time to time a generous brother or sister asks me how they can financially contribute to this ministry and the maintenance of this Website. If you feel so led by the Lord you may find out more about how to do so [here](#).

Please feel free to [contact me](#) with any suggestions you might have on how I might improve the Website. If the Lord leads you please pray for me and this ministry. It is much needed so that the seed of the gospel is not cast at random. Pray that the materials on this site would bring honor to God and be used as a medium to bring further success to the gospel. Without prayers for God's gracious intervention advance of the kingdom is in vain.

My wife and I recently began attending [Intown Presbyterian Church](#) (PCA), a new church plant in downtown Portland. We would love to have you drop in if you happen to be in the area.

Soli Deo Gloria
John W. Hendryx

Email: John@monergism.com

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Important Articles

No sooner is the soul quickened, than it at once discovers it's lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. -C.H. Spurgeon

on Monergism

[What is Monergism?](#) by John Hendryx
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On Free Will

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[God's Part and Man's Part in Salvation](#) by John G. Reisinger **Required Reading!**
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Popedom

From inception to the demise of Pope John Paul II, its nature and purpose

By Richard Bennett

Because of the fascination of the world with the office of the Pope and his power, and because of current discussions regarding who will be the next Pope, it is important to study the topic historically and in the light of Biblical truth. Part I is an overview of the history of the Papacy from its inception to the demise of the present Pope. Part II, in our next newsletter, is a biblical analysis of the basis on which the Office of the Papacy claims to be the Rock of Matthew 16:18.

Part I: An Overview of the History of the Papacy

Early church at Rome

The church at Rome was in the beginning a community of brothers and sisters, guided by a few of the brothers. The four Gospels and letters of the Apostles settled the great questions of doctrine. A pompous title and position of one man lording it over the others did not exist, as such is forbidden by the Holy Scriptures. The lives of the believers and the doctrine taught were in accord with the Lord's words, "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.", [\[1\]](#) The Scriptures, however, warned that from the midst of the brotherhood would arise a power that would attempt to destroy the Gospel and the simple brotherhood of believers. This was nowhere more graphically fulfilled than in the rise of the Office of the Papacy out of the church that had been established in Rome.

Gradual rise of Papal Rome

The respect enjoyed by the various Christian elders in the second century was roughly proportionate to the rank of the city in which they resided. At that time, Rome was the largest, richest, most powerful city in the world, the queen of the Imperial Roman Empire. If Rome was the queen of cities, why should she not be the one to have a bishop to be the king of bishops? Thus, even when pagan Rome fell to the barbarian nations, some of the political esteem that she had won from the nations of the earth remained. The Barbarian overthrow of the Western Roman Empire was succeeded by the gradual rise of Papal Rome. Gradually, bishops from different parts of the empire, seeing themselves as above ordinary elders, yielded to the bishops of Rome some portion of the honor similar to that which the world gives to a prince. From this approbation, the Bishops of Rome began to demand submission as the third, fourth, and fifth centuries passed. In these centuries also, as the true Gospel was watered down, there came in its place the growth of ritualism in the churches, in which true worship of God and the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit was replaced by ceremonialism and idolatry. Pagan practices took on a veneer of Christianity. The clergy-laity division of the people of God became the accepted base. This further devolved into a hierarchy of the ruling clergy. By the end of the fifth century, the early ministers of the Gospel, who had taught the Scripture, had become replaced by a sacrificing priesthood in which the priest presumed to mediate between God and men. The church was no more the fellowship of believers under Christ Jesus, but rather an institution dominated by a hierarchy, with the most powerful individual being the Bishop of Rome. [\[2\]](#)

Bishop of Rome becomes the Pope

The power of the Bishop of Rome ascended as the imperial power of the Emperor declined. Edicts of the Emperor Theodosius II and of Valentinian III proclaimed the Roman bishop "as Rector of the whole Church." The Emperor Justinian, who was living in the East in Constantinople, in the sixth century published a similar decree. These proclamations did not create the office of the Pope but from the sixth century there was such advancement of power and prestige that from that time the title of "Pope" began to fit the one who was Bishop of Rome. [\[3\]](#)

Fraudulent documents aid rise of Papacy

It was not until the middle of the eighth century that serious contentions were made claiming the transfer of power and authority from the Emperor Constantine to the Bishop of Rome. The Donation of Constantine was purported to be the legal document in which the Emperor Constantine donated to Sylvester, the Bishop of Rome (314-335), much of his property and invested him with great spiritual power and authority. The vastness and splendor of the inheritance allegedly given by Constantine to Sylvester in the spurious document is seen the following quotation from the manuscript, *"We attribute to the See of Peter all the dignity, all the glory, all the authority of the imperial power. Furthermore, we give to Sylvester and to his successors our palace of the Lateran, which is incontestably the finest palace on the earth; we give him our crown, our miter, our diadem, and all our imperial vestments; we transfer to him the imperial dignity. We bestow on the holy Pontiff in free gift the city of Rome, and all the western cities of Italy. To cede precedence to him, we divest ourselves of our authority over all those provinces, and we withdraw from Rome, transferring the seat of our empire to Byzantium; inasmuch as it is not proper that an earthly emperor should preserve the least authority, where God hath established the head of his religion."* [\[4\]](#)

The Donation of Constantine was probably forged a little before A.D. 754. Of it, Wylie says, *"In it Constantine is made to speak in the Latin of the eighth century, and to address Bishop Sylvester as 'Prince of the Apostles, Vicar of Christ'. During more than 600 years Rome impressively cited this deed of gift, inserted it in her codes, permitted none to question its genuineness, and burned those who refused to believe in it. The first dawn of light in the sixteenth century sufficed to discover the cheat. In the following century another document of a like extraordinary character was given to the world. We refer to the Decretals of Isidore. These were concocted about the year 845. They professed to be a collection of the letters, rescripts, and bulls of the early pastors of the Church of Rome... The writer, who professed to be living in the first century, painted the Church of Rome in the magnificence which she attained only in the ninth, and made the pastors of the first age speak in the pompous words of the Popes of the Middle Ages. Abounding in absurdities, contradiction, and anachronisms, it affords a measure of the intelligence of the age that accepted it as authentic... It became the foundation of the canon law, and continues to be so, although there is not now a Popish writer who does not acknowledge it to be a piece of imposture."* [\[5\]](#)

As early as 865, Pope Nicholas drew from these forgeries a way to demand submission from bishops and princes. The arrogance of the popes grew from this time onward. Popes became intoxicated with their own pride; some in their teens and twenties lost their senses in drunken immorality [\[6\]](#) The infamous

women of history, Theodora and Marozia, for many years governed the papal throne. That unholy See, pretending to rise above the majesty of kings and bishops, was sunk in the dregs of sin. Theodora and Marozia installed and deposed at their pleasure those who sat in the pretended chair of St. Peter. For two centuries, the Papacy was one wild arena of disorders as the most powerful families of Italy disputed and fought over it like a possession.

Lusts of the mind

The year 1073 was a turning point from the centuries of gross immorality. Rigorous discipline filled the papacy. Reaching above the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of papal minds began to clutch at the things of God. Pope Gregory VII, the noted Hildebrand, ambitious beyond all who had preceded him, took to himself the idea that the reign of the Pope was but another name for the reign of God. He resolved never to rest until he had subjected all authority and power, both spiritual and temporal, to the "chair of Peter". Hildebrand's successors continued his project, and strove by trickery, by arms, by crusades and by anathemas, to place the world under the scepter of the papal throne. For two centuries from the time of Hildebrand's reign, the papacy increased in power and glory, and was maintained by thousands of destroyed lives, many deposed kings and princes, many sacked cities, and many fields deluged with blood.

Popes Innocent III (1216) and Boniface VIII (1303) put the final touches to Papal triumph in spiritual and temporal power. Seventy-five popes, one after another, from Pope Innocent Pope Pius VII, approved of torture, murder, and burning at the stake, and the confiscation of property of believers in the horrific centuries of the Inquisition. [7] Many of those slain were true Bible believers.

"The most ghastly abomination of all was the system of torture. The accounts of its cold-blooded operations make one shudder at the capacity of human beings for cruelty. And it was decreed and regulated by the Popes who claim to represent Christ on earth. In 1252 Pope Innocent IV solemnly authorized it. Confirmatory or regulatory decrees about it were issued by Alexander IV, Clement IV, Urban IV and Clement V." [8]

The Papacy had become *"drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."* [9] No other kingdom or power has ever drunken so deeply of this blood as had Papal Rome. Thus as streams are traced to the fountain, so is the Papacy traced to the prophecies of Scripture, which correctly interprets the Papacy. This is *"the same horn [that] made war with the saints, and prevailed against them."* [10] *"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations."* [11]

The Papacy and Modern Times

A partial list of the successes of the Papacy under Roman Catholic dictators in twentieth century includes: Adolf Hitler in Germany, 1933-1945; Benito Mussolini in Italy, 1922-1943; Francisco Franco in Spain, 1936-1975; Antonio Salazar in Portugal, 1932-1968; Juan Peron in Argentina, 1946-1955; Ante Pavelic in Croatia, 1941-1945; and Engelbert Dollfuss and Kurt von Schuschnigg in Austria, 1932-1934. The Vatican's legal agreement with those nations is well known; few, however, see the Nazism of Germany and the Fascism of Italy, Spain, Portugal, Croatia, and Latin America as consequences of the

Papacy's economic and social teachings, and legal agreements between the Vatican and these nations. [\[12\]](#) The Crusades and the 605 years of the Inquisition have stopped, but the power of the Papacy to influence and to control governments, social, economic, political life and the destinies of peoples, has continued.

Power through law

What had looked like a mortal wound to Papal power took place in 1798. [\[13\]](#) A general of Napoleon's army entered the Vatican, removing Pope Pius VI from his throne; and so it was that Popedom lost its basis as a civil power. Pope Pius IX, not having territorial or civil power, sought to re-establish the Papacy. An internally important part of his design brought about the declaration of Papal infallibility. With remarkable ingenuity against not only the Scriptural absurdity of the concept, but also in spite of the historical fact of heretical popes, this was made doctrine at Vatican Council I in 1870. Further, the Papacy re-established itself internally by re-organizing Roman Catholic law into the 1917 Code of Canon Law. [\[14\]](#) The apparent mortal wound of 1798 was to be healed in 1929 when under Mussolini, the Vatican was again recognized as a civil power and seated on all seven hills. The concordat with Mussolini was just the beginning of many civil concordats, one of the most infamous being that between Pope Pius XII and Adolf Hitler. [\[15\]](#) The Papacy had again consolidated its power from within by the 1917 Code of Canon Law and from without by legal concordats with the various nations. Thus the Vatican, with its own citizens as part of sovereign nations across the world and with her civil agreements with the same nations, has a double cord of power. The individual Catholic, fearing for his salvation, and laden with his first allegiance being to "holy Mother Church" is a pliable pawn in the hand of the Papacy. [\[16\]](#)

The major change of direction made visible by Vatican Council II (1962-1965). That council moved from separation from other religions to false ecumenism, not only with the religions of the world, but also with Bible believers in particular. "Separated brethren" was a new term for those always considered heretics, while the pagan religions of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism now became accepted ways to God. [\[17\]](#) This new approach was established by the RCC to win the world to herself by means of dialogue, the rules and goal of which she has carefully spelled out in her post-Conciliar Document No. 42 on ecumenism, which states that "dialogue is not an end in itself...it is not just an academic discussion." [\[18\]](#) Rather, "ecumenical dialogue...serves to transform modes of thought and behavior and the daily life of those [non-Catholic] communities. In this way, it **aims at preparing the way for their unity of faith in the bosom of a Church one and visible.**" [\[19\]](#)

The Pope's official position is that "ecumenical encounter is not merely an individual work, but also a task of the [RC] Church, **which takes precedence over all individual opinions.**" [\[20\]](#) The Papacy expects this process of dialogue to take time. The Roman Catholic Church's stated aim of bringing all Christian churches under her authority is clearly her goal. She says, *"...little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, **all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist [the Mass] into that unity of the one and only Church....This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something we can never lose.**"* [\[21\]](#)

Pope John Paul II, while initially having been thought to be liberal and modern, consolidated further the dictatorial powers afforded him by the 1917 Code of Canon Law and by his purported infallibility, bequeathed him by Vatican Council I. This he did by revising the 1917 Code, making it even more conservative than it had been, and has been careful to appoint new bishops in line with his centralized way of thinking.

Like another Hildebrand, the present Pope is determined to build, by both Church and civil law, the structure by which the Papacy can again at the appropriate time wield might and power among the nations. [22] This same Pope John Paul II has been adamant in his efforts to update the laws of the Roman Catholic Church. Since the days of Hildebrand, popes have seen the necessity of making iron and inflexible church laws before attempting to control her subjects and those not Catholic by compulsion and violence, if necessary. In 1983, John Paul II's revision of the 1917 Code of Canon Law added to the Roman Catholic laws, for example, "The Church has an innate and proper right to coerce offending members of the Christian faithful by means of penal sanctions." [23] Examination of these laws shows them to be even more absolute and totalitarian than those of the past. If one rejects submission of his intellect and will to the Pope, or some of the other laws of the Papacy, Canon 1371, Para. 1 states that "The following are to be punished with a just penalty: 1 a person who...teaches a doctrine condemned by the Roman Pontiff...." Canon 1312 outlines specified penalties that are to be carried out, "Para. 2. The law can establish other expiatory penalties which deprive a believer of some spiritual or temporal good and are consistent with the supernatural end of the Church."

The perverse vindictiveness of these laws contravenes the repeated Scriptural commands to be not despotic, as are the rulers of this world. From the creation of the Papacy in the sixth century, its heart has been that of law and force. Grace and the Gospel have been superseded by decrees and coercion. A veneer of Christianity has always been upheld, yet this surface ritual religion has always repressed and persecuted true godliness. The history of the Papacy shows that unequivocally it is a power structure built on forgeries, craft, persecution, a false gospel, church law, civil power, and concordats. Nonetheless, the Papacy for most of its history has succeeded in deluding millions. Present day Catholicism continues to insist that its Papal Office is of God, and the world for the most part bows down before her shrine and her Christ, the Pontiff himself.

[End of Part I]

Endnotes

[1] Matthew 23:8.

[2] See J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, originally published in 1878 (Kilkeel, N. Ireland: Mourne Missionary Trust, 1985) Vol. I, Book I, pp. 3-14. See also J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century, A New Translation* (New York: John B. Alden, Publisher, 1883) Book I, pp.1-34.

[3] D'Aubigne, Book I, p. 81.

[4] Quoted from copy Matthew 23:8.

of the document in Pope Leo's letter in Hardouin's Collection, Epistola I., Leonis Papoe IX; Acta Conciliorum et Epistolae Decretales, tom. 6, pp. 934; Parisiis, 1714. The English reader will find a copy of the pretended original document in full in Historical Essay on the Power of the Popes, Vol. II, Appendix, Tr. from French, London, 1838

[5] Wylie, Vol. I, p. 29-30. See also Roman Catholic historian Ignaz Von Dollinger, The Pope and the Council, Auth. Tr. from German, 2nd ed. (London: Rivingtons, 1869) Sect. 7 "Forgeries", pp. 94-142.

[6] Peter De Rosa, Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1988) p. 47-56.

[7] De Rosa, p. 175.

[8] William Shaw Kerr, A Handbook on the Papacy (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Ltd., 1950) p. 239.

[9] Revelation 17:6.

[10] Daniel 7:21.

[11] Revelation 13:7.

[12] For fuller documentation of this see John W. Robbins, Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church (Unicoi, TN 37692-0068: The Trinity Foundation, 1999) ISBN: 0-940931-52-4.

[13] "Edward King, insightful in 1800 wrote about this defeat as the mortal wound or end of Pontifical Power, "THIS IS THE YEAR 1798.-And just 1260 years ago, in the very beginning of the year 538, Belisarius put an ed to the Empire, and Dominion of the Goths, at Rome...He had entered the City on the 10th of the preceding December, in triumph, in the name of Justinian, Emperor of the East: and had soon after made it tributary to him: leaving thenceforward from A.D. 538 NO POWER in Rome, that could be said to rule over the earth, excepting the ECCLESIASTICAL PONTIFICAL POWER." Remarks on the Signs of the Times (Philadelphia ed., 1800) pp. 18-19 in LeRoy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950) Vol. II, p. 767.

[14] RC writer John Cornwell states, "At the turn of the century [1900], Pacelli [later Pope Pius XII]...collaborated in redrafting the Church's laws in such a way as to grant future popes unchallenged domination from the Roman center. These laws, separated from their ancient historical and social background, were packaged in a manual known as the Code of Canon Law, published and brought into force in 1917. The code, distributed to Catholic clergy throughout the world, created the means of establishing, imposing, and sustaining a remarkable new 'top-down' power relationship. As papal nuncio in Munich and Berlin during the 1920s, Pacelli sought to impose the new code, state by state, on Germany...." Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII (New York, 10014: Viking, 1999) p. 6.

[15] Cornwell, p. 7 "In 1933 Pacelli found a successful negotiating partner for his Reich Concordat in the person of Adolf Hitler. Their treaty authorized the papacy to impose the new Church law on German Catholics and granted generous privileges to Catholic schools and the clergy. In exchange, the Catholic Church in Germany, its parliamentary political party, and its many hundreds of associations and

newspapers 'voluntarily' withdrew, following Pacelli's initiative, from social and political action. The abdication of German political Catholicism in 1933, negotiated and imposed from the Vatican by Pacelli with the agreement of Pope Pius XI, ensured that Nazism could rise unopposed by the most powerful Catholic community in the world..."

[16] See RC author Cornwell and Presbyterian author Robbins.

[17] No. 56, *Nostra Aetate*, 28 October 1965, Austin P. Flannery, Ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1975, 1984).

[18] Flannery, No. 42, "Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue", *S.P.U.C.*, 15 August 1975, p. 549.

[19] Flannery, No. 42, pp. 540-1. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

[20] Flannery, No. 42, p.545.

[21] Flannery, No. 42, p. 541.

[22] For more details see our article on *Vatican Prepares to Control Through Civil Law*.

[23] *Code of Canon Law Latin-English ed.* (Washington DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983) Canon 1311. All canons are taken from this source.

Forgiveness through a Priest

By Richard Bennett

Sins are forgiven, as people believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, “*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.*”^[1] In believing on the finished work of the Lord Christ Jesus, a soul has both one hundred percent right standing with God credited to him and the forgiveness of sins. “*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested.*”^[2] “*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*”^[3] Thus the Gospel is the power of God to salvation as the Apostle Paul proclaimed. If one does sin after salvation, it is a relationship problem with the Father in heaven to be resolved, as one directly confesses his sin to God. “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”^[4]

Catholic Forgiveness

In stark contrast to this clear teaching of the Lord, the Catholic is taught to look for forgiveness by confessing his sin to a priest. Forgiveness through a priest is what a Catholic is taught and what the devout Catholic practices. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, forgiveness is defined as follows,

“It is called the *sacrament of confession*, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament...It is called the sacrament of forgiveness, since by the priest’s sacramental absolution God grants the penitent ‘pardon and peace.’”^[5]

Forgiveness through a priest is the sacrament of Penance, another name for Confession, and declared to be necessary for salvation. The official words of Rome are,

“It is through the sacrament of Penance that the baptized can be reconciled with God and with the Church... This sacrament of Penance is necessary for salvation for those who have fallen after Baptism, just as Baptism is necessary for salvation for those who have not yet been reborn.”^[6]

Forgiveness for literally everything is proclaimed to be in the power of the priests of the Church. In the Vatican’s own words,

“There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive. “There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest.”^[7]

“Priests have received from God a power that he has given neither to angels nor to archangels... God above confirms what priests do here below. Were there no forgiveness of sins in the Church, there would be no hope of life to come or eternal liberation. Let us thank God who has given his Church such a gift.”^[8]

The Church of Rome claims a Biblical base for forgiveness through a Priest

The Scriptural backing claimed by Rome for the priest purportedly being able to absolve others of sin is found in Para. 1485 of her *Catechism*,

“‘On the evening of that day, the first day of the week,’ Jesus showed himself to his apostles. ‘He breathed on them, and said to them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’ (John 20:19, 22-23).”^[9]

The biblical response to this claim is found in a study of the actual words of John 20:23, “*Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*” This confirms that rather than anything judicially enacted through any “sacrament”, the forgiveness spoken of is that which is proclaimed by the Gospel. Here, unquestionably, the Lord has declared, in a few words, the sum of the Gospel. The Lord gave authority to His disciples to declare forgiveness to those whom God had already forgiven. The commission given in this passage in John is a parallel to similar passages such as Luke 24:47,

Matthew 28:18-20, and Mark 16:15-16. This is the way the Apostles understood and obeyed the commission, as evidenced throughout the Acts of the Apostles, for Christ did not appoint confessors to probe intimately into each sin of people in whispers in a confession box. Rather He commissioned preachers of his Gospel and He caused their voice to be heard. Thus the Apostle Peter proclaimed, “*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*”^[10] The manner of forgiving sins in Scripture is the proclamation of the Gospel, not the whispering of sins committed, into the ear of a man in a confession box.

The Obligation to Confess

Rome’s insistence that her people confess is seen in her *Catechism* and in her laws.

“One who desires to obtain reconciliation with God and with the Church, **must confess to a priest all the unconfessed grave sins** he remembers after having carefully examined his conscience.”^[11]

“Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the only ordinary means by which a member of the faithful conscious of grave sin is reconciled with God and the Church.”^[12]

“A member of the Christian faithful is obliged to confess in kind and number all grave sins committed after baptism and not yet remitted directly through the keys of the Church nor acknowledged in individual confession, of which the person has knowledge after diligent examination of conscience.”^[13]

Auricular confession that is obligatory does not even have an old tradition to commend it. Ignaz von Dollinger, one of the most respected Roman Catholic historians in Germany declared that the sacrament of penance was unknown in the West for one thousand one hundred years and never known in the East. He wrote, “...So again with Penance. What is given as the essential form of the sacrament was unknown in the Western Church for eleven hundred years, and

never known in the Greek.”^[14]

Divine absolution?

The rite has necessary words going with it that the priest must use. The prescribed words are,

“The formula of absolution used...God, the Father of mercies, /through the death and the resurrection of his Son/has reconciled the world to himself/ and sent the Holy Spirit among us/ for the forgiveness of sins;/ through the ministry of the Church/ may God give you pardon and peace,/ and **I absolve you from your sins/in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**”^[15]

This absolution that is necessary for the Catholic to obtain is taught by Rome, not to be a declaration that God has forgiven the person confessing, but that the priest who says, “I absolve you from your sins,” is himself forgiving the sins as judge in a judicial act. In the words of the Council of Trent,

“However, although the absolution of the priest is the dispensation of the benefaction of another, yet it is not a bare ministry only, either of an announcing the Gospel or declaring the forgiveness of sins, but it is equivalent to a judicial act, by which sentence is pronounced by him as a judge [can 9].”^[16]

This divine power for priests judicially to forgive sins is claimed in the *Catechism*,

“Only God forgives sins. Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, ‘The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins’ and exercises this divine power: ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name.” (Para. 1441)

It is mind-boggling arrogance to claim that divine judicial power is given to sinful men to forgive sins. It is made worse in that the false basis for such claim is cited as in the Lord’s personal commission to the Apostle Peter in Mathew 16:19.

Thus the *Catechism* continues in paragraph 1444 in teaching,

“In imparting to his apostles his own power to forgive sins the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. This ecclesial

dimension of their task is expressed most notably in Christ's solemn words to Simon Peter: 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' 'The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of the apostles united to its head.'"

The Lord said to the Apostle Peter, "*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*" (Matthew 16:19). "*Unto thee*" relates this promise to Peter alone. This prophetic declaration of our Lord was literally fulfilled to Peter, as he was made the first instrument of opening the kingdom of heaven preaching the Gospel to the Jews (Acts 2:41) and to the Gentiles, (Acts 10:44-47). This commission to be the first to open the kingdom of heaven by the Gospel gave no judicial divine power to the Apostle Peter. The power of the keys was twofold, to the Jews and to the Gentiles. It was fulfilled in the Apostle Peter and in him alone. There can be no successors to this prophetic commission, since there was but one first opening of the kingdom for the Jews as for the Gentiles. The binding and loosing of Matthew 16:19 and 18:18, has to do with the decisions of a church congregation in matters of discipline reached through prayer, the Word, and the Spirit, that will be ratified in heaven. It does not include the divine right of Lord to forgive sins. The concept of a sinful human being having divine authority judicially to forgive the sins of others is totally offensive to God and a denial of the truth of the Written Word of the Lord. Nonetheless this is exactly what Rome claims for her Priests. The claim is for an identical ministry for the Roman Catholic priest, with all the authority and power of His person. The exact words of this preposterous assertion are the following,

"All priests share with bishops the one identical priesthood and ministry of Christ. Consequently the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical union with the order of bishops."^[17]

In a similar way, Rome teaches in her *Catechism*,

"Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to

act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (*virtute ac persona ipsius Christi*). Christ is the source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ.”^[18]

The basis for Rome’s claim amounts to the outrageous concept of a Roman Catholic priest’s ministry being identical with the divine Christ Jesus the Lord. That there is no other Savior, or mediator between God and man, is abundantly taught in the New Testament; and it is, indeed, the main design of revelation to prove this. In the word of the Lord, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*^[19] To assert seriously that the Roman Catholic priest can forgive sins as the Lord did, and that the priest has an identical ministry to the Lord Jesus Christ is, in the strictest sense of the word, a blasphemy against the person of the Lord. Scripture did speak of the one who would make such a claim as “the son of perdition”, *“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”*^[20]

Biblical Forgiveness

In Scripture, however, forgiveness is mediated through Jesus Christ alone, the only mediator between God and man (John 14:6; Acts 4:12, I Timothy 2:5). The instrument of forgiveness is not a church but rather faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”*^[21] *“However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.”*^[22] The boundaries of forgiveness are all of God and not that of any church to demonstrate, in the words of the Apostle, that He is *“just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”*^[23] The precincts of salvation are outlines in Romans 3:24, *“being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,”* showing that God’s grace is the efficient cause, and the payment is *“through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* To attempt to bring the Roman Catholic

priest and the sacrament of confession into the nature of the salvific work of the Godhead, indeed to make the priest and the sacrament the fount of forgiveness is gross blasphemy. In Scripture, forgiveness and acceptance are in Christ Jesus alone, “*to the praise of the glory of his grace.*”^[24]

Conclusion

In spite of clear Biblical teaching, the Roman Catholic Church claims that a mere man, with the right formula of words, is an effective means of grace in the judicial act of forgiveness. This assertion for the sacrament of confession is in the vein of Rome’s claim that all seven sacraments are necessary for salvation and the means of grace. This teaching is so emphatic that the “sacramental grace” alleged to be conveyed through her physical sacraments is declared to be the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Church of Rome officially teaches,

“The [Roman Catholic] Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*. ‘Sacramental grace’ is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament.”^[25]

Looking to physical rituals and signs to give “sacramental grace” and calling that “the grace of the Holy Spirit” is literally a blasphemy against the all Holy God. It not only demeans the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit, but it presupposes that His power is bound within the Roman Catholic Church’s seven sacraments. The rite of confession, in particular, claiming that “by virtue of his [Christ’s]

divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name”^[26] is sufficiently serious to merit the full wrath of God for those who have invented and practice this evil parody on the forgiveness of the Lord. In Scripture “*the God of all grace*”^[27] by means of His Word directly seeks, finds, and saves His people. Forgiveness is God’s gift to the believer. It is granted to the believer

based on Christ’s finished work on the cross,^[28] “*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”^[29] God’s direct action shows His graciousness to believers so that their eyes of faith are fixed on Him. “*For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which*

receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”^[30]

The Dangers involved in Confession

The real sadness that breaks the heart is the emptiness and wickedness that comes out of what claims to be the means to forgive sin. The engineered artifact of a confessional box, with two sinners inside one claiming to be the overlord of conscience, is substituted for that interior and spiritual communion with God through the faithfulness of Christ Jesus seeking mercy and grace. Souls have been trained to forsake the preciousness of true faith and grovel before another creature in a dangerous ritual. Salvation and forgiveness are no longer flowing through the pure Word from the very heart of God, but rather men are attempting to siphon them off and to dispense them to the “faithful” through a soiled waste pipe overflowing with religious debris. In the Catholic system, intimate proximity to a man that can be an occasion of sin has been substituted for the unction of the Holy Spirit and the joy of knowing forgiveness before the living God. The real vulnerability of boxed confession becoming a time of solicitation to sin and scandal, and even of false accusations that can be equally dangerous, are all admitted in the rules that go with the sacrament in Catholic system. Canon 977 declares,

The absolution of an accomplice in a sin against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue is invalid except in danger of death. [*“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* is counted as the sixth commandment in Roman Catholic Church]

Canon 979 declares,

In posing questions, the priest is to proceed with prudence and discretion, attentive to the condition and age of the penitent, and is to refrain from asking the name of an accomplice.

Canon 982 declares,

Whoever confesses to have denounced falsely an innocent confessor to ecclesiastical authority concerning the crime of solicitation to sin against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue is not to be absolved unless the person has first formally retracted the false denunciation and is prepared to repair damages if there are any.

Canon 984 §1 declares,

A confessor is prohibited completely from using knowledge acquired from confession to the detriment of the penitent even when any danger of revelation is excluded.

This is just a sample of the grim laws designed to anticipate and limit the potential moral chaos arising from the practice of boxed private confession. If the ordinary rules of Christian counseling were observed, and the priest not left alone with someone to solicit or to be solicited, things would not be so hazardous. [31] The Word of God teaches by precept and example that the knowledge of good and evil is always polluting to a creature who possesses it. One of the principal joys of heaven toward which true believers yearn in the depths of their being is to be finally free from the presence, power, and knowledge of sin. The very reason why the Lord God reserved the knowledge of good and evil to Himself in the Garden of Eden was because only an All-Holy, Infinite Being of unlimited Power and Goodness can retain that knowledge without contracting pollution from it. [32] It is therefore the height of spiritual stupidity and silly presumption to devise and mandate a private a ritual wherein the depths of human depravity and weakness are explored under a cloak of seeking forgiveness and grace. [33] In the Church of Rome it is even the law that confessions be heard in the confessional box and not in another place. [34]

It is a tremendous burden to see that under the pretense of forgiving sins, there is the undermining of the unique office of Christ Jesus, which can end up as a serious occasion of sin. Sincere priests doing their duty, and devout Catholics seeking to alleviate guilt, can find themselves prey to sin in the very rite through which it is purported they may delivered from sin. The scandals that have resulted from Confession, and other close encounters within the Roman Catholic system, has reached such horrendous proportions that it is difficult to keep up with the documented evidence. [35] Our hearts ought to grieve in anguish and our desire increase to give the pure Gospel to Catholics so that they can come to the Lord himself, and know the freedom and joy it is to be His very own. *“If the Son*

therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”^[36]

It is a gracious promise of the Lord, to all who continue in His Word, that they shall know the truth and that truth will set them free. The Gospel truth frees one from the yoke of the ceremonial rites that routinely deceive and ensnare. The soul trusting on the Lord for salvation, and for His mercy day by day for forgiveness, beholds the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Our prayer is that God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, would shine forth into the hearts of those sitting in the gloom of man-made traditions to give “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*”^[37] ♦

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Endnotes

[1] Acts 13:38-39

[2] Rom3:21

[3] Eph 1:7

[4] I John 1:9

[5] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), Para. 1424. (Hereafter *Catechism*).

[6] *Catechism*. Para. 980

[7] *Catechism* Para. 982

[8] *Catechism* Para. 983

[9] The present day Roman Catholic *New American Bible* does not make such a glaring

mistranslation of the John 20:23 passage as Para 1485 of the *Catechism*. In the *NAB*, while the “if” clause is missing, “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained”, the footnote on the verse states “The Council of Trent defined that this power to forgive sins is exercised in the sacrament of penance.” *New American Bible*, The Catholic Study Bible Edition, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1990).

[10] Acts 10:43

[11] *Catechism*, Para. 1493. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

[12] Canon 960, *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-English Ed. (Washington DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983) New English Tr., 1999. All canons are taken from this source unless otherwise noted.

[13] Canon 988 §1.

[14] von Dollinger, *The Pope and the Council by Janus*, Authorized tr. from the German “‘*Janus*’: *Der Papst und das Concil* (Boston, MA: Roberts Brothers, 1870) p.50.

[15] *Catechism*, Para. 1493.

[16] Denzinger, Henry, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, Tr. By Roy J. Deferrari, 30th Ed. of *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, Rev. by Karl Rahner, S. J. (St Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1957) # 902.

[17] *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, No. 63, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7 December 1965, Austin Flannery, O.P., Editor (Northport, NY: Costello Publ. Co., 1975) Vol. I, Sec. 7, p. 875.

[18] *Catechism*, Para. 1548

[19] John 14:6

[20] II Thessalonians 2:3-4

[21] Acts 16:31.

[22] Romans 4:5.

[23] Romans 3:26.

[24] Ephesians 1:6.

[25] *Catechism*, Para 1129.

[26] *Catechism* Para1441

[27] I Peter 5:10.

[28] Romans 4:5-8, II Corinthians 5:19-21, Romans 3:21-28, Titus 3:5-7, Ephesians 1:7, Jeremiah 23:6, I Corinthians 1:30-31, Romans 5:17-19.

[29] Romans 3:24.

[30] Romans 5.17.

[31] James 5:16, II Corinthians 13:1, I Timothy 5:19.

[32] Genesis 2:17

[33] 1 Samuel 2:22-25, Psalm 51 1-13

[34] Canon 964 §1: Confessions are not to be heard outside a confessional without a just cause.

[35] <http://www.iconbusters.com/iconbusters/lechery/current-lechery1.htm> That source links also to Roman Catholic sources that show the bad fruit that arises from wrong doctrine and practice.

[36] John 8:36

[37] 2 Corinthians 4:6

THE PRIESTHOOD

By Richard Bennett of Berean Beacon

Introduction

The Priesthood by a Converted Priest

A common thread that runs throughout the experiences of former priests is this: we had a great yearning to be different from those around us. We wanted to be more pure, nearer to God. We wanted to be free in conscience before God, and we sought the priesthood in which we thought we could administer salvation stage by stage to our fellow man.

The nobility and charm of the priesthood also drew us, as priests around us were signally honored with special privileges and dignity. Hearing confessions, forgiving sins, bringing Christ down upon the altar, the wonder of being "another Christ", all of these attracted us. In the words of Graham Greene's novel on the subject, we were drawn by "the power and the glory".

We did not question:

1. That there is an office of sacrificial priesthood in the New Testament.
2. That the priest's life revolves around the sacraments.
3. That we were fit subjects to be elevated to this honor. We had all worked hard at being "holy" so we took for granted that a right standing with God was something that we could merit.

1. The Office of the Priesthood

In the early 1970s we who gloried in being priests were shocked to read the word of one of our best Roman Catholic Scripture scholars, Raymond E. Brown:

When we move from the Old Testament to the New Testament, it is striking that while there are pagan priests and Jewish priests on the scene, no individual Christian is ever specifically identified as a priest. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the high priesthood of Jesus by comparing his death and entry into heaven with the actions of the Jewish high priest who went into the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle once a year with a offering for himself and for the sins of his people (Hebrews 9:6-7).

But it is noteworthy that the author of Hebrews does not associate the priesthood of Jesus with the Eucharist or the Last Supper; neither does he suggest that other Christians are priests in the likeness of Jesus. In fact, the once-for-all atmosphere that surrounds the priesthood of Jesus in Hebrews 10:12-14, has been offered as an explanation of why there are no Christian priests in the New Testament period. [\[1\]](#)

Later in the same chapter Brown argues for a priesthood like that of the Levitical class in the Old Testament. He makes his case for the development of such a doctrine by means of tradition. Even those of us who knew very little of the Bible knew that the Pharisees counted tradition superior to the clear Word of God. Brown did more to demolish the conviction that we were indeed priests than to ease our troubled minds.

Now I see that what Brown stated in the section quoted is biblically and absolutely true. Other than the royal priesthood, which applies to all true believers in Christ, there is no office of priesthood in the New Testament. Rather, as Hebrews states so clearly of the Old Testament priests, "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:23-25) "Unchangeable priesthood" means just that in the Greek: *aparabatos* means "untransferable". The reason it cannot be transferred to men is that its essence is Christ's own, ..who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (verse 26).

2. The Priest's Life Revolves around the Sacraments

The second presupposition was that the Roman Catholic sacraments gave, as our catechism books said, "outward signs of inward grace". Our mindset, in the words of Canon 840, was that the sacraments "...contribute in the highest degree to the establishment, strengthening and manifestation of ecclesiastical communion". [2] In fact, the sacraments themselves were for us the center of salvation and of sanctification.

For example, regarding confession to a priest, Canon 960 declared that it was "the only ordinary way by which the faithful person who is aware of serious sin is reconciled with God". Rather than proclaiming the finished work of Christ Jesus as the answer to the problem of our sinful nature and personal sin record, our lives revolved around these physical signs. Some of us were shocked to read in Dollinger (the most respected Roman Catholic historian) that the sacrament of penance (confession) was unknown in the West for 1,100 years and never known in the East.

Dollinger said, "So again with Penance. What is given as the essential form of the sacrament was unknown in the Western Church for eleven hundred years, and never known in the Greek." [3] How could this be? The bishops were declared to be high priests "first and foremost" (Canon 835). Were not we as priests also declared to be dispensers of the sacramental system? In the light of God's Word, this was magic rather than the gospel message.

The New Testament has two signs as instituted by the Lord; yet rather than the two signs, center stage in the Bible is the proclaimed message. But for us the sacraments themselves were of major importance. Every day began with Mass. Our doubts regarding the physical sacraments as central to our life with God began from experience. Many of us, priests for many years, had baptized countless infants, and had said the words, "I absolve you," over countless heads. We had anointed many aged, sick and accident victims with the words, "May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."

Year after year we saw the children we had baptized as infants grow up as pagan as the pagans on the mission field. The myriads of people over whose heads we had pronounced absolution came up off their knees as much sinners after our words as before them. When the sick and the aged were neither saved nor "raised up", it was then that some of us dared to check the Bible. Here we discovered: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh

profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The verses in Ephesians shocked us most of all. Our standard definitions of sacraments defined them as "works", as in the famous Canon 8 of the Council of Trent: "If anyone says that by the sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred ex opere operato [from the work worked], but that faith alone in the divine promise is sufficient to obtain grace, let him be anathema." [\[4\]](#)

It was difficult even to begin to doubt the sacraments. Much of our time was absorbed by these and other physical signs. During Lent or Holy Week, for example, we had to make arrangements for procuring and putting in order the newly blessed oils, the Pascal candle, the Pascal fire, the palms, the ashes from last year's palms, the processional cross, the thurible with its charcoals and incense, the purple, red and white vestments, and so on. How could any of us dare to hear the Lord's principle stated so clearly in John 6:63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

But hear the words we did, as these testimonies bear witness. The Father drew us, showing us our own worthlessness and the sufficiency of his Word. As Jesus said to the Father, "Thy word is truth".(John 17:17).

3. Unfit Subjects for Honor

The last presupposition was the most deeply rooted within us. As a child, before ever wanting to become a priest, I had labored at being "holy". During Lent I would "offer up" candy and sweet drinks to be a better Catholic. I visited nine churches in one day praying alternately "Our Father" six times, "Hail Mary" six times and "Glory Be" six times in each church. Some of us played at being holy by giving white peppermints to our friends when they would kneel down, as if we were the priest giving communion.

As priests, most of us were very enthusiastic about Vatican Council II. When the

documents were published, some of us preached from them. One of the most popular documents was "The Church in the Modern World". But when the excitement had calmed, those of us who studied it saw the same message we had lived and preached. Paragraph. 14 states, "...Nevertheless man has been wounded by sin... When he is drawn to think about his real self he turns to those deep recesses of his being where God who probes the heart awaits him, and where he himself decides his own destiny in the sight of God." Paragraph. 17 continues, "Since human freedom has been weakened by sin it is only by the help of God's grace that man can give his actions their full and proper relationship to God." [5]

This type of modern teaching seemed very much like the old message. The old message was also contained in Vatican Council II documents in a less popular document, No. 6, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, Paragraph. 6 which states: From the most ancient times in the Church good works were also offered to God for the salvation of sinners, particularly the works which human weakness finds hard...

Indeed, the prayers and good works of holy people were regarded as of such great value that it could be asserted that the penitent was washed, cleansed and redeemed with the help of the entire Christian people." [6]

All these teachings were endorsed by messages at Lourdes and at Fatima. That many souls go to hell because there is no one to pray and to do penance for them was part of our third and biggest presupposition. Grace was, of course, presupposed; but it is you who by means of your suffering and good works merit salvation for yourself and for others.

This is the net in which all of us who lived the works gospel so intensely were most deeply entangled by Roman Catholicism. This two-fold presupposition; that we were somehow holy and right before a holy God because we had prayed and suffered, and that we would continue as holy and righteous men to practise our religion, became our biggest undoing.

Mankind's Condition Before The Holy God Christ Jesus describes man's nature. "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these

evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:20-23). See also Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things; and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Both Old and New Testaments tell us that we are spiritually dead to God. Adam's sin brought death (Genesis 2:17). Ezekiel states, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20) and Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." We are not simply "wounded" as Roman Catholics believe. We are spiritually dead.

The Biblical Message of Salvation We find the remedy for this situation in both Old and New Testaments. The prophet Isaiah declares: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all". Peter and John tell us: "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot". "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I Peter 1:18-19, I John 2:2)

The Bible clearly states that salvation was Christ's work and his alone: ". . .by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

Romans 3:26 says that God is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus". One is saved by God's work. Salvation is God's majestic, finished work. Woven through these testimonies is the same scarlet thread of God's sovereign grace. Before him, each person is dead in sin. By grace one is saved, through faith.

What the Bible has to say about priesthood becomes crystal clear in these personal testimonies of men who experienced both the false and the true priesthood (the priesthood of every believer in the once for all sacrifice of Christ Jesus).

The best summary of what happened to these men in the Roman Catholic priesthood is found in the words of Paul in II Corinthians 4:1-2: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of

dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

[1] Raymond E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (Paulist Press, New York 10019, 1970), p. 13

[2] *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English ed.* (Canon Law Society of America, Wash. DC 20064) 1983. All references to canon law are taken from this volume unless otherwise stated

[3] von Dollinger, *The Pope and the Council by Janus*, (Authorized tr. from the German "Janus_: Der Papst und das Concil), Roberts Brothers (Boston, 1870) p. 50

[4] *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, 7th Session, March, 1547*, Tr. by Rev. H. J. Schroeder, O.P. (Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., Rockford, IL 61105) 1978

[5] *Vatican Council II Documents, No. 664, Gaudium et Spes, 7 December 1965, Ch. 1, Vol. I*, in *Documents of Vatican II, Vatican Collection, Vol. I*, Austin P. Flannery, O.P., Ed. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1984)

[6] Flannery, Vol. I. (While No. 6, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, 1 January, 1967, is an absolutely official primary source document and is included with the Vatican Council II documents, strictly speaking it is a post-conciliar document of Paul IV)

The Invincible Gospel, and the modern evangelical lie

By

Richard M. Bennett

Introduction

I had great difficulties as a Catholic priest in listening to evangelists in my fourteen years of searching for the Gospel. Christian radio programs continually told me the amount of things I had to do to accept Jesus into my heart. Christian tracts likewise told me the amount of dedication or commitment I needed in order to make a decision for Christ.

After an agonizing search in the face of being told what I must do to be saved, I discovered that the first thing that must be understood biblically about the Gospel is that it is "*concerning Jesus Christ our Lord*", in the words of Paul in Romans 1:3. While the Gospel is proclaimed to all, it is not about us or about anything that happens in us. It solely concerns what Jesus Christ did and His death and resurrection.

I found out, too, that the Gospel is an historic fact. Biblical faith is not concerned with recommending techniques, whether mystical or ethical, whereby salvation may be obtained—for that is the burden of all false religion. Rather the Bible proclaims the fact that God has in concrete historical fact saved all His people from destruction. The Gospel "*by which ye are saved*" (I Corinthians 15:1-4) is the finished and complete work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The God before Whom We are Saved

What seems to be totally missing from modern evangelical circles is "the knowledge of the Holy". "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.*" (Proverbs 9:10) Knowledge of the Holy is defined by the Bible as knowledge of Who God is in Himself as the All Holy One. Unless it is proclaimed, "*God is*

light, and in Him is no darkness at all," [1] how would anyone begin to see the evil of sin? In the Scripture words a person must ask, "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy [2] ." With the Apostle Peter one must rightly come to fear the Lord God's command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy [3] ." Unless a person understands something of God's attributes and that He is All Holy, there is no reason to desire the perfect righteousness of Christ in salvation. Thus, Scripture asks the question, "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? " [4]

The author of the Gospel: God just and justifier

It is as "*the God of all grace*" [5] that seeks, finds, and saves His people. Justification is God's gift to the believer, which is imputed to him based on Christ's finished work on the cross. [6] Quite simply, justification is God's righteous judgment of the believer, declaring him both guiltless in regard to sin, and righteous in regard to his moral standing in Christ before the Holy God. This judgment by God is legally possible because of the substitutionary death and resurrection of Christ Jesus in the place of the believer. Justification is first and foremost God's legal judgment of the believer. "*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*" [7]

Justification is God's righteous judgment to demonstrate in the words of Romans 3:26, that He is "*just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*" This righteous judgment of God is the center of the apostolic preaching of the good news in the Bible. It is a righteous judgment freely given by God:

²¹ But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²² even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: ²³ for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴ being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom God hath set forth to

be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶ to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26)

Scriptural meaning of Justification

The precise import of the term "to justify" is clearly seen in that it is the exact opposite or contrast to the term "to condemn." *"It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"* (Romans 8:33-34) [8] Condemnation is not a process by which a good man is made bad, but is the verdict of a judge declaring a man blameworthy. Now just as to condemn a man is not to infuse evil into him, but declares him guilty, so justification does not infuse goodness into a man, but declares that he is just. Justification is that formal sentence of the Divine Judge whereby He pronounces the believer before Him righteous.

Purpose of the Justification: to reveal Christ's righteousness

The Scripture declares the righteousness of God without the law is manifested; it is the purpose of the Gospel. What is declared is not human works righteousness of any kind, but rather it is God's righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ that is revealed. The Gospel is the demonstration, in concrete historical fact, of the perfect satisfaction which Christ rendered to all the demands of the law, and which God places to the credit of every true believer in Him. Before God's all Holy nature, sin had to be punished and true righteousness established. This has been accomplished in the faithful obedience of the Lord Christ Jesus and His propitiatory sacrifice. Thus Christ's faithfulness is proclaimed in v. 22, *"even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ. When the Bible declares that justification is God's gift to the believer, it also shows in few words what this justification is. Justification is found in and of Christ. It is the demonstration of the faithfulness [9] of Jesus Christ, even unto death. Such perfect rectitude is of God, and from God, "even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ" (v. 22). The great news is that this absolute righteousness is "unto all and upon all them that believe."*

Legally what is shown is the true believer's identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. God has provided Christ's righteousness to sinners who believe. There are several passages in

which faithfulness of the Lord is mentioned. In each case, the name of Jesus Christ is in the genitive case indicating that faithfulness a character quality that He possesses. Galatians 2:16 is an example of this usage, "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.*" Knowing that the law must be fulfilled for God to declare a person righteous, the faithfulness of Christ must be also understood as applying specifically to this context.

The human condition and the Graciousness of God

According to verse 23, "*for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*", every person under the law has fallen short of the glory of God and thereby is possessed both of a bad heart because of sin nature and a bad record because of personal sin. The good news is stated in v. 24, "*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" This is the pure Sovereign grace of God, showing as it were the very heart of God. His own graciousness moved Him, to devise a way whereby His wondrous love could be seen in the vilest of rebels. As it is written, "*I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins*" (Isaiah 43:25). The design of God is highlighted by the adverb "freely". This excludes all consideration of anything in man or from which should be the cause or condition of justification. That same Greek adverb is translated "without a cause" in John 15:25, "*they hated Me without a cause.*" The believer's right standing before God is in Christ's redemption, which is freely given, as it is outside anything he can do for himself.

"*Being justified*" means that since there remains nothing for man in himself, being smitten by the just judgment of God, but to perish, he is to be justified freely through God's provision in Christ. There is perhaps no passage in the whole Scripture that illustrates in such a striking manner the efficacy of Christ's righteousness as this one does. It shows that God's grace is the efficient cause, "*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" This shows *being justified freely by his grace* is through Christ Jesus' payment and nothing from the believer, lest one might imagine a kind of "half grace", and should be bold enough to attempt to add his own merit to God's grace.

Riches of God's grace: work's righteousness excluded

Herein is the love of God shown through his Son, Jesus Christ, in that this gift of righteousness, which cost Christ Jesus his life, is a finished work and is freely given. For to whom does God owe anything? And who can meet His standards under the law? So who can bargain with God or with Christ Jesus that he should even think of offering God anything in exchange for God's righteous judgment of himself? To make such a natural and ridiculous offer would be to attempt bribery of the highest order. Again and again the Bible states, as in the above text, that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer freely by God, or by God's grace alone. It is in Christ alone that one has right standing before the All Holy God *"In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."* (Ephesians 1:7)

Biblical justification, therefore, is perfect and a finished work of God. *"It is God that justifieth."* [10] Justification is God's work alone to show His righteousness and the fact that He alone saves. Once God has justified any person, He views that person *"in Christ"*, [11] for God, having forgiven the sinner, reckons to his account Christ's righteousness. Thus justification is by faith alone *"without the deeds of the law."* [12]

In the Lord Jesus, believers have a righteousness without spot or blemish, perfect and all glorious; a righteousness which has not only expiated all their sins, but satisfied every requirement of the law's precepts. It is not a transfusion of Christ's righteousness unto those who are to be justified, so that they could thereby be inherently righteous. No it is a Divine and legal right to eternal life and the title to an everlasting inheritance.

The perfect meritorious obedience of Christ is so truly transferred to believers that they will be called "the righteous" in the last judgment. (Matthew 25:40). Surely the believer has cause to cry out in praise in the words of Psalm 71:15-16 *"my mouth shall show forth thy righteousness, thy salvation all the day. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."*

The Gospel: not a process

The type of witnessing that states, "If you will do this and that or take these steps, then God will save you," is a false gospel, a return to the lie of Satan that implies that God can be manipulated. The Gospel does not do this. It declares historical facts: God has acted

already in Christ to accomplish the reconciliation that is the Gospel. Rather than offering possibility thinking, what every person is commanded to believe on is objective and complete fact. God has redeemed all of His own (Isaiah 44:22, Romans 5:18, II Corinthians 5:14-21).

Two main points of receiving the Gospel

Biblically, receiving the Gospel has two main points. First, all men are commanded to believe on the Lord Jesus. Second, while the faith to believe is a free gift of God, yet without God's grace, no person can believe. The Lord put the command to believe in a nutshell when He said, "*if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*" [13] Likewise, Paul and Silas declared "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" [14] The central importance of faith was given by the Lord in the words, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*" [15] In a word the Lord summarizes the situation, "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" [16] The Lord Jesus Christ states clearly the reason for this, "*He that believeth on Him [Christ] is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*" (John 3:18-19)

The highest expression of the loving kindness of God is grace. The term denotes the very nature of the graciousness of God. Therefore the Scripture insist, "*That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, through Jesus Christ. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*" [17] Salvation does not proceed from anything in the one witnessed to, but rather it issues forth from the sheer mercy of God. The contrast between His grace and human merit is clearly marked out in the plainest of words, "*And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.*" [18] The plan that God has devised for saving people is by faith, in order that His justification of them might be by grace alone, that His promise and faithfulness be firmly manifested, and they, therefore, perfect and secure. "*Therefore it is of faith, that it*

might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed..."

Biblical tension between the two points

The Biblical tension between these two points—that every person is commanded to believe, but without God's grace, a person cannot believe—must be clearly evident in witnessing to unbelievers. This tension is expressed in some texts, for example, *"Jesus answered and said unto them, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.' [19]* One of the clearest examples is in John 1:12-13, *"But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* Both aspects are also given in the preaching of the Apostle Paul, *"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."*

The design of the Lord in these and other verses is to show that man cannot be justified by his works, to hedge up the temptation of Satan that one can be saved by his or her own righteousness. God's promise of grace is the result. *"But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."* [20] In witnessing it must be made clear to the lost is that in the words of Scripture each person must himself or herself, *"Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord"* (Lamentations 2:19) *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Romans 10:13) *"God be merciful to me a sinner"* (Luke 18:13) *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"*

(Ps 51:17)

Presenting the Gospel the way the Bible does

Biblically believing on Christ, trusting on Him, or coming to Him has an essential negative side that is often not mentioned in present day tracts and witnessing. In the Bible, however, it is often first and is always a big part of the message. The Lord Jesus Christ's

message is, *"Repent ye, and believe the Gospel."* (Mark 1:15) He came to *"call sinners to repentance"* (Luke 5:32) and He insisted that *"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."* (Luke 13:3-5). The risen Lord teaches in His word *"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations."* (Luke 24:47) Peter proclaims, *"Repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out!"* (Acts 3:19) Everywhere Paul went he preached, *"repent and turn to God and do works meet for repentance"* (Acts 26:20), *"testifying to both Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Acts 20:21) Repentance is so essential to saving faith that if repentance is neglected, a person does not have saving faith. Conviction of sin is the first work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the lost (John 16:8). Without conviction of sin, a person does not have salvation. *"And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:21) Repentance is always part of trusting on Christ because Christ came not to save a person in his sins but from his sins. *"[God] now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."* (Acts 17:30).

Non-Biblical Terminology: men's words

In the light of the biblical truth examined here, it is necessary to analyze what is generally given as the gospel in our times. The following words and phrases that are often used in modern Evangelical circles are biblically wrong. These expressions can lead an unsaved person to think that some specific behavior on his part is necessary for him to be saved. When these phrases are used, even saved people may mistakenly teach error when witnessing to lost people.

"Accept Jesus into your heart." is one of the most used sentences in modern Evangelical circles. This humanistic concept is not biblical. Basically it is the second lie of Satan. The biblical concept of justification is that by it the believer is made ***accepted in Christ***. The whole theme of Ephesians Chapter 1 is summarized in verse 6, *"To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."* The terminology, "accept Jesus into your heart" is backwards. It assumes wrongly that the person himself makes the choice to accept Jesus into his human heart and that he initiates the action that will save him. When the believer does abide in Christ by faith and in love keeps His commandments, Christ does dwell in that person's cleansed human heart. *"Abide in Me,*

and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." (John. 15:4) The whole process of sanctification ("*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" Colossians 1:27) depends first on a person being positionally in Him, clothed with His righteousness.

It is unscriptural to think that salvation begins by Christ first coming into the sinful heart of a man. The dead and ungodly person can be made acceptable to God only as he is "*in Christ*", as was seen in Ephesians 1:6. Then, and only then, does Christ come to sanctify the one already saved. The verses below are often wrongly used to evangelize. Rather these words are addressed to believers in the church of the Laodiceans, "*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne.'*" (Revelation 3:14, 20-21). This misuse of Revelation 3:20, a sanctification message, to teach justification is inexcusable. Justification differs from sanctification. Sanctification is internal and experimental, while justification is objective and legal. Justification is instantaneous and immutable, whereas sanctification is gradual and progressive. Those who misuse this passage know better, yet for the sake of what they call success in witnessing they persist. Since this abuse of Scripture is so serious and soul damning it is important to give examples. [21] The Billy Graham Association proclaims the following, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). Jesus Christ wants to have a personal relationship with you. Picture, if you will, Jesus Christ standing at the door of your heart (the door of your emotions, intellect and will). Invite Him in; He is waiting for you to receive Him into your heart and life." "How to become a Christian"

www.billygraham.org/spiritualhelp/become.asp

In a similar presentation Campus Crusade International state, "How to Know That Christ Is in Your Life Did you receive Christ into your life by sincerely praying the suggested prayer? According to His promise in Revelation 3:20, where is Christ right now in relation to you? Christ said that He would come into your life. Would He mislead you? On what authority do you know that God has answered your prayer? (The trust worthiness of God Himself and His Word.)"

<http://www.ccci.org/laws/english/received.html>

Here Campus Crusade's way to be saved is "Sincerely praying the suggested prayer". Faith in Christ alone saves, not faith in some inner process that has been subtly given in its place. The sanctification text (Rev 3:20) spoken by the Lord to those in the Church is totally misused. (It is no wonder that Campus Crusade fully supports "Conversion as a process" in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*: (ECT 1) and other similar false Ecumenical documents)

Multitudes are deceived upon this vital matter, sincerely believing that they have received Christ as their personal Savior while in fact their foundation is in the sand. Vast numbers will only be awakened from their pleasant dreaming only when the cold hand of death lays hold of them. It is unspeakably serious to give a deceiving salvation message.

"**Give Jesus control** of your life to be saved" is another well known unbiblical approach. This teaching is in error because the Sovereign God of the universe controls His creation. He is the One "Who worketh **all things after the counsel of His own will.**" (Ephesians 1:11) Nothing any person might think of to give God in exchange for salvation is acceptable before God. "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...*" (Titus 3:5) Jesus Christ Himself was the only sacrifice for sin acceptable to the Holy God, and that sin offering was accomplished completely at the cross. The sacrifice for sin is finished. A person is saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not by a promise of "controlled behavior". Controlled behavior is a process following on salvation rather than the initiating cause of salvation.

"**Give your life** to Jesus (to be saved.)" This teaching is error for several reasons. First, eternal life is a **free gift**. (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 5:15-18, 6:23) A person does not "give" anything for a free gift. God gives this free gift to a person when **He** places that person in Christ Jesus. With the gift of salvation also comes the gift of faith to believe that this is what God has done. (See also John 5:24-25.) Sin is what separates a man from God (Romans 3:23). Second, such phrases as "give your life to Jesus" wrongly presume that a person has something worthy of God to give. Spiritually dead people **cannot give anything** that will save them from their sins. Because man is dead in sin, Christ Jesus **gave His life for the sins of His people** (Galatians 1:4). There is no Bible verse that says

or teaches that a lost, spiritually dead person "gives" anything, not even his life, in order to be saved.

When a lost person is taught to "give his life to Jesus" to be saved, he may think that he has to give his service, time, works, money, etc., to be saved. This may lead the lost person into a works gospel, which can never save. Getting saved is not a "trade-in" by which a person gives something to Jesus to be saved. A person is saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone--and nothing else. See Eph. 2:8-9. Repentance is also God given and not a human "trade-in" item, "*Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*" (Acts 5:31)

Summary

Biblical methodology is an important part of the Lord's truth. The Lord's own method of evangelising was essentially by asking questions, and by proclaiming the need to repent and believe. Likewise, the Apostles proclaimed the Lord's commandment to believe. There are no invitation systems in the Scripture. Such a method, flagrantly setting aside the sovereignty of Holy God, presupposes that man has within himself the power to accept or reject salvation as he so wishes.

The biblical method is to ask questions, as did the Lord Himself. Using the actual words of the Bible, one presents the holiness of God, and God's holiness and goodness in declaring the righteousness of Christ to be the covering of each person He saves. One shows that the Lord Jesus Christ's saving work is factual and complete. Clearly one must make it known that all are commanded to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. To do this, one must repent of all his or her own efforts to establish his or her own righteousness and cry out to God for His free gift of grace. The central point of God saving the ungodly is that He does so by imputing the righteousness of Christ to the one who believes. This is the theme of Romans Chapter Four and is summarized wonderfully in verse five, "*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*" The reason why God imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer is to show who He is. "*To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*" (Romans 3:26) Unless modern

Evangelicals return to this clear Biblical understanding in their witnessing, it will become easier and easier for them to promote an inner process or technique like unto that of the Roman Catholic Church.

Coming to Christ is initiated by the Father Who draws each individual (John 6:44) and has given each one to Christ (John 6:37). Salvation is accomplished by God's grace alone. It is His free gift through faith alone. (Ephesians 2:8-9). Coming to Christ is having eternal life now, which life will be fully glorified in heaven. In witnessing, to talk about "getting to heaven" not only changes the focus from who God is to man's fulfillment, but it also fails to make clear that through the precious faith that is ours now as believers, we already have eternal life. Rather than talking about getting to heaven, those who have been saved are to proclaim to the lost, *"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."* (John 17:3) And what is written likewise must be proclaimed by those saved, whether in the supermarket or on the telephone, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."*

Two extremely great offenses to God and His Gospel are 1) the attempt to negate His power by so-called free decisions of the unsaved, and 2) the unbiblical idea that justification, which is an act of God, is located in the believer's heart rather than in Christ alone and in the heavenlies. The Gospel is not magnified nor God glorified by going the worldly wise and telling them that they "may be saved by accepting Christ as their Personal Savior" while they are wedded to their idols and their hearts still in love with sin. This is to tell them a lie, pervert the Gospel, insult Christ, and turn the grace of God into debauchery.

When full credit is given to God and His grace, when His word, which is powerful, is used, He saves the sinner; and the one through whom the word has been given is humbled by a demonstration of the might and mercy of Holy God. Both people benefit, to the glory of God. All is as stated in Ephesians 1:6, ***"To the praise of the glory of His grace."*** ♦

Permission is given by the author to copy this article if it is done in its entirety without any changes.

[1] I John 1:5

[2] Revelation 15:4

[3] I Peter 1:16

[4] Exodus 15:11

[5] 1 Peter 5:10

[6] Romans 4:5-8, II Corinthians 5:19-21, Romans 3:21-28, Titus 3:5-7, Ephesians 1:7, Jeremiah 23:6, I Corinthians 1:30-31, Romans 5:17-19

[7] Romans 5:18

[8] For a detailed study of the term see texts such as Deuteronomy 25:1, Job 9:20, Job 32:2, Proverbs 17:15, Matthew 12:37, Luke 7:29, 1 Timothy 3:16 Psalm 143:2. Isaiah 50:7, 8

[9] Greek pistis. There are many contexts where this is necessarily translated faithfulness Matthew 23:23, Romans 3:3, Galatians 5:22, Titus 2:10, etc. There are several passages in which faithfulness of the Lord is mentioned. In each case, name of Jesus Christ is in the genitive case indicating that faithfulness is a character quality which He possesses (Galatians 2:16, 3:22; Ephesians 3:12, Philippians 3:9)

[10] Romans 8:33

[11] The concept in Christ (in the Beloved, in Him, in Whom etc) occurs 18 times in Ephesians Ch 1 & 2

[12] Romans 3:28

[\[13\]](#) John 8:24

[\[14\]](#) Acts 16:31

[\[15\]](#) John 6: 47

[\[16\]](#) John 3:36

[\[17\]](#) Ephesians 2:7-9

[\[18\]](#) Romans 11:6

[\[19\]](#) John 6:29

[\[20\]](#) Galatians 3:22

[\[21\]](#) See also our Neo-Evangelical chart on this topic.

The Council of Trent

*The canons and decrees of the sacred
and oecumenical Council of Trent,*
Ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848)

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[The Complete Text](#)

By Session

[Bull of Indiction](#)

[The First Session](#)

- Decree touching the opening of the Council
- Indiction of the next session

[The Second Session](#)

- Decree touching the manner of living, and other matters to be observed, during the Council
- Indiction of the next session

[The Third Session](#)

- Decree touching the symbol of faith
- Indiction of the next session

[The Fourth Session](#)

- Decree concerning canonical Scriptures
- Decree concerning the edition, and the use, of the sacred books
- Indiction of the next session

[The Fifth Session](#)

- Decree concerning original sin
- Decree on reformation
- Indiction of the next session

[The Sixth Session](#)

- Decree on justification
- On justification
- Decree on reformation
- Indiction of the next session

[The Seventh Session](#)

- Decree on the Sacraments
- Decree on Reformation
- Indiction of the next session
- Bull with faculty to transfer the Council

[The Eighth Session](#)

- Decree concerning the translation of the Council

[The Ninth Session](#)

- Decree for the prorogation of the session

[The Tenth Session](#)

- Decree for the prorogation of the session
- Bull for the resumption of the Council of Trent, under the Sovereign Pontiff, Julius III

[The Eleventh Session](#)

- Decree for resuming the Council
- Indiction of the next session

[The Twelfth Session](#)

[The Thirteenth Session](#)

- Decree concerning the most holy sacrament of the eucharist
- On the most holy sacrament of the eucharist
- Decree on reformation
- Decree for postponing the definition of four articles touching the sacrament of the eucharist, and for giving a safe-conduct to Protestants
- Safe-conduct granted to Protestants

[The Fourteenth Session](#)

- On the most holy sacraments of penance and extreme unction
- On the most holy sacrament of penance
- On the sacrament of extreme unction
- Decree on reformation

[The Fifteenth Session](#)

- Decree for proroguing the session
- Safe-conduct given to the Protestants

[The Sixteenth Session](#)

- Decree for the suspension of the Council
- Bull for the celebration of the Council of Trent, under the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IV

[The Seventeenth Session](#)

- Decree for celebrating the Council
- Indiction of the next session

[The Eighteenth Session](#)

- Decree on the choice of books, and for inviting all men on the public faith to the Council
- Indiction of the next session
- Safe-conduct granted to the German nation
- Extension thereof to other nations

[The Nineteenth Session](#)

- Decree for the prorogation of the session

[The Twentieth Session](#)

- Decree for the prorogation of the session

[The Twenty-First Session](#)

- [Decree on communion under both species, and the communion of infants]
- On communion under both species, and on the communion of infants
- Decree on reformation
- Indiction of the next session

[The Twenty-Second Session](#)

- Doctrine on the sacrifice of the mass
- On the sacrifice of the mass
- Decree concerning the things to be observed, and to be avoided, in the celebration of the mass
- Decree on reformation
- Decree touching the petition for the concession of the chalice
- Indiction of the next session

[The Twenty-Third Session](#)

- The true and catholic doctrine, touching the sacrament of order, decreed and published by the Holy Synod of Trent, in the seventh session, in condemnation of the errors of our time
- On the sacrament of order
- Decree on reformation
- Indiction of the next session

[The Twenty-Fourth Session](#)

- Doctrine on the sacrament of matrimony
- On the sacrament of matrimony
- Decree on the reformation of marriage
- Decree on reformation
- Indiction of the next session

[The Twenty-Fifth Session](#)

- Decree concerning purgatory
- On the invocation, veneration, and relics, or saints, and other sacred images
- On regulars and nuns
- Decree on reformation
- Decree for continuing the session on the following day

- Decree concerning indulgences
- On choice of meats; on fasts, and festival days
- On the index of books; on the catechism, breviary, and missal
- On the place of ambassadors
- On receiving and observing the decrees of the Council
- On reciting, in session, the decrees of the Council under Paul III and Julius III
- On the close of the Council, and on suing for confirmation from Our Most Holy Lord
- Acclamations of the Fathers at the close of the Council
- Confirmation of the Council
- Bull of Our Most Holy Lord Pius IV, by the providence of God, Pope, touching the confirmation of the oecumenical (and) general Council of Trent

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Documentation of Roman Catholic Dogmas on Saving Faith from Official Roman Catholic Sources

The Sources from which these teachings are documented are *The Documents of the Council of Trent, The Documents of Vatican I, The Documents of Vatican II, The Code of Canon Law, Papal Decrees on the Papacy, The Papal Decrees on Mary (Pius IX and Pius XII), The Papal and Conciliar Decrees on Salvation and the Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism and Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma by Ludwig Ott*

The Necessity of Roman Catholic Dogmas for Saving Faith

The Papacy

Mary

Justification and the Sacraments

Grace and Merit

Baptism

The Mass

The Priesthood

Confession and Penance

The Eucharist

The Roman Church and Salvation

The Canon

Purgatory

Penance and Confession

A Biblical and Historical Analysis of the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Penance and Confession

By William Webster

The Council of Trent teaches that Christ instituted the priesthood for two primary functions: to forgive sins and to administer the sacrament of the eucharist. It declares that through confession of sin to a priest, by his absolution and performance of the prescribed penance, an individual can receive forgiveness of sins. The Roman Church teaches that sin requires that satisfaction be made to God and this is achieved through penance and good works, through the enduring of sufferings in purgatory and through indulgences which are authorized by the pope. Along with its teaching on the eucharist, the Roman Catholic teaching on confession and penance hits at the heart of the Reformation debate. It was the indulgence controversy which first fueled it. It began with a criticism of that particular practice and then to a criticism of the theology which was foundational to it and from there to a critique of the whole system of works and merit which had developed throughout the centuries. The controversy, as with the eucharist, centers around the whole issue of the meaning and nature of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that justification, rather than being a judicial declaration of God based on the imputed righteousness of Christ and received by faith, is, in fact, a process which is dependent upon infused grace which can be lost by committing serious sin. Should that happen, forgiveness must be sought and the state of justification regained. Forgiveness for sin is mediated through the Church and the sacrament of Confession and Penance. According to the Church of Rome penitential works are meritorious before God who accepts such works as a payment for the temporal punishment due to sin. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that men can make atonement for their own sins by making satisfaction for them through these works of penance and thereby merit God's mercy and forgiveness and justification. The following are the teachings of the Council of Trent:

Canon IX. If anyone saith, that the sacramental absolution of the priest is not a judicial act, but a bare ministry of pronouncing and declaring sins to be forgiven to him who confesses; provided only he believe himself to be absolved, or (even though) the priest absolve not in

earnest, but in joke; or saith, that the confession of the penitent is not required, in order that the priest may be able to absolve him: let him be anathema.

Canon XII. If any one saith, that God always remits the whole punishment together with the guilt, and that the satisfaction of penitents is no other than the faith whereby they apprehend that Christ has satisfied for them: let him be anathema.

Canon XIII. If any one saith, that the satisfaction for sins, as to their temporal punishment, is nowise made to God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, by the punishments inflicted by him, and patiently borne, or by those enjoined by the priest, nor even by those voluntarily undertaken, as by fastings, prayers, alms—deeds, or by other works also of piety; and that, therefore, the best penance is merely a new life: let him be anathema.

Canon XIV. If any man saith, that the satisfactions, by which penitents redeem their sins through Jesus Christ, are not a worship of God, but traditions of men, which obscure the doctrine of grace, and the true worship of God, and the benefit itself of the death of Christ: let him be anathema.

Note that Trent states that satisfaction is made to God through the works of penance and that through these works men redeem their sins. John Hardon affirms these teachings in these words:

Penance means repentance or satisfaction for sin. If we expect God's forgiveness we must repent. Penance is necessary because we must expiate and make reparation for the punishment which is due our sins...Christ instituted this sacrament to give us a ready and assured means of obtaining remission for the sins committed after baptism...A person must be in a state of grace to merit divine mercy for his venial sins...Satisfaction must be made for sins already forgiven because normally some—and even considerable—temporal punishment is still due, although the guilt has been removed...We make satisfaction for our sins by every good act we perform in a state of grace but especially by prayer, penance and the practice of charity...All prayer merits satisfaction for sin...The patient acceptance of trials or humiliations sent by God is expiatory. Our works of satisfaction are meritorious if they are done while in a state of grace...Sacramental satisfaction is the penitential work imposed by a confessor in the confessional in order to make up for the injury done to God and atone for the temporal punishment due to sin already forgiven. The penitent is obliged to perform the penance imposed by the priest, and deliberate failure to perform a penance imposed for mortal sin is gravely sinful...Sins can also be expiated through indulgences (John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden: Image, 1981, #1320, 1322, 1386, 1392, 1394).

And Ludwig Ott states:

By sacramental satisfaction is understood works of penance which are imposed on the

penitent in atonement for the temporal punishment for sins (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), p. 434).

By the use of the words atonement, expiation, reparation, satisfaction, redeeming sin and merit the Roman Catholic teaching on penance hits right at the heart of the whole issue of the atonement of Jesus Christ. And what the Church is obviously saying by its teaching is that men must supplement the work of atonement done by the Lord Jesus on the Cross by their own works of atonement to satisfy the justice of God and to merit justification and the reward of heaven. But such teaching completely undermines the sufficiency of the atonement of Jesus Christ by adding human works as a supplement to his work. This is a serious departure from the gospel and the teaching of Scripture on the forgiveness of sins. The Church obviously teaches a works salvation which is strictly forbidden in Scripture.

There are a number of facts related to penance and confession which the Church of Rome says can be verified by the constant practice of the Church and the unanimous teaching of the Fathers. Those facts are private confession to a priest known as auricular confession, the repetitive nature of confession and penance for all known sin, the practice of private penance as a satisfaction for sin and finally the necessity for the absolution of a priest.

These teachings of the Roman Church can be traced back many centuries. However, it can also be demonstrated that they are clearly the innovations of a later age which have corrupted the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are contradictory to the Word of God. And, in addition, it can be demonstrated quite conclusively that much of the teaching related to confession and penance, including purgatory and indulgences are a matter of long historical development and were a source of conflicting opinion to as late a period as the 13th century. The historical facts reveal the following broad outlines regarding the development of the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins within the Roman Catholic Church which we will then examine in detail:

- 1) The early Church knew nothing of the doctrine of auricular confession, penance, purgatory or indulgences.
- 2) Confession in the early Church was a public matter that related to grave sin and could be done only once. There was no judicial absolution by a priest.
- 3) At the end of the second and beginning of the third century penances were introduced as a means of gaining forgiveness of sins and the distinction between mortal and venial sins became prominent.
- 4) Purgatory came into Christianity through paganizing and philisophical influences by way of Origen and Gregory the Great gave it dogmatic authority.
- 5) Private confession to a priest did not come into prominence until the 7th or 8th centuries and it completely displaced public confession.

6) The first recorded use of indulgences is dated from the 9th century.

7) There are conflicting opinions among theologians to as late as the 13th century on the exact nature of confession and penance and whether or not confession to a priest is necessary to receive forgiveness of sins.

The Historical Development of Confession and Penance

In the early Church repentance and faith were the two basic conditions of baptism. Initially, repentance carried the idea of a forsaking of sin and the world and self and the giving of oneself wholly to Christ to follow him. The idea of repentance as ‘penance’, that is, as consisting of human works by which one satisfied God’s justice for personal sin was unknown.

The writings of the *Apostolic Fathers*, for example, are full of exhortations to holy living and appeals to the readers to prove the validity of their faith by good works. These writings clearly teach that true saving faith is evidenced in good works and a holy life. But they do not teach that good works are in any way meritorious in salvation. On the contrary, they point to Christ himself as the source of salvation and emphasize repentance, faith, and baptism as the means of appropriating that salvation and of holy living as the natural result and evidence of true conversion. Clement of Rome, for example, clearly states that forgiveness and salvation are gifts of God given completely independent of human works. Clement makes these comments about justification by faith:

All of them therefore were all renowned and magnified, not through themselves or their own works or the righteous actions which they had wrought, but through his will; and therefore we who by his will have been called in Christ Jesus, are not made righteous by ourselves, or by our wisdom or understanding or piety or the deeds which we have wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, by which Almighty God has justified all men from the beginning of the world; to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen (J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, The Epistle of S. Clement to the Corinthians*, 49, 32 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), pp. 34, 26).

Clement renounces any thought of men being able to justify themselves before God and merit his grace on the basis of their own works. Justification, according to Clement, comes by faith in the person of Christ. He presents Christ as the one who has made a substitutionary atonement and his blood is the sole basis upon which men are justified and receive forgiveness, which is appropriated by repentance and faith. A large portion of his letter is very similar to the epistle of James in that he appeals to his readers to walk in holiness before God and in love for their fellow Christians.

Clement’s teaching is a fair summary of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers as a whole. There is no mention in the writings of Ignatius, The Didache, Clement or Polycarp, or the writings of Justin Martyr or Irenaeus of confession of sins to a priest or anyone other than God himself, of penance, purgatory or

indulgences. The whole system of sacramental forgiveness devised by the Roman Church can find no affirmation in these early writings.

The Nature of Confession and Forgiveness

With the Church's teaching that only the sins committed up to the time of baptism were forgiven in coming to Christ, there remains the problem of how sins were to be forgiven after baptism. The Church taught that confession of sin and repentance was necessary to receive forgiveness. But over time what we see is that the biblical idea of repentance is slowly displaced by the concept of penance. This began with the teaching that true repentance will manifest itself in fruit or outward works, and those works became identified as works of satisfaction such as fasting, weeping and praying. At first, the fundamental meaning of repentance as a heart forsaking of sin was preserved in the teaching of the major Fathers, but over time, the true meaning of repentance is lost to the externalizing works of penance, and penance and repentance, for all practical purposes become interchangeable terms.

The first Father to give a detailed description of the process of confession and penance as it developed in the post-apostolic age was Tertullian. The technical term by which this process was identified was *exomologesis*, a general term which embraced both the confession of sin to God as well as the works of penance. The really important aspect of this practice was not the confession so much as the acts of penance. Eventually the word confession or *exomologesis* became almost exclusively identified with penance. And it is clear from the writings of Tertullian that confession was a well established practice in the Church of his day.

Between the second and beginning of the third century, therefore, there is the development of a full blown penitential discipline known as confession or *exomologesis*. Thus, it is clear that confession of sin was practiced in the early Church. But the question is, What was its exact nature? Did it conform to what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about what it calls the sacrament of confession and penance? As one examines the historical documents of the writings of the Fathers it becomes very clear that the practice of the early Church was radically different from the practice and teaching of the Roman Church today as expressed authoritatively by the Council of Trent.

In the early Church confession or *exomologesis* had a very specific meaning which made it distinctively different from the practice of the Church of Rome today. These differences are highlighted by the following points: Confession was done for only a certain type of sin, it was generally public, the works of penance were also strictly a public affair which could only be done once in a person's lifetime, and there was no judicial absolution as is practiced by the Roman Church today.

Karl Keating makes these comments on the practice of confession and penance in the early Church:

Christian writers such as Origen, Cyprian and Aphraates are quite clear in saying confession is to be made to a priest. In fact in their writings the whole process of penance is termed *exhomologesis* which simply means confession. The confession was seen as the

main part of the sacrament (Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), pp. 184-185).

This is a very misleading statement. Keating would have us believe these fathers are endorsing the present Roman Catholic system. But this is not the case. What Keating fails to tell us are the facts mentioned above: *Exomologesis* was done once in a lifetime; it could not be repeated; it was done for very grave sin only; it was public and not private in nature; the priest did not grant absolution; and the main part of the practice was not confession but public penance. The Roman Catholic practice today is very different from the practice of the early church.

Let us examine each of these points historically.

The early Church dealt severely with sin among its members, but this had to do with sins it considered to be very grave such as adultery, fornication, murder, heresy and denying Christ in persecution. Such sins would be dealt with by excommunication. Thus sins were classified according to their gravity, but it was Tertullian in the latter half of the second century who was the first to introduce the distinction of mortal and venial sins. The Church then adopted his teaching and it became standard in the Church.

For those individuals who had committed mortal sin it became necessary, in order to be forgiven and restored to the Church, that they generally publically confess their sins and submit themselves to an extensive penitential discipline of personal humiliation which could only be done one time in one's lifetime. This discipline meant that they would be excluded from communion and would undergo weeping, fasting and other disciplines requiring protracted ascetic and religious exercises for long periods of time.

There would most likely have been some kind of private consultation with the bishop or presbyter in which the individual would admit his sin and the nature of the public penance would be assigned. But the primary idea behind the actual confession of sin was that it was a personal acknowledgment of the sin in prayer to God himself, This is the teaching of Cyprian and he states specifically that that priests did not grant remission of sins but were responsible for consulting with offenders of grave sin and assign the proper penance:

That for brethren who have lapsed, and after saving Baptism have been wounded by the devil, a remedy may by penance be sought: not as if they obtained remission of sins from us, but that through us they may be brought to a knowledge of their offences, and be compelled to give fuller satisfaction to the Lord (*A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: Parker, 1844), *The Epistles of S. Cyprian* 75.4).

By the time of the Council of Nicea this penitential discipline had been systematized into categories of penitents (Canon 11) in which the degree of exclusion from the worship services and the exact nature of the penance was regulated by the class of penitent one was designated:

Concerning those who have fallen without compulsion, without the spoiling of their property, without danger or the like, as happened during the tyranny of Licinius, the Synod declares that, though they have deserved no clemency, they shall be dealt with mercifully. As many as were communicants, if they heartily repent, shall pass three years among the hearers; for seven years they shall be prostrators; and for two years they shall communicate with the people in prayers, but without oblation (Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), Second Series, Volume 14, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, I Nice, Canon 11, p. 24).

Writing in the middle of the fourth century Basil the Great, the bishop of Caesarea, describes in great detail the different classes of penitents and the type and length of penance one must undergo for committing any form of sexual sin, murder or apostasy. The following is but one example of many that are given in his writings:

LVI. The intentional homicide, who has afterwards repented, will be excommunicated from the sacrament for twenty years. The twenty years will be appointed for him as follows: for four he ought to weep, standing outside the door of the house of prayer, beseeching the faithful as they enter in to offer prayer in his behalf, and confessing his own sin. After four years he will be admitted among the hearers, and during five years will go out with them. During seven years he will go out with the kneelers, praying. During four years he will only stand with the faithful, and will not take part in the oblation. On the completion of this period he will be admitted to the sacrament.

LVII. The unintentional homicide will be excluded for ten years from the sacrament. The ten years will be arranged as follows: For two years he will weep; for three years he will continue among the hearers; for four he will be a kneeler; and for one he will only stand. Then he will be admitted to the holy rites.

LVIII. The adulterer will be excluded from the sacrament for fifteen years. During four he will be a weeper, and during five a hearer, during four a kneeler, and for two a stander without communion (Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), Second Series, Volume 8, *Basil: Letters and Select Works*, Letter 217, Canons 56, 57, 58, p. 256).

Basil states that the confession of sin is public and the different stages of the *exomologesis* are described as weepers, hearers, kneelers and standers, which are also public in nature. All of Basil's canons which deal with confession and penance have to do in some form with the grave or mortal sins and Augustine, writing in the fifth century, reveals that the practice of the Church was the same in his day. The public practice of what the Church called confession or *exomologesis* was only done for sins which were categorized as mortal, those being sexual sins (adultery, fornication, perversion), murder and apostasy. And it could only be done once. If an individual, after penance, committed the same grave sins again, there was no forgiveness available through the Church though Augustine teaches that if he truly repented before God and proved it by private penance and good works that he could appeal to the mercy of God.

The lighter sins which Christians commit are not subject to this confession but are dealt with on a personal basis through personal prayer, good works and private penance. These sins were never confessed privately to a priest and absolved by him, but were confessed directly to God. The following are Augustine's comments on the nature of the forgiveness of sins:

When ye have been baptized, hold fast a good life in the commandments of God, that ye may guard your Baptism even unto the end. I do not tell you that ye will live here without sin; but they are venial, without which this life is not. For the sake of all sins was Baptism provided; for the sake of light sins, without which we cannot be, was prayer provided. What hath the Prayer? 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.' Once for all we have washing in Baptism, every day we have washing in prayer. Only, do not commit those things for which ye must needs be separated from Christ's body: which be far from you! For those whom ye have seen doing penance, have committed heinous things, either adulteries or some enormous crimes: for these they do penance. Because if theirs had been light sins, to blot out these daily prayer would suffice. In three ways then are sins remitted in the Church; by Baptism, by prayer, by the greater humility of penance (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume III, St. Augustin, On The Creed 15, 16).

But they who think that all other sins are easily atoned for by alms, yet have no doubt of three being deadly, and such as require to be punished by excommunications, until they have been healed by a greater humility of penance, namely, unchastity, idolatry, murder (*Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (London: Oxford, 1847), St. Augustine, Of Faith and Works 34).

Vice, however, sometimes makes such inroads among men that, even after they have done penance and have been readmitted to the Sacrament of the altar, they commit the same or more grievous sins, yet God makes His sun to rise even on such men and gives His gifts of life and health as lavishly as He did before their fall. And, although the same opportunity of penance is not again granted them in the Church, God does not forget to exercise His patience toward them (*The Fathers of the Church* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University, 1953), Saint Augustine, Letters, Volume III, Letter 153, p. 284-285).

That there was only one repentance available through the Church for grave sins is also affirmed by the writings of The Shepherd of Hermas, Origen, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Ambrose and Pacian and by numerous canons of different councils of the Church. These writings cover the time frame of the immediate post-apostolic age up through the sixth century demonstrating that the practice of the Church for many centuries was very different from that which is decreed by the Council of Trent (A documentation from the writings of these fathers is listed in an Appendix at the end of this article).

In their book which traces the development of penance in the early Church and documents the penitential discipline which developed in later centuries, John McNeill and Helena Gamer make these comments about the nature of confession and penance in the early centuries:

Christianity from the first applied austere standards of behavior, and in the course of its advance in the Graeco–Roman world developed a discipline for the correction of Christians who violated the code. In the first stage this took the form of public confession, made before the assembled congregation. In graver offenses and in cases of impenitence or of public scandal, this discipline was accompanied by a period of exclusion from the fellowship...The word ‘exomologesis’ is used to include both confession and penance which are parts of the same process of public humiliation. There is no suggestion that any other kind of penance is in existence...It is not to be supposed, however, that frequent penance for the grave sins, the customary practice of later centuries, was yet permitted...advocates of public penance in the Middle Ages often cited the patristic literature as evidence that the act of penance may not be repeated (John McNeill and Helena Gamer, *Medieval Hand-Books of Penance* (New York: Octagon, 1965), pp. 4, 8, 14).

The Roman Catholic historian, Charles Hefele, in commenting on the practice of the Novatians to permanently exclude from the Church all who lapsed in a time of persecution, affirms the above conclusions of the practice of confession and penance in the early Church:

The *Cathari* who are here under discussion are no other than the Novatians...who from a spirit of severity wished to exclude for ever from the Church those who had shown weakness during persecution...Their fundamental principle of the perpetual exclusion of the lapsi was in a manner the concrete form of the general principle, brought forward two generations before, that whoever after baptism once fell into mortal sin, should never be received back into the Church. The Catholic Church was herself in those times very much inclined to severity: she granted permission to perform penance only once; whoever fell a second time was for ever excluded (Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1895) Volume I, pp. 410-411).

J.N.D. Kelly in commenting on the historical development of confession and penance summarizes all that has been said and confirms the fact that for the first centuries there existed no sacrament of private confession and priestly absolution:

With the dawn of the third century the rough outlines of a recognized penitential discipline were beginning to take shape. In spite of the ingenious arguments of certain scholars, there are still no signs of a sacrament of private penance (i.e. confession to a priest, followed by absolution and the imposition of a penance) such as Catholic Christendom knows to-day. The system which seems to have existed in the Church at this time, and for centuries afterwards, was wholly public, involving confession, a period of penance and exclusion from communion, and formal absolution and restoration—the whole process being called exomologesis...Indeed, for the lesser sins which even good Christians daily commit and can scarcely avoid, no ecclesiastical censure seems to have been thought necessary; individuals were expected to deal with them themselves by prayer, almsgiving and mutual forgiveness. Public penance was for graver sins; it was, as far as we know,

universal, and was an extremely solemn affair, capable of being undergone only once in a lifetime (J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 216-217).

What the early Church called confession or public penance for grave sin was not initially something that could be done over and over again. And because of its very demanding and humiliating character many people put off the discipline until the end of their lives. However, over time there was a gradual change in this practice so that eventually no matter how often an individual might sin he could seek reconciliation through the presbyter. Just as Augustine complained of the tendency in his day for laxity of some in their attitude towards emphasizing the necessity for true repentance for catechumens, so we find a gradual tendency for a more and more lenient view towards sin and its forgiveness relative to the practice of confession and penance in the Church.

For all practical purposes the Church abandoned in practice the teaching of biblical repentance. Men could now receive forgiveness for the same sins as often as needed no matter how often they sin. There were reactions to this more relaxed attitude and practice as, for example, the third Council of Toledo (A.D. 589) which condemned outright (Canon 11) the practice of frequent confession and penance. This canon states:

In some churches of Spain, disorder in the ministry of penance has gained ground, so that people sin as they like, and again and again ask for reconciliation from the priest. This must no longer happen; but according to the old canons everyone who regrets his offence must be first excluded from communion, and must frequently present himself as a penitent for the laying on of hands when his time of penance is over, then, if it seems good to the bishop, he may again be received to communion; if, however, during his time of penance or afterwards, he falls back into his old sin, he shall be punished according to the stringency of the old canons (Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1895) Volume IV, pp. 419-420).

Hefele reiterates his statement, mentioned above, in explaining what the council of Toledo meant when it referred to a person being punished according to the stringency of the old canons who fell back into grave sin: 'The ancient Church appointed only one single public penance, and, if anyone after penance again fell into a gross sin he remained for ever excommunicated' (Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1895) Volume IV, p. 420).

Such a canon gives clear documentation of the fact that the practice of the Church was changing from what had been the teaching of the Fathers and the practice of the Church for many centuries.

With the introduction of the concept of penance as a vital element of true repentance, we find that gradually the biblical concept of repentance is perverted as it degenerates into a legalistic system of works by which an individual made reparation to God for his own sins. These initially were taught to be the evidences or fruits of true repentance but they eventually became efficacious in their own right.

And along with the teaching that acts of penance can gain forgiveness for post–baptismal sins is the teaching that good works accrue merit before God. This concept was first introduced by Tertullian. He taught that sin after baptism incurs guilt before God which demands satisfaction. He further taught that human works such as fasting, almsgiving etc., render satisfaction to God and merit forgiveness for sins. In addition he taught that good works accrue merit before God. These thoughts were further embellished by his disciple Cyprian and from these two Fathers we have the foundation to the whole system of penance and works which later developed into and is characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church.

The result of this teaching was that the concept of penance soon displaced the biblical meaning of repentance and the two became synonymous terms. That this is the doctrine which is still taught today is seen by these statements of The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism. Please note the reference to penance and repentance as synonyms terms and the teaching on works and merit:

Penance means repentance or satisfaction for sin...Penance is also necessary because we must expiate and make reparation for the punishment which is due for our sins. Satisfaction is remedial by meriting grace from God...We make satisfaction for our sins for every good act we perform in the state of grace, but especially by prayer, penance, and the practice of charity...All prayer merits satisfaction for sin...Our works of satisfaction are meritorious if they are done while in a state of grace and in a spirit of penance...We can make up for sin through the sorrows and trials of life, including the pain of death, or through the purifying penalties in the life beyond. Sin can also be expiated through indulgences (John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden: Image, 1981, #1320, 1322, 1386, 1392, 1394).

The biblical teaching of repentance is the complete antithesis of the Roman Catholic dogma of penance. Repentance means a heart forsaking of sin and turning to Christ for forgiveness by trusting in his finished work. Christ has made a full atonement for sin. He has borne the full wrath of God against sin. Men therefore are called upon to confess their sins directly to God and recognize and appropriate the forgiveness already secured in the death of Christ. Penance, on the other hand, is man's effort to satisfy God for personal sin through one's own works.

Thus we see by the beginning of the third century major teachings which undermine the finished work of Christ and by the addition of human works which must supplement his work. This is a clear perversion of the doctrine of grace for it introduces human works as a supplement to the work of Christ. Over time, Christianity became more and more externalized. Repentance became characterized by outward acts which supposedly made expiation for sin. And coupled with this was the rise of asceticism in which men sought to achieve merit before God by living a life consisting of monastic withdrawal from the world, voluntary poverty, celibacy, and harsh treatment of the body. These works supposedly brought an individual into a higher state of spirituality and enabled him to earn or merit the grace of God and thereby heaven through his good works.

Restoration to the Church

Once the period of public penance had been completed the penitent was reinstated into the full fellowship of the Church and allowed to partake once again of the sacraments. This took place through the laying on of hands in a public ceremony. But this restoration was simply the public declaration that the individual had completed the required penance and was officially reinstated. There was no sacramental absolution which became the practice of the Church many centuries later. That this was a public and declarative act is seen from the following statement from Cyprian:

For whereas in lesser sins sinners do penance for an appointed time, and according to the rules of discipline, come to confession, and by laying on of hands by the Bishop and Clergy, recover the right of communion (*Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: Parker, 1844), The Epistles of S. Cyprian 16.2).

Trent says that there are a number of elements which make up the sacrament of penance which are necessary for the sacrament to be valid. An important element is absolution by the priest and then the performance of the works of satisfaction. But an interesting historical point about the teaching of Trent on penance is that related to priestly absolution, for this practice was not found in the early Church. Absolution was not a judicial act but simply the bishop declaring that an individual had fulfilled his obligation to the Church and was restored to fellowship. McNeill and Gainer point out that the practice of penance was during the first centuries was not considered to be a sacrament and that it would be wrong to apply the teachings which evolved in the medieval Church on the Church of the early centuries:

To employ the word 'absolution,' ...in connection with the reconciliation of penitents at this period would be misleading if it involved a recognition of the medieval application of the term. Absolution was granted not at the beginning of penance but at its close, and it is not to be distinguished from reconciliation or readmission to communion. No formularies of absolution are preserved; and all information on the point indicates the use of a prayer, not of a declarative form (John McNeill and Helena Gamer, *Medieval Hand-Books of Penance* (New York: Octagon, 1965), pp. 16-17).

That auricular confession and judicial absolution granted by the priest to absolve men from their sins was not the practice of the Church from the very beginning as asserted by the Council of Trent can be seen in the fact that there was no general agreement in the Church about the nature and necessity of such an important issue to as late a period as the 13th century. It was a matter of debate among among Scholastic theologians, most of whom demonstrate that there were conflicting opinions even among the Church Fathers. Philip Schaff emphasizes these points:

At the close of the twelfth century a complete change was made in the doctrine of penance. The theory of the early Church, elaborated by Tertullian and other Church fathers, was that penance is efficient to remove sins committed after baptism, and that it consisted in certain penitential exercises such as prayer and alms. The first elements added by the medieval system were that confession to the priest and absolution by the priest are necessary conditions for pardon. Peter the Lombard did not make mediation of the priest a

requirement, but declared that confession to God was sufficient. In his time, he says, there was no agreement on three aspects of penance: first, whether contrition for sin was not all that was necessary for its remission; second, whether confession to the priest was essential; and third, whether confession to a layman was insufficient. The opinions handed down from the Fathers, he asserts, were diverse, if not antagonistic.

Alexander of Hales marks a new era in the history of the doctrine. He was the first of the Schoolmen to answer clearly all these questions, and to him more than any other single theologian does the Catholic Church owe its doctrine of penance...Beginning with Alexander of Hales, the Schoolmen vindicate the positions that confession, to be efficacious, must be made to the priest, and that absolution by the priest is an essential condition of the sinner's pardon. Bonaventura, after devoting much time to the question, 'Whether it is sufficient to confess our sins to God,' answered it in the negative. At greater length than Peter the Lombard had done, he quoted the Fathers to show that there was no unanimity among them on the question (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910), Volume 5, pp.731-732, 735-737).

From these quotes it is very apparent that major changes eventually take place in the overall teaching and practice of penance. It obviously continued to be consistently practised and became inculcated in the Church to such a degree that, in the Middle Ages, it developed into a very regulated affair in which certain punishments were prescribed for specific sins. These were written down in penitential books which document for us the penitential practice of the Church beginning at about the seventh century. It is with these books that we find the documentation of a clear change in the practice of penance in the Church, which the council of Toledo protested against, but which eventually culminated in the practices sanctioned by the Council of Trent. They reveal a radical change from the practice of the early Church. McNeill and Gamer make these comments on the nature of that change:

The public procedure, in which the penitent in his humiliation implores the intercession of 'all the brethren,' was later to be replaced by a private and secret rite involving confession to and absolution by a priestly confessor and entailing acts of penance that were often mainly or wholly private. In this transformation of penance the penitential books were to play an important role.

When all the similarities between the penitentials and earlier writings on penance have been recognized, it is still evident that the emergence of the series marks a new departure. Not only do the penitentials indicate a new method of penitential discipline; they also constitute a means hitherto unemployed of guiding confessors in their task. From the inception of the use of these manuals arises a new era in the history of penance.

According to the penitentials penance is to be administered privately at every stage; confession is to be made in secret to a qualified person, who is regularly, of course, a priest...Penance was...now in general wholly private in the sense of being dissociated from the assembled church.

There was no public *exomologesis* and no corporate knowledge of the matter on the part of the congregation. Before the reactionary council of Toledo forbade the iteration of penance (589)...a number of penitential books had been written and put to use. They assert the principle, with scant courtesy to the Church fathers, that penance may take place whenever there are sins to be repented. The penance of the penitentials is available as often as it is sought. It is designed as the habitually repeated practice of all the faithful, not as the resort of penitents who had been exceptionally wicked (John McNeill and Helena Gamer, *Medieval Hand-Books of Penance* (New York: Octagon, 1965), pp. 23, 28-29).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms the above historical facts related to the change that took place in the practice of penance:

During the first centuries the reconciliation of Christians who had committed particularly grave sins after their Baptism (for example, idolatry, murder, or adultery) was tied to a very rigorous discipline, according to which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years, before receiving reconciliation. To this “order of penitents” (which concerned only certain grave sins), one was only rarely admitted and in certain regions only once in a lifetime. During the seventh century Irish missionaries, inspired by the Eastern monastic tradition, took to continental Europe the “private” practice of penance, which does not require public and prolonged completion of penitential works before reconciliation with the Church. From that time on, the sacrament has been performed in secret between penitent and priest. This new practice envisioned the possibility of repetition and so opened the way to a regular frequenting of this sacrament. It allowed the forgiveness of grave sins and venial sins to be integrated into one sacramental celebration. In its main lines this is the form of penance that the Church has practiced down to our day’ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Rome: Urbi et Orbi, 1994), #1447).

The Council of Trent makes the comment that from the very beginning the Church had practiced secret confession to a priest and it anathematizes anyone who denies this. But such an assertion is simply unsupported by the historical evidence. Once again the Roman Church makes dogmatic assertions which, like so many of its teaching on Tradition, the papacy and Mary, can find no historical support.

It is quite obvious from these statements and the evidence that has been presented that confession and penance for many centuries in the Church was very different from the sacrament which the Council of Trent dogmatically asserts is binding on all believers and necessary for salvation. Its assertion that the form of the sacrament which it officially sanctioned had been the universal practice of the Church from the very beginning is totally false. It was not until the beginning of the eighth century that private confession began to displace the public form and it did not become a universal practice until the Middle Ages.

Such is the history of the development of the Roman Catholic sacrament of penance and confession in its teaching on forgiveness of sins. And closely aligned with this development is also the development of the

Church's teachings on indulgences and purgatory.

The Biblical Teaching Forgiveness and Repentance

The apostles taught that if men were to come into the experience of salvation they must repent and believe. The word repent or repentance is the Greek word metanoia and it fundamentally means a change of mind. In the biblical usage as it applies to the gospel it means a fundamental change of mind and heart towards God, Christ, sin and the world and such a change is evidenced in the fruit of a changed life which is characterized by a turning to Christ in personal commitment and a forsaking of the world and sin to be his follower. True repentance is always evidenced by a life that is lived unto the will of God, a life of holiness. Such a life, however, is not a life of perfection. And though the Scriptures exhort believers to a life of holiness, they also recognize that there will be a continuing need to deal with sin. And Scripture gives very clear instructions on the nature of receiving forgiveness of sins after one has become a Christian and is a member of the Church.

The Roman Catholic Church claims that Christ established the priesthood for the specific purpose of dealing with men's sins through private confession and absolution and the assigning of penances to satisfy God's justice. These claims are given biblical sanction by the following reasoning. We are told that Jesus had authority to forgive sins. This is clearly stated by him in Matthew 9:6. We are then told that he has vested his followers with this same authority in that he has given his disciples and those who follow them as priests the authority to bind and loose (Mt. 16:19, 18:18; Jn. 20:23) and he stated that as the Father had sent him into the world so he was sending them into the world (Jn. 17:18, 20:21). And so, the logic runs, since Jesus was sent by the Father to forgive sins, he has granted his followers this same authority through the powers of binding and loosing and of exercising a ministry of reconciliation through the sacrament of confession and penance (2 Cor. 5:18-20). The Church also appeals to James 5:16 and 1 John 1:9 which do indeed command Christians to confess their sins.

However, such logic is flawed for it rests on a false foundation and false interpretation of Scripture. First of all, Scripture teaches that Christ did not establish a New Testament priesthood but that the whole order of priesthood has been completely eliminated since Christ himself has assumed that position. The authoritative office in the New Testament is now that of an elder or pastor (presbuteros) who functions as an overseer (episkopos), and not that of a priest.

Secondly, the major passages that relate to binding and loosing, rather than teaching that Jesus was granting authority to the apostles as priests to hear confession and grant absolution have to do with a declarative authority to proclaim the gospel and to offer the free forgiveness of sins to men if they will come to him in repentance and faith. This is the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20) which has been given to the apostles and the followers of Christ. It is true that Jesus has authority to forgive sins and he exercised that prerogative as a personal right. But when he states that he is sending the apostles into the world as the Father sent him into the world we must make a clear distinction between what Christ can do as God and what he has authorised his followers to do in his name.

For example, Christ also came to make atonement for sin and was sent by the Father for that purpose. But we do not claim that the apostles likewise have been given authority to make an atonement for sin. Christ was also sent by the Father to proclaim the gospel and free forgiveness of sins on the conditions of repentance and faith (Lk.4:18; Mk. 1: 15). It is in this sense that the apostles are sent into the world as Christ was sent into the world. The authority granted the apostles is strictly related to the proclamation of the gospel. Only God can forgive sins and the apostles have the authority granted them to proclaim that on the basis of the work of Christ men can expect God to grant them forgiveness (Mt. 28:18-20).

And, thirdly, the Roman Catholic logic is flawed because the passages which call for personal confession have nothing to do with priestly confession and absolution. Men are called upon to confess their sins directly to God, through Christ alone as their priest, and to rest in the finished work of Christ as a payment for those sins. Men can go directly to God in confession of sin and receive forgiveness directly from him without going through a priest and without doing penances to make satisfaction for their sins. This is clearly stated in Hebrews 10:19-22:

Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

This should be obvious as well from an analysis of the priesthood of the Old Testament. There is not the slightest hint that these priests heard the people's sins and judicially absolved them from their sins. Men confessed their sins directly to God on the basis of the atoning sacrifice which was slain in their place. God has never ordained that confession of sin be made to a priest and the performance of penance to receive forgiveness.

Part of true confession of sin is the important element of repentance which means a turning away from and a forsaking of sin. But this is a very different thing from the idea of penance as personal works by which a man earns forgiveness for sins by satisfying the wrath and justice of God. This is not taught in Scripture. Forgiveness is based solely on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work in making a complete atonement for all sin. To teach that a man can earn forgiveness through the works of penance is to pervert the gospel of grace by teaching that man's work must somehow supplement the work of Christ. Scripture does teach that men are to bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance (Acts 26:20; Mt. 3:8) but what the Word of God means is that the life must demonstrate true repentance by the fruits of holiness. This is not a call to penance as an attempt to earn God's forgiveness.

We are also enjoined to confess our sins to one another (Js. 5:16; Mt. 5:23-24). This means that we are to confess to a brother or sister where we have sinned against them and be reconciled with them and also to open our hearts to fellow believers that they might pray for us and we for them.

The Scriptures teach us that Christians are to deal very seriously with sin for the Church is a holy body

called out by God from the world to be a distinctly holy people. Sin is not to be tolerated and accepted, it is to be confessed and repented of. This is, of course, sanctioned very clearly in the New Testament. Jesus and Paul both teach that the Church leadership is to confront sin and deal with it in the lives of those who are guilty. For example, Jesus gives the following specific instructions for dealing with sin in the church:

And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Mt. 18:15-18).

The objective in confronting such an individual is to bring repentance and restoration in the person's relationship with God. And Jesus says that the Church has the power to bind and loose. If the individual in question refuses to repent then Jesus says that person is to be excommunicated from the fellowship of the Church and be treated as an unbeliever. And the judgment that is rendered by the Church will be likewise rendered in heaven.

The Church here is simply passing a judgment upon an individual which has already been passed in heaven. Binding and loosing here is a public matter that is strictly disciplinary in nature and has nothing to do with private confession to a priest who supposedly has the judicial power to absolve men from sin or conversely, to withhold such absolution and thereby to bind men in sin. Paul in 1 Corinthians 5 also states that Church members whose lives are characterized by certain sins are to be excommunicated from the fellowship of the Church. But when they have demonstrated true repentance by forsaking their sin they are to be restored to the Church. And he says absolutely nothing about restoration being conditioned on the performance of penance. The only condition is a genuine forsaking of sin which is the true meaning of repentance in Scripture. To teach that repentance means penance is a perversion of the biblical meaning of the word.

Thus, the biblical passages used by the Church of Rome as a foundation for its teaching on confession and penance do not support its claims. It has misinterpreted those Scriptures. We know this to be the case because the New Testament Church did not apply the Scriptures of binding and loosing to auricular confession and priestly absolution, but rather to the preaching of the gospel.

Appendix

Quotations From Writings Of The Early Fathers From The Second To The Fifth Centuries Demonstrating That There Was

Only One Repentance Available For Grave Sins And It Was This Which Was Known As Confession.

The Shepherd of Hermas

‘Sir,’ say I, ‘if a man who has a wife that is faithful in the Lord detect in her adultery, doth the husband sin in living with her?’ ‘So long as he is ignorant,’ saith he, ‘he sinneth not; but if the husband know of her sin, and the wife repent not, but continue in her fornication, and her husband live with her, he makes himself responsible for her sin and an accomplice in her adultery.’ ‘What then, Sir,’ say I, ‘shall the husband do, if the wife continue in this case?’ ‘Let him divorce her,’ saith he, ‘and let the husband abide alone: but if after divorcing his wife he shall marry another, he likewise committeth adultery.’ ‘If then, Sir,’ say I, ‘after the wife is divorced, she repent and desire to return to her own husband, shall she not be received?’ ‘Certainly,’ saith he, ‘if the husband receiveth her not, he sinneth and bringeth great sin upon himself; nay, one who hath sinned and repented must be received, yet not often; for there is but one repentance for the servants of God (J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker), *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Mandate 4.1).

Clement of Alexandria

He, then, who has received the forgiveness of sins ought to sin no more. For, in addition to the first and only repentance from sins (this is from the previous sins in the first and heathen life - I mean that in ignorance), there is forth-with proposed to those who have been called, the repentance which cleanses the seat of the soul from transgressions, that faith may be established. And the Lord, knowing the heart, and foreknowing the future, foresaw both the fickleness of man and the craft and subtlety of the devil from the first, from the beginning; how that, envying man for the forgiveness of sins, he would present to the servants of God certain causes of sins; skillfully working mischief, that they might fall together with himself.

Accordingly, being very merciful, He has vouchsafed, in the case of those who, though in faith, fall into any transgression, a second repentance; so that should anyone be tempted after his calling, overcome by force and fraud, he may receive a repentance not to be repented of. ‘For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.’ But continual and successive repentings for sins differ nothing from the case of those who have not believed at all, except only in their consciousness that they do sin. And I know not which of the two is worst, whether the case of a man who sins knowingly, or of one who, after having repented of his sins, transgresses again. For in the process of proof sin appears on each side, - the

sin which in its commission is condemned by the worker of iniquity, and that of the man who, foreseeing what is about to be done, yet puts his hand to it as a wickedness. And he who perchance gratifies himself in anger and pleasure gratifies himself in he knows what; and he who repenting of that in which he gratified himself, by rushing again into pleasure, is near neighbour to him who has sinned wilfully at first. For one who does again that of which he has repented and condemning what he does, performs it willingly.

He, then, who from among the Gentiles and from that old life has betaken himself to faith, has obtained forgiveness of sins once. But he who has sinned after this, on his repentance, though he obtain pardon, ought to fear, as one no longer washed to the forgiveness of sins. For not only must the idols which he formerly held as gods, but the works also of his former life, be abandoned by him who has been 'born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,' but in the Spirit; which consists in repenting by not giving way to the same fault. For frequent repentance and readiness to change easily from want of training, is the practice of sin again. The frequent asking of forgiveness, then, for those things in which we often transgress, is the semblance of repentance, not repentance itself. (Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1956) Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, Book 11, Chapter XIII.

Origen

In graver sins, the place of repentance is granted once only (Homily 15 in Leviticus 25) (As quoted in *A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (London: Oxford, 1842), Volume One, Tertullian, p. 362).

Tertullian

So far, O Lord Christ, may it happen unto Thy servants to speak and to hear concerning the rule of repentance, as it behoveth not the hearers to sin: or let them henceforth know nothing of repentance, nothing need it. I am loath to subjoin any mention of the second (yea and the last) hope, lest, in treating of a benefit of repentance yet in reserve, I seem to shew that there is yet room for sinning. Far be it from any one so to understand me, as though, because a door is still open to repentance, it is therefore open to sin; and as though the abundance of Divine mercy gave a licence to human recklessness. Let no one therefore be the less, because God is the more, good; sinning as oft as he is forgiven. Otherwise he shall find an end of escaping, when he hath not found an end of sinning. We have escaped once: suffice it to have exposed ourselves thus far to dangers, though we think that we shall again escape. men for the most part, when delivered from shipwreck, renounce thenceforward both the ship and the sea, and by remembering the danger, honour the good gift of God, that is, their own preservation. I commend their fear, I love their modesty: they would not a second time be a burden on the Divine mercy: they are afraid of seeming to tread under foot that which they have already obtained: they shun, with assuredly a

righteous care, to make trial a second time of that which they have once learned to fear. The end therefore of their venturousness is the proof of their fear: but fear in man is honour unto God.

But yet that most stubborn Adversary never suffereth his malice to rest, but then rageth the most when he perceiveth that man is wholly set free; then kindleth the most, when he is being quenched. Grieve and wail he needs must, when forgiveness of sins hath been granted, because so many of the works of death in man are destroyed, and so many records of his former condemnation effaced. He grieveth, because he that was a sinner, but now a servant of Christ, shall judge him and his angels. Wherefore he watcheth, he attacketh, he besetteth him, if by any means he may strike his eyes by carnal lust, or ensnare his mind by worldly allurements, or overthrow his faith by fear of earthly power, or turn him aside from the sure way by perverse traditions. He is not wanting in offences, nor inn temptations.

Wherefore God seeing beforehand these his poisons, although the door of pardon be shut, and the bar of Baptism interposed, hath yet suffered some opening to remain. He hath placed in the porch a second repentance, which may open unto them that knock, but now for once only, because now for the second time, and never again, because at the last time in vain.

But the mind is is not to be forthwith cut down and overwhelmed with despair, if any one become a debtor for a second repentance. Let him indeed be loath to repent again: let him be loath to peril himself again, but to be again delivered. Let none be ashamed. If the sickness be renewed, the medicine must be renewed. Thou wilt show thyself thankful to the Lord, if thou refusest not that which the Lord offereth thee. Thou hast offended, but thou mayest yet be reconciled. Thou hast One to Whom thou mayest make satisfaction, and Him willing to be satisfied. If thou doubtst this, consider what the Spirit saith to the Churches. To the Ephesians He imputeth rthat they had left their first love: those of Thyatira He reproacheth with fornication and the eating of things sacrificed unto idols: the Sardicans He accuseth oof works not perfect: those of Pergamos He reproveth as teachers of perverse doctrines: those of Laodicea He upbraideth as trusting in riches: and yet He admonisheth all these to repent, and that even with threatenings. But He would not threaten the impenitent, if He would not pardon the impenitent.

The more straightened then the work of this second and only remaining repentance, the more laborious its proof , so that it may not be only borne upon the conscience within, but may also be exhibited by some outward act. This act, which is better and more commonly expressed by a Greek word (exomologesis), is Confession, whereby we acknowledge our sin to the Lord, not because He knoweth it not, but inasmuch as by confession satisfaction is ordered, from confession repentance springeth, by repentance God is appeased (*A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (London: Oxford, 1842), Tertullian, *Of Repentance* 7,8,9, pp. 361-364).

Ambrose

Deservedly are they blamed who think that they often do penance, for they are wanton against Christ. For if they went through their penance in truth, they would not think that it could be repeated again; for as there is but one baptism, so there is but one course of penance, so far as the outward practice goes for we must repent of our daily faults, but this latter has to do with lighter faults, the former with such as are graver (Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), Volume X, Ambrose, *Concerning Repentance*, Book II.10).

Augustine

When ye have been baptized, hold fast a good life in the commandments of God, that ye may guard your Baptism even unto the end. I do not tell you that ye will live here without sin; but they are venial, without which this life is not. For the sake of all sins was Baptism provided; for the sake of fight sins, without which we cannot be, was prayer provided. What hath the Prayer? 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.' Once for all we have washing in Baptism, every day we have washing in prayer. Only, do not commit those things for which ye must needs be separated from Christ's body: which be far from you! For those whom ye have seen doing penance, have committed heinous things, either adulteries or some enormous crimes: for these they do penance. Because if theirs had been light sins, to blot out these daily prayer would suffice. In three ways then are sins remitted in the Church; by Baptism, by prayer, by the greater humility of penance (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume III, St. Augustin, *On The Creed* 15, 16).

But they who think that all other sins are easily atoned for by alms, yet have no doubt of three being deadly, and such as require to be punished by excommunications, until they have been healed by a greater humility of penance, namely, unchastity, idolatry, murder (*Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (London: Oxford, 1847), St. Augustine, *Of Faith and Works* 34).

Vice, however, sometimes makes such inroads among men that, even after they have done penance and have been readmitted to the Sacrament of the altar, they commit the same or more greivous sins, yet God makes His sun to rise even on such men and gives His gifts of life and health as lavishly as He did before their fall. And, although the same opportunity of penance is not again granted them in the Church, God does not forget to exercise His patience toward them (*The Fathers of the Church* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University, 1953), Saint Augustine, *Letters*, Volume III, Letter 153, p. 284-285).

Pacian

After the Passion of the Lord, the Apostles having considered and treated of all things, delivered an Epistle to be sent to such of the Gentiles as had believed; of which letter the import was as follows: The Apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words; so below, It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. This is the whole conclusion of the New Testament. The Holy Spirit, despised in those many ordinances, hath left these injunctions to us on condition of hazard of our lives. Other sins are cured by the compensation of better works: but these three crimes we must dread, as the breath of some basilisk, as a cup of poison, as a deadly arrow: for they know how, not to corrupt only, but to cut off the soul. Wherefore niggardliness shall be redeemed by liberality, slander be compensated by satisfaction, moroseness by pleasantness, harshness by gentleness, levity by gravity, perverse ways by honesty; and so in all cases which are well amended by their contraries. But what shall the despiser of God do? What the blood-stained? What remedy shall there be for the fornicator? Shall either he be able to appease the Lord who hath abandoned Him? Or he to preserve his own blood, who hath shed another's? Or he to restore the temple of God, who hath violated it by fornication? These, my brethren, are capital, these are mortal, crimes.

What then? Must we die? Many too have in mind fallen into these sins. Many are guilty of blood; many, sold unto idols; many, adulterers. I say moreover that not hands are involved in murder, but every design also which hath driven the soul of another to death; and that not only those who have burnt incense on profane altars, but altogether every lust that wandereih beyond the marriage couch and the lawful embrace, is bound by the sentence of death. Whosoever shall have done these things after believing, shall not see the face of God. But those who are guilty of so great crimes are in despair.

Are we then to perish?... Shall we die in our sins? And what wilt thou do, the priest? By what gains wilt thou repay so many losses to the Church? Receive the remedy, if ye begin to despair, if ye acknowledge yourselves miserable, if ye fear. Whoso is too confident is unworthy (saith the Lord) will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word...In one and two is the Church, and in the Church is Christ. And he therefore, who hides not his sins from the brethren, assisted by the tears of the Church, is absolved by Christ.

To weep, namely, in sight of the Church, to mourn our lost life in sordid garb, to fast, to pray. to fall prostrate; to refuse luxury, if one invite to the bath; to say, if one bid to a feast, 'These things for the happy! I have sinned against the Lord, and am in danger of perishing eternally. What have I to do with feasting who have injured the Lord?' and besides this, to hold the poor man by the hand, to entreat the prayers of the widows, to fall down before

the Priests, to ask the entreaties of the interceding Church, to assay all sooner than perish...If ye draw back from confession, remember hell, which confession shall extinguish for you.

Remember, brethren, there is no confession in the grave; nor can penance be assigned, when the season for penitence is exhausted. Hasten whilst ye are alive, whilst ye are on the way with your adversary. Lo! we fear the fires of this world, and we shrink back from the iron claws of tortures. Compare with them the hands of ever-during torturers, and the forked flames which never die!

By the faith of the Church, by mine own anxiety, by the souls of all in common, I adjure you and intreat you, brethren, not to be ashamed in this work, not to be slack to seize, as soon as ye may, the proffered remedies of salvation; to bring your souls down by mourning, to clothe the body with sackcloth, to sprinkle it with ashes, to macerate yourselves by fasting, to wear yourselves with sorrow, to gain the aid of the prayers of many. in proportion as ye have not been sparing in your own chastisement will God spare you. For He is merciful and long-suffering, of great pity, and repenteth Him against the evil He hath inflicted. Behold! I promise, I engage, if ye return to your Father with true satisfaction, erring no more, adding nothing to former sins, saying also some humble and mournful words, as, Father we have sinned before Thee, and are no more worthy to be called Thy sons; straightway shall leave you both that filthy herd, and the unseemly food of husks. Straightway on your return shall the robe be put upon you, and the ring adorn you, and your Father's embrace again receive you (*A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: Parker, 1844), *The Extant Works of St. Pacian, Bishop of Barcelona, Treatise of Exhortation Unto Penance* 9, 11, 15, 20, 24).

THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY

A Roman Catholic Dogma Originating with Heretics and Condemned as Heretical by 2 Popes in the 5th and 6th Centuries.

By William Webster

The Roman Catholic doctrine of the assumption of Mary teaches that she was assumed body and soul into heaven either without dying or shortly after death. This extraordinary claim was only officially declared to be a dogma of Roman Catholic faith in 1950, though it had been believed by many for hundreds of years. To dispute this doctrine, according to Rome's teaching, would result in the loss of salvation. The official teaching of the Assumption comes from the decree *Munificentissimus Deus* by pope Pius XII:

All these proofs and considerations of the holy Fathers and the theologians are based upon the Sacred Writings as their ultimate foundation. These set the loving Mother of God as it were before our very eyes as most intimately joined to her divine Son and as always sharing His lot. Consequently it seems impossible to think of her, the one who conceived Christ, brought Him forth, nursed Him with her milk, held Him in her arms, and clasped Him to her breast, as being apart from Him in body, even though not in soul, after this earthly life. Since our Redeemer is the Son of Mary, He could not do otherwise, as the perfect observer of God's law, than to honour, not only His eternal Father, but also His most beloved Mother. And, since it was within His power to grant her this great honour, to preserve her from the corruption of the tomb, we must believe that He really acted in this way.

Hence the revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined in a hidden way with Jesus Christ in one and the same decree of predestination, immaculate in her conception, a most perfect virgin in her divine motherhood, the noble associate of the divine Redeemer who has won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences, finally obtained, as the supreme culmination of her privileges, that she should be preserved free from the corruption of the tomb and that, like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages.

For which reason, after we have poured forth prayers of supplication again and again to God, and have invoked the light of the Spirit of Truth, for the glory of Almighty God Who has lavished His special affection upon the Virgin Mary, for the honour of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages and the Victor over sin and death, for the increase of the glory of that same august Mother, and for the joy and exultation of the entire Church; by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our own

authority, We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.

Hence, if anyone, which God forbid, should dare wilfully to deny or call into doubt that which we have defined, let him know that he has fallen away completely from the divine and Catholic faith...It is forbidden to any man to change this, Our declaration, pronouncement, and definition or, by rash attempt, to oppose and counter it. If any man should presume to make such an attempt, let him know that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul (*Munificentissimus Deus, Selected Document of Pope Pius XII* (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference), 38, 40, 44-45, 47).

This is truly an amazing dogma, yet there is no Scriptural proof for it, and even the Roman Catholic writer Eamon Duffy concedes that, ‘there is, clearly, no historical evidence whatever for it ...’ (Eamon Duffy, *What Catholics Believe About Mary* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1989), p. 17). For centuries in the early Church there is complete silence regarding Mary’s end. The first mention of it is by Epiphanius in 377 A.D. and he specifically states that no one knows what actually happened to Mary. He lived near Palestine and if there were, in fact, a tradition in the Church generally believed and taught he would have affirmed it. But he clearly states that ‘her end no one knows.’ These are his words:

But if some think us mistaken, let them search the Scriptures. They will not find Mary’s death; they will not find whether she died or did not die; they will not find whether she was buried or was not buried ... Scripture is absolutely silent [on the end of Mary] ... For my own part, I do not dare to speak, but I keep my own thoughts and I practice silence ... The fact is, Scripture has outstripped the human mind and left [this matter] uncertain ... Did she die, we do not know ... Either the holy Virgin died and was buried ... Or she was killed ... Or she remained alive, since nothing is impossible with God and He can do whatever He desires; for her end no-one knows.’ (Epiphanius, *Panarion, Haer.* 78.10-11, 23. Cited by Juniper Carol, O.F.M. ed., *Mariology*, Vol. II (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1957), pp. 139-40).

In addition to Epiphanius, there is Jerome who also lived in Palestine and does not report any tradition of an assumption. Isidore of Seville, in the seventh century, echoes Epiphanius by saying that no one has any information at all about Mary’s death. The patristic testimony is therefore non-existent on this subject. Even Roman Catholic historians readily admit this fact:

In these conditions we shall not ask patristic thought—as some theologians still do today under one form or another—to transmit to us, with respect to the Assumption, a truth received as such in the beginning and faithfully communicated to subsequent ages. Such an attitude would not fit the facts...Patristic thought has not, in this instance, played the role of a sheer instrument of transmission’ (Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., ed., *Mariology*, Vol. I (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1955), p. 154).

How then did this teaching come to have such prominence in the Church that eventually led it to be declared an issue of dogma in 1950? The first Church father to affirm explicitly the assumption of Mary

in the West was Gregory of Tours in 590 A.D. But the basis for his teaching was not the tradition of the Church but his acceptance of an apocryphal Gospel known as the *Transitus Beatae Mariae* which we first hear of at the end of the fifth century and which was spuriously attributed to Melito of Sardis. There were many versions of this literature which developed over time and which were found throughout the East and West but they all originated from one source. Mariologist, Juniper Carol, gives the following historical summary of the *Transitus* literature:

An intriguing corpus of literature on the final lot of Mary is formed by the apocryphal *Transitus Mariae*. The genesis of these accounts is shrouded in history's mist. They apparently originated before the close of the fifth century, perhaps in Egypt, perhaps in Syria, in consequence of the stimulus given Marian devotion by the definition of the divine Maternity at Ephesus. The period of proliferation is the sixth century. At least a score of *Transitus* accounts are extant, in Coptic, Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Armenian. Not all are prototypes, for many are simply variations on more ancient models (Juniper Carol, O.F.M. ed., *Mariology*, Vol. II (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1957), p. 144).

Thus, the *Transitus* literature is the real source of the teaching of the assumption of Mary and Roman Catholic authorities admit this fact. Juniper Carol, for example, writes: 'The first express witness in the West to a genuine assumption comes to us in an apocryphal Gospel, the [Transitus Beatae Mariae of Pseudo-Melito](#)' (Juniper Carol, O.F.M. ed., *Mariology*, Vol. I (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1957), p. 149). Roman Catholic theologian, Ludwig Ott, likewise affirms these facts when he says:

The idea of the bodily assumption of Mary is first expressed in certain transitus-narratives of the fifth and sixth centuries. Even though these are apocryphal they bear witness to the faith of the generation in which they were written despite their legendary clothing. The first Church author to speak of the bodily ascension of Mary, in association with an apocryphal transitus B.M.V., is St. Gregory of Tours' (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), pp. 209-210).

Juniper Carol explicitly states that the *Transitus* literature is a complete fabrication which should be rejected by any serious historian:

The account of Pseudo-Melito, like the rest of the *Transitus* literature, is admittedly valueless as history, as an historical report of Mary's death and corporeal assumption; under that aspect the historian is justified in dismissing it with a critical distaste (Juniper Carol, O.F.M. ed., *Mariology*, Vol. I (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1957), p. 150).

It was partially through these writings that teachers in the East and West began to embrace and promote the teaching. But it still took several centuries for it to become generally accepted. The earliest extant discourse on the feast of the Dormition affirms that the assumption of Mary comes from the East at the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century. The *Transitus* literature is highly significant as the origin of the assumption teaching and it is important that we understand the nature of these writings. The Roman Catholic Church would have us believe that this apocryphal work expressed an existing,

common belief among the faithful with respect to Mary and that the Holy Spirit used it to bring more generally to the Church's awareness the truth of Mary's assumption. The historical evidence would suggest otherwise. The truth is that, as with the teaching of the immaculate conception, the Roman Church has embraced and is responsible for promoting teachings which originated, not with the faithful, but with heretical writings which were officially condemned by the early Church. History proves that when the *Transitus* teaching originated the Church regarded it as heresy. In 494 to 496 A.D. Pope Gelasius issued a decree entitled [*Decretum de Libris Canonicis Ecclesiasticis et Apocryphis*](#). This decree officially set forth the writings which were considered to be canonical and those which were apocryphal and were to be rejected. He gives a list of apocryphal writings and makes the following statement regarding them:

The remaining writings which have been compiled or been recognised by heretics or schismatics the Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church does not in any way receive; of these we have thought it right to cite below some which have been handed down and which are to be avoided by catholics (New Testament Apocrypha, Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed. (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), p. 38).

In the list of apocryphal writings which are to be rejected Gelasius signifies the following work: *Liber qui apellatur Transitus, id est Assumptio Sanctae Mariae, Apocryphus* (Pope Gelasius 1, Epistle 42, Migne Series, M.P.L. vol. 59, Col. 162). This specifically means the *Transitus* writing of the assumption of Mary. At the end of the decree he states that this and all the other listed literature is heretical and that their authors and teachings and all who adhere to them are condemned and placed under eternal anathema which is indissoluble. And he places the *Transitus* literature in the same category as the heretics and writings of Arius, Simon Magus, Marcion, Apollinaris, Valentinus and Pelagius. These are his comments. I have provided two translations from authoritative sources:

These and the like, what Simon Magus, Nicolaus, Cerinthus, Marcion, Basilides, Ebion, Paul of Samosata, Photinus and Bonosus, who suffered from similar error, also Montanus with his detestable followers, Apollinaris, Valentinus the Manichaeon, Faustus the African, Sabellius, Arius, Macedonius, Eunomius, Novatus, Sabbatius, Calistus, Donatus, Eustasius, Iovianus, Pelagius, Iulianus of ERclanum, Caelestius, Maximian, Priscillian from Spain, Nestorius of Constantinople, Maximus the Cynic, Lampetius, Dioscorus, Eutyches, Peter and the other Peter, of whom one besmirched Alexandria and the other Antioch, Acacius of Constantinople with his associates, and what also all disciples of heresy and of the heretics and schismatics, whose names we have scarcely preserved, have taught or compiled, we acknowledge is to be not merely rejected but excluded from the whole Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church and with its authors and the adherents of its authors to be damned in the inextricable shackles of anathema forever (New Testament Apocrypha, Wilhelm Schneemelcher, Ed., (Cambridge: James Clark, 1991).

These and [writings] similar to these, which ... all the heresiarchs and their disciples, or the schismatics have taught or written ... we confess have not only been rejected but also banished from the whole Roman and Apostolic Church and with their authors and

followers of their authors have been condemned forever under the indissoluble bond of anathema (Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (London: Herder, 1954), pp. 69-70).

Pope Gelasius explicitly condemns the authors as well as their writings and the teachings which they promote and all who follow them. And significantly, this entire decree and its condemnation was reaffirmed by [Pope Hormisdas](#) in the sixth century around A.D. 520. (Migne Vol. 62. Col. 537-542). These facts prove that the early Church viewed the assumption teaching, not as a legitimate expression of the pious belief of the faithful but as a heresy worthy of condemnation. There are those who question the authority of the so-called Gelasian decree on historical grounds saying that it is spuriously attributed to Gelasius. However, the Roman Catholic authorities Denzinger, Charles Joseph Hefele, W. A. Jurgens and the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* all affirm that the decree derives from Pope Gelasius, and Pope Nicholas I in a letter to the bishops of Gaul (c. 865 A.D.) officially quotes from this decree and attributes its authorship to Gelasius. (See Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (London: Herder, 1954), pp. 66-69; W. A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. I (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1970), p. 404; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VII (Washington D.C.: Catholic University, 1967), p. 434; Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), vol. IV, pp. 43-44). While the Gelasian decree may be questioned by some, the decree of Pope Hormisdas reaffirming the Gelasian decree in the early sixth century has not been questioned.

Prior to the seventh and eighth centuries there is complete patristic silence on the doctrine of the Assumption. But gradually, through the influence of numerous forgeries which were believed to be genuine, coupled with the misguided enthusiasm of popular devotion, the doctrine gained a foothold in the Church. The *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* gives the following history of the doctrine:

In the 3rd or 4th century there was composed a book, embodying the Gnostic and Collyridian traditions as to the death of Mary, called *De Transitu Virginis Mariae Liber*. This book exists still and may be found in the *Bibliotheca Patrum Maxima* (tom. ii. pt. ii. p. 212)...The *Liber Transitu Mariae* contains already the whole of the story of the Assumption. But down to the end of the 5th century this story was regarded by the Church as a Gnostic or Collyridian fable, and the *Liber de Transitu* was condemned as heretical by the *Decretum de Libris Canonicis Ecclesiasticis et Apocryphis*, attributed to pope Gelasius, A.D. 494. How then did it pass across the borders and establish itself within the church, so as to have a festival appointed to commemorate it? In the following manner: In the sixth century a great change passed over the sentiments and the theology of the church in reference to the Theotokos—an unintended but very noticeable result of the Nestorian controversies, which in maintaining the true doctrine of the Incarnation incidentally gave strong impulse to what became the worship of Mary. In consequence of this change of sentiment, during the 6th and 7th centuries (or later):

- 1) The *Liber de Transitu*, though classed by Gelasius with the known productions of heretics came to be attributed by one...to Melito, an orthodox bishop of Sardis, in the 2nd century, and by another to St. John the Apostle.
- 2) A letter suggesting the possibility of the Assumption was written and

attributed to St. Jerome (*ad Paulam et Eustochium de Assumptione B. Virginis*, *Op.* tom. v. p. 82, Paris, 1706).

3) A treatise to prove it not impossible was composed and attributed to St. Augustine (*Op.* tom. vi. p. 1142, ed. Migne).

4) Two sermons supporting the belief were written and attributed to St. Athanasius (*Op.* tom. ii. pp. 393, 416, ed., Ben. Paris, 1698).

5) An insertion was made in Eusebius's Chronicle that 'in the year 48 Mary the Virgin was taken up into heaven, as some wrote that they had had it revealed to them.'

Thus the authority of the names of St. John, of Melito, of Athanasius, of Eusebius, of Augustine, of Jerome was obtained for the belief by a series of forgeries readily accepted because in accordance with the sentiment of the day, and the Gnostic legend was attributed to orthodox writers who did not entertain it. But this was not all, for there is the clearest evidence (1) that no one within the church taught it for six centuries, and (2) that those who did first teach it within the church borrowed it directly from the book condemned by pope Gelasius as heretical. For the *first* person within the church who held and taught it was Juvenal, bishop of Jerusalem (if a homily attributed to John Damascene containing a quotation from from 'the Eutymiac history'...be for the moment considered genuine), who (according to this statement) on Marcian and Pulcheria's sending to him for information as to St. Mary's sepulchre, replied to them by narrating a shortened version of the *de Transitu* legend as 'a most ancient and true tradition.' The *second* person within the church who taught it (or the *first*, if the homily attributed to John Damascene relating the above tale of Juvenal be spurious, as it almost certainly is) was Gregory of Tours, A.D. 590.

The Abbe Migne points out in a note that 'what Gregory here relates of the death of the Blessed Virgin and its attendant circumstances he undoubtedly drew...from Pseudo-Melito's *Liber de Transitu B. Mariae*, which is classed among apocryphal books by pope Gelasius.' He adds that this account, with the circumstances related by Gregory, were soon afterwards introduced into the Gallican Liturgy...It is demonstrable that the Gnostic legend passed into the church through Gregory or Juvenal, and so became an accepted tradition within it...Pope Benedict XIV says naively that 'the most ancient Fathers of the Primitive Church are silent as to the bodily assumption of the Blesseed Virgin, but the fathers of the middle and latest ages, both Greeks and Latins, relate it in the distinctest terms' (*De Fest. Assumpt.* apud. Migne, *Theol. Curs. Compl.* tom. xxvi. p. 144, Paris, 1842). It was under the shadow of the names of Gregory of Tours and of these 'fathers of the middle and latest ages, Greek and Latin,' that the *De Transitu* legend became accepted as catholic tradition.

The history, therefore, of the belief which this festival was instituted to commemorate is as follows: It was first taught in the 3rd or 4th century as part of the Gnostic legend of St. Mary's death, and it was regarded by the church as a Gnostic and Collyridian fable down to the end of the 5th century. It was brought into the church in the 6th, 7th, and 8th centuries, partly by a series of successful forgeries, partly by the adoption of the Gnostic legend on part of the accredited teachers, writers, and liturgists. And a festival in commemoration of the event, thus came to be believed, was instituted in the East at the

beginning of the 7th, in the West at the beginning of the 9th century (*A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, William Smith and Samuel Cheetham, Ed., (Hartford: J.B. Burr, 1880), pp. 1142-1143).

R.P.C. Hanson gives the following summation of the teaching of the Assumption, emphasizing the lack of patristic and Scriptural support for it and affirming that it originated not with the Church but with Gnosticism:

This dogma has no serious connection with the Bible at all, and its defenders scarcely pretend that it has. It cannot honestly be said to have any solid ground in patristic theology either, because it is first known among Catholic Christians in even its crudest form only at the beginning of the fifth century, and then among Copts in Egypt whose associations with Gnostic heresy are suspiciously strong; indeed it can be shown to be a doctrine which manifestly had its origin among Gnostic heretics. The only argument by which it is defended is that if the Church has at any time believed it and does now believe it, then it must be orthodox, whatever its origins, because the final standard of orthodoxy is what the Church believes. The fact that this belief is presumably supposed to have some basis on historical fact analogous to the belief of all Christians in the resurrection of our Lord makes its registration as a dogma *de fide* more bewilderingly incomprehensible, for it is wholly devoid of any historical evidence to support it. In short, the latest example of the Roman Catholic theory of doctrinal development appears to be a *reductio ad absurdum* expressly designed to discredit the whole structure (R.P.C. Hanson, *The Bible as a Norm of Faith* (University of Durham, 1963), Inaugural Lecture of the Lightfoot Professor of Divinity delivered in the Appleby Lecture Theatre on 12 March, 1963, p. 14).

Pius XII, in his decree in 1950, declared the Assumption teaching to be a dogma revealed by God. But the basis upon which he justifies this assertion is not that of Scripture or patristic testimony but of speculative theology. He concludes that because it seems reasonable and just that God should follow a certain course of action with respect to the person of Mary, and because he has the power, that he has in fact done so. And, therefore, we must believe that he really acted in this way. Tertullian dealt with similar reasoning from certain men in his own day who sought to bolster heretical teachings with the logic that nothing was impossible with God. His words stand as a much needed rebuke to the Roman Church of our day in its misguided teachings about Mary:

But if we choose to apply this principle so extravagantly and harshly in our capricious imaginations, we may then make out God to have done anything we please, on the ground that it was not impossible for Him to do it. We must not, however, because He is able to do all things, suppose that He has actually done what He has not done. But we must inquire whether He has really done it ... It will be your duty, however, to adduce your proofs out of the Scriptures as plainly as we do...(Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), Vol. III, Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, ch. X and XI, p. 605).

Tertullian says that we can know if God has done something by validating it from Scripture. Not to be able to do so invalidates any claim that a teaching has been revealed by God. This comes back again to

the patristic principle of *sola scriptura*, a principle universally adhered to in the early Church. But one which has been repudiated by the Roman Church and which has resulted in its embracing and promoting teachings, such as the assumption of Mary, which were never taught in the early Church and which have no Scriptural backing.

The only grounds the Roman Catholic faithful have for believing in the teaching of the assumption is that a supposedly 'infallible' Church declares it. But given the above facts the claim of infallibility is shown to be completely groundless. How can a Church which is supposedly infallible promote teachings which the early Church condemned as heretical? Whereas an early papal decree anathematized those who believed the teaching of an apocryphal Gospel, now papal decrees condemn those who disbelieve it. The conclusion has to be that teachings such as Mary's assumption are the teachings and traditions of men, not the revelation of God.

The Relationship of Faith to Works

The Place of Sanctification in Salvation

A Study of Romans 6, 7 and 8

By William Webster

In the Book of Romans we find a systematic presentation of the gospel. In the first chapter the apostle Paul makes this introductory statement regarding it: 'The gospel is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes' (Rom. 1:16). What Paul is saying is that when an individual hears that message and responds in true repentance and faith and is united to the Lord Jesus Christ, it results in a radical transformation of heart and life. It not only results in deliverance from sin's guilt and hell (Romans 1-5) but also from sin's power and dominion resulting in a life of sanctification (Romans 6-8).

This is a truth the evangelical church of our day desperately needs to hear for all too often in its teaching on the gospel evangelical preachers and teachers separate faith and works. They claim that the Reformation teaching of faith alone (*sola fide*) means that salvation does not involve repentance from sin or the works of sanctification. But such a claim is completely misguided. The [Reformers](#) never separated faith from works. They unanimously taught that sanctification—the works of holiness and love—will always be produced by saving faith and that works are the evidence of a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Martin Luther is representative of the Reformers when he writes:

We do not then reject good works; nay, we embrace them and teach them in the highest degree. It is not on their own account that we condemn them, but on account of this impious addition to them and the preverse notion of seeking justification from them. It is not from works that we are set free by the faith of Christ, but from belief in works, that is from foolishly presuming to seek justification through

works. Faith redeems our consciences, makes them upright, and preserves them, since by it we recognise the truth that justification does not depend on our works, although good works neither can nor ought to be absent...(*Concerning Christian Liberty*. Found in *Luther's Primary Works* (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 1896), Henry Wace and C.A. Buchheim Ed., , pp. 275-277, 288).

The popular evangelical teaching on *sola fide* or faith alone is generally not representative of the teaching of the Reformation. It is in fact a tragic departure from it. But what is worse is the fact that it is a departure from the teaching of Scripture. It is unbiblical because the Christ who justifies also sanctifies. Hebrews 2:11 states: 'For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father.' The Scriptural teaching is that sanctification and justification are essential aspects of the overall work of salvation. The two cannot be separated from one another though they are two distinct and separate works. This is a truth that is emphasized very forcefully in Paul's Epistle to the Romans. There are two major errors that Paul deals with in this letter. The first is legalism and the second is antinomianism. Legalism is the teaching that one can contribute to the attaining of salvation through the merit of personal or sacramental works. Antinomianism, on the other hand, is the teaching that works are not a part of salvation at all. They are desirable but they are not necessary. Both of these teachings are heresies.

The big question relative to the gosepl is the Law. What is the relationship of the Law to salvation? Paul clearly spells this out for us in Romans. On the one hand, in Romans chapters 1 to 5, he explains the truth of justification in which he unambiguously states that this aspect of salvation is given as a gift completely apart from the works of man. And yet he also emphasizes that while works as merit are completely eliminated, works as fruit are not. In Romans 6, 7 and 8 Paul explains the essential aspect of sanctification in the overall scheme of salvation.

Romans 6

In Romans 6:1 Paul begins with this statement: 'What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?' Why does Paul ask such a question?

The reason is that a charge had been levelled against him by his legalist opponents that his teaching of justification by faith alone apart from the works of the Law produces antinomianism, a license to sin. But Paul repudiates such a notion. ‘God forbid, may it never be!’, says Paul. You don’t understand what a Christian is or the nature of salvation if you can even suggest such a thing. Salvation in Christ delivers us from sin, not only its guilt and the eternal consequences in hell, but also from its power and dominion. We are eternally set free from the Law, we are no longer ‘under it’, but we are ‘under grace’ (Rom. 6:14). But what this means is that we are not under the Law in the sense of being under it as a standard of condemnation. That does not mean we are set free from the obligation for obedience. Quite the opposite. In Christ, the Christian is now changed and empowered to obey the Law of God. We are delivered from the dominion of sin through our union with Jesus Christ so that we walk in newness of life—we become new creations and the slaves of righteousness. This is why Paul so emphatically says, May it never be that we could go on living in sin. And then he goes on to explain in detail why this is so. Paul says:

How can we who died to sin still live in it? (Rom. 6:2)

There is a miracle that takes place within a person when he experiences salvation. As Paul states in verse 2 that person dies to sin and then he goes on to explain in more detail the nature of that miracle in verses 3 to 7 and why it is impossible for a person who becomes united to Jesus Christ to live a life dominated by sin:

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin (Romans 6:3-7).

Paul says here that individuals who have been united to Jesus Christ have died to sin, they have been resurrected from spiritual death to a new life, and they share in the resurrection life and power of Jesus Christ. In Romans 7:4 Paul speaks further of the spiritual union of Christians with Christ. They are joined to him with the result being the fruit of obedience:

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God (Rom. 7:4).

The believer in Christ has died to sin, its bondage has been broken, and he is set free and made alive unto God. As a consequence of this miracle of transformation, the believer now has the power and ability to obey God. This is why Paul exhorts the Roman Christians in verse 12-14:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace (Rom. 6:12-14).

They are to obey God and to use the members of their body as instruments of righteousness. Paul emphatically states that sin shall not be master over a true Christian for he is now in the realm of grace and grace infallibly reigns in righteousness in a person's life. In the remainder of Romans 6 Paul reemphasizes the nature of the radical change that takes place in the life of any one who has experienced salvation in Christ. He has become a slave of Christ and, as a result, a slave of righteousness. The believer has a new master. Where he used to be a slave of sin with the result being death, he has now obeyed the gospel from the heart and has become one with God, delivered from the bondage and power of sin, and has received a new life characterized by power and life and obedience. There is a complete change of heart. Where he used to delight in sin, the believer now finds such a lifestyle to be shameful:

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. (Romans 6:17-21).

This overall truth that Paul is emphasizing in Romans 6 is summed up by him in verse 22 when he says:

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit (fruit), resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life (Rom. 6:22).

It is important to note here how he characterizes the relationship with God—that spiritual union with him—that delivers from sin and results in sanctification and eternal life. He says they are ‘set free from sin’ by becoming ‘enslaved to God.’ The word enslaved here means a total commitment and surrender of the life to Christ as Lord to be his servant. The person becomes a slave of God in that Christ becomes the Lord of his life. Christ becomes master. It is the same commitment that Jesus himself had in his relationship with his Father (Phil 2:5-8). This is further amplified in the [lordship](#) article on this web page. Apart from this commitment there is no deliverance from sin, no fruit of sanctification and no eternal life, because there is no union with Christ. The process of sanctification begins with the consecration of sanctification. So where this union has taken place, and there is an enslavement to Christ, there will be the fruit of sanctification in that life as well as the ultimate result of eternal life. There is a transformed life that manifests itself in a life of sanctification or, if you will,

obedience to the will of God.

Romans 8

In Romans 8 Paul goes on to amplify this thought of a transformed life by expressing it in terms of a new law to which the believer is subject in Christ. This is what Paul calls the law of the Spirit of life which has delivered the believer from another law that held him in bondage, what he calls the law of sin and death:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Rom. 8:1-2).

Paul then goes on to contrast two types of people. There are those he describes as being ‘in the flesh and who walk according to the flesh’ and those who are ‘in the Spirit and who walk according to the Spirit’:

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:3-8).

How are we to understand what Paul means by those who are ‘in the flesh’ and those who are ‘in the Spirit’? It is not uncommon to hear certain teachers interpret Paul’s reference to those who are ‘in the flesh’ as being a reference to carnal Christians. These are believers who supposedly have never learned to walk in the Spirit. Is that what Paul means here? The answer is an unequivocal no, because

Paul himself goes on to explain what he means in verse 9. He says:

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him (Romans 8:9).

Paul explains here that to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to be ‘in the Spirit.’ To be ‘in the flesh’ is to be devoid of the Spirit because the Holy Spirit does not dwell in that individual. It is a description of an unregenerate state, of a lost man. Therefore, Paul is describing the contrast between a Christian and a non-Christian. Those who are ‘in the Spirit’ express this new law of life by obeying the Law of God. They have the ability to obey because they have the power to obey from the indwelling Spirit, and their experience is one of life and peace. Those on the other hand who are ‘in the flesh’, who are devoid of the Spirit, have no power to obey the Law of God. Paul says in Romans 8:7 that they do not subject themselves to the Law of God because they are not even able to do so. The greek word used here for *able* in verse 7 is *dunamis* which means power. They have no power to obey. And therefore they live in accordance with the sinful desires of the flesh. They are slaves of the flesh and of sin and therefore their experience is one of powerlessness and death.

Paul continues to emphasize in Romans 8:12-14 the fact that the proof that an individual is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and is united to Christ and is son of God is the fact that he puts to death the evil deeds of the body by the power of the Spirit. Such a person he says will live. But he warns that those who live according to the flesh will die, which means they will perish eternally. They are not the sons of God:

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Romans 8:12-14).

So in Romans 6 and 8 Paul is giving an absolute contrast between the Christian and the non-Christian. The Christian is a sanctified person who has experienced a radical transformation of life. He is no longer under the Law but under grace. He is no longer in the flesh but is now in the Spirit. And he is no longer in bondage to sin and unable to obey the Law of God because he has no power. He has been set free from the power of sin and he now has the power to be subject to the Law and to obey its commands. As Paul says in Romans 6, he is a slave of righteousness (Rom. 6:18). He no longer experiences death and despair but life and peace. That is the contrast given by Paul between those who are in the flesh, the unsaved, and those who are in the Spirit, the saved.

And this teaching corresponds with the overall teaching of the rest of the New Testament. It testifies to the fact that salvation and conversion results in a radical transformation of the heart and life of an individual. So radical that it is described as nothing less than a new creation:

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Cor. 5:17).

The believer's life is infused with a power that was never there before, so that whether it be in living the Christian life or in ministry, the Christian is able to live by and is energized by the POWER of God. The gospel is the POWER of God to salvation. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians he said:

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

Why could Paul say that the gospel had been attended with the power of God? Because he goes on to say:

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

The Holy Spirit in all his power invaded the lives of the Thessalonians and they were converted, their lives were transformed, and now they serve the true and living God. They have become the servants of God. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, says that they used to be dead in sin and lived according to the desires of the flesh. But now he says this is not the case. They have come to know Christ. They have been made alive together with him and created in him for good works:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:1-10).

He exhorts the Philippians to ‘work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure’ (Philippians 2:12-13). They have the ability to work—to do the will of God—because God’s power energizes them, and God himself, by his Spirit, indwells them. Paul further emphasizes this truth in Phillipians 4:13 when he makes this positive statement about himself:

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

Pual says, I can do the will of God, no matter what it is, because the power that

resurrected Christ from the dead is operative in my life. I am a new creation with a new life.

This does not mean that Paul is saying that he lives a perfect life or that the Christian is perfect; far from it! Scripture does not teach perfection this side of heaven. The Christian still sins. He struggles against sin. he hates it. But it does mean that the overall bent of his life is that of obedience and righteousness. He hungers and thirsts for righteousness, not sin. The apostle John says: ‘And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments’ (1 John 2:3-4), that is, by obedient lives. But then he also says: ‘My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous’ (1 John 2:1). He is obviously not teaching sinless perfection when he states that we know we have truly come to know God when our lives are characterized by obedience. But then he goes on to say: ‘No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God’ (1 Jn. 3:9). John is saying the same thing here that Paul says in Romans 6:2: ‘How shall we who have died to sin still live in it?’ Both Paul and John affirm the truth that it is impossible for a true Christian to continue to LIVE in sin because of the miracle that has occurred in his life. He is born of God and indwelt by the Spirit. He is a completely new creation with a new law operative in his life—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus—which has set him free from the law of sin and death. And this is why the Scriptures are emphatic in teaching that a saved man, a true Christian, will always give evidence to that fact in living a life of holiness:

Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself (James 2:17).

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:11-14).

And He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven (Mt. 7:21).

We cannot separate works from faith and be true to the teaching of Scripture. Saving faith always results in a life of holiness and obedience because the Christ who justifies also sanctifies, and his omnipotence transforms our lives and empowers them for obedience. According to Scripture, when a man is united to Christ, he is simultaneously justified and sanctified and he begins to manifest the process of sanctification:

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30).

Romans 7

Well what about Romans 7? How are we to understand the teaching of this chapter in light of what we have seen is Paul's teaching in Romans 6 and 8, and of the overall teaching of Scripture in general with respect to the whole issue of sanctification? Romans 7 is not an easy passage to understand, but if we keep the overall context of Romans 6 and 8 in mind, since these are the context for this chapter, we will be able to understand the main truth embodied in this passage.

After dealing in Romans 6 with the charge of antinomianism by the legalists, Paul returns in chapter 7 to the theme of the purpose of the Law of God and the whole issue of legalism. His purpose is to establish the point that legalism is bankrupt because of the nature of man. The only way an individual can bear the fruit of righteousness is to go through a radical change in relationship to the Law and be united to the person of Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In the first three

verses of Romans 7, in the illustration of the marriage relationship, Paul states that a true Christian has died to the Law and its condemnation in Christ. Legally, the believer in Christ is justified from the condemnation of the Law and is set free from its requirement for perfect obedience. The believer has died to the Law and its condemnation because Christ perfectly fulfilled its demands. He is no longer under the Law, married to the Law, he is under Christ. Not only that, he is also joined to Christ so that he might now bear fruit for God:

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God (Rom. 7:4).

Fruit is the main issue in this chapter and it has to do with righteousness or obedience to the Law. So verse 4 sets the theme for the entire chapter and then in the next two verses (5 and 6) Paul gives an overview of the subject he will be discussing. He defines part of the purpose of the Law and gives a contrast between the Law in relation to an unregenerate man and then in relation to a saved man, a man who is born again and in the Spirit. In verse 5 Paul gives a description of the unregenerate man and in verse 6 of the regenerate. In verse 5 Paul says:

For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death (Rom. 7:5).

The main characteristic of this person's life is that he is 'in the flesh.' This is his state of being. His life is characterized by disobedience, the fruit is not righteousness but death and the Law of God actually incites him to sin. It arouses sin in him. Thus, rather than being able to obey it, he actually continually disobeys it. This goes back to Paul's statement in Romans 3 and 5 where he speaks of the purpose of the Law for the unsaved man. In Romans 3:20 Paul says that it is impossible for anyone to be justified by the Law because through the Law comes the knowledge of sin: 'Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin' (Rom.

3:20). And then in Romans 5:20 Paul says: ‘And the Law came in that the transgression might increase.’ He states the principle again here in Romans 7:5 and then amplifies this principle in personal terms in Romans 7:7-25 in the remainder of the chapter. In other words, verses 7 through 25 are a further explanation and elaboration of the general principle laid down in verse 5. The entire chapter is an illustration of what he is presenting in general terms in Romans 7:5.

In contrast to the principle enunciated in verse 5 of the person who is ‘in the flesh’, is that which found in verse 6 which describes the person who is ‘in the Spirit’:

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:6).

Here Paul speaks of the Christian as one who serves God in the newness of the power of the Holy Spirit. And Paul further amplifies the teaching of this verse beginning with Romans 8:1 and going through verse 17 where he speaks about the new law of the Spirit being effected in the life of the believer setting him free from the law of the flesh, and of sin and death, and enabling him to obey the Law of God and to walk in obedience and righteousness.

So Paul begins Romans 7 with a contrast between two kinds of people—those who are in the flesh, and those who are in the Spirit. Those who are in the flesh, when confronted with the Law of God find they cannot obey it, in fact, they sin more. Those, however, who are in the Spirit bear the fruit of righteousness in a sanctified life through obedience to the Law.

Let’s look for a moment at Romans 7:7-25, the expanded explanation of his statement in verse 5. This passage gives insight into how the Law brings an unconverted man under conviction of sin and brings him to see his need for Christ. It demonstrates the utter fallacy of legalism, the thinking that man is capable through obedience to the Law to attain to a righteousness that will bring

acceptance with God and result in life.

Paul begins this section by answering an objection that was raised to his teaching that the Law actually incites and arouses sin. In verse 7 He says: ‘What shall we say then? Is the Law sin?’ His legalist opponents have said, ‘Well, Paul, if what you say is true, that the Law actually incites a sinner to sin more, you are in effect saying that the Law is sinful. After all, it brings about a sinful result, according to you.’ Paul’s response is an unqualified denial of such an assertion:

May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet’ (Rom. 7:7).

God forbid, says Paul. The Law is good because it reveals God’s standard of righteousness and the meaning of sin. There is nothing wrong with the Law. He says in Romans 7:12 that it is ‘holy and righteous and good.’ The problem says Paul is not with the Law. The problem is with man. So in this passage Paul will endeavor to demonstrate three major purposes of the Law of God:

- 1) To define the nature of righteousness
- 2) To define the nature of sin and to reveal to a man his innate sinfulness and corruption and bondage to sin. In other words, to bring conviction of sin.
- 3) An finally, to point him to the Lord Jesus Christ as the deliverer from sin—its guilt and its bondage.

Paul had a very high view of himself before he truly understood himself or the true purpose of the Law. In verse 10 he says that initially his attitude towards the Law was that through it he would be able to find life: ‘And this commandment which was to result in life.’ In other words, Paul was a legalist. He sincerely believed he could keep the Law. But he goes on to say that he was in for a very rude awakening. Rather than experience obedience and life, he experienced disobedience and death and a complete shattering of his idealism:

I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I

would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet'. But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me (Romans 7:7-10).

The Law he says produced in him coveting of every kind. He knew the standard. The Law says clearly, Thou shalt not covet. But when he sought to obey the commandment he found that he was unable to do so and that the Law actually became a catalyst to sin. But this is precisely what it was supposed to do, to reveal to him his sinful nature:

Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful (Romans 7:13).

What Paul is saying here is that the Law was used to bring him to the realization that he was a hopeless, helpless sinner. The Holy Spirit is using the Law to reveal to Paul his true condition and terrible need. The fact that he is a slave of sin. There is nothing wrong with the Law, it is good and perfect and holy. And Paul could say this in his unconverted state. He could delight in the Law of God in his mind. So Paul comes to the realization that the Law, by nature, is spiritual but he is not. He says:

For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin (Romans 7:14).

To keep the Law one must have a spiritual nature, but Paul comes to the conclusion that he is 'of the flesh, sold into bondage to sin.' This is the same phrase used in Romans 7:5 and Romans 8 to describe an unconverted man. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in him. When he says he is in bondage to sin, he is

coupling this with being in the flesh which is the condition of those who are unconverted. A converted man, as we have seen, is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit and he is set free from bondage to sin. Paul comes to the conclusion that he is a sinner, a slave of sin. How does he come to this conviction? It is wrought in him by painful experience. The optimistic and polyanna view he had about the Law and his own ability is completely shattered in light of his actual practice. His mind has been illuminated by the Holy Spirit to see the innate goodness of the Law and he sincerely desires to obey it. As he says in verses 15 to 23, he wishes to do good, but he says that in his experience he continually practices unrighteousness. He finds that he has no power or ability to do what he knows is right and good:

For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members...So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin
(Romans 7:15-23, 25).

Paul finds that he cannot subject himself to the Law of God. He is not able to do so. His is a slave of sin and his practice is one of continual disobedience and his experience is one of death:

Who will set me free from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:24).

This is precisely the description given of the unconverted man in the first verses of Romans 8. And it is completely contrary to Paul's own testimony in his converted state as he gives testimony to it in his letter to the Philippians:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil 4:13).

So Paul comes to the realization that there is something fundamentally wrong with him. He is a prisoner of the law of sin, a slave of sin:

I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members (Romans 7:22-23).

Paul is not upset here with the fact that he has to struggle against sin, that he is not perfect in his performance. He is upset with the fact that there is no performance at all. There is no ability, no power, no obedience. He is in bondage, a prisoner of sin. And this realization and experience leads him to self despair and finally to cry out for deliverance:

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? (Romans 7:24).

He needs deliverance, and of course, this is precisely what the gospel offers in Jesus Christ and that is the wonderful conclusion Paul comes to. In answer to the question, Who will deliver me, Paul exclaims:

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:25).

The Law has done its work through the ministry of the Holy Spirit to be a tutor to bring Paul to Christ as it says in Galatians 3:24:

Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24).

The Law has revealed Paul's sinfulness to him, it has brought a deep conviction of sin and has been used to point him to Christ as the one who can deliver him from the guilt and power of sin. And this is what he finds to be true in Christ, a twofold deliverance from the condemnation due to sin and from sin's power:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Romans 8:1-2).

In Romans 7 Paul is describing in personal and practical terms the function of the Law in bringing a sinner to conviction of sin and salvation in Christ. He is describing a man under the influence of the Holy Spirit whose mind has been enlightened to the goodness and righteousness of the Law but who has not come into the deep realization of his own sinfulness and of his own bankruptcy before a holy God. This is why, on the one hand, he can say that he delights in the Law of God in his mind, but in his practical experience he experiences a complete inability to obey it. This is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit using the Law of God to reveal to a man his need for salvation.

CONCLUSION

Salvation in Christ always results in a life of holiness and obedience. It produces works. We are justified by faith alone completely apart from works through union with Jesus Christ. But that union produces holiness of life because the individual is raised from the dead, he is a new creation, born again of the Spirit. He is delivered from bondage to sin and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and becomes a partaker of the power of God that raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead which energizes him and enables him to obey God. There is no salvation apart from sanctification. The apostle John is unequivocal in asserting this point:

And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked (1 Jn. 2:3-6).

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother (1 Jn. 3:4-10).

Jesus is a Savior from sin: from its guilt, its consequences, its state, its power and its dominion. He is Lord and Savior. According to Scripture, sanctification is an integral part of the overall work of salvation in a person's life. And the call of the gospel is for men and women to receive Christ as Lord and Savior through repentance and faith that they might be delivered from sin and be brought into a personal relationship with the living God that they might experience the power of God to fulfil the purpose for their creation: to glorify his name by worshipping, loving, serving, and obeying him both now and throughout eternity.

How is it with you? Is there evidence in your life that you truly belong to Jesus Christ. Have you experienced the transformation of life that Scripture says **MUST** be there as proof of your relationship with Jesus Christ. Are you being sanctified? Is your life characterized by obedience to the word of God? Without sanctification there is no justification, because there is no relationship with the one who justifies, for the one who justifies also sanctifies.

The Roman Catholic Teaching on Salvation and Justification

by William Webster

Roman Catholic theology does not embrace the interpretation of salvation and justification as that presented by Scripture and the Protestant Reformers. The Roman Church does teach that we are justified by grace through faith on account of Christ. What is missing, however, is the word *alone*. By omitting this word the Roman Church redefines grace, faith and justification in a way that undermines and invalidates the teaching of Scripture. This will become clear as we examine the specific definitions given these terms by the official Magisterium of the Church of Rome.

The Roman View of the Work of Christ

Rome says that Christ made an atonement for sin, meriting the grace by which a person is justified but that the work of Christ is not the exclusive cause of an individual's justification and salvation. Ludwig Ott makes this statement:

Christ's redemptive activity finds its apogee in the death of sacrifice on the cross. On this account it is by excellence but not exclusively the efficient cause of our redemption....No one can be just to whom the merits of Christ's passion have not been communicated. It is a fundamental doctrine of St. Paul that salvation can be acquired only by the grace merited by Christ (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), pp. 185, 190).

According to the Church of Rome, Christ did not accomplish a full, finished and completed salvation in his work of atonement. His death on the cross did not deal with the full penalty of man's sin. It merited grace for man which is then channeled to the individual through the Roman Catholic Church and its sacraments. This grace then enables man to do works of righteousness in order to merit justification and eternal life. Robert Sungenis expresses the Roman Catholic perspective in these words:

What did Christ's suffering and death actually accomplish that allowed the Father to provide the human race with salvation? Did Christ take within himself the sin and guilt of mankind and suffer the specific punishment for that sin and guilt, as Protestants contend? The answer is no...Christ did not take upon himself the entire punishment required of man for sin. Rather, Scripture teaches only that Christ became a 'propitiation,' a 'sin offering,' or a 'sacrifice' for sins...Essentially, this means that Christ, because he was guiltless, sin-free and in favor with God, could offer himself up

as a means of persuading God to relent of his angry wrath against the sins of mankind. Sin destroys God's creation. God, who is a passionate and sensitive being, is angry against man for harming the creation. Anger against sin shows the personal side of God, for sin is a personal offense against him. We must not picture God as an unemotional courtroom judge who is personally unharmed by the sin of the offender brought before him. God is personally offended by sin and thus he needs to be personally appeased in order to offer a personal forgiveness. In keeping with his divine principles, his personal nature, and the magnitude of the sins of man, the only thing that God would allow to appease him was the suffering and death of the sinless representative of mankind, namely, Christ (Robert Sungenis, *Not By Faith Alone* (Santa Barbara: Queenship, 1997), pp. 107-108).

What Sungenis is saying is that Christ's death merely appeased God's anger against man. He persuades God to relent of his anger and to offer a means of forgiveness to man. And that means is through man's own works cooperating with the grace of God. Grace is not the activity of God in Christ purchasing and accomplishing full salvation and eternal life and applying this to man as a gift. And it is not a completed work. Rather, grace is a supernatural quality, infused into the soul of man through the sacraments, enabling him to do works of expiation and righteousness. These works then become the basis of justification. In the Roman theology of justification there is an ongoing need to deal with sin in order to maintain a state of grace, and a need for positive acts of righteousness, which originate from that grace and then become the basis for one's justification. So man's works must be added to the work of Christ, in particular, the work of the sacraments. Consequently, justification is not a once-for-all declaration of righteousness based upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, but a process that is dependent upon the righteousness of man produced through infused grace.

The Sacraments

In Roman Catholic teaching there is no salvation apart from participation in the sacraments mediated through its priesthood. The Roman Church teaches that she is the mediator between Christ and the individual. Saving grace is mediated through these sacraments. John Hardon, author of *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (which carries the official authorization of the Vatican) says this:

Why did Christ establish the Church?

Christ established the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation.

How is the Church the universal sacrament of salvation?

The Church is the universal sacrament of salvation as the divinely instituted means of conferring grace on all the members of the human family.

What does the Catholic Church believe about the forgiveness of sins?

She believes it is God's will that no one is forgiven except through the merits of Jesus Christ and that these merits are uniquely channeled through the Church He founded. Consequently, even as the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation, she is also the universal sacrament of reconciliation.

How does the Church communicate the merits of Christ's mercy to sinners?

The Church communicates the merits of Christ's mercy to sinners through the Mass and the sacraments and all the prayers and good works of the faithful.

Are the sacraments necessary for salvation?

According to the way God has willed that we be saved the sacraments are necessary for salvation

(John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981), Questions # 401, 402, 461, 462, 1119).

These words clearly express the official position of the Church of Rome. There is no salvation apart from participation in the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. There is no other means of obtaining saving grace. Hardon's words echo the teaching of the Council of Trent:

If any one saith that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation...and that without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain from God, through faith alone, the grace of justification...let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1919), Canon IV, p. 119).

According to Rome, there are three main sacraments necessary for justification and ultimate salvation. These sacraments supposedly communicate grace to an individual and help to maintain him in a state of sanctifying grace. They are baptism, penance, and the eucharist/mass. Through baptism, an individual is brought into a state of regeneration and sanctifying grace. The guilt and punishment for original sin and for all sins committed up to the point of baptism are forgiven in the sacrament of baptism. However, sins committed after baptism must be dealt with through the sacraments of penance and the mass. This is especially true for mortal sin which is said to kill the spiritual life in the soul and cause the loss of sanctifying grace and, therefore, of justification. In order to regain the state of grace the individual must participate in the sacraments. As Ott stated, the atonement of Christ is not the exclusive cause of man's redemption. Man must supplement the work of Christ for sins committed after baptism by partially atoning and expiating his own sin through penance. Trent states that no one can be justified apart from the sacrament of penance (the confession of sin to a Roman Catholic priest, receiving his absolution and performing the required penance):

As regards those who, by sin, have fallen from the received grace of Justification, they may again be justified...through the sacrament of Penance...For, on behalf of those who fall into sins after baptism, Christ Jesus instituted the sacrament

of Penance...and therein are included not only a cessation from sins, and a detestation thereof, or, a contrite and humble heart, but also the sacramental confession of said sins...and sacerdotal absolution; and likewise satisfaction by fasts, alms, prayers, and the other pious exercises of the spiritual life...for the temporal punishment, which...is not always wholly remitted.

If any one saith that he who has fallen after baptism...is able to recover the justice which he has lost...by faith alone without the sacrament of Penance...let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), *Decree on Justification*, Chapter XIV. Canon XXIX.

John Hardon also emphasizes the necessity of penance as a work of expiation:

Penance is...necessary because we must expiate and make reparation for the punishment which is due our sins...We make satisfaction for our sins by every good act we perform in the state of grace but especially by prayer, penance and the practice of charity (John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981), Question #1320).

In addition to Penance the Church teaches the necessity for the mass as an expiation for sins committed after baptism. The mass is the re-sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a propitiation for sin. It is declared by Trent to be a propitiatory sacrifice and necessary for salvation:

In this divine sacrifice...that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner who once offered himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross...This sacrifice is truly propitiatory...If any one saith, that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; or that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory sacrifice...and that it ought not to be offered for the living and dead for sins, pains, satisfactions and other necessities: let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), *Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass*, Chp. II, p. 180, Canon III).

John Hardon says:

The Sacrifice of the altar... is no mere empty commemoration of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, but a true and proper act of sacrifice. Christ, the eternal High Priest, in an unbloody way offers himself a most acceptable Victim to the eternal Father as He did upon the Cross...In the Mass, no less than on Calvary, Jesus really offers His life to His heavenly Father...The Mass, therefore, no less than the Cross, is expiatory for sins (emphasis mine) (John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981), Questions #1265, 1269, 1277).

Note the assertion here that in the mass Christ offers himself as a Victim for sin in sacrifice just as he did on Calvary. The mass, no less than Calvary, is expiatory for sin because the mass is supposedly the same sacrifice as Calvary. According to Rome, then, the offering of Christ in sacrifice is not finished but continues and is perpetuated through time. But such teaching contradicts Scripture.

The word of God teaches that Christ has made a complete propitiation for sin through his once-for-all sacrifice of atonement. It is finished. **The Greek word translated once-for-all is *ephapax*. It is used in particular with reference to Jesus' death and communicates the thought that Christ's death is a finished work which cannot be repeated or perpetuated:**

Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives He lives to God (Rom. 6:10).

Jesus' death was a unique historic event which is completed and therefore he can never experience death again. In addition to Paul's affirmation of this, Jesus himself states: 'I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore' (Rev. 1:18). The word used to describe the death of Jesus as a finished work—*ephapax*—is the same word used to describe his sacrifice and the offering of his body (Heb. 10:10; 9:25–26). Just as Christ cannot die again, neither can his body be offered again or his sacrifice be continued for sin. This is because apart from his death there is no sacrifice that is propitiatory for sin. What made his sacrifice propitiatory in God's eyes was his death. Hebrews 9:22 makes this point: 'Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.' As a result then of this one sacrifice, the bible teaches that God has accomplished a sufficient and finished atonement. Since Christ cannot die again there is no more sacrifice for sin and therefore the mass cannot be the same sacrifice as Calvary. **On the basis of that finished work God now offers complete and total forgiveness to man. There is no more sacrifice for sin: 'Where there is forgiveness of these things there is no longer any offering for sin' (Heb. 10:18). And since there is no need for further sacrifice, Scripture also teaches that there is no need for a continuing sacerdotal priesthood. Christ has fulfilled the Old Testament ceremonial law and it is now abrogated (Heb. 7:11–19). He has become our Sacrifice and Priest and the only Mediator by which we approach God (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:22–25). Christ's atonement has completely removed the guilt of our sin and its condemnation because he has paid the penalty in full.** To suggest that a sacrament is necessary to continue to offer Christ's body and blood to make sacrifice for sin is completely antithetical to the teaching of Scripture, and undermines the sufficiency of Christ's work. This teaching of the mass as a perpetuation of the sacrifice of Christ which is propitiatory for sin was a point of universal opposition by the Reformers. They vigorously objected to this teaching on Scriptural grounds that it made void the cross of Christ. These comments from Scottish Reformer, John Knox, and English Reformer, Nicholas Ridley are representative:

John Knox: How can you deny the opinion of your Mass to be false and vain? You say it is a sacrifice for sin, but Jesus Christ and Paul say, The only death of Christ was sufficient for sin, and after it resteth none other sacrifice...I know you will say, it is none other sacrifice, but the self same, save that it is iterated (repeated) and renewed. But the words of Paul bind you more straitly than that so you may escape: for in his whole disputation, contendeth he not only that there is no other sacrifice for sin, but also that the self same sacrifice, once offered, is sufficient, and never may be offered again. For otherwise of no greater price, value, nor extenuation, should the death of Christ be, than the death of those beasts which were offered under the Law: which are proved to be of none effect, nor strength, because it behooves them often

times to be repeated. The Apostle, by comparing Jesus Christ to the Levitical priests, and his sacrifice unto theirs, maketh the matter plain that Christ might be offered but once (John Knox, *A Vindication of the Doctrine That the Mass Is Idolatry*. Found in *The Works of John Knox* (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1895), Volume III, p. 56. Language revised by William Webster).

Nicholas Ridley: Concerning the Romish mass which is used at this day or the lively sacrifice thereof, propitiatory and available for the sins of the quick and the dead, the holy Scripture hath not so much as one syllable...Now the falseness of the proposition, after the meaning of the schoolmen and the Roman Church and impiety in that sense which the words seem to import is this, that they, leaning to the foundation of their fond transubstantiation, would make the quick and lively body of Christ's flesh, united and knit to the divinity, to lurk under the accidents and outward shows of bread and wine; which is very false...And they, building upon this foundation, do hold that the same body is offered unto God by the priest in his daily massings to put away the sins of the quick and the dead. Whereas by the Apostle to the Hebrews it is evident that there is but one oblation and one true and lively sacrifice of the church offered upon the altar of the cross, which was, is and ever shall be for ever the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and where there is remission of the same there is (saith the Apostle) no more offering for sin (Nicholas Ridley, *Examinations of the Eucharist*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), Volume XXVI, pp. 314–315).

In addition to expiation through personal penance and the mass, the Roman Catholic Church also teaches that sin can be expiated through the sufferings of purgatory after one dies and through indulgences. Many are acquainted with the fact that the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences were the catalyst for the Reformation but are unaware that they are still part of the official teaching of the Church. While the abuses of the doctrine of indulgences which led to the Reformation have been repudiated, the actual doctrine itself is still in force. The Church of Rome teaches that through indulgences the temporal punishment for sin can be expiated. Indulgences are applied through the authority of the pope from what is known as the Treasury of Satisfaction or Merit. This treasury consists of the merit of Christ in addition to the merit of all the saints and can be applied to individuals as remission for sins thereby mitigating the punishment due them either here or in purgatory. In 1967 Pope Paul VI issued an encyclical on Indulgences entitled *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*. This encyclical reaffirms the medieval teaching:

The doctrine of purgatory clearly demonstrates that even when the guilt of sin has been taken away, punishment for it or the consequences of it may remain to be expiated and cleansed. They often are. In fact, in purgatory the souls of those 'who died in the charity of God and truly repentant, but who had not made satisfaction with adequate penance for their sins and omissions' are cleansed after death with punishments designed to purge away their debt...Following in Christ's steps, those who believe in him have always tried to help one another along the path which leads to the heavenly Father, through prayer, the exchange of spiritual goods and penitential expiation. The more they have been immersed in the fervor of love, the more they have imitated Christ in his sufferings. They have carried their crosses to make expiation for their own sins and the sins of others. They were convinced that they could help their brothers to obtain salvation from God who is the Father of mercies. This is the very ancient dogma called the Communion of Saints...The "treasury of the

Church” is the infinite value, which can never be exhausted, which Christ’s merits have before God. They were offered so that the whole of mankind could be set free from sin and attain communion with the Father. In Christ, the Redeemer himself, the satisfactions and merits of his Redemption exist and find their efficacy. This treasury includes as well the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are truly immense, unfathomable and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body...God’s only-begotten Son... has won a treasure for the militant Church... he has entrusted it to blessed Peter, the key-bearer of heaven, and to his successors who are Christ’s vicars on earth, so that they may distribute it to the faithful for their salvation. They may apply it with mercy for reasonable causes to all who have repented for and have confessed their sins. At times they may remit completely, and at other times only partially, the temporal punishment due to sin in a general as well as in special ways (insofar as they judge it to be fitting in the sight of the Lord). The merits of the Blessed Mother of God and of all the elect ... are known to add further to this treasure (Paul VI, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, January 1, 1967).

Through its doctrines of confession and penance, the mass, purgatory, indulgences the Church of Rome adds sacramental and moral works to the work of Christ. Justification and salvation are not through Christ alone but are instead a cooperative effort between Christ and man. Rome claims that it teaches justification by grace alone through the merits of Christ alone. The problem is that her interpretation is not the Scriptural teaching of grace alone and Christ alone. Just using the word does not mean that one is using it in a scriptural way. After all, Pelagius did not deny the need for grace. He used the term and affirmed it. The problem was not in the use of the word but in the interpretation he applied to it. Though he used the word his interpretation undermined its biblical meaning. This is precisely what the Roman Catholic Church has done with respect to its interpretation of grace and the work of Christ. While affirming these biblical doctrines, its interpretation of what they mean actually undermines their biblical meaning. When scripture says that justification is by grace on account of Christ it means on account of Christ exclusively, completely apart from the works of man or sacraments.

The Roman Teaching of Grace and Justification

When Rome states that an individual is justified by grace she means that grace has been infused into the soul of man. This makes him righteous before God and enables him to perform acts of righteousness. These then become the basis of justification and the means whereby he merits heaven. Justification is a process then by which the individual is made righteous in a moral sense. The Roman Catholic Church interprets the phrase *the righteousness of God* to mean a human righteousness which has its source in the grace of God, channeled through sacraments. But the righteousness itself is the work of man cooperating with that grace. The righteousness of God then is not the righteousness of Christ but rather the righteousness of man which results from the gift of grace,

the source of which is God. The Roman Catholic theologian William Marshner explains the Roman Catholic position in these words:

Now, if what Paul means by *dikaiosune theou* (righteousness of God) is not something to remain in God but something to be conferred on us, then we must reckon with that mysterious possibility: a quality of man which is the property of God! Does St. Paul say anything to indicate a knowledge of this possibility? Indeed he does: ‘God has made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we in him might become justice of God’ (II Cor. 5:21)...It is not a question of replacement but of participation, and the participation is real in both directions. First in Jesus: just as really as the Word took our humanity, just that really his humanity became God. And then in us: just as really as Christ–God took our sins (so really that even the Father forsook Him—Mark 15:34), just that really we receive God’s justice. For if we dare to believe that in the Incarnation our nature, without ceasing to be a human nature, received God’s subsistence, then we may easily believe that we, in Christ, receive God’s justice as our quality. In fact, St. Paul even has a name for this quality. In the very next verse (II Cor. 6:1) he says: ‘As God’s co-workers, we beg you once again not to have received God’s grace in vain.’ What we should not ‘receive in vain’ is exactly what Paul has just said we have ‘become’ in Christ. God’s justice is His grace, a gift given to men. That is why the justice of God is identically ‘the justice which comes from God through faith’ (Philippians 3:9). What emerges from these texts then, is the existence in man of a justice conferred by God (William Marshner, *Justification by Faith*. Taken from *Reasons for Hope: Catholic Apologetics* (Front Royal: Christendom College, 1978), pp. 232-233).

Marshner equates the righteousness of God in justification with the righteousness of man in sanctification. This view is a fundamental contradiction of the biblical teaching that the righteousness of God in justification is the righteousness of Christ in his work of atonement. Marshner is correct in stating that just as our sins were imputed to Christ, so a real righteousness is given to the believer. However, it is a righteousness that is already complete and not something that must be worked out by man. We can agree with him when he says that ‘God’s justice is His grace, a gift given to men.’ This is the point the Reformers made in their controversy with Rome. God’s grace in justification is the provision of a completed, finished righteousness given as a gift which eternally justifies us in the eyes of God. But Marshner misinterprets the Scriptures when he refers to this righteousness as the process of sanctification in the life of the believer, rather than the righteousness of Christ himself. By defining justifying grace as God’s gift of the righteousness of sanctification, Marshner, and Roman Catholicism as a whole, misinterprets the biblical meaning of grace with respect to justification.

The Council of Trent explicitly condemned the biblical teaching of the imputed righteousness of Christ himself for justification:

If any one saith, that men are just without the justice of Christ, whereby he merited for us to be justified; or that it is by that justice itself that they are formally just, let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), *Decree on Justification*, Chapter VII, Canons X, XXXII).

Trent teaches that men are justified by the righteousness of Christ only in the sense that in his atonement he has merited the grace which is infused into man for salvation. Trent denied that men are justified by the righteousness of Christ alone imputed to the believer. Trent taught that the righteousness which justifies is the work of the regenerated believer cooperating with the grace that Christ merited. So justification is equated with regeneration and sanctification. Rome does not acknowledge sanctification and justification as separate works of God in salvation. It makes human works the basis for justification which merit eternal life:

Justification...is not the remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man.

If any one saith, that the good works of the one that is justified are in such manner the gifts of God, that they are not also the good merits of him that is justified, by the good works which he performs through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, and does not truly merit increase in grace, eternal life, and the attainment of eternal life, if so be, that he depart in grace, and an increase in glory, let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), *Decree on Justification*, Chapter VII, Canons X, XXXII).

Ludwig Ott emphasizes this in these words:

Justification is the declaration of the righteousness of the believer before the judgment seat of Christ...The Council of Trent teaches that for the justified eternal life is both a gift or grace promised by God and a reward for his own good works and merits... According to Holy Writ, eternal blessedness in heaven is the reward...for good works performed on this earth, and rewards and merit are correlative concepts (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), pp.254, 264).

John Hardon likewise confirms this point of view when he writes:

Habitual or sanctifying grace is a supernatural quality that dwells in the human soul, by which a person shares in the divine nature, becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, a friend of God, his adopted child, and able to perform actions meriting eternal life (emphasis mine) (John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981), Question #1074).

So Roman Catholic theology teaches that justification is obtained by receiving grace through baptism, and is maintained through the sacrament of penance, the mass and the works of sanctification which in turn merit eternal life. It is important to point out that sanctification in Roman Catholic theology is not only the righteous acts of individuals cooperating with the grace of God but participation in the sacraments of the Church. A state of sanctifying grace, by which a person is justified, cannot be maintained apart from the sacraments. Justification then is not by grace alone (in the biblical sense) or on account of Christ alone (in the biblical sense). Therefore it is not by faith alone (in the biblical sense). In fact, the Council of Trent condemned the teaching of justification by faith alone stating:

If anyone saith that by faith alone the impious is justified in such wise as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtaining the grace of Justification...let him be anathema...After this Catholic doctrine on justification which whosoever does not faithfully and firmly accept cannot be justified...(The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), *Decree on Justification*, Chapter XVI, Canon IX).

John Gerstner gives a clear and concise summation of the Roman Catholic view of justification in contrast to the Protestant view in these words:

Some Romanists will say that they too teach justification by grace—by Christ’s righteousness, in fact. But the righteousness of Christ which they claim justifies is not Christ’s own personal righteousness reckoned or credited or given or imputed to believers. Romanists refer to the righteousness which Christ works into the life of the believer or infuses into him in his own living and behavior. It is not Christ’s personal righteousness but the believer’s personal righteousness, which he performs by the grace of God. It is Christ’s righteousness versus the believer’s own righteousness. It is Christ’s achievement versus the Christian’s achievement. It is an imputed righteousness not an infused righteousness. It is a gift of God versus an accomplishment of man. These two righteousnesses are as different as righteousnesses could conceivable be. It does come down to the way it has been popularly stated for the last four and a half centuries: Protestantism’s salvation by faith versus Rome’s salvation by works...The Protestant trusts Christ to save him and the Catholic trusts Christ to help him save himself. It is faith versus works. Or, as the Spirit of God puts it in Romans 4:16 (NIV), ‘Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace, and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring.’ It is ‘by faith so that it may be by grace...’ If a Romanist wants to be saved by grace alone, it will have to be by faith alone. ‘The promise comes by faith so that it may be by grace.’ You can’t be saved ‘sola gratia’ except ‘sola fide.’...We agree with Roman friends—salvation is by grace. That is the reason it must be by faith. If it is a salvation based on works that come from grace, it is not based on grace but on the Christian’s works that come from grace. The works that come from grace must prove grace but they cannot be grace. They may come from, be derivative of, a consequence of, but they cannot be identified with it. Faith is merely union with Christ who is our righteousness, our grace, our salvation. 1 Corinthians 1:30, ‘It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus who has become for us wisdom from God,’ that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Christ is our righteousness. Our righteousness does not result from His righteousness, it is His righteousness (*Justification by Faith Alone*, Don Kistler, Ed. (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), John Gerstner, *The Nature of Justifying Faith*, pp. 111–113).

We need to be clear about the fact that justification is only one aspect of the overall work of salvation. Scripture teaches that salvation means more than justification and also involves election, regeneration, adoption, conversion, sanctification and glorification, all applied as a result of union with Christ. Each of these is a separate and complete work in its own right. That is, justification is not the same as sanctification. They are completely independent works though they cannot be separated because they both come from union with Christ. The error of Roman Catholicism is that it equates sanctification with justification stating that the

two are interchangeable terms resulting in a perversion of the biblical teaching of justification. This is equivalent to the error of some in the early Church regarding the person of Christ. They failed to maintain the integrity of Christ's person because they did not retain the biblical balance of the truth of his humanity and deity. They subsumed either his deity into his humanity thereby denying his true deity, or his humanity into his deity thereby denying his humanity. The biblical and orthodox teaching is that Christ is both God and man, two truths which must be held in conjunction with one another. Similarly, the biblical teaching of salvation is that justification and sanctification are different aspects of the overall work of salvation which also must be held in conjunction with one another. If we subsume sanctification into justification we will deny the biblical teaching on the necessity for the works of sanctification. On the other hand, if we subsume justification into sanctification we will pervert the biblical teaching on justification. To fail to maintain a proper balance between justification and sanctification leads to the perversion of the biblical teaching on salvation, just as failure to maintain the biblical teaching on the humanity and deity of Christ leads to perversion of the biblical teaching of the person of Christ. The Protestant Reformers emphasized the Scriptural truth that in salvation an individual not only possesses an imputed righteousness which eternally and completely justifies but also the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which results in the works of sanctification. It is a misrepresentation of the teaching of the Reformers to imply that their concept of salvation was limited to justification only and that faith alone meant the denial of works. Please refer to the article on the teaching of the Reformers on works and sanctification.

Faith

Roman Catholicism teaches that saving faith is not trust in Christ alone for justification and salvation. While the Church of Rome affirms the necessity for faith in the justification of adults, her definition is different from that of the scriptures and the teaching of the Protestant Church. To a Roman Catholic, justifying faith is called dogmatic faith. This has to do with the doctrinal content of the faith necessary to be believed for salvation. Essentially it means intellectual assent to everything the Church teaches. In order to be saved an individual must believe and hold to every doctrine dogmatically defined by the Roman Catholic Church. This entails not only the teaching of the Creed, the sacraments and justification but also the doctrines related to the Papacy (papal rule and infallibility), Mary (immaculate conception and assumption), the canon of scripture and purgatory. Vatican I states that it is necessary for salvation that an individual believe not only all that is revealed in Scripture but also everything defined and proposed by the Church. To reject anything officially taught by the Roman Church is to reject saving faith and to forfeit both justification and eternal life:

Further, all those things are to be believed with divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the Word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church, either by a solemn judgment, or by her ordinary and universal magisterium, proposes for belief as having been divinely revealed. And since, without faith, it is impossible to please God, and to attain to the fellowship of his children, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will any one obtain eternal life unless he shall have persevered in faith unto the end (*Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council*, On Faith, Chapter

Ludwig Ott explains the relationship of Dogmas defined by the Church and faith in these words:

By dogma in the strict sense is understood a truth immediately (formally) revealed by God which has been proposed by the Teaching Authority of the Church to be believed as such. Two factors or elements may be distinguished in the concept of dogma:

A) An immediate Divine Revelation of the particular Dogma...i.e., the Dogma must be immediately revealed by God either explicitly (explicite) or inclusively (implicite), and therefore be contained in the sources of Revelation (Holy Writ or Tradition).

B) The Promulgation of the Dogma by the Teaching Authority of the Church (propositio Ecclesiae). This implies, not merely the promulgation of the Truth, but also the obligation on the part of the Faithful of believing the Truth. This promulgation by the Church may be either in an extraordinary manner through a solemn decision of faith made by the Pope or a General Council (Iudicium solemns) or through the ordinary and general teaching power of the Church (Magisterium ordinarium et universale). The latter may be found easily in the catechisms issued by the Bishops.

Dogma in its strict signification is the object of both Divine Faith (Fides Divina) and Catholic Faith (Fides Catholica); it is the object of the Divine Faith...by reason of its Divine Revelation; it is the object of Catholic Faith...on account of its infallible doctrinal definition by the Church. ***If a baptised person deliberately denies or doubts a dogma properly so-called, he is guilty of the sin of heresy*** (Codex Iuris Canonici 1325, Par. 2), ***and automatically becomes subject to the punishment of excommunication*** (Codex Iuris Canonici 2314, Par. I).

As far as the content of justifying faith is concerned, the so-called fiducial faith does not suffice. What is demanded is theological or dogmatic faith (confessional faith) which consists in the firm acceptance of the Divine truths of Revelation, on the authority of God Revealing...According to the testimony of Holy Writ, faith and indeed dogmatic faith, is the indispensable prerequisite for the achieving of eternal salvation (emphasis added) (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), pp. 4-5, 253).

And John Hardon says:

What must a Catholic believe with divine faith?

A Catholic must believe with divine faith the whole of revelation, which is contained in the written word of God and in Sacred Tradition.

Can a person be a Catholic if he believes most, but not all, the teachings of revelation?

A person cannot be a Catholic if he rejects even a single teaching that he knows has been revealed by God.

What will happen to those who lack ‘the faith necessary for salvation’?

Those will not be saved who lack the necessary faith because of their own sinful neglect or conduct. As Christ declared, ‘He who does not believe will be condemned’ (Mark 16:16).

Why is divine faith called catholic?

Divine faith is called catholic or universal because a believer must accept everything God has revealed. He may not be selective about what he chooses to believe.

(John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981), Questions #44, 45, 46, 47).

The dogmatic teachings of Vatican I are a perfect example of this point of view. After giving extensive teaching on the need to be submitted to the bishop of Rome for salvation the Council makes this statement:

This is the teaching of Catholic truth from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and salvation (*Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council*. Found in *The Creeds of Christendom* by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), Chapter III, On the Power and Nature of the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff).

There are similar statements made by the Bishops of Rome in their decrees on Mary, as well as numerous anathemas which have accompanied the doctrinal promulgations of Trent and Vatican I on the sacraments and the papacy on papal rule and infallibility. According to Rome, all these dogmas must be believed and embraced for salvation. But where are these teachings found in scripture? Where are we told that it is necessary to believe in the assumption of Mary or papal infallibility in order to experience salvation? Such teachings not only are absent from scripture, but from the teaching of the Church historically. Not one of these doctrines was taught in the early Church.

From a Roman Catholic perspective, the concept of saving faith is far removed from the biblical teaching of commitment to and simple trust in Christ alone for salvation. The Roman Catholic Church has distorted the gospel of grace. It has fallen into the same Galatian error of legalism (a sacerdotal/sacramental/works salvation) addressed by Paul in his letter to the Galatian Churches. In that letter Paul dealt with the heresy of the Judaizers, who attempted to add the Jewish ceremonial law to faith in Christ as a basis for salvation. Temple worship and the ceremonial law included circumcision, an altar, daily sacrifices, a laver of water, priests, a high priest, special priestly and high priestly vestments and robes, candles, incense and shewbread. In the routine religious life of the average Jew there were feast days, prayers, fasts, adherence to the tradition of the elders and certain dietary restrictions. All of these things were included in the Judaizers’ teaching on salvation. So it was Jesus plus the Jewish system. How does this relate to Roman Catholicism? The doctrines of salvation embraced by Rome are, in principle, identical to the Judaizers. The Roman Church teaches that salvation is achieved by believing that Jesus is the Son of God who died for sin, by being baptized, by being a part of the Roman Catholic Church, by striving to keep the Ten Commandments and partaking of the sacramental system (which involves ongoing sacrifices, altars, priests, a high priest, along with the exercises of prayers, fasts, almsgiving, penances and until recently adherence to certain dietary regulations). The following lists demonstrate the parallels between Roman Catholicism and the

Judaizers:

Judaizers

1. Belief in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God
2. Circumcision
3. Become a Jew
4. Sacrificial System
5. Priests
6. High Priests
7. Altars
8. Feast Days
9. Laver of Water
10. Dietary Regulations
11. Candles
12. Incense
13. Shew Bread
14. Keep the Ten Commandments
15. Tradition of the Elders

Roman Catholicism

1. Belief in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God
2. Baptism
3. Become a Roman Catholic
4. Sacrificial System
5. Priests
6. High Priests
7. Altars
8. Feast Days
9. Font of Holy Water
10. Dietary Regulations (Until recently)
11. Candles
12. Incense
13. The Eucharist Wafer
14. Keep the Ten Commandments
15. Tradition of the Church Fathers

The parallels are obvious. The Roman Catholic teaching on salvation is essentially the same as that preached by the Judaizers. Paul

warned the Galatian believers that if they embraced this false gospel they would actually desert Christ (Gal. 1:6). Those evangelicals who would promote spiritual cohabitation with the Church of Rome need to heed to the warning of Paul. He saw no basis for unity with the Judaizers even though they professed faith in Christ. Likewise, there is no basis for unity with the Church of Rome today. If evangelicals jettison the Reformation gospel distinctives for so called unity with Rome they will deny Christ.

A Summary Chart of the differences between Biblical Truth and Catholicism

by *Richard Bennett*

“Thy Word is Truth”
John 17:17

<p>Biblical Truth</p> <p>The Light of God’s Word</p>	<p>Topic</p>	<p>New Catechism</p> <p><i>Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994)</i></p>
<p>The Bible only is the Standard for Truth</p> <p>“...the scripture cannot be broken.” John. 10:35</p> <p>“Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” John. 17:17</p> <p>“That ye might learn in us not to think...above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.” 1 Corinthians 4:6</p> <p>“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” Proverbs. 30:6</p> <p>“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is</p>	<p>The Basis of Truth</p>	<p>Truth is based on Scripture, Tradition, and the Pope</p> <p>“Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other.” <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) Para 80</i></p> <p>And [Holy] <i>Tradition</i> transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. CCC Para 81</p> <p>“As a result the [Roman Catholic] Church...does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and</p>

profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: **That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”** 2 Timothy 3:16-17

“**Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition**, which ye have delivered...” Mark. 7:13

reverence.” CCC Para 82

“**The Supreme Pontiff**, in virtue of his office, **possesses infallible teaching authority** when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful...he proclaims with a definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held as such.” CCC Para 891

Salvation is by Grace Alone Through Faith

“**Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**” Romans 3:24

“**For by grace are ye saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: **It is the gift of God: Not of works**, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:8, 9

“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive **abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness** shall reign in life **by one, Jesus Christ.**” Rom 5:17

“**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but**

For Salvation Grace becomes merely a help and is given through the sacraments of the Church

“Grace is the **help** God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life.” CCC Para2021

The Church affirms that for believers **the sacraments** of the New Covenant **are necessary for salvation.** ‘**Sacramental grace**’ is the **grace of the Holy Spirit**, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. CCC Para1129

“**One who desires to obtain reconciliation with God and with the Church, must confess to a priest all the unconfessed**

Salvation by Grace Alone

according to his mercy he saved us..." Titus 3:5-6

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Galatians 2:21

grave sins he remembers after having carefully examined his conscience." CCC Para 1493

Faith is the Gift of God and comes by the Word of God

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16:31

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only **to believe on him**, but also to suffer for his sake." Philippians 1:29

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

Faith is God-given and sustained

Faith comes through the Mother Church

"It is the Church that believes first, and so bears, nourishes and sustains my faith." CCC Para 168

"Salvation comes from God alone; but because we receive the life of faith through the Church, she is our mother:..." Para 169

"Believing" is an ecclesial act. The Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. **The Church is the mother of all believers. 'No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother'"** CCC Para 181

Christ's Sacrifice was His alone and once offered

"...Jesus said, '**It is finished:**...'"
John. 19:30

"But this man, **after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God" Hebrews 10:12

"...when He had **by Himself** purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" Hebrews. 1:3

Christ's Atonement

Sufficient

Finished

Sacrifice

Christ's Sacrifice continues, and is also of the Church

In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross **is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner.**" CCC Para 1367

"The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the [Roman Catholic] Church. **The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head.** With him, **she herself is offered** whole and entire." CCC Para 1368

God is the Only All Holy One and the Only Source of Holiness

"**Holy, Holy, Holy**, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah. 6:3

"Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? **For Thou only art Holy:** for all nations shall come and worship before Thee..." Revelation. 15: 4

"**There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside**

God, the Only

All Holy

One

Mary is also the All-Holy One and the Source of Holiness

"By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to **the 'Mother of Mercy,' the All Holy One.**"
CCC Para 2677

"From the [Roman Catholic] Church he learns the example of holiness and recognizes its model **and source in the all-holy Virgin Mary....**" CCC Para 2030

Thee: neither is there any rock like our God.” 1 Samuel.2:2

“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” Isaiah 42:8

“The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God ‘the All-Holy’ (Panagia), and celebrate her as ‘free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature’” CCC Para 493

In Salvation the Lord Jesus Christ Alone Mediates

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy. 2:5

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name [Jesus Christ] under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

One Mediator

In Salvation “Mary” Also Mediates

“Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession **continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation....** Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the [Roman Catholic] Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and **Mediatrix.**” CCC Para 969

God Hates Idolatry

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything...Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.” Exodus. 20:4-5

“And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even Ten Commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake...**Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure....**” Dt. 4:13, 15-16

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen”
1 John. 5:21

The Roman Catholic Church Rationalizes Idolatry

“The Christian veneration of images is not contrary to the first commandment which proscribes idols. Indeed, the honor rendered to an image passes to its prototype, and whoever venerates an image venerates the person portrayed in it.” CCC Para 2132

Idolatry

“Basing itself on the mystery of the incarnate Word, the seventh ecumenical council at Nicaea (787) justified...the veneration of icons - of Christ, but also of the Mother of God, the angels, and all the saints. By becoming incarnate, the Son of God introduced a new ‘economy’ of images.” CCC Para 2131

This Pagan Practice is Forbidden in the Bible

“There **shall not be found among you any one...** that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a **consulter with familiar spirits**, or a wizard, or a **necromancer**, [one who calls up the dead].” Deut. 18:10-11

“And the soul **that turneth after such as have familiar spirits** [divination; contacting the dead], and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, **I will even set my face against that soul**, and will cut him off from among his people. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I Am the Lord your God.” Leviticus. 20:6-7

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Communion with the Dead

This Practice is Recommended by Rome

“*Communion with the dead.* In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead...**Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping “them, bur also of making their intercession for us effective.”** CCC Para 958

“The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer...Their intercession is their most exalted service...**We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world.**” CCC Para 2683

Contact Information

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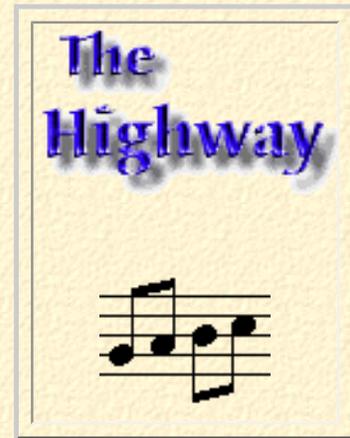
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Evangelicals and Catholics Together: A New Initiative or Further Confusion?

"The Gift of Salvation"

John H. Armstrong

Christianity Today, the flagship evangelical periodical of North America, hails the newly released document, "The Gift of Salvation," by saying it is "a remarkable statement on what we mean by the gospel." This document, following in the wake of the now famous *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (1994), was published initially in November. This new statement is, as was also true with the previous ECT document, an "unofficial" statement signed by a number of prominent evangelical and Roman Catholic spokesmen. (One wonders if this new statement will become known as ECT II?) As with the ECT statement this document is the result of collaboration by such leaders as Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, the former Lutheran now Catholic priest, who serves as editor of the valuable periodical, *First Things*.

This new statement is more clearly and forthrightly a *doctrinal* statement than the earlier one. Attempts are made in this statement to address the central theological problem raised by the first initiative, namely in what sense do we share a common doctrine of salvation? The statement openly concludes that justification is by faith alone (*sola fide*), as well as by grace alone. These truths, it is said, constitute an agreed upon scriptural understanding of salvation in Christ. The document amazingly states that: "We understand that what we here affirm is in agreement with what the reformation traditions have meant by justification by faith alone (*sola fide*). . . . Elsewhere it adds, "We agree that justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own, it is entirely God's gift."¹

Not surprisingly, Dwayne Hastings, writing for a *Baptist Press* November 13 news release on this statement, headlined the entry by writing: "Reformers' View of Salvation Embraced by Catholic Theologians." Richard John Neuhaus commented, "This is the first time that evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics have publicly agreed to a common understanding of salvation."² Maybe, and maybe not.

This new initiative flows out of what ECT referred to as a growing "convergence and cooperation" between Catholics and evangelicals in the public arena. The notion of "co-belligerence" (a term coined by Francis Schaeffer) has drawn many Roman Catholics and evangelicals into alliances that go far beyond the original intent of the term "co-belligerence." Now we have serious evangelical leaders drafting significant ecumenical documents with serious Roman Catholics. (It is important to note that no bishops or cardinals, and no representative theologians or the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, are involved in signing this statement.) Whatever else we may say, this document appears to be a first, at least in terms of how much some respected evangelicals are willing to grant in reaching this new "convergence."

Our Modern Context

Efforts to resolve historic disagreements regarding the doctrine of salvation are not new. Most of these could not have happened before Vatican II (1962-65). The most recent high level ecumenical accord came just this past year when Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians issued a proposal for a *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. this declaration, approved in August by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), had been previously endorsed by delegates to the Lutheran World Federation in July. This declaration will be studied by other member Lutheran churches as well as by the Vatican in coming months. The statement calls for seeing the old condemnations and anathemas, of the reformation era, "in a new light." In fact, the Lutheran-Roman Catholic declaration states that the old condemnations no longer apply. (i.e. the 33 anathemas of the famous council of Trent might be removed, in some sense, without intentionally admitting that they were ever wrong in the first place!)

John Reumann, professor emeritus of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, has been active in these dialogues since 1965. In a recent article in the liberal magazine, *The Christian Century*, Reumann writes that "The Reformation breach on these points has, apparently, been healed. What has brought about such a change?" In Reumann's words, "What allows old anathemas to be transcended?"³

He suggests several reasons for this conclusion. First, there has been the impetus of a century long ecumenical effort. the fruit of this effort can now be seen in how we address our most fundamental differences regarding the doctrine of salvation. In addition to this, serious biblical studies, among both Protestant and Catholic scholars, have borne fruit. Studies of words like "righteousness" and the important term "the righteousness of God" have likewise have helped. Reumann correctly notes that Vatican II "said little about justification, but it set a mood that made discussion of this old point of division inevitable." In addition to these factors he cites the work of Catholic theologians such as Karl Rahner and others. A result of these efforts was a series of talks in the late 70's and early 80's. Out of these came a volume entitled, *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue* (1985) which produced a common statement regarding salvation. This statement included a one-sentence affirmation which said, "our entire hope of justification and salvation" rests on "God's promise and the saving work in Christ" as "our ultimate trust."⁴

In the 1997 *Joint Declaration* we see the harvest of these earlier efforts according to Reumann. Here those things agreed upon are now brought together in on joint statement. Seven topics of past disagreements are presented and in each case the statement says, "we confess together. . ." Following this are several aspects of both Lutheran and Catholic teaching. Lutherans confess, for example, "that good works follow justification. . . and are its fruits." Catholics confess that "justification always remains the unmerited gift of grace."⁵

The sticking point came when *simul justus et peccator* was considered, i.e. the Protestant doctrine that a person is simultaneously just before God (as just as he will ever be) and sinful.

This *Joint Declaration* allows the anathemas of the sixteenth century to remain on the books. The document states that they are "salutary warnings" to which teaching and preaching must attend.

We have now learned that privately a number of evangelicals were busily involving themselves in their own attempt to deal with many of the same concerns. Not only are such efforts not new, but a lesson from church history serves us well at this point.

An Example from History

What should be noted, with regard to the *Joint Declaration* and "The Gift of Salvation," is that this is not the first time Roman Catholics have agreed with the language of *sola fide*, even though the Council of Trent condemned the terminology. At Regensburg, or Ratisbon, in 1541, the Emperor Charles V invited three Lutheran evangelicals and three Roman Catholic theologians to consider a way for healing the breach in the German church. Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, the papal legate in Germany at the time, openly expressed his belief "that the Lutheran concern for justification by faith was in fact the essence of the Catholic faith also." What Contarini meant was that Protestantism was essentially Catholic! His argument, made by many then and since, was that the Protestant schism had been caused principally "by a misunderstanding of Catholicism."⁶

Before this sixteenth century ecumenical meeting took place Luther was suspicious of the whole effort. The six men who met did reach an agreement. They issued a statement and mutually agreed to *sola fide*. Luther was aghast with their statement. He had previously warned that to go back one iota on the wording of the Augsburg Confession would invite catastrophe. But why was Luther hostile toward such an effort for unity, especially when it seemed to bring about an agreement on *sola fide*? The answer to this question provides material for reflection in regard to present efforts behind "The Gift of Salvation."

Many will no doubt say, "Isn't it enough that we all agree salvation is "by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone?" If we agree on such essential (Protestant) truths aren't we now in basic agreement, except for some less essential differences? (This is, in fact, how this new statement argues the case for a common salvation.) Can't we say that now we have theological unity in the gospel, at least between some evangelicals and some roman Catholics? If we can agree on these essential items then the Reformation debate, for all intents and purposes, must be over, or so it would seem. At least the possibility is near. but just a minute. Don't rush to conclusions too quickly.

Luther, as noted, was profoundly agitated with the Regensburg agreement. In strongly rejecting it he wrote:

Popish writers pretend that they have always taught, what we now teach, concerning faith and good

works, and that they are unjustly accused of the contrary; thus the wolf puts on the sheep's skin till he gains admission into the fold.⁷

Luther said this precisely because he knew the Regensburg articles were dangerously, even intentionally, ambiguous. Many argued that Regensburg was a victory because nothing in it explicitly denied the doctrine of the Reformers regarding salvation. But James Buchanan has noted that Luther rejected the statement because it failed to plainly state that the converted Christian is acceptable to God solely because of Christ's imputed righteousness.⁸ The agreement made it clear that no unconverted person could be saved on the basis of merit in himself. Furthermore, it taught that only through imputed righteousness could the sinner be brought to God and true saving grace. However, ambiguous wording made it possible for the converted person to eventually become acceptable to God by virtue of an infused or transformative righteousness.

It is intriguing that the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* notes that Cardinal Contarini taught a theory called "double justification" which did not *directly* deny imputed righteousness but at the same time attributed to infusion a prominent role in man's final acceptance (i.e. sanctification helps to *secure* final justification in some way.)⁹

Luther, understanding what was truly at stake in this debate, said that if we are not saved entirely because of Christ alone, and solely on the basis of the imputation of His righteousness, then we are not yet saved and have not yet understood the gospel. I believe documents like "The Gift of Salvation" create exactly the same confusion that Luther saw in the Regensburg statement. A document such as "The Gift of Salvation" should not to be read just for what it says but also for what it does not say. What is left out of such a statement is as crucial as what is included. But what is said here is bad. This effort to bring us together, in regards to a more common view of salvation by grace, is provocative. It is also extremely dangerous. The cause of the gospel in wider evangelicalism will be materially altered by this kind of agreement. and when the leading evangelical publication in the world takes on the cause we have every reason to fear for broader evangelicalism itself. Let me explain why this is so.¹⁰

A Denial of the Gospel?

In the case of this new evangelical/Catholic document the emphasis on co-belligerency has clearly resulted in an affirmation of unity which accepts the actual slogans of the Reformation without agreeing on the actual content of the slogans. All who know the debate of the sixteenth century, and the resultant issues which remain, realize that the whole point of *sola fide* is found in the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. As the Reformers put it, it is the righteousness of Christ which saves us *extra nos* (apart from us, outside of us), not the righteousness which is put inside of us through the Spirit's work. Put imply, do the works of the law, done by us out of transformed hearts, contribute anything to our being made right before God? This was the Reformation question. It still is the essential question.

Make no mistake about it, we are not dealing with a minor issue here. This is no tempest in a teapot, as some will no doubt cry. The gospel itself hangs in the answer to this question, as serious historians and biblical exegetes have understood. But "The Gift of Salvation," after affirming *sola fide* in a manner that will prompt many to think the Roman Catholic signers have actually embraced the theology of the Reformers, includes the following statement in the third paragraph from the end:

While we rejoice in the unity we have discovered and are confident of the fundamental truths about the gift of salvation we have affirmed, we recognize that there are necessarily interrelated questions

that require further and urgent exploration. Among such questions are these: the meaning of baptismal regeneration, the Eucharist, and sacramental grace; *the historic uses of the language of justification as it relates to imputed and transformative righteousness*; the normative status of justification in relation to all Christian doctrine; the assertion that while justification is by faith alone, the faith that receives salvation is never alone; diverse understandings of merit, reward, purgatory, and indulgences, Marian devotion and the assistance of the saints in the life of salvation; and the possibility of salvation for those who have not been evangelized (italics are mine).

This statement, in effect, undoes any possible agreement regarding *sola fide*. But why?

Imputation: The Central Truth

If we allow for a common view regarding justification that does not specifically embrace imputation, but rather allows for what is to be called "transformative righteousness," then we have missed the whole point. *Sola Fide* is made an empty slogan by such reasoning. What this statement is saying is that we can have *sola fide* and we can also have disagreement between us over the central issue of the Reformation, at one and the same time. If the alien righteousness of Christ is the singular ground of my salvation, and the consequent assurance of my pardon, then "transformative righteousness," a most distinctly Roman Catholic term (which stands for infusion in the older sense), can never be allowed.

What this phrase does, in short, is make this new document even more dangerous than ECT. Regensburg was actually closer to the gospel than this new statement and Regensburg settled nothing.

In the first ECT we had a rather ambiguous, at times clumsy, attempt to show how evangelicals and Roman Catholics could share alliances and maintain their differences. The doctrine of salvation was not *plainly* stated as the ground for sharing in this common faith. In this new statement the whole ground has shifted and thus the stakes are even more serious. In "The Gift of Salvation" we are told that we have a common ground in the very nature of the gospel of grace. But Catholics have argued this way for centuries. The reason evangelicals are now prepared to listen is because they are actually closer to the theological beliefs of Rome than they are to those of their Protestant forefathers.

The obvious point to be observed is that this new statement will give multitudes of people the false assurance that what evangelicals and Roman Catholics have disagreed over for nearly 500 years has been settled, at least in large measure. The fact that major language translations are planned will only add to the confusion. (In the case of ECT the document was used against evangelicals in Latin America and elsewhere in an attempt to stop Roman Catholics from leaving their church for evangelical churches. I know this through firsthand observation in Brazil.)

If this new statement is followed, we will use the slogans of the Reformers without their clear intention. By this means we can all agree that we are one in the gospel of grace. But no one should even begin to imagine that the divide created by the Council of Trent has now been spanned in 1997. If the Catholic signers of this document really mean what they say regarding faith alone then the questions I ask them are: "When will you abandon the Roman doctrine of the mass?" Furthermore, "When will you affirm *simul justus et peccator*?" (This, as many of the readers of this publication will no doubt understand, is the doctrine no Roman Catholic will ever be able to genuinely affirm and still remain a confessing Roman Catholic.) And, further, "When will you openly abandon the continued use of Trent's formulations as restated in the modern Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church in

its approved and official teaching on salvation?" There is simply no hard evidence that Rome is abandoning Trent, at least not in the way that evangelicals think of abandoning false doctrine. There is every reason to be extremely careful in regards to these efforts to find a common faith in a postmodern world, when the way in which we speak and think has been so radically altered.

How much better is the short but straightforward article on *sola fide* in *The Cambridge Declaration* (1996). Here we read:

Justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. This is the article by which the church stands or falls. Today this article is often ignored, distorted or sometimes even denied by leaders, scholars and pastors who claim to be evangelical. Although fallen human nature has always recoiled from recognizing its need for Christ's imputed righteousness, modernity greatly fuels the fires of this discontent with the biblical Gospel. We have allowed this discontent to dictate the nature of our ministry and what it is we are preaching. . . There is no gospel except that of Christ's substitution in our place whereby God imputed to Him our sin and imputed to us His righteousness. Because He bore our judgment, we now walk in His grace as those who are forever pardoned, accepted and adopted as God's children. There is no basis for our acceptance before God except in Christ's saving work, not in our patriotism, churchly devotion or moral decency. The gospel declares what God has done for us in Christ. It is not about what we can do to reach Him.

This article of faith clearly states that without substitution an imputation there is "no gospel." We cannot speak of a common doctrine of salvation without these twin truths. This the very heart of what it meant historically to be called an evangelical. Evangelicals shared the gospel in common, even though they often disagreed among themselves regarding matters such as sacraments and ecclesiology. Indeed, the title evangelical has no significant meaning left if substitution and imputation are surrendered.

The framers and signers of *The Cambridge Declaration* concluded thesis four with this summary:

We *reaffirm* that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice.

We *deny* that justification rests on any merit to be found in us, or upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ's righteousness in us, or that an institution claiming to be a church that denies or condemns *sola fide* can be recognized as a legitimate church.

Note how *The Cambridge Declaration* both *affirms* and *denies*. This is one of the critical differences between this 1996 evangelical declaration and "The Gift of Salvation." Furthermore, see that *The Cambridge Declaration* denies that an institution can rightly be treated as a church if it still clings to infusion, or what "The Gift of Salvation" terms "transformative righteousness."

The Unique Dangers of Our Time

One signer, who is of Reformed theological persuasion, has written that he is committed to "an ecumenism of conviction," not one of "accommodation." I sincerely believe he means this. I also doubt that all of those who

signed this statement are of the same mindset or that they have his understanding of the background. Why?

The nature of modern theologizing is to address the unreconciled diversity of American evangelicalism by seeking new ways in which we can "get along" rather the old ways through which we sought to find agreement through the careful use of words. The old ways sometimes brought a true ecumenism while still respecting significant differences. Fundamentalism did not understand this kind of unity and continually divided over every new issue. Modern evangelicalism has followed a different course. We have increasingly sought for ways to play down our distinctive differences. We hardly know what our differences are these days. We want to work with Roman Catholics in the cause of evangelism. We want to recognize the Roman Catholic Church on equal terms with evangelical churches that have historically confessed the gospel.

This thinking has been growing for fifty years. We have been able to do this because the only article of faith we seem to insist upon is the "new birth." (Catholics have always affirmed the new birth as a renewing and renovating work of the Holy Spirit!) At this time in our history, when our fences need serious mending theologically, we should be weary of such ecumenism. We should be weary for entirely different reasons than those expressed by earlier fundamentalists.

When I asked an evangelical theologian his thoughts regarding this new statement he noted that some feel this new statement might well be an instrument for rescuing several evangelical organizations (who engage in evangelism as their primary purpose). Isn't it ironic that we need a seriously flawed statement to protect evangelicals from their own shallow and confused understanding of *sola fide*?

Most evangelicals do not know what justification actually means, much less what the issues were that divided us from Roman Catholicism in the first place. Not knowing our own history and the reasons for profound differences, we can, in a few short pages, heartily agree to recognize oneness with Roman Catholics in "The Gift of Salvation." I have no doubt Luther would be amazed, but definitely not surprised.

If the truths of faith and grace are now celebrated by these Roman Catholics what does this mean for their Magisterium, the official teaching body of their church? Is Christ alone able to intercede for them at God's right hand or do they still need another mediator (or intercessor) in heaven besides Christ? Do these Catholic signers believe that by taking the host they receive the grace of God in salvation? (The statement clearly infers that they still believe this Catholic dogma.) These questions remain precisely because of the admissions cited above. Until we get imputation right we will have no common doctrine of salvation.

I can find no room for celebration in the publication of this statement. I find room only for shock and horror. This document will cause new confusion and deeper division within evangelicalism. If a book is to follow, as is promised, then the divide will grow even more serious in the next few years. One consolation exists - more and more people will be forced to deal with the nature of the gospel message. One can only cry for reformation and revival in the midst of the confusion.

Finally, I ask, "What exactly is the agenda of Richard John Neuhaus?" Why are several of these men, some of whom have had private audience with the Pope (e.g. Neuhaus, etc.), so eager to get evangelicals onto the ecumenical stage with them? A recent AP news release tells of Pope John Paul's hopes to bring erstwhile Catholics back into the fold of the church. He urged Catholic bishops in North America to work with fresh missionary zeal. The Pope told the bishops, "The objective is to diffuse ever more the evangelical message" and to help "knock down the walls of separation between man and man, nation and nation." Isn't it interesting that the

pope endorses the popular idea of "tearing down the walls?" If Catholics can somehow seize the missionary initiative, use evangelical methodology that they have seen work so well, and reach statements of agreement with Protestants, then they may well stop some of the exodus and renew their own church. there is no doubt, in the light of the Pope's statements, that this is his goal. Why then is Neuhaus, who left Protestantism deliberately, a kind of spokesman for so many evangelicals and evangelical issues, at least in some unofficial sense? And what is the *real* purpose of this evangelical/Catholic initiative of the past four years?

"The Doctrine of Salvation" says furthermore:

We must share the fullness of God's saving truth with all, including members of our several communities. Evangelicals must speak the gospel to Catholics and Catholics to Evangelicals, always speaking the truth in love.

The problem is not that there are no true believers within the Roman Catholic Church. That has never been the debate. God is the final judge of who, whether Roman Catholic or evangelical, is genuinely trusting Christ alone for salvation. the problem is that those who affirm the theological beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church do not have a gospel that is biblical. We must share the gospel with lost evangelicals but we must make sure it is the gospel that we are preaching to them, not the gospel of Rome, which is no gospel at all.

Related Evangelical Confusion Regarding the Gospel

I am reminded, in all of this, that the Promise Keepers organization inserted a *sola fide* addition to their doctrinal statement recently. This was done after some questions were raised from Protestant critics. Then, after Roman Catholic criticism of the added words, the leadership removed *sola fide*. what is amazing is that this back and forth doctrinal change was done within only a matter of months. The way in which we can affirm a truth, and then deny the same truth only weeks later, is staggering. I believe there are profound reasons for maintaining serious suspicion about all of these changes.

Further, this document speaks of evangelicals and Roman Catholics having salvation beliefs in common. Yet it is safe to say that the majority of Roman Catholics, both conservative and liberal, do not share these things in common with evangelicals. It is simply misleading to suggest that this kind of statement is representative of any significant number of Catholics in the real world.

Even more important is the observation, made by a friend who understands these matters quite well, that this document nowhere deals with official roman Catholic teaching on any of the matters cited. Vatican II, which does have official Catholic authority, takes a quite different view in regard to salvation. It teaches that an atheist, without denying his atheism, might be saved by virtue of the grace of God which equips him to live a morally good life.

I wonder, furthermore, what does this whole effort do for the cause of truth and for needed reformation? When Bill Bright wrote of ECT that "The joint statement by evangelical and Catholic believers in our Lord Jesus Christ has enhanced our efforts to reach the masses of the world with the gospel," I was amazed. But when he added, "I have no doubt that the population of heaven will be greatly increased because of this statement," there could be no doubt as to his profound confusion regarding the essential nature of the gospel.¹¹ Truly some Roman Catholic theologians might be closer to understanding grace, at least in several critical areas as touching the nature of grace

and the human will, than Dr. Bright.

This new document adds several new evangelical signers who did not endorse the earlier ECT document. Some of these include Timothy George (Beeson Divinity School), Harold O.J. Brown and John Woodbridge (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School), Timothy Phillips (Wheaton College), and T.M. Moore (Chesapeake Theological Seminary). Others who signed the first document are also involved in this new statement as well, e.g. Charles Colson, Bill Bright, J.I. Packer, Kent Hill, and Mark Noll.

Conclusion

At Regensburg the Roman Catholic representatives thoroughly renounced every remnant of semi-Pelagianism, something few evangelicals in our time will do. They even agreed on *sola fide*, something this new statement also attempt to do, yet unsuccessfully. But Luther strongly opposed this doctrinal statement. Regensburg bears a certain strange resemblance to our recent history. Roman Catholic scholars such as Bouyer (another converted Protestant), McSorley, Tavard and Kung have all written things that are very close to what these evangelicals and Catholics have given us. These scholars argued for years that Luther did not reject the "real" Catholic Church. This thinking has been proven bankrupt in the past decade. Yet evangelicals continue to follow the mistakes.

What I fear is missed in these debates is this - Luther always affirmed the imputed righteousness of Christ (i.e. extrinsic justification, not "transformative righteousness") as the heart of the gospel. He properly contended that without this truth there is no gospel at all. A whole generation of evangelicals pay lip service to Luther yet deny the central tenet of his thought.

An evangelical writer of another age wisely wrote:

It has been justly said, in controversies of faith, the difference between antagonist systems is often reduced to a line as sharp as a razor's edge, yet on one side of that line is God's truth and on the other a departure from it. At Ratisbon [Regensburg], the difference between the Popish and the Protestant doctrines of Justification seemed to resolve itself into one point.¹²

Has history repeated itself? It would appear so.

End notes.

1. *Christianity Today*, December 8, 1997
2. *Baptist Press*, November 13, 1997.
3. ohn Reumann, *The Christian Century*, October 22, 1997, 942-43.
4. *Ibid.*, 945.
5. *Ibid.*, 946.
6. Peter Matheson, *Cardinal Contarini at Regensburg*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 49.
7. Quoted in James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 144.
8. *Ibid.*, 145.

9. 1967 ed., s.v. "Contarini Gasparo," by F.F. Strauss.
10. *Christianity Today* is not merely reporting on this document when its Senior Adviser, Dr. Timothy George, who helped draft the statement and likewise signed it, writes an introduction to the publication of the statement itself which assesses the document positively. Timothy George makes the following statement in his assessment of what was going on in making such a statement possible.

Thus, for all our differences, Bible-believing evangelicals stand much closer to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger than to Bishop Spong" (34)!

This is an amazing admission. It helps the reader understand something of what is behind this drive for expressing unity. Our world is changing. Protestant theology is in disarray and because we have more in common with a devout Catholic such as Ratzinger, who would affirm the ancient creeds with us as evangelicals, we can now enter into a deeper unity on the nature of salvation. This thinking is somewhat akin, in the political realm, to a citizen of France in the 1930's saying, "For all our differences, which are still large, we stand much closer to Mussolini than we do to Hitler!" Both were a serious threat to the prosperity of France and both were determined to believe and practice things harmful to the French people.

Note further, David Neff's positive editorial in this same issue encouraging the whole Catholic/evangelical direction.

11. Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, *Evangelical & Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), back cover quotations.
12. James Buchanan, 150

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Resolutions for Roman Catholic and Evangelical Dialogue

Drafted by Michael Horton; revised by J. I. Packer

The following statements of evangelical belief are offered as material for dialogue between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, following from the recent document, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," drafted by Richard John Neuhaus and Charles Colson, with others. We the undersigned offer this response in a spirit of irenic debate on issues arising from that important joint statement. As that document was crafted to encourage cooperation on the basis of a consensus deemed sufficient for the purpose, though confessionally incomplete, so the following statements seek to identify issues of concern to evangelical Protestants that the thrust of the document raises. What follows is intended to encourage further discussion of the possibilities and problems of acting together.

1. While both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics affirm the ecumenical Creeds, we do not see this catholic consensus as a sufficient basis for declaring that agreement exists on all the essential elements of the Gospel.
2. The doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone has since the Reformation been acknowledged by mainstream Protestants as "the article by which the church stands or falls," and the tenet that distinguishes a true from a false church. While affirming an indissoluble bond between justification and sanctification, this doctrine insists that justification itself is God's present forensic declaration of pardon and acceptance, and that the righteousness required for this declaration is neither attained by human effort nor infused or worked internally by God in the human soul, but is the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to those who believe. The Council of Trent anathematized those who embrace this doctrine, and all subsequent magisterial declarations, including those of the Second Vatican Council, continue to bind Roman Catholics to the conviction that this Gospel of free justification by faith alone, apart from works, and the assurance of salvation that springs from it, is not consonant with Roman Catholic teaching. While gladly noting in modern Roman Catholic exposition a growing emphasis on Christ and the biblical promises as objects of faith and trust, we see justification by faith alone as an essential of the Gospel on which radical disagreement continues, and we deny the adequacy of any version of the Gospel that falls short at this point.
3. Furthermore, while rejoicing in our agreement that God in the Gospel offers salvation in Christ

to all who will receive it, we radically disagree with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that unbelievers may be saved by their good works, apart from faith in Christ.

4. The extent of the creedal consensus that binds orthodox Evangelicals and Roman Catholics together warrants the making of common cause on moral and cultural issues in society. Roman Catholics and Evangelicals have every reason to join minds, hearts, and hands when Christian values and behavioral patterns are at stake. Yet it is incorrect to regard such cooperation among Christians as common ecclesial action in fulfilling a common ecclesial mission. The mission of the church as such is primarily the fulfilling of the Great Commission of Christ through the ministry of Word and sacraments, and cultural, moral, political and social concerns in which Christians rightly engage must not be thought to determine the relationship of ecclesial communions, or allowed to become decisive in the setting of their respective agendas.

5. We affirm that Christ's prayer for unity requires vigilant patience and diligence as we seek a greater visible unity. We deny that this prayer refers merely to the spiritual or invisible church. We further affirm that the unity we seek is shaped, bounded, and controlled by the teaching of the canonical Scriptures, the written Word of God, comprising the Law and the Gospel in its message of reconciliation with God and new life in Christ. To this Word the church must submit and by it must correct its understandings, so that its unity will be unity in truth. The Roman Catholic Church claims to be graced with an infallibility that attaches to conciliar declarations and Papal pronouncements *ex cathedra*, such that these are in principle irreformable, and must be treated as decisive guides to the theological interpretation of the Bible. We deny that the defined doctrines of the church's infallibility, Papal primacy, justification according to Trent, transubstantiation and eucharistic sacrifice, and the immaculate conception and assumption of Mary, can be proved from Scripture, and we cannot accept any form of joint action that appears to imply agreement with them. Also, we deny that visible unity has been or can be achieved where a common confession of the Gospel in all its essential elements is lacking.

6. We affirm that individual Roman Catholics who for whatever reason do not self-consciously assent to the precise definitions of the Roman Catholic Magisterium regarding justification, the sole mediation of Christ, the relation between faith and the sacraments, the divine monergism of the new birth, and similar matters of evangelical conviction, but who think and speak evangelically about these things, are indeed our brothers and sisters in Christ, despite Rome's official position. We perceive that the Roman Catholic Church contains many such believers. We deny, however, that in its present confession it is an acceptable Christian communion, let alone being the mother of all the faithful to whom every believer needs to be related.

7. We affirm that the Great Commission of our Lord requires every Christian and every congregation to be engaged in witness to Christ, and that this is concerned not merely with conversion, but with the catechesis, nurture, and discipline of converts. Therefore, we deny that it is advisable to imply that whether one is in a church where the Word is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly (that is, biblically) administered is no longer important; and we insist that every Christian, Roman Catholic no less than Protestant, needs regular exposure to accurate, Christ-centered preaching and exposition of the Bible.

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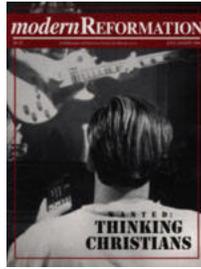
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The Lord Christ or the Pope of Rome?

by Richard Bennett and Robert J. Nicholson

Truth and the Scripture

The Lord Jesus Christ, in His great high priestly prayer, declared clearly the truth of God's Word. He said, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*" God's Word not only contains the truth but rather it is truth itself. This is consistent with the declarations throughout the Old Testament in which the Holy Spirit continually proclaimed that the revelation from God is truth, as for example Psalm 119:142, "*thy law is truth.*" The Lord Himself therefore identified truth with the Written Word. There is no source, other than written Scripture alone, to which the statement, "*thy word is truth*" can apply. That source alone, the Holy Scripture, is the believer's standard of truth.

In the New Testament, it is the Written Word of God^¾and that alone^¾to which the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles refer as the final authority. In the temptation, the Lord Jesus three times resisted Satan, saying, "*It is written.*" For example, in Matthew 4:4, "*he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" In stating, "*It is written*", the Lord used the very phrase that is used in the Holy Bible eighty times. The prevalence of this repeated phrase underlines its importance. The Lord's complete acceptance of the authority of the Written Word is evident in His words found in Matthew 5:17-18,

"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

Other sources of authority condemned

Christ Jesus continually castigated and rebuked the Pharisees because they placed their tradition on a par with the Word of God. He condemned them because they were attempting to corrupt the very basis of truth by equating their traditions to the Word of God. He declared to them “[You are] *making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such things do ye*” (Mark 7:13). These traditions of the Pharisees were precepts, ordinances, and rules of religious belief and practice that had been developed by learned religious teachers over time. They had been passed on by word of mouth and by selectively edited writings. These traditions, oral and written, formed a body of cultural material that became an official set of interpretations and guidelines for religious life. Even the clear teaching of the Holy Scripture was being sifted through them and modified to suit men's tastes and preferences. Furthermore, in refuting the errors of the Sadducees, the Scripture records the Lord saying, “*Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God*” (Matthew 22:29). Unlike the Pharisees, who mistakenly considered themselves the loyal followers of Moses, the Sadducees were a radical party of religious liberals who had appropriated the thinking of Greek agnostic philosophers. They manufactured beliefs on the basis of what seemed reasonable to them rather than what had been revealed by God in His Word. However, since Scripture alone is inspired, [\[1\]](#) it alone is the ultimate authority, and it alone is the final judge of all human traditions and reasoning. The Word of the Lord says as a commandment in Proverbs 30:5, 6, “*Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*” God commands that we are not to add to His Word: This command shows emphatically that it is God’s Word^{3/4}and God’s Word alone^{3/4}that is pure and uncontaminated.

Aligned with Proverbs, the Lord’s strong, clear declaration in Isaiah 8:20 is: “*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*” The truth is this: since God’s written word alone is breathed out by Him [\[2\]](#), it and it alone is the sole rule of faith. It cannot

be otherwise. Any who contradict Scripture, or attempt to assign it an inferior position in the life of faith, may safely be accounted as liars and deceivers bent on moving God off His throne that they may occupy it themselves.

The expression “Sola Scriptura”

From the time of the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, when the Holy God wrote with His finger on the tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18), until this present day, the written word of God has been extant in the world. The term “Sola Scriptura” or “the Bible alone” as the measure of truth is short hand for saying that Scripture is the only point of reference for finding out what is to be believed about God and what duty God requires of man. The very phrase “It is written” means exclusively transcribed, and not hearsay. The command to believe what is written means we are to receive only the pure word of God. It separates out from all other sources the body of truth that we are to believe. What is at stake before the All Holy God is His incorruptible truth. For men, what is at stake is certainty, in the words of Proverbs 22:21 *“That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth.”* Certainty is needed for the salvation of immortal souls. In the very last commandment in the Bible God resolutely tells us not to add to nor take away from His Word.

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”
(Revelation 22:18-19)

The principle of interpretation

The principle of “Sola Scriptura” is consistent with the very way in which the word of truth that comes from God says it is to be interpreted, as Psalm 36:9 explains, *“For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light we see light.”* God’s truth is seen in the light of God’s truth. This is exactly the same as the Apostle Paul says, *“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom*

teacheth but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. [3]” It is precisely in the light which God’s truth sheds, that His truth is seen. Scripture provides its own sufficient rule of interpretation.

The Apostle Peter, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, declares, “*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*” [4] Logically then, Peter makes it very clear that in order to maintain the purity of Holy God’s written word, the source of interpretation must be from the same pure source as the origin of the Scripture itself. Scripture can only be understood correctly in the light of Scripture, since it alone is uncorrupted. It is only with the Holy Spirit’s light that Scripture can be comprehended correctly. The Holy Spirit causes those who are the Lord’s to understand Scripture.

Since the Spirit does this by Scripture, obviously, it is in accord with the principle that Scripture itself is the infallible rule of interpretation of its own truth: “*it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth*” (I John 5:6). Those sincerely desiring to be true to Lord in this very matter of the standard of “Sola Scriptura” must turn to the Lord to obey His command, “*Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.*”

[5] If one is yearning for truth in this essential matter, in the attitude of Psalm 51:17, “*with a broken and a contrite heart*”, the Lord God will not despise, but reveal to him or her the basic foundation where the Lord Christ Jesus and the Apostles stood. In the words of the Apostle John, “*This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.*” [6] The Apostle John wrote, as did Peter and Paul, in order that those who are saved should know that his testimony is true.

The sufficiency and clarity of Scripture

The total sufficiency of Scripture is declared by the Apostle Paul, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect,*

thoroughly furnished unto all good works." [7] For final truth and authority, all that is needed is the Scripture. This is because the Word of God bears its own spiritual rule of historical-grammatical interpretation. Sections that initially appear obscure because of our lack of understanding, are clarified by other parts where meanings are made plain. The Holy Spirit Himself is given to the believer so that by prayer and diligent comparative study, knowledge of the Gospel and the will of God is made plain to him. It is this means alone, comparing Scripture with Scripture under the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, that safeguards the renewed reader from the danger of imaginative self-centered mystical deceit and the errors propagated by religious fanaticism and cultic heresies. Natural men, those not made alive by the Holy Spirit and indwelt by Him, have only their darkened understandings to guide them. [8]

The Scriptures are so plain that even a child can come to faith through the Written Word. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy, "*And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*" [9] Much of the Bible is quite plain and straightforward. For example John 3:36 says, "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" There is no mystical or hidden meaning in this verse, as in most of Scripture.

The claim that Sola Scripture was not possible

In an attempt to justify tradition as an authority, an appeal is often made to the very last verse in John's gospel where it is stated, "*And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*" [10] Of course, there were many deeds and sayings of the Lord that are not recorded in Scripture. But Scripture is the authoritative record that the Holy God has given His people. We do not have a single sentence that is authoritatively from the Lord, outside of what is in the written word of the New Testament. To appeal to a tradition for authority when the Holy God did not give it is futile. The idea that somehow sayings and events from the Lord had been

passed on by word of mouth, and so preserved reliably in tradition is simply not true. Given the fluid nature of language, the fragility of verbal communication, and the reconstructive nature of human memory, such a claim is ludicrous in the extreme. Simply to believe in the traditions of men is superstitious naivety of spirit combined with an irrational gullibility. The Bible even gives us an example of a false tradition already at work at the time of John's writing of his Gospel. In John 21:23, John refutes a false tradition, a "saying [note that it was not "written"] abroad among the brethren" going around the church that the Lord would return before John died.

Another desperate attempt to justify tradition is the claim that the early church did not have the New Testament. However, the Apostle Peter speaks about the writings of the Apostle Paul when he states, "*...even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*" [\[11\]](#) Peter also declares that he was writing so that the believers could remember what he said. So he wrote, "*Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.*" [\[12\]](#)

From the earliest times a substantial part of the New Testament was available. Under the inspiration of the Lord, the Apostle Paul commands his letters to be read in other churches besides those to which they were sent. This clearly shows that the written word of God was being circulated even while the Apostles lived. The Lord's command to believe what is written has always been something that the believers could and did obey. In this matter one must have the humility commanded in the Scripture not to think above what is written: "*...that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.*" [\[13\]](#)

The absurd rationale that because the early Church did not have the New Testament we need tradition ignores two very simple facts concerning God's

provision for the early church. In the first place, before the canon of the New Testament was complete, the Apostles were present as Christ's personally commissioned ambassadors, and thus He endorsed their authority as teachers as being from Himself. Second, even during the transitional stages of establishing the New Testament body of believers, the Apostles had no difficulty preaching the Gospel from the Old Covenant Scriptures, nor using them as an authoritative guide for that period in matters of faith and morals. [14] The New Testament writings were incorporated and received into the canon of Holy Scripture when the last surviving Apostle had completed his work. Written revelation was at an end because the final prophetic word on salvation had been given in and from the Lord Jesus Christ. [15] No further Word from heaven could have been given, nor should any more have been expected, then or now. [16] The Gospels are the record of His first advent in the flesh; the Acts, His coming in the Spirit; the letters are the inspired comment on them. The book of Revelation is His Second Advent and preceding instruction and events. The documentation is finished and complete.

The regulation and the believer's love of God

The Lord brings the topic of truth to bear on the believer's love for Him. This again underscores its importance. *“Jesus answered and said to him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent Me.”* [17] And again, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”* [18] Living His own life in this world to the glory of His Father, the Lord Jesus could say *“he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”* [19] In His supreme aim to please His Father, Christ looked to the authority and direction of the Scriptures alone. He confirmed the very message of the Old Testament, *“The law of the LORD is perfect.”* [20]

The believer is to be true to the way of the Lord, holding alone to what is written:

“*Thy Word is truth.*” All true disciples therefore must acknowledge that there is an absolute measure by which a thing may be judged to be truth or falsehood, and either pleasing or displeasing to God. In times past, that standard was called “the rule of faith” or “the basis of truth,” meaning the measure by which truth is known. This principle is, as is clearly demonstrated in both the Old and New Testaments, that the written word of God *itself* is the basis of truth. It is not possible to own the Lord Jesus Christ as Master and then refuse the rule of the Father’s Word in and by Him. [\[21\]](#) There are no halfway houses here in which the vacuous pretence of an anti-biblical piety can find safe-haven. It is a clear choice. If you love God you love His Word alone, not His Word plus the words of men. You cannot say you love God and despise His Word, for the marks of authentic spiritual affection are patent in the Word itself, “*But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*” [\[22\]](#)

Source of authority in the Roman Catholic Church

Within Roman Catholicism, the basis for truth is also absolute, but it is not the unqualified authority of God in His Written Word. Rather, it is the authority of a man, the Pope of Rome. The ultimate authority lies in the decisions and decrees of the reigning Pope. This is seen in documentation from official Roman Catholic sources. Canon 749 Sec.1 declares,

“The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses **infallible teaching authority** when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful...he proclaims with a definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held as such.” [\[23\]](#)

The mandated response of “the Christian faithful” to this claimed infallible teaching authority is spelled out in Canon 752,

“**A religious respect of intellect and will, even if not the assent of faith, is to be paid to the teaching which the Supreme Pontiff or the college of bishops enunciate on faith or morals when they exercise the authentic magisterium...**”

Any appeal or recourse against the totalitarian imposition of a claimed infallibility is silenced by the decree of Canon 333 Sec. 3, **“There is neither appeal nor recourse against a decision or decree of the Roman Pontiff.”**

According to the Bible, however, infallibility is an attribute of God and not that of any man or group of men. Like eternity and omniscience, infallibility is among God’s incommunicable natural attributes, properties of His Being that cannot be passed or delegated to creatures. There are some things God declares He cannot do, He cannot lie, nor can he create another infallible one. [\[24\]](#) The Papal claim to “infallible teaching authority” is essentially a claim to divinity. Rome’s doctrine exalts the Pope *“above all that is called God.”* [\[25\]](#) Scripture makes clear the fact that revealed truth is solely from God, *“For prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”* [\[26\]](#) Nothing more strikingly displays the arrogance of the Papacy than this appalling claim to infallibility. The Pope, in setting himself up as supreme, has *de facto* denied the absolute authority of God.

Skirting the problem by “situational infallibility”

Roman Catholic apologists generally object to ascribing divinity to the Papal office by virtue of this claim to infallibility. In fact, it is customary among them to point out that Rome’s own statements confine the Pope’s freedom from error only to those declarations concerning faith and morals that he, as the sole legitimate heir and successor of the Apostle Peter, pronounces. That is to say, a Roman Pope is considered to be infallible, not in his own person, but in his office as supreme pastor and head of the Church. This alleged chrism is granted to him standing at the head of the continuing Apostolic College of Cardinal bishops. The Pope’s infallibility, it is alleged, is situational and not inherent in his person. This evasion, however, does not alleviate in any way the blasphemy bound up in the Papal claim. Apostolic succession inhering in Rome and the Papacy is simply a lie. Nowhere in Scripture is there any suggestion of the existence of an “apostolic succession”. The Roman claim is completely inconsistent with the recorded commission that the Apostle Peter was to take the Gospel to the Jews [\[27\]](#), as was the Apostle Paul to the Gentiles [\[28\]](#), including those in Rome. In

the New Testament, the Apostles appointed elders and deacons, and not a line of apostles. [\[29\]](#) There remains also the fact that God cannot confer a “limited infallibility” any more than an unqualified infallibility. The contradiction still stands, even if the hair splitting seems convenient for Roman Catholic apologists. Infallibility is God’s own nature. As an incommunicable attribute, it cannot be passed or delegated to any creature.

The ascription of even a “situational infallibility” to the Papal office is a wicked assumption. It attempts to elevate the Roman Catholic Church to the very throne of God, and to establish one man and his attending retinue of ecclesiastical sycophants and lackeys as self-appointed lords over the consciences of men. As the Scriptures themselves state, *“There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”* [\[30\]](#)

That a human power should claim infallibility to be “as God” defies imagination, but Papal and collegiate infallibility are now so sufficiently nebulous as to provide a wealth of material for historical comedy. In aping God’s attribute of infallibility, the system of Rome not only mocks the Godhead and His truth, it also denies the facts of history. Pope Honorius (625-638) was condemned as a heretic by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681 A.D.). He was also condemned as a heretic by Pope Leo II, as well as by every other Pope until the eleventh century. So there were “infallible” Popes condemning another “infallible” Pope as heretics. The Roman Catholic historian Bernard Hasler writes “but [Pope] John XXII did not want to hear about his own infallibility; he viewed it an improper restriction of his rights as a sovereign, and in the bull *Qui quorundam* (1324) condemned the Franciscan doctrine of papal infallibility as the work of the devil.” [\[31\]](#) Ignaz von Dollinger, another leading Roman Catholic historian in Germany, warned the world in his own day regarding the consequences of such a doctrine,

“The Pope’s authority is unlimited, incalculable; it can strike, as Innocent III says, wherever sin is; it can punish every one; it allows no appeal and is itself Sovereign Caprice; for the Pope carries, according to the expression of Boniface VIII, all rights in the Shrine of his breast. As he has now become infallible, he

can by the use of the little word, “orbi,” (which means that he turns himself round to the whole Church) make every rule, every doctrine, every demand, into a certain and incontestable article of Faith. No right can stand against him, no personal or corporate liberty; or as the [Roman Catholic] Canonists put it—‘The tribunal of God and of the pope is one and the same.’” [\[32\]](#)

Rome’s declaration of claimed infallibility is castigated by the Lord’s commandment, “*I am the LORD thy God... thou shalt have no other gods before me.*” [\[33\]](#) The basic blasphemy of Rome observed in this alleged infallibility is seen, although in different terminology, in her declaration that her tradition is divinely inspired.

The claim for Tradition, divinely inspired

To understand Rome’s traditions, one must appreciate her sacrilegious mindset in the bold assertion that her doctrines are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus she says,

“Following the divinely inspired teaching of our holy Fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church (for we know that this tradition comes from the Holy Spirit who dwells in her)...” [\[34\]](#)

Thus Rome professes not to have the Bible, but rather to have the “Word” of God, incarnate and living. Thus she states,

“Still, the Christian faith is not a ‘religion of the book’. Christianity is the religion of the ‘Word’ of God, ‘not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living.’” [\[35\]](#)

Only men devoid of the Holy Spirit could have penned and published such a distorted view of Holy Scripture. The Bible, God’s Written Word, shows the brightness of the Truth, Holiness, Majesty and Authority of God, given to it by its Author, the Holy Spirit. Sacred Scripture has the stamp God’s excellence upon it, distinguishing it from all other writings. This is evidenced by the many fulfilled

prophecies in the Bible, written hundreds of years before the actual event, pointing to Jesus Christ. Isaiah 7:14 speaks of “*a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.*” Isaiah 9:6 says, “*unto us a child is born... the Mighty God.*” Micah 5:2 says, “*But thou Bethlehem...out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.*” Zechariah 9:9 says, “*behold thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass.*” In Luke 19:43-44, Jesus prophesied of the destruction to come to Jerusalem in 70 AD. By contrast, no Catholic document has any fulfilled prophecy in it because no Catholic document is inspired of God! Fulfilled prophecy is God’s way of authenticating the Bible as the one inspired book. [\[36\]](#) God in these last days has spoken “*by his Son.*” [\[37\]](#) Divine inspiration is revelation given in written words, it is not formed or preserved in a tidal swamp of human tradition, “*All scripture [graphe] is given by inspiration of God....*” [\[38\]](#) Rome’s claim to “divinely inspired teaching of our holy Fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church” is the ancient temptation and lie “*ye shall be as gods*” [\[39\]](#) again manifested. Rome would place herself on the throne of God declaring her tradition to be on a par with Scripture inspired by God. The Church of Rome does not stop there. In another document her assertions go so far as to contend that the very fullness of grace and truth belongs to the Catholic Church. From *Dominus Iesus*, Rome’s exact words are, “Therefore, the fullness of Christ’s salvific mystery belongs also to the Church, inseparably united to her Lord.” And, “The Lord Jesus, the only Saviour, did not only establish a simple community of disciples, but constituted the Church as a salvific mystery: he himself is in the Church...” And, “the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.” [\[40\]](#)

The Bible speaks of only One to whom the very fullness of grace and truth has been entrusted, His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. [\[41\]](#) The Papal arrogance tallies well with what the Scripture predicted for such claims, “*he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*” [\[42\]](#) “*I will be like the most High.*” [\[43\]](#) If Christ Himself were identified with “the very fullness of grace and truth” in the Church of Rome, He would have been responsible for all the torture and murder, heresy and intrigue of the Inquisition from the iniquitous Pope Innocent III in 1203 A.D., until its final dissolution in Spain and Portugal in

1808. The Christ of Scripture is separated from all such iniquity. He is the source and means of grace and truth. [44] Far from being identified with her, He exposes her as “*the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs.*” [45] He as the Lord of history reveals the rotten fruit that comes from her so-called “divinely inspired” tradition.

Where divinely inspired Tradition leads

Having examined the claim for a “tradition [that] comes from the Holy Spirit”, an assessment to see just what that tradition is, follows. For example, Paragraph 1161 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states,

“Following the divinely inspired teaching of our holy Fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church (for we know that this tradition comes from the Holy Spirit who dwells in her) we rightly define with full certainty and correctness that, like the figure of the precious and life-giving cross, venerable and holy images of our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ, our inviolate Lady, the holy Mother of God, and the venerated angels, all the saints and the just, whether painted or made of mosaic or another suitable material, are to be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and vestments, walls and panels, in houses and on streets.”

This is idolatry^{3/4}plain, simple, and condemned by the Lord God.

The Bible makes clear that God hates idolatry and forbids a representation in art of what is divine (Exodus. 20:4-6). Making images to represent God corrupts those who use them (Deuteronomy 4:13, 15-16). Images teach lies about God (Habakkuk. 2:18-20). God cannot be represented in art and all who practice idolatry are commanded to repent (Acts 17:29-30). The Holy Spirit orders in the New Testament as He did the Old, “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen*” (1 John. 5:21). The traditions of Roman Catholicism bring into the worship of God unholy water mixed with oil and salt, the smells of charcoal and incense, the lives of frustrated celibate men and women, and worst of all, it brings in the idolatry which God hates. With such “images of our Lord and God”, Rome

commands the exhibition of “the venerated angels, all the saints” and saints’ bones which are venerated as Holy Relics. Such teaching and behavior bring ridicule upon the Holy Spirit that she claims as the source of her tradition. The Church of Rome mocks God when they pretend that these traditions came from the Holy Spirit. As the promoter of lewdness in the institutions of her unholy traditions, there never was a more expressive or appropriate title of her than that penned by the Apostle John, “*And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*” [\[46\]](#)

Rome claims her Tradition is sacred

To maintain her pomp, ceremonies and sacraments, Rome officially states that her Tradition is sacred,

“Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine wellspring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal.” [\[47\]](#)

Rome claims not only that Sacred Tradition forms “one thing” with God’s Written Word but also that her Holy Tradition transmits God’s Word. She declares,

“*Sacred Scripture* is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. And [Holy] [\[48\]](#) *Tradition* transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by their preaching.” [\[49\]](#)

Such teaching ascends from the pit of hell itself. It is a dishonor done to God’s Holy Name and a profanity against His Holy Word. The Bible teaches that the Written Word of God cannot be commingled with Rome’s Tradition; in the Lord

Jesus Christ's own word, "*the Scripture cannot be broken.*" [50] "*Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*" [51] The Roman Catholic assertion that "*Holy Tradition* transmits in its entirety the Word of God" is literally a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit communicates His Word to believers. This is His design and purpose in transmitting His Word to His people. It is not the Holy Spirit's endeavor to transmit an unholy tradition that upholds idolatry, superstition, and necromancy. "*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*" [52] It is true faith that the Spirit of God seals in the hearts of believers, as He alone is the Spirit of truth. By His own divine light, efficacy, and power, the testimony of the Holy Spirit is given to all believers in the Written Word. The Holy Spirit's communication of His own light and authority to the Scripture is the evidence of its origin. The Holy Spirit brings His Word to believers.

Rome's declaration that "*Holy Tradition* transmits in its entirety the Word of God" not only denigrates the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit, it also focuses the mind on Tradition and not on the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit to open the Word to him or her. This is the very desire of Rome emphasized in italics in the beginning of Paragraph 113 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "*Read the Scripture within the 'living Tradition of the whole Church.'*" Rome goes so far as to reprimand "the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church." [53] Believers being convicted by the Holy Spirit receive, embrace, believe, and submit to the Scriptures because of the authority of God who gave them to us. The system of Rome maligns the Holy Spirit in claiming that "*Holy Tradition* transmits in its entirety the Word of God". This "Holy Tradition" can also be an unwritten tradition, which the Roman Catholic Church feels no compunction to write down. This is actually the handy trick employed by dictators^{3/4}the "law" is whatever the dictator says it is today. Since the law is not necessarily written down, it can be contradicted with impunity whenever the dictator feels like it. This is why written contracts are demanded in everyday life. "Tradition", used this way, is a very handy tool in the

Roman Catholic arsenal. In so using it, she negates the very means by which a person is saved from his sin. Rome's teaching is literally soul damning, in the words of Lord, "*Woe unto you... for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.*" [\[54\]](#)

The Apostle Paul urges the believer to look to the "*demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*" [\[55\]](#) Just as a fresh supply of manna was given each day to the Israelites in the desert, so the Spirit of God ever breaks anew the Word of Life to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Therefore, it is incumbent on all Gospel preachers to faithfully direct the poor deluded prisoners of the Papacy away from the words of men, and toward the Scripture wherein they may find One who said, "*He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*" [\[56\]](#)

The claim that apostolic succession upholds Tradition

Under the heading called "*The Apostolic Tradition*" and the sub heading "*...continued in apostolic succession*", Rome claims the following,

"In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them 'their own position of teaching authority.' Indeed, 'the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time.' This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it." [\[57\]](#)

Nowhere in Scripture is there reference to the existence of an apostolic succession. In the New Testament the Apostles appointed not apostles but rather elders [\[58\]](#) and deacons. Nonetheless Rome attempts to defend her position in the name of personal succession from the Apostles. [\[59\]](#) If one wants to use the concept of "apostolic succession", the true successors of the Apostles are the saints of the household of God who "*are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*" [\[60\]](#) If that doctrinal foundation is destroyed, instead of

apostolic faith, one has apostasy. “Apostolic succession” without apostolic doctrine is a fraud. It is only Biblical doctrine that makes one wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

If one actually investigates “succession” with Roman Catholicism, the evidence of a sequence from Pagan Rome is what appears as obvious. This is documented by one of their own famous scholars, John Henry Newman, as he wrote of the pagan origin of many Roman Catholic practices,

We are told in various ways by Eusebius that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own....The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; holidays and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure.... images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, and the Kyrie Eleison, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church. [\[61\]](#)

Such a succession of tradition in incense, candles, votive offerings, holy water, processions, blessed oils, palms, ashes and forbidding people to marry and the ordering of abstinence from certain foods, is, in the words of the Apostle “*a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*” [\[62\]](#) The same Apostle spoke of the deterioration to follow; such in fact is the succession of Rome. “*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*” [\[63\]](#)

It is the true Christ who speaks in Scriptures. In it He tells who He is, and what we are. He tells us that He has come to save us from our sins, and for that purpose the Father sent Him into the world. In order to bring that work to completion in individual men, the Holy Spirit takes the truth of Scripture and applies it to believers. He will lead His people out the religion of “baptized paganism” embodied in Rome. For all imaginative habits of tradition, her teachings, worship, and emotional pseudo-spiritual experiences that arise from

outside the Bible, are no more than vagrant deceits and self-willed deceptions. “*Beware*” says the Scripture, “*lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*” [\[64\]](#) It is beyond doubt that the Pope with all his robes and rituals from tradition cannot be the “Vicar of Christ” as he pretends. He is rather the Vicar of hell.

Tradition as an equal source of certainty

The Church of Rome is forthright in stating where her certainty regarding doctrine lies. She officially teaches,

“As a result the [Roman Catholic] Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, ‘does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.’” [\[65\]](#)

This statement is a formal denial of the sufficiency of Scripture and a repudiation of its unique Authority, for Scripture alone is vested with all the moral authority of God over His creatures. For a Church claiming to be Christian to affirm her equal love for Tradition and the Scripture is to make the Scripture to be of no worth. It is like a husband who declares that he loves his wife, and he at the same time states that he also loves equally the woman across the street. Even as such love is adulterous, so also is Rome’s “equal sentiments of devotion and reverence”, for her Tradition translates as a rejection of Scripture and unfaithfulness to the God of Scripture.

Effectual superior position of Tradition

It is the very nature of authority to bear rule in itself. The life of faith must have a rule. It cannot finally bear any contradiction. If two alleged co-ordinate authorities stand in opposition on any point then, in the end, one will be taken as authority over the other. Rome’s pretence of an equal “devotion and reverence” for both Scripture and Tradition is merely the ecclesiastical equivalent to the

authority principle of a famous barnyard where it was paraded that, “all animals are equal”, but subjoined with the qualifier, “some animals are more equal than others.” [\[66\]](#) Tradition is always “committee chairman” with the deciding vote on matters of authority. That is how Rome lives out and continually enforces her rules. For example, in the “Profession of Faith” of the Council of Trent, the formula for submission is given with these words,

The apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions and all other observances and constitutions of that same Church I most firmly admit and embrace. I likewise accept Holy Scripture according to that sense which our holy Mother Church has held and does hold, whose [office] it is to judge of the true meaning and interpretation of the sacred Scriptures; I shall never accept nor interpret it otherwise than in accordance with the unanimous consent of the Fathers. [\[67\]](#)

The seat of authority, or the rule of faith, is firmly in the hands of the Roman hierarchy. The men who make up the hierarchy are ‘holy Mother Church.’ They sit in judgment on the Scriptures. The end result is that the Catholic person ends up believing not the Almighty God and His Word, but rather holy Mother Church and her tradition. This way of thinking is drilled into the minds of those the Roman hierarchy degradingly calls, ‘the faithful’. An example of how the rule of faith is imposed is found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,

“‘Believing’ is an ecclesial act. The Church’s faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers. ‘No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother’” [\[68\]](#)

“Because she is our mother, she is also our teacher in the faith.” [\[69\]](#)

“As a mother who teaches her children to speak and so to understand and communicate, the Church our Mother teaches us the language of faith in order to introduce us to the understanding and the life of faith.” [\[70\]](#)

The final position of the Catholic faithful is that they are compelled to submit to holy Mother Church and accept her rule of faith. That rule of faith is easily

exposed as “whatever Mother says is true, is true”, and, if the question is ever raised as to why this is so, the only reply is that it must be true because Mother says it. In *Animal Farm*, it was Napoleon who turned out to be the final authority in all matters of policy, including life and death for the other creatures. So in Roman Catholicism, its whirligig of “equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” ends up with the “Holy Father” telling the Catholic what to do based on “Holy Mother’s” manufactured Tradition. The Scripture cuts directly through all this, “*call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.*” [71] The word “father” denotes an authority, a right to command, and a claim to innate filial respect. The Scripture teaches that this title belongs eminently only to God, and is not to be tendered to mere men. Genuine Christian brethren are equal before the Lord and are commanded to practice authentic spiritual submission one to another. [72] Only God has supreme authority. Just as it is utterly immoral to call the Pope, “Holy Father”, so it is sinful and deceiving to call him and his hierarchy “Holy Mother”.

Rome’s pride in having people believe in her as “Holy Mother Church” is as basic as the blazing eruption of vanity in the heart of Eve, leading her to accede to the wicked insinuations, “*Yea, hath God said?*” and “*Ye shall be as gods.*” [73] For this reason, the Scripture says: “*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*” [74] In equating Tradition to Scripture, the Roman Catholic Church has thereby stifled the truth in unrighteousness. The very element in which and by which the truth is known and enjoyed has thus become darkness. The Lord’s own teaching that one’s spiritual understanding must be single, as opposite of twofold, is of uttermost importance in this regard. He the Lord declared, “*The light of the body is the eye: if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.*” [75] To have a twofold authority base for understanding all revealed truths in place of the exclusive authority of God in His Written Word is to walk in darkness, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. Christ Jesus the Lord showed His wrath against the Pharisees for the same offence because it

undermines the very the authority and Person of God. He called them “*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers,*” [\[76\]](#) as their sin was like unto that of Satan who denied the all sufficiency of the Lord’s Written Word. The severity of the Lord’s condemnation ought not to be a surprise because the system of the Pharisees was the base enemy of sound doctrine and the corrupter of the Scripture. Christ intended to strike dread into His people, so that that they might guard against a similar deception. To deal with this debasement in any way but with the utmost seriousness would be to fail the Lord Jesus Christ and betray the souls of men. Making tradition a part of the rule of faith subverts the entire authority of Scripture, and is a formal refusal of the Lordship of Christ. [\[77\]](#)

How Roman authority impacts Catholics

The Roman Catholic Church states how she is communicated and perpetuated to every generation. Her official words are, “Through Tradition, ‘the [Roman Catholic] Church, in her doctrine, life, and worship perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes.’” [\[78\]](#) It is absolutely tragic that this testimony is quite true. Rome’s doctrine, life, and worship, all that she herself is, and all that she believes, is perpetuated and transmitted to every generation. The fruits of this are seen in the pages of history and the crisis of faith worldwide concerning the truth for Catholics today. As in the past, Catholics who have Tradition instructing them are easily shaken in their hearts. Utterly lacking the assurance of faith in Christ that belongs to the believer, its living witness in the heart brought by the indwelling Holy Spirit and the confirmation of the Written Word, the Roman Catholic must do battle with the all the motions of original sin and doubt that pervade the heart and assail the mind. Quite logically, major doctrines concerning judgment, the inspiration of Scripture, the afterlife, the Person of Christ, and place of the moral law all become relative to one’s feelings and circumstances. Eventually a substantial percentage of professing Catholics become cynical and derogatory of Rome’s faith and practice.

The contemporary crisis of faith is documented by many Roman Catholic periodicals. For example, in nothing but large print the cover of *The Catholic World Report* of February 1999 proclaimed, “THERE IS A CRISIS IN FAITH...A CRISIS CONCERNING THE ABILITY TO KNOW THE TRUTH. THE CRISIS OF FAITH IS WORLD-WIDE.” The subtitle was, “BLUNT TALK FROM THE VATICAN”. The special report inside goes on for thirteen pages. Some conclusions are given on the crisis in faith in Australia that are

typical of the worldwide problem,

The *Statement of Conclusions* offered a number of general observations about the ‘crisis in faith’ in Australia, which was understood to reflect the growing influence of secularism and a consequent declining belief in God, in the afterlife, and in the inspiration of the Scriptures. This crisis, the document states, has reduced a perception of Christ in many cases to just ‘a great prophet of humanity’ and the Church to a body of purely human origin. Truth, in the eyes of many Australians, is now seen to be based on “the shifting sands of majority and consensus.” At the same time, individual conscience had been elevated to an absolute, and heterosexuality and homosexuality viewed as ‘two morally equivalent variations.’ This kind of thinking had found its way into the Church. Such a situation was confirmed by recent Australian research which showed that between 1991 and 1996, among religious categories in the census statistics, ‘no religion’ was the fastest growing, rising by 35 percent, whereas the general population had increased by only 5.4 percent over the same period. Of those raised as Catholics, over 20 percent would enter the ‘no religion’ category in adulthood. [\[79\]](#)

If only today’s Bible believers could see as clearly as Catholics the evil fruit of Roman authority perpetuating itself to every generation! The Lord’s own cry when faced with sterile tradition and its fruits was, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*” [\[80\]](#) The very heart of the Lord Christ Jesus pours itself forth through human flesh and words, then and now. It is the incarnation of profound love pleading with men to bring them back to His finished and sufficient Word of truth in the Scriptures, and to His only efficacious sacrifice, “*and when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it*” [\[81\]](#)

Church behavior to be as a pillar and ground of truth

Rome has the uncommon audacity to advance the claim that the Church mentioned in I Timothy 3:15 is herself, the Catholic Church, governed by the

Pope. The following bold assertion is directed as a requirement binding on those she calls her faithful,

The Catholic faithful are required to profess that there is an historical continuity—rooted in the apostolic succession between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church: ‘This is the single Church of Christ...which our Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter’s pastoral care (cf. Jn 21:17), commissioning him and the other Apostles to extend and rule her (cf. Mt 28:18ff.), erected for all ages as ‘the pillar and mainstay of the truth’ (1 Tim 3:15). This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in [subsistit in] the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him’. [\[82\]](#)

Any time Rome argues for her legitimacy, a careful watch must be made for any thought or line of reasoning that actually undercuts the authority of the Word of God. Rome is always seeking to introduce extra-biblical sources to undermine biblical authority, and to place herself above the Bible. In the above quote, it is “historical continuity” that accomplishes diminishment of biblical authority. “Dominus Iesus” here actually exposes the Roman Catholic Church’s deceptive reasoning, for it is stated unequivocally that she is first requiring the “faithful” to put their trust in “historical continuity” or to put it more plainly, what fallible history books say! So a Catholic is to put his trust in fallible history books, which root him in an apostolic succession she does not have because she does not have apostolic doctrine. Rome here demonstrates again her dependence on “historical continuity”, or tradition, rather than the written word of the Lord. Therefore she proves that she is not “the pillar and mainstay of truth.”

Further, there is no continuity in faith and practice between the early Church and the state institutional system(i.e., the Roman Catholic Church) that latterly emerged under the sponsorship of Imperial Rome. The Roman “Church” must be by her very nature utterly excluded from the above Bible text because what is said refers to a Church that is upholding the truth. Given her superstitions and empty blasphemous rituals, this would make the Church of Rome the last imaginable reference for the Apostle Paul who, to the contrary, was prophetically granted an

insight into the rise of the seminal errors of that mystery of iniquity that would eventually appear as the Papacy. [\[83\]](#)

The text itself states, *“But if I [Paul] tarry long, that thou [Timothy] mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”* [\[84\]](#) The focus of the verse is on the behavior of the believer upholding truth. As with the wise man of Luke chapter six, he is founded on rock when he hears the Word and does what it says; so in this passage, Paul is telling Timothy how he ought to behave in the local church at Ephesus. He is to conduct himself in the house of God in such a way that the Church of the living God upholds truth and is in fact, grounded upon it. In the context this is the meaning of the verse. The verse cannot be understood to make the Church, independent of its being rooted in truth, to be the pillar and ground of truth. No other Scripture text says this and in fact, the opposite is stated. The Church that is not rooted in truth is again and again seen failing in conduct, as Paul’s letters to the Corinthians and Galatians make clear, and also the book of Revelation, chapters one to three. The Church in its members is born out of the Word of truth in the Scriptures. As the Holy Spirit so clearly tells us, *“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.”* [\[85\]](#) and that believers are *“born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”* [\[86\]](#) The Lord’s Word gave life to the early Church as it does today. The true Church is “the pillar of the truth” as the historical continuance of the truth on which it rests. It witnesses to and preserves the Word of truth. He who is of the truth belongs by that very fact to the Church, for He belongs to Christ, its Head. The Lord Christ Jesus alone is the ground of the truth in the highest sense. *“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* [\[87\]](#) The Church rests on the truth as it is in Christ, and in His Written Word.

The Apostle Paul is not claiming that any church is truth, or can be “the truth”. He shows in many places the failings of particular churches in doctrine in many cities to which he writes. He is urging the behavior of the Church to be as a placard or billboard upon which the very Word of God is proclaimed in such a

way to be the pillar and ground of truth. The Apostle was concerned about the behavior of Timothy and the local believers at Ephesus. He was not denying what he had declared so consistently in his letters, nor the principle outlined by Christ Jesus and through the whole of Scripture, that God's Word is truth. When a church is "erected for all ages as 'the pillar and mainstay of the truth,'" as is Rome's spurious claim, horrendous results become manifest, as for example, the Church of Rome declaring that the sacraments are necessary for salvation; that Mary is the All Holy One, and all manner of errors, heresies, and blasphemies. If the true Church is "the pillar and ground of truth", it is certain that this is not the Roman Catholic Church, where an avalanche of extra-biblical traditions have completely buried the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ under the accumulation of human works. The true Church was not instituted to be a chain to bind the body of Christ in idolatry, impiety, ignorance of God, and other kinds of evil. Rather, as the Apostle teaches, it was in correct behavior to train the believers in the fear of God and obedience of the truth^{3/4}all of which is sufficiently taught already in the Word of God. The same Apostle declares that the Church is not founded either upon the judgments of men or a priesthood, but rather upon the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets (Ephesians 2:20). The Bride of Christ washed clean in the blood of the Lamb is to be distinguished from the Mother of Harlots drunken with the blood of the saints. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be separated from the conspiracy of Satan by the discriminating test which our Savior has applied to all believers, "*He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*" [\[88\]](#) On this vital test Rome, utterly fails. The very fact that the Roman Catholic Church will not accept the Written Word of God as ultimate authority seals the fact that she is not of God.

"Thy word is truth"

The same Holy Spirit Who has given His Word in the Scriptures uses it most fruitfully to convict of sin and to bring eternal life. All growth in the fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is also the fruit of God's truth in His Holy Word. The Church of Rome's skill and hypocrisy in placing Tradition on par with Scripture, as inspired, and equally to be accepted with certainty, is the same sin of

the Scribes and Pharisees. The difference is that the Roman Catholic Church far surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees in craft and deceitfulness of expression in upholding their traditions. Christ Jesus' reproof is more profoundly true of Rome than when first applied to the Scribes and Pharisees. *"But woe unto you... hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."* [89] The Church of Rome, having the same love and confidence in traditions as in the pure truth of God's Written Word, is *"as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!"* [90] Such harlotry begets false worship, idolatry, and pride. In Catholicism, people worship the communion bread as God, which is not God, [91] they give their hearts to idols, with a saint for every season and every ill. Doctrines, rites, and administrations take the place of what God has revealed and appointed in His Word. The reason is obvious. Rome has taken the Holy God's truth and commingled it with the traditions of men, with such results as the dishonoring of marriage and the supporting of ungodly celibacy in monasteries and convents.

The source of all life and truth is God Himself. He has graciously communicated that life and truth by the work of the Holy Spirit in giving His own sure word of prophecy in His Holy Word. [92] He has not granted or ceded any authority to add, change, or adapt His Word to a supposed infallible "Holy Father" in Rome. Spiritual Fatherhood belongs eminently and only to God. Only God has supreme authority. He only has a right to give laws, to declare doctrines that shall bind the conscience, and to punish disobedience. God's Written Word alone has absolute authority. Nevertheless, Rome's grasping for power and authority with hands covered in traditions, leads not simply into false teachings, but also to assuming the divine right to impose her laws with force. Thus the present Pope and his system proclaim, "The Church has the innate and proper right to coerce offending members of the Christian faithful by means of penal sanctions." [93] The Lord Christ Jesus said, *"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them...But ye shall not be so."* [94] One thousand seven hundred fifty-two is the number of Roman Catholic laws. The weight of guilt and torment under some one hundred sixty-four Pharisaic laws was light compared to the

oppression exercised by the Pope, Cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, Episcopal Vicars, Vicars apostolic, Apostolic administrators, Vicar generals, and ordinary Priests. *“For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.”*

Rome's metaphysical, and psychological Aristotelian-Thomistic traditions have become the standard diet of millions. Greek and pagan mysticism have reappeared in Catholicism in ecstasies, apparitions, blessed bones, holy water, unity consciousness, and a hierarchy of virgins and saints. *“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”* [\[95\]](#) What safety or confidence does anyone have if the very foundation of the truth of God's Word is confused with the smells, yells, and bells of traditions? By supplanting the Scripture with her tradition, and supplanting the Biblical means of grace by her sacrificial priesthood, the Roman Catholic Church moves once again to gather to herself all power and all authority over the souls of men. In Scripture all power in heaven and earth is given to Christ Jesus the Lord alone, and on earth His absolute authority undergirds His Written Word of truth alone. True believers must stand where He stands, for His Word is truth. The written Word of God is like the sun. In its light all things are seen as they really are; without it, nothing is seen for what it really is. The Church of Rome does not simply place a cloud over the light of the Word by imposing her ceremonies and traditions; rather she makes void the very brightness of the revelation of God in His Written Word. She cannot concede on this vital foundational issue of ultimate authority, for if Rome agreed to forfeit her pomp and ceremony, she would cease to attract the world of the mind and flesh. Because of her incorrigible, unbending attitude, she decrees that the definitions of all Roman Pontiffs are “irreformable by their very nature.” [\[96\]](#) The final and absolute authority for the true believer, however, is the Written Word of God alone, *“Thy Word is truth.”* [\[97\]](#) As the Lord Himself denounced both the Pharisees and their traditions, so must the true believer *“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”* [\[98\]](#) Like King David, the true believer praises the Lord for His loving kindness and for His truth *“for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”* [\[99\]](#) The

Church of Rome, however, has *“changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”* [\[100\]](#)

The Bible given to the early Church

The Church of Rome teaches that the Bible was given to her. Thus she states,

“For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.” [\[101\]](#)

“It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books.” [\[102\]](#)

The leaders of the early Church received the Old Testament as did the Jews, and they received the books of the New Testament recognizing the inherent authority of those writings was given by the Holy Spirit from God. The New Testament was received as the Word of God as the common property of believers and heritage of the people of God. This was in the manner and humility of faith as expressed by the Apostle Paul, *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”* [\[103\]](#) This was in the centuries before the over-powering dictatorial supremacy of the Church of Rome was established. These Christians did not look on the Church as “Holy Mother”; rather for the most part, their attitude as believers was as that expressed by the Lord, *“for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.”* [\[104\]](#)

Unlike present day Roman Catholicism, the early Church understood Apostolic Tradition as Apostolic doctrine, in line with the written Word of the Apostles, and not as a source distinct from Scripture. “From the very beginning of the post apostolic age with the writings of what are known as the Apostolic Fathers

(Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement, the Didache, and Barnabus) there is an exclusive appeal to the Scriptures for the positive teaching of doctrine and for its defense against heresy. The writings of the Apostolic Fathers literally breathe with the spirit of the Old and New Testaments. In the writings of the apologists such as Justin Martyr and Athenagoras the same thing is found. There is no appeal in any of these writings to the authority of a verbal or extra-biblical Tradition as a separate and independent body of revelation. It is with the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian in the mid to late second century that the concept of Apostolic Tradition that is handed down in the Church in oral form is first encountered. The word “tradition” simply means teaching. Irenaeus and Tertullian state emphatically that all the teachings of the Bishops that was given orally was rooted in Scripture and could be proven from the written Scriptures. Both men give the actual doctrinal content of the apostolic Tradition that was orally preached in the churches, and it can be seen clearly that all their doctrine was derived from Scripture. There was no doctrine in what they refer to as apostolic Tradition that is not found in Scripture. In other words, the apostolic Tradition defined by Irenaeus and Tertullian is simply the teaching of Scripture. It was Irenaeus who stated that while the Apostles at first preached orally, their teaching was later committed to writing (the Scriptures), and the Scriptures had since that day become the pillar and ground of the Church’s faith.” [\[105\]](#)

As has been seen at the beginning of this article, from the earliest times a substantial part of the New Testament was available to the believers. The four Gospels were known and read in the Churches. The letters of Apostles Paul and Peter were circulated, and used even while the Apostles lived. These New Testament books did not become authoritative because they were being formally accepted as Scripture by any church or group of churches, rather because the believers received them as inspired, recognizing in their Apostolic authority the very Word of God. The life of Christ Jesus, in His role as the final and full revelation of God [\[106\]](#) culminated in the New Testament Canon. It expressed the final prophetic word of grace and truth given in Him. The early believers accepted the Written Word of the New Testament, as like unto Christ Jesus Himself, unchangeable, final, finished and authoritative. In this they were totally

unlike Romanism, with its unholy Tradition equally honoured and revered as Scripture, and its cleverly evolving doctrine, such as its recent acceptance of Islam. [\[107\]](#)

God's people in the first three centuries after Christ universally accepted what we now know as the New Testament. The spirit and humility in which they "*received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.*" There were indeed controversies over individual books, all of which confirmed rather than impeded the certainty that they had God's final Written Word "*which was once delivered unto the saints.*" The Lord's people universally knew the contents of the canon of the New Testament well before the local Council of Hippo formally accepted it in 393, and the provincial Council of Carthage in 397. The teachings of Rome contradict the New Testament in her hierarchical pyramid of authority beginning in the Pope, her Mary, seven Sacraments, Purgatory and other unholy traditions. In the Rome's acceptance of the Apocryphal books in the Old Testament, she also contradicts the teachings of the early Church. It is patently obvious, therefore, that the Roman Catholic Church's identifying herself with the early Church and claiming that Bible has been handed over to her by God, is both false and historically absurd. In her more than 600 years of Inquisition against those who received, treasured, and lived by the Scriptures, she showed herself not as "Holy Mother Church" but rather as the Word of truth paints her, "*the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.*" [\[108\]](#)

The fountain of life poisoned by the Apocrypha

Two historical contradictions occur in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First, the Canon of accepted books is not the one recognized by the Apostles or the primitive church. Rome's official declaration is as follows,

It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books. This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes 46 books for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentations as one) and 27 for the New.

The Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, [inserted additions to Daniel, Bel and the Dragon and the Song of the three Holy Children] Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi.

The New Testament: the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the Acts of the Apostles, the Letters of St. Paul to the Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, the Letter to the Hebrews, the Letters of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude, and Revelation (the Apocalypse). [\[109\]](#)

Please note the many extra-biblical writings. The Catholic Church herself refers to these books as the “deuterocanonical books”, a term meaning second canon. They are Tobit, Judith, I and II Maccabees, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, and inserted into the book of Daniel in the third chapter; “The Song of the three young men”, plus the additional chapter 13 of Daniel with the story “Susanna” and chapter 14 with the account of “Bel and the Dragon”. Hence from this “complete list” is plain evidence that Holy Mother Church does not rely on “the apostolic Tradition” and never intended to do so. If she had purposed to follow apostolic Tradition, she would not have broken the biblical prohibition of adding to the Word of God. This accretion was a historical deception formalized at the Council of Trent in 1546 with the express purpose of destroying the internal consistency of self-interpretation in Holy Scripture. By including these Apocryphal writings in their canon of Scripture, the Roman Catholic hierarchy was able to effectively undermine individual confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the Word to the seeking soul. The presence of human error, subsumed and bound by ecclesiastical cunning and craft into the Written Word of God, attempts to makes the Word of God of none

effect. These books and other additions, while interesting in giving the believer insights into the period of history between Malachi and the Gospel of Matthew, yet because of magical divination in “Tobit” and “Bel and the Dragon”, and the sheer foolishness at times in the “Wisdom of Solomon”, prove to be spiritual land mines planted in the Word of God. A person’s faith in the inerrant and All Wise God can be shattered as one wonders how inspired is the history of the Maccabees, since I Maccabees clearly teaches that there were no prophets of the Lord in the land in those days!

This intrusion of the Apocrypha into the inspired and inerrant Word of God is of utmost importance. The additions amount to nigh one quarter of the size of the Old Testament in what is called a Roman Catholic Bible. The entire Word of God is thereby polluted. The Lord’s gift to the believer is like unto the Lord Himself, a Word in which there is neither uncertainty nor shadow of deceit. [\[110\]](#)

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” [\[111\]](#)

Quite a contrast is the false “Bible” of the Roman Catholic Church. It is one of irregularity, fickleness, and vacillation in a large portion of what is wrongly called the Word of the Living God. The same Pope who kisses this unholy Bible has also publicly kissed the Qu’ran of Mohammed. It looks indeed that such kisses are the same as those of the woman of Proverbs Seven who invitingly declared, *“I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.”* [\[112\]](#)

Once the errant apocryphal additions are removed from the Roman Catholic Bible, it becomes a witness to the truth of the Lord God. But until that day, it stands as a morbid witness against Rome and her presumptions. Rome’s own polluted “Bible” is the clear evidence that there is no similarity historically or doctrinally between the Apostolic Church and the one who dares to call herself “Holy Mother”.

Reasons why the Apocrypha cannot be accepted

The four main reasons why the Apocrypha cannot be accepted as part of the Bible

are:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ and the writers of the New Testament did not accept the Apocryphal books as God's Word. It is extremely significant that although there are numerous quotations and references to almost all of the canonical books of the Old Testament in the New Testament, the Lord and the writers of the New Testament never once quoted from the Apocrypha.

2. The Old Testament was given by God to the Jewish people, in the words of the Apostle, "*unto them were committed the oracles of God.*" [\[113\]](#) The Jews have never accepted anything more than the canonical books of the Old Testament. For example, the Jewish scholars of Jamnia in A.D. 90 recognized the books of the Old Testament, as did the Early Church and Christians of today. They did not recognize the Apocrypha. The Jewish historian, Josephus (A.D. 30-100), explicitly excludes the Apocrypha.

3. There is a conspicuous absence of a claim to be inspired in the books of the Apocrypha themselves; rather, in fact some of the books themselves state that the Lord was not speaking through His prophets at that time, e.g. I Maccabees 9:27, I Maccabees 14:41.

4. The Apocrypha contains errors, fables, superstitions, magic, deceit, and wrong doctrine such as praying for the dead. All of these things are totally at variance to the pure word of God in the canonical books. For example, in Wisdom 8:19 Solomon is made to say, "Now I was a well favored child and I came by a noble nature." But this is at variance with Romans 3:23, "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*" Another example is II Maccabees 12:45. This verse is quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to justify communion with the dead and prayer for the dead bound by their sins. The official teaching based on the lie of II Maccabees 12:45 is the following,

"Communion with the dead. 'In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the

Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and 'because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins' [II Mac. 12:45] she offers her suffrages for them.' Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective." [\[114\]](#)

This pagan practice of communion with the dead is forbidden in the Bible, for example, "*There shall not be found among you any one...that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer, [one who calls up the dead].*" [\[115\]](#)

Then the false humanistic assumption, that man is left to his own resources when it comes to salvation, is taught in Ecclesiasticus 15:14 in the Roman Catholic "Bible". This deadly error is quoted in the present day Vatican II documents of Rome,

"It is, however, only in freedom that man can turn himself towards what is good. . . . For God willed that man should 'be left in the hand of his own counsel' [Ecclesiasticus 15:14] so that he might of his own accord seek his creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him." [\[116\]](#)

This type of soul damning teaching shows why the Roman Catholic Church included the Apocrypha, and how unashamedly she uses it to propagate lies. Other blatant examples of ghastly errors are found in Tobit 12:9, Judith 10:11-13, and Baruch 3:4.

As an unusual exception to the general rejection of the Apocrypha by the Early Church, Augustine and two local councils in North Africa in the late fourth century and early fifth century argued for the acceptance the Apocrypha. Using this exception (it was not even in itself perfectly clear just how much Augustine approved of the Apocrypha), the Council of Trent in 1546 accepted and endorsed the Apocrypha as part of God's Holy Word. The reader should note, however, that the Roman Catholic Church itself did not accept and formally sanction the

lying treachery of these additions to the Written Word of God until 1546, and only then with the express purpose of nullifying the potent biblically-based critiques directed against her by the Protestant Reformers.

Conclusion

The frank examination of the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of authority made here leads to the conclusion that her authority is not simply without true biblical foundation, but it also is an attempt to completely usurp the Divine authority of the Lord God in His Written Word. "Holy Mother Church", in biblical terms is neither holy nor strictly speaking a Church. She is rather clearly the successor to the Imperial Roman Empire embodied in her arrogance in law, traditions and pagan customs. The Barbarian overthrow of the Roman Empire was succeeded by the gradual rise of papal Rome. A very significant event in this evolution took place in the sixth century. The Emperor Justinian, who was living in the East in Constantinople, handed over his title of Supreme High Priest (Summum Pontifex) to Vigilius, Bishop of Rome. This he did in the sixth century. The exact date given by some is 538 AD. [\[117\]](#) The bestowal by Justinian of the title of the Supreme Pontiff, which entailed the universal oversight of the entire Christian World, exalted the Bishop of Rome to become what we know as the Pope. He was, as Supreme Pontiff, to become spiritual head of the restored Roman Empire. In 800 AD, the work of Charlemagne completed the evolution of that movement by the creation of the "Holy Roman Empire" of medieval and modern times. [\[118\]](#) It is in this office as the Supreme Pontiff that the Pope claims the divine attribute of infallibility,

"The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority." [\[119\]](#)

"Furthermore we declare, say, define, and proclaim to every human creature that they, by necessity for salvation, are entirely subject to the Roman Pontiff" [\[120\]](#)

The biblical-prophetic identity of Rome is not in any doubt to those given eyes to see. The specter haunting "Holy Mother Church" (including some of her devout

apologists) is that she is in fact the “*Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth,*” [\[121\]](#) “*that was, and is not, and yet is.*” [\[122\]](#) That is, the city of Rome was a seat of arrogance, idolatry and persecution in a purely pagan form under the civil Emperors, who also simultaneously held the pagan religious title of Supreme Pontiff. The base of the city of Rome’s power at that time was its military might. That form, based in Imperial Rome’s military might, is no longer in existence. Yet in a certain sense it really does still exist because the same city, now under the religious and spiritual power of Roman Catholic Supreme Pontiffs, is still a civil state, still claims supreme power, and still practices idolatry even in some of the same buildings. The old civil-religious form or title of Supreme Pontiff, handed down from Imperial Rome through the Holy Roman Empire, today stands primarily on a spiritual power base, but one which claiming to be Christian while her final authority is herself rather than the written Word of God. They that dwell on the earth wonder at her, the weird “Holy Mother Church” that acts as if she were supreme over God and the Holy Bible.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

In attributing her Tradition to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and His leading to such preposterous claims as Papal infallibility, is in the strict sense of the term a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. That is why there can never be any negotiation, compromise, or alliance between the Vatican and Bride of Christ. The “Temple curia” of the Pharisees, in the Lord’s time identified themselves with all that was good, upright, and holy. There was no question in their minds but that God worked wholly in, by, and through their teachings and administrations. Christ Jesus, however, showed them to be “*like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.*” [\[123\]](#) In a similar manner, the proud privileges and claims of the Roman System to be the very mouthpiece of God are shown by the Word of the Lord to be rather “*seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.*” [\[124\]](#) Even the testimony of history shows that this system has been an instrument of persecution of true biblical faith and a tool of assimilation whereby pagan shrines and artifacts have become grottos of Mary and images of her

person. The Roman religion and her form of godliness has become a cloak to cover her paganism. Her basis of all of this is the plea that her Tradition is to be equally honored as the Lord's own Written Word. To the destruction of "the faithful", therefore, her traditions include *"Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."* [\[125\]](#) Her false basis in Tradition has allowed her to construct a Worldwide Empire where she enforces her will over 814,779 women who are her nuns, 57,813 men whom she calls religious brothers, and 404,626 men whom she calls her priests. [\[126\]](#)

The Holy Spirit, foreseeing all these things, as the Guide and Comforter of the true Church, has graciously provided a divine answer for the dangerous, ubiquitous, and deceiving System of Rome and her fabricated Authority base. God Himself Who began the writing of the Word with His own finger, has in these last days spoken to us *"by His Son."* [\[127\]](#) This Son has authenticated the Old Testaments writings and as the Alpha and Omega, having all Authority in heaven and on earth, He commanded the finishing of the New Testaments writings in His words to the Apostle John, *"What thou seest, write in a book"* [\[128\]](#) The Lord Jesus Christ's mind and counsel come unto the believers in writing^{3/4}the Bible^{3/4}as a merciful and steadfast relief against all that is confusion, darkness, and uncertainty, including the Roman Catholic Church.

In the Bible, the Spirit of God has portrayed the Church of Rome as wonderful in the eyes of the world; but to the eyes of true believers she is shown to be *"that great city that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!"* [\[129\]](#) To the believers, He has broken her magic spells; he has lifted her mask, and as something already come to pass, He publishes her fall, *"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."* [\[130\]](#)

The believers of old^{3/4}the Vaudois, the Waldenses, the Lollards, and the Bohemians^{3/4}saw those things clearly and were thereby fortified and equipped.

Likewise throughout the 600 years of the Inquisition, and to the Reformers, the office of the papacy was “the Man of Sin” and the Antichrist. The Imperial Roman Empire, revived as the so-called “Holy Roman Empire”, they saw as the Babylon of Revelation 17 and 18. These doctrines were embodied in their Confessions of Faith and sealed by the blood of countless martyrs. Confidently they saw that the papacy and those who believe in its system would most surely be terminated, as the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming”. [\[131\]](#) In the meantime, the Gospel of Christ saves multitudes from her. The Lord Christ Jesus, the Exalted Head of the Church, and His Sovereign Spirit give comfort and victory, for “*The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.*” [\[132\]](#). All of this is absolutely established on the unwavering and unchangeable Authority of the Lord God in His Written Word. “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*” II Timothy 3:16-17 “

Endnotes:

[\[1\]](#) II Timothy 3:16 “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God....*” Inspiration in Greek is *theopneustos*, literally meaning, “breathed out”, that is, Scripture is breathed out by God as His Word.

[\[2\]](#) Psalms 12:6, 18:30, 119:128, 140; Romans 7:12.

[\[3\]](#) I Corinthians 2:13.

[\[4\]](#) II Peter 1:20, 21.

[\[5\]](#) Proverbs 1:23.

[6] John 21:24.

[7] II Timothy 3:16, 17.

[8] Proverbs 4:19, 1 Corinthians 2:14

[9] II Timothy 3:15

[10] John 21:25.

[11] II Peter 3:15, 16.

[12] II Peter 1:12.

[13] I Corinthians 4:6.

[14] Acts 17:3, 18:28, 28:23; Galatians 3:8; Romans 9:17.

[15] Hebrews 1:1, 2.

[16] Revelation. 1:1, 2.

[17] John 14:23, 24.

[18] Matthew 24:35.

[19] John 8:29.

[20] Psalm 19:7.

[21] Luke 6:46.

[22] Isaiah 66:2.

[23] Canon 749, *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-English Ed., New English Tr., 1999 (Washington DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983). All canons are taken from this source unless otherwise stated. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

[24] Isaiah 43:10, Titus 1:2.

[25] The Greek word for “above” can mean “in a place of” or “as much as”. It seems to be this meaning that applies the text rather than superior to God, cf. Strong’s *Hebrew-Greek Dictionary*, # 1909.

[26] II Peter 1:21.

[27] Galatians 2:7-8.

[28] Acts 13:46-48, 18:6; Romans:1:5, 11:13; Galatians 1:16; I Timothy 2:7; II Timothy 1:11.

[29] The terms overseer and elder/pastor are used interchangeably (Acts 20:17, 28; I Peter 5:1-4).

[30] James 4:12, see also: Isaiah 33:22, Jeremiah 10:7, Matthew 10:28, Luke 12:5, Revelation 15:4.

[31] Bernard Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible* (USA: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1981) pp. 36, 37. Originally published in German under the title *Wie der Papst Unfehlbar Wurde* (Verlag, Munchen: R. Piper & Co., 1979).

[32] Ignaz von Dollinger, “A Letter Addressed to the Archbishop of Munich” 1871, as quoted in MacDougall, *The Acton Newman Relations* (Fordham University Press) pp. 119, 120.

[33] Exodus 20:2-3.

[34] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1994) Para. 1161. CCC hereafter.

[35] CCC, Para. 108.

[36] Deuteronomy 18:22, Isaiah 41:21-29, Isaiah 42:9, Isaiah 43:9-12, Isaiah 45:21. Isaiah 48:14, John 13:19, John 16:14

[37] Hebrews 1:2.

[38] II Timothy 3:16.

[39] Genesis 3:5.

[40] “*Dominus Iesus*”, September 5th 2000, Section 16.

[41] John 1:14.

[42] II Thessalonians 2:4.

[43] Isaiah 14:14.

[44] John 1:14, 17.

[45] Revelation 17:6.

[46] Revelation 17:5.

[47] CCC, Para. 80.

[48] Square brackets are in the original text.

[49] CCC, Para. 81.

[50] John 10:35.

[51] Jeremiah 23:29.

[52] Isaiah 55:11.

[53] DOMINUS IESUS September 5th 2000

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html

[54] Luke 11:52.

[55] I Corinthians 2:4, 5.

[56] John 7:38.

[57] CCC, Para. 77, 78.

[58] The terms overseer and elder/pastor are used interchangeably (Acts 20:17, 28; I Peter 5:1-4).

[59] To the Pharisees of Jesus' time the Scripture did not mean a finished revelation. Their basic allegiance was to a "living Torah". Their real loyalty was to that living knowledge they claimed came through tradition from Moses. In precisely the same way, the system of Rome claims a "living transmission" called Tradition by means of apostolic succession.

[60] Ephesians 2:20.

[61] John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1960) pp. 352-353.

[62] II Timothy 3:5.

[63] Acts 20:29.

[64] Colossians 2:8.

[65] CCC, Para. 82.

[66] Orwell, George, *Animal Farm* (Heineman, 1979) p. 85.

[67] Denzinger, Henry, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, Tr. By Roy J. Deferrari, 30th Ed. of *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, Rev. by Karl Rahner, S. J. (St Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1957) # 995.

[68] CCC, Para. 181.

[69] CCC, Para. 169.

[70] CCC, Para. 171.

[71] Matthew 23:9.

[72] Ephesians 5:21; II Corinthians 1:24, 4:5.

[73] Genesis 3:1.

[74] Romans 1:18.

[75] Matthew 6:22, 23.

[76] Matthew 23:33.

[77] Luke 19:14.

[78] CCC, Para 78.

[79] *The Catholic World Report* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press) February 1999, p. 49.

[80] Matthew 23:37.

[81] Luke 19:41.

[82] Declaration “Dominus Iesus”, Section 16.

[83] II Thessalonians 2:7, I Timothy 4:1-3

[84] I Timothy 3:15

[85] James 1:18

[86] I Peter 1:23

[87] I Corinthians 3:11

[88] John 8:47

[89] Matthew 23:13.

[90] Ezekiel 16:32.

[91] “There should be no doubt in anyone’s mind ‘that all the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament the worship which is due to the true God, as has always been the custom of the Catholic Church. Nor is it to be adored any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten.’ *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, No. 9, *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, Austin Flannery, ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publ. Co., 1975) 1981 ed., Vol. I, Sec. 3, p. 104. All Vatican Council II documents are taken from this source unless otherwise stated.

[92] II Peter 1:19.

[93] *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-English edition (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1989) Can. 1311.

[94] Luke 22:25, 26.

[95] Psalm 11:3.

[96] Flannery, Vatican Council II Documents, No. 28, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 Nov. 1964, Vol. I., p. 380.

[97] John 17:17.

[98] Jude 3.

[99] Psalm 138:2

[100] Romans 1:25

[101] CCC, Para 105

[102] CCC, Para 120

[103] I Thessalonians 2:13

[104] Matthew 23:8

[105] William Webster, *Sola Scriptura and the Early Church*, pp 1,2 www.bereanbeacon.org

[106] Hebrews 1:1-2.

[107] See our paper, *The Papacy and Islam*. www.bereanbeacon.org,
www.users.bigpond.com/farel/index.html

[108] Revelation 17:6

[109] CCC, Para 120

[110] Proverbs 22:21

[111] James 1:17

[\[112\]](#) Proverbs 7:16

[\[113\]](#) Romans 3:2

[\[114\]](#) CCC, Para. 958

[\[115\]](#) Deuteronomy 18:10-11

[\[116\]](#) Flannery, Vatican Council II Documents, No. 64, *Gaudium et spes*, 7 December 1965, Vol 1, Sec. 17, p.917.

[\[117\]](#) LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1978) Vol. I, p. 513.

[\[118\]](#) See Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter 15.

[\[119\]](#) Canon 749.

[\[120\]](#) Denzinger, Henry, *Unam Sanctum*, Nov. 18, 1302, #469.

[\[121\]](#) Revelation 17:4

[\[122\]](#) Revelation 17:8

[\[123\]](#) Matthew 23:27

[\[124\]](#) I Timothy 4:1

[\[125\]](#) I Timothy 4:3, “*Forbidding to marry*”: see Flannery, Vatican Council II Documents, No. 63 *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Sec. 16, Vol. I, p. 893. Re “*abstain from meats*”: see Canon 1251.

[\[126\]](#) 2001 *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Almanac* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2001) p. 343.

[\[127\]](#) Hebrews 1:2

[\[128\]](#) Revelation 1:11

[\[129\]](#) Revelation 18:16

[\[130\]](#) Rev 18:2

[\[131\]](#) II Thessalonians 2:8.

[\[132\]](#) Romans 1:16

Who Really Speaks for God?

John H. Armstrong

Serious evangelical dialogue with Roman Catholicism finds it virtually impossible to avoid the issues raised by the institution of the papacy. These issues were central in the sixteenth-century division, and they remain problematic for modern discussion as well. It is hard for many Catholics in the West to understand the serious concerns evangelicals have regarding the papacy, since they often think of John Paul II as a benevolent and kind gentleman who warmly radiates love for Christ and non-Catholics.

In a special commentary on the Feast Day (1971) honoring St. Peter and St. Paul, the Vatican radio declared, "The Church does not exist without the Pope. The Pope does not exist without the Church. He who believes in the Church believes in the Pope. He who believes in the Pope believes in the Church. Pope and Church are inseparable realities." This understanding, which sounds so completely foreign to the evangelical mind, is perfectly natural to Catholic teaching, with its fully developed doctrine of ecclesiastical authority.

THE PRIMACY OF THE POPE

The teaching of papal authority grew out of the church's early relationship to society around it. Linear historical succession to Peter (believed to be the first pope by Roman Catholics) is a matter that may well be debated till the end of the age. What is beyond serious debate is the clear influence early Roman law and cultural practice had on the church. This background helps us understand something of the development of papal authority over the centuries.

What can be seen, and this considerably prior to the Middle Ages, is an increasingly unified institutional church organized along lines both juridical (that is, pertaining to the law, in this case Roman law) and monarchical (that is, following the pattern of a single head, or monarch). An evolution was going on during these centuries that led, by the ninth century, to a church directed by the human authority of a single leader — a pope. The dogma of the papacy gradually developed until it reached its apex in Vatican Council I (1870). This dogma added to the rupture that took place between the churches of the East (Orthodox Church) and the West (Roman Catholic Church) on July 16, 1054.

This division, described by the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, happened "when Cardinal Humbert, the head of a papal delegation in Constantinople, placed a document of excommunication on the altar of Hagia Sophia, the cathedral church of Constantinople." Why was this done? "The official reasons for this were the removal of the filioque [a word meaning "from the Son," which was used to teach that the Holy Spirit proceeded equally from both the Father and the Son] from the Creed; the practice of married clergy and

some liturgical errors (for example, the use of leavened bread instead of unleavened bread for the Eucharist)" (Stravinskias 1991, 707).

This division, existing down to our time, has been addressed by recent ecumenical dialogue, especially since 1966 when anathemas were lifted by Pope Paul VI and Athenagoras I. One of the perennial problems, however, that remains between East and West is the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church.

The same problem existed with regard to the division of the sixteenth century. Luther began his reforming efforts as a loyal subject of the Pope, but in time he concluded that the whole papal system was unsound. His language, often harsh and offensive to modern readers, must be understood against the backdrop of his times and the way the papacy responded to him. Neither Catholic nor Protestant should be proud of some of the language hurled about in the sixteenth century, and hopefully these vital doctrinal differences can be considered by us *without* the invectives of the past.

What exactly is the Roman Catholic doctrine of the pope? The *Catholic Encyclopedia* once again helps us:

The Bishop of Rome . . . exercises universal jurisdiction over the whole Church as the Vicar of Christ and the Successor of St. Peter. The term "pope" derives from the Latin for "father." . . . In Western Christianity this term refers to the Roman Pontiff, called His Holiness the Pope, who governs the universal Church as the successor to St. Peter. . . who possesses, "by virtue of his office, . . . supreme, full, immediate, and universal ordinary jurisdiction power in the Church (Canon 331). (Stravinskias 1991, 761)

This supreme head of the Christian church is said to carry out his pontificate through the office of bishops, cardinals, and various other offices of the Roman Curia (a body of *official agencies* that assists the pope).

WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE PAPACY?

Roman Catholic apologists never tire of quoting Matthew 16:18-19 when asked to defend the papacy. In this passage, Jesus asked Simon Peter who people said He was. Peter answered that "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets" (v. 14). Then our Lord asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" After Peter answered, seemingly for the whole group, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16), Jesus told Peter that the Father had revealed this truth to him. Then Jesus added the oft-quoted words: "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" (vv. 18-19).

The Catholic argument goes essentially like this: Peter is the rock in this passage. Christ promises to build His church on the rock. Thus, Peter is the first head, or rock, of the church, and the popes (more than 260 historically) who have followed him (supposedly in unbroken succession) are the heirs of this promise to Peter.

Protestants often try to interpret the reference to the rock in a way that shows why Peter could not be the rock in this passage. Personally, I am in agreement with evangelical scholar D. A. Carson when he writes, "If it were not for Protestant reactions against extremes of Roman Catholic interpretation, it is doubtful whether many would have taken 'rock' to be anything or anyone other than Peter" (Carson 1986, 368).

What, then, can we say about Roman Catholic reference to this text in establishing the doctrine of the papacy through Peter as the first pope?

Catholic conclusions from this text suffer from what Carson refers to "as insuperable exegetical and historical problems" (Carson 1986, 368). For example, after Peter's death his so-called successor would have had authority over a living apostle, John, a prospect that simply cannot be demonstrated. What is actually said in Scripture is that Peter was the first disciple to confess Jesus in this manner, and by this confession his prominence continued into the early years of the church (Acts 1-12). He, along with John, is sent by the other apostles to Samaria (8:14), he is held accountable for his actions by the church in Jerusalem (11:1-18), and he is rebuked by Paul face-to-face (Galatians 2:11-14). Peter is, concludes Carson, first among equals; "and on the foundation of such men (Eph. 2:20), Jesus built his church. This is precisely why Jesus, toward the close of his earthly ministry, spent so much time with them. The honor was not earned but stemmed from divine revelation (v. 17) and Jesus' building work (v. 18)" (Carson 1986, 368-69).

Though modern Catholics will point out that the pope does not speak infallibly on all occasions, and the pope must himself confess sin and be redeemed as a sinner, the truth is that the doctrine of papal authority succession, and infallibility is still a major roadblock to meaningful agreement regarding the teaching of the New Testament.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in speaking of the episcopal college of bishops and the pope, says,

When Christ instituted the Twelve, "he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them." Just as "by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another"

The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful." "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered." (Ratzinger, 233-34)

Here it is stated plainly: Authority was conferred by Christ upon His apostles, Peter being the prince, or supreme head of them all. From the apostles this same authority is given to the bishops of the church in an unbroken line of succession, with supreme authority vested in the Roman Pontiff chosen as a successor to Peter since the first century. But a number of nagging questions remain:

1. Was Peter ever in Rome? We don't know for sure, but even if he was it proves nothing. A problem, however, is this: when Paul wrote his epistle to the Roman church, why does he address personal greetings to twenty-seven different people but never mention Peter? Strange omission, I believe, if he were the supreme head of this flock.
2. Because Peter's name was changed is no proof that he was now pope, as has been claimed. Jesus changed the names of other apostles as well (Mark 3:16-17; see John 1:42).
3. The Catholic Church always lists Peter's name first when it refers to the Twelve. The New Testament does not do so, listing others before Peter on several occasions (Matthew 4:18; John 1:44; and so on).

4. Paul spoke of reputed "pillars of the church" in Galatians 2:9 and named, in order, James, Peter, and John. Peter was an important leader for sure, but plainly not the supreme head of them all.
5. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, worked independently of Peter and never refers to submitting to Peter (in some sense) as head over all. If anyone qualifies as the human leader, it has to be Paul, yet he never claims any such office for himself. Further, Paul actually rebuked Peter to his face because he stood condemned by his own actions and his behavior was hypocritical (Galatians 2:11-14). The unambiguous evidence is this — the headship of the church was not in a human leader on earth but in Christ who reigned above!
6. Nowhere in any New Testament text is there evidence of the office of Pope, and nowhere do we have the model of a person acting as pope, a very strange omission if we are to understand that the church is not a true church without this office and the bishops.

WHAT ABOUT INFALLIBILITY?

Most Roman Catholics are not aware of their own history in terms of theological development and doctrinal formulations. It comes as a surprise, therefore, when they discover that the doctrine of "Papal Infallibility" came as late as 1870 at Vatican Council I. Here Pius IX accomplished what he had earlier begun — the strengthening of his leadership over the church. At Vatican Council I it was stated that the Pope's decisions, when he spoke *ex cathedra* in matters of faith and morals, were "unchangeable in themselves and not because of the consent of the church" (Session 4.4; Denzinger, 3073-75).

Vatican Council II (1962-1965) sought to modify this doctrine by saying that the college of bishops *assists* the pope. Whereas the earlier Council had taken a more anti-Protestant stance, Vatican II seems to address dangers within the Catholic Church itself and to seek to reform modern practice. The fact is, collegiality (the idea that bishops collectively share authority) is still to be interpreted in the light of papal supremacy. *De Ecclesia*, a Vatican II reformist document, states this clearly:

The college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is simultaneously conceived of in terms of its head, the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and without any lessening of his power of primacy over all, pastors as well as the general faithful. For in virtue of his office, that is, as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme, and universal power over the Church. And he can always exercise this power freely. (p. 22)

This same document on the church, which comes from a section dealing with ecumenism and the church's relationship to Protestant churches, adds, "Thus religious submission of the will and mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*" (p. 25).

THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF AUTHORITY

All Catholic teaching regarding authority in the church and in the life of the faithful individual centers in the previously mentioned triad — Bible, tradition, and the magisterium. This is often not understood by evangelicals who speak of "cooperation" with Roman Catholic ministries, priests, or churches.

The Catholic concept of tradition is vital to understanding how the Bible is used and understood. The word *tradition* (from the Latin word for "handing over") refers to the teachings and practices handed down,

whether in written or oral form, separately but not independently of Scripture.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says, "Tradition is divided into two areas: (1) Scripture, the essential doctrines of the Church, the major writings and teachings of the Fathers, the liturgical life of the Church, and the living and lived faith of the whole Church down through the centuries; (2) customs, institutions, practices which express the Christian Faith" (Stravinskias 1991, 939). It goes on to say that

the Council of Trent (1546), in distinct opposition to evangelical faith and practice, affirmed "both the Bible and Tradition as divine sources of Christian doctrine." Vatican II states, "It is clear . . . that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand alone without the others. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls." (Stravinskias 1991, 939)

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the magisterium is "the teaching office of the church." It was established, according to Catholic belief, in order "to safeguard the substance of faith in Jesus Christ" and to prevent the individual from "being left entirely on his own" (Stravinskias 1991, 615).

It is believed, very simply, that Christ established an apostolic college in His disciples who, unified with Peter as their head, became the teaching magisterium of the first church. The understanding of this magisterium and its limits, role, and work were ironed out in the centuries that followed, especially at the Council of Trent and Vatican I. The magisterium proclaims the teachings of Christ "infallibly, irreformably and without error" when it follows principles that assure its faithfulness (as defined, of course, by the church).

What this means, practically, is that Rome may alter matters that will change how Catholics perceive and experience the life of their church, but *fundamental doctrines* (such as those we have considered in this book) do not and cannot change. This is what has been meant by the oft-quoted phrase *semper idem* (Latin, "always the same").

In practice the typical Catholic never experiences the magisterium directly. He reads and hears of its deliberations and actions. Where he actually experiences the authority of the church is in the priesthood of his parish. Here the chain of command comes down to the level of how he or she must actually live and act to be a devout Catholic. Here the person receives the sacraments, receives forgiveness for sin, and seeks to know God through his church.

Even at the level of the local parish priest there is powerful connection to the structure of the Roman Catholic Church internationally. That is why we can speak of an American Catholic Church, but ultimately it too is intimately related to the *Roman Catholic Church*. American Catholics are prone to almost lose sight of this reality.

Further, all that is believed and taught at the local parish level is to be ultimately related to tradition, the magisterium, and the pope. That is precisely why the idea is utterly impossible that one priest, or one parish, can be *evangelical* and still be properly related to the Roman Catholic Church, as defined in its own creeds and practices!

SUMMING UP

There is more serious appeal to modern Christian minds in this doctrine than many evangelicals realize. We live in an age of independence and, often, the spirit of anarchy. Ours is the age of "personal rights." Christians who observe the spirit of our times might well find attractive a church with a supreme pastor who has authority over all matters and to whom we can submit ourselves.

Indeed, in every age the tension has existed between submission to one (or several) who has authority over me and my personal responsibility to exercise discernment and make personal decisions based on an authority that is above all present human and ecclesiastical structure. Many Protestants often have church leaders who have become virtual popes in this sense.

My reason for opposing the Catholic doctrine of authority in the papacy and the magisterium, and the more recently developed doctrine of infallibility is not because I desire to foster rebellion, much less willful independence. It is because this very doctrine, like so many others we have observed, is simply not grounded in the New Testament. In fact, I would suggest that it runs counter to the teaching and spirit of the Scriptures.

Martin Luther opposed "Enthusiasts" (visionaries, prophets, and so on) in the sixteenth century in much the same way that he countered the papacy. Both, Luther maintained, sought to exercise an authority above and beyond the written Scriptures. Their independence from God's Word was the primary problem. The church does not give us "new birth," rather it is by the Word of God that we are begotten by the Holy Spirit (see 1 Peter 1:13; James 1:18). Further, we have but one true Supreme Head and Chief Shepherd of our souls — Jesus Christ the Lord! His infallible teaching is not found in the human creeds and decisions of a fallible church but in the Word of the living God. This is precisely why every great recovery and spiritual awakening in the history of the church has broken forth upon rediscovery of the power of God in the written Scriptures, not in ecclesiastical structures and meetings.

We can honestly discuss how we might accept churches with a papacy on equal footing with churches that do not, but ultimately the faithful evangelical must allow Scripture to rule the discussion. Catholicism's position will not allow for a middle ground either. Perhaps Catholicism will change this doctrine in the future, but there is no evidence at all that she will. For the evangelical who remains faithful to the New Testament there is no middle ground either. Truth and unity are not served by covering over this major difference. Truth is best served by recognizing the supreme headship of Jesus Christ (alone) over the entire universal church.

All human leaders — pastors, deacons, elders, whatever — must govern and lead only in a distinctly subservient role as "fellow priests" (see Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) with the whole people of God. They are to serve in a spirit of gentleness that honors Christ the true Head of the church. And they must serve with derived authority, living totally under the written Scripture and its final authority.

Author

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The Sufficiency of the Written Word

Answering the Modern Roman Catholic Apologists

by **Dr. John F. MacArthur, Jr**

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The tendency to venerate tradition is very strong in religion. The world is filled with religions that have been following set traditions for hundreds -- even thousands -- of years. Cultures come and go, but religious tradition shows an amazing continuity.

In fact, many ancient religions -- including Druidism, Native American religions, and several of the oriental cults -- eschewed written records of their faith, preferring to pass down their legends and rituals and dogmas via word of mouth. Such religions usually treat their body of traditions as a de facto authority equal to other religions' sacred writings.

Even among the world's religions that revere sacred writings, however, tradition and Scripture

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are often blended. This is true in Hinduism, for example, where the ancient Vedas are the Scriptures, and traditions handed down by gurus round out the faith of most followers.

Tradition in effect becomes a lens through which the written word is interpreted. Tradition therefore stands as the highest of all authorities, because it renders the only authoritative interpretation of the sacred writings.

This tendency to view tradition as supreme authority is not unique to pagan religions. Traditional Judaism, for example, follows the Scripture-plus-tradition paradigm. The familiar books of the Old Testament alone are viewed as Scripture, but true orthodoxy is actually defined by a collection of ancient rabbinical traditions known as the Talmud. In effect, the traditions of the Talmud carry an authority equal to or greater than that of the inspired Scriptures.

Teaching as Doctrines the Precepts of Men

This is no recent development within Judaism. The Jews of Jesus' day also placed tradition on an equal footing with Scripture. Rather, in effect, they made tradition superior to Scripture, because Scripture was interpreted by tradition and therefore made subject to it.

Whenever tradition is elevated to such a high level of authority, it inevitably becomes detrimental to the authority of Scripture. Jesus made this very point when he confronted the Jewish leaders. He showed that in many cases their traditions actually nullified Scripture. He therefore rebuked them in the harshest terms:

"Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'"

"Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." He was also saying to them, "You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death'; but you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban (that is to say, given to God),' you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother, thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that (Mark 7:6 -- 13).

It was inexcusable that tradition would be elevated to the level of Scripture in Judaism, because when God gave the law to Moses, it was in written form for a reason: to make it permanent and inviolable. The Lord made very plain that the truth He was revealing was not to be tampered with, augmented, or diminished in any way. His Word was the final authority in all matters: "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that

you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). They were to observe His commandments assiduously, and neither supplement nor abrogate them by any other kind of "authority": "Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it" (Deuteronomy 12:32).

So the revealed Word of God, and nothing else, was the supreme and sole authority in Judaism. This alone was the standard of truth delivered to them by God Himself. Moses was instructed to write down the very words God gave him (Exodus 34:27), and that written record of God's Word became the basis for God's covenant with the nation (Exodus 24:4, 7). The written Word was placed in the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 31:9), symbolizing its supreme authority in the lives and the worship of the Jews forever. God even told Moses' successor, Joshua: "Be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night., so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it" Joshua 1:7 -- 8).

Of course, other books of inspired Scripture beside those written by Moses were later added to the Jewish canon -- but this was a prerogative reserved by God alone. Sola Scriptura was therefore established in principle with the giving of the law. No tradition passed down by word of mouth, no rabbinical opinion, and no priestly

innovation was to be accorded authority equal to the revealed Word of God as recorded in Scripture.

Agur understood this principle: "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar" (Proverbs 30:5 -- 6).

The Scriptures therefore were to be the one standard by which everyone who claimed to speak for God was tested: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20, KJV).

In short, tradition had no legitimate place of authority in the worship of Jehovah. Everything was to be tested by the Word of God as recorded in the Scriptures. That's why Jesus' rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees was so harsh. Their very faith in Rabbinical tradition was in and of itself a serious transgression of the covenant and commandments of God (cf. Matthew 15:3).

The Rise and Ruin of Catholic Tradition

Unfortunately, Christianity has often followed the same tragic road as paganism and Judaism in its tendency to elevate tradition to a position of authority equal to or greater than Scripture. The Catholic Church in particular has its own body of tradition that functions exactly like the Jewish Talmud: it is the standard by which Scripture is to be interpreted. In effect, tradition supplants the voice of Scripture itself.

How did this happen? As James White has demonstrated in his chapter on "Sola Scriptura and the Early Church," the earliest church Fathers placed a strong emphasis on the authority of Scripture over verbal tradition. Fierce debates raged in the early church over such crucial matters as the deity of Christ, His two natures, the Trinity, and the doctrine of original sin. Early church councils settled those questions by appealing to Scripture as the highest of all authorities. The councils themselves did not merely issue ex cathedra decrees, but they reasoned things out by Scripture and made their rulings accordingly. The authority was in the appeal to Scripture, not in the councils per se.

Unfortunately, the question of Scriptural authority itself was not always clearly delineated in the early church, and as the church grew in power and influence, church leaders began to assert an authority that had no basis in Scripture. The church as an institution became in many people's eyes the fountain of authority and the arbiter on all matters of truth. Appeals began to be made more often to tradition than to Scripture. As a result, extrabiblical doctrines were canonized and a body of opinion that found no support in Scripture began to be asserted as infallibly true.

Roman Catholic doctrine is shot through with legends and dogmas and superstitions that have no biblical basis whatsoever. The stations of the cross, the veneration of saints and angels, the Marian doctrines such as the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, and the notion that

Mary is co-mediatrix with Christ -- none of those doctrines can be substantiated by Scripture. They are the product of Roman Catholic tradition.

Officially, the Catholic Church is very straightforward about her blending of Scripture and tradition. The recently published Catechism of the Catholic Church (henceforth CCC, citations referring to paragraph numbers rather than page numbers) acknowledges that the Roman Catholic Church "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence" (CCC 82, emphasis added).

Tradition, according to Roman Catholicism, is therefore as much "the Word of God" as Scripture. According to the Catechism, Tradition and Scripture "are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal" (CCC 80). The "sacred deposit of faith" -- this admixture of Scripture and tradition -- was supposedly entrusted by the apostles to their successors (CCC 84), and "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone.... This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome" (CCC 85).

The Catechism is quick to deny that this makes the Church's teaching authority (called the magisterium) in any way superior to the Word of God itself (CCC 86). But it then goes on to warn the faithful that they must "read the Scripture within 'the living tradition of the whole Church' " (CCC 113). The Catechism at this point quotes "a saying of the Fathers[:] Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word" (CCC 113).

So in effect, tradition is not only made equal to Scripture, but it becomes the true Scripture, written not in documents, but mystically within the Church herself. And when the Church speaks, her voice is heard as if it were the voice of God, giving the only true meaning to the words of the "documents and records." Thus tradition utterly supplants and supersedes Scripture.

Modern Catholic Apologetics and Sola Scriptura

In other words, the official Catholic position on Scripture is that Scripture does not and cannot speak for itself. It must be interpreted by the Church's teaching authority and in light of "living tradition." De facto this says that Scripture has no inherent authority, but like all spiritual truth, it derives its authority from the Church. Only what the Church says is deemed the true Word of God, the "Sacred Scripture... written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents

and records."

This position obviously emasculates Scripture. That is why the Catholic stance against Sola Scriptura has always posed a major problem for Roman Catholic apologists. On one hand faced with the task of defending Catholic doctrine, and on the other hand desiring to affirm what Scripture says about itself, they find themselves on the horns of a dilemma. They cannot affirm the authority of Scripture apart from the caveat that tradition is necessary to explain the Bible's true meaning. Quite plainly, that makes tradition a superior authority. Moreover, in effect it renders Scripture superfluous, for if Catholic tradition inerrantly encompasses and explains all the truth of Scripture, then the Bible is simply redundant. Understandably, sola Scriptura has therefore always been a highly effective argument for defenders of the Reformation.

So it is not hard to understand why in recent years Catholic apologists have attacked sola Scriptura with a vengeance. If they can topple this one doctrine, all the Reformers' other points fall with it. For under the Catholic system, whatever the Church says must be the standard by which to interpret all Scripture. Tradition is the "true" Scripture, written in the heart of the Church. The Church -- not Scripture written in "documents and records" -- defines the truth about justification by faith, veneration of saints, transubstantiation, and a host of other issues that divided the Reformers from Rome.

To put it another way, if we accept the voice of the Church as infallibly correct, then what Scripture says about these questions is

ultimately irrelevant. And in practice this is precisely what happens. To cite but one example, Scripture very plainly says, "There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Nonetheless, the Catholic Church insists that Mary is her Son's "co-mediatrix."(1)

And in the eyes of millions of Catholics, what the Church says is seen as the final and authoritative Word of God. First Timothy 2:5 is thus nullified by Church tradition.

Obviously, if Rome can prove her case against sola Scriptura, she overturns all the arguments for the Reformation in one fell swoop. If she can establish her tradition as an infallible authority, no mere biblical argument would have any effect against the dictates of the Church.

Modern Roman Catholic apologists have therefore mounted a carefully focused attack against sola Scriptura. Hoping to turn the Reformation's greatest strength into an argument against the Reformation, they have begun to argue that it is possible to debunk sola Scriptura by using Scripture alone! This line of argument is now being employed by Catholics against evangelicalism in practically every conceivable forum.

For example, these excerpts are from some articles posted on the Internet:

The Protestant teaching that the Bible is the sole spiritual authority -- sola Scriptura -- is nowhere to be found in the Bible. St. Paul wrote to

Timothy that Scripture is "useful" (which is an understatement), but neither he nor anyone else in the early Church taught sola Scriptura. And, in fact, nobody believed it until the Reformation.(2)

The Bible nowhere teaches that it is the sole authority in matters of belief. In fact, the Bible teaches that Tradition -- the oral teachings given by Jesus to the apostles and their successors, the bishops -- is a parallel source of authentic belief. [Quotations from 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 1 Corinthians 11:2 follow].(3)

From some books written by Catholic apologists:

Nowhere does [the Bible] reduce God's Word down to Scripture alone. Instead, the Bible tells us in many places that God's authoritative Word is to be found in the church: her tradition (2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6) as well as her preaching and teaching (1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:20 -- 21; Matthew 18:17).

That's why I think the Bible supports the Catholic principle of sola verbum Dei, "the Word of God alone" [with "Word of God" encompassing both tradition and Scripture], rather than the Protestant slogan, sola scriptura, "Scripture alone."(4)

The Bible actually denies that it is the complete rule of faith. John tells us that not everything concerning Christ's work is in Scripture (John 21:25), and Paul says that much Christian teaching is to be found in the tradition that is handed down by word of mouth (2 Timothy 2:2). He instructs us to "stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). We are told that the first Christians "were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles" (Acts 2:42), which was the oral teaching given long before the New Testament was written -- and centuries before the canon of the New Testament was settled.(5)

And from a public debate on the question of sola Scriptura:

Sola Scriptura itself must be proved from Scripture alone. And if it can't be done, sola scriptura is a self-refuting proposition, and therefore it is false.(6)

[In] 2 Thessalonians 2: 15, Paul commands the Church to stand firm and hold fast in the traditions that they had been given, whether orally, spoken, or through an epistle of theirs. So in other words, tradition is one major category, and there are two subsets in the one category: oral tradition, written tradition. That's what

the Word of God says.(7)

Many of these claims will be refuted elsewhere in this book. My main focus will be on explaining the biblical passages cited in support of the Catholic veneration of tradition. But allow me a brief summary response to the thrust of all these arguments.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

First, it is necessary to understand what sola Scriptura does and does not assert. The Reformation principle of sola Scriptura has to do with the sufficiency of Scripture as our supreme authority in all spiritual matters. Sola Scriptura simply means that all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture.

It is not a claim that all truth of every kind is found in Scripture. The most ardent defender of sola Scriptura will concede, for example, that Scripture has little or nothing to say about DNA structures, microbiology, the rules of Chinese grammar, or rocket science. This or that "scientific truth" for example, may or may not be actually true, whether or not it can be supported by Scripture -- but Scripture is a "more sure Word," standing above all other truth in its authority and certainty. It is "more sure," according to the apostle Peter, than the data we gather firsthand through our own senses (2 Peter 1:19). Therefore, Scripture is the highest and supreme authority on any matter to which it speaks.

But there are many important questions on

which Scripture is silent. Sola Scriptura makes no claim to the contrary. Nor does sola Scriptura claim that everything Jesus or the apostles ever taught is preserved in Scripture. It only means that everything necessary, everything binding on our consciences, and everything God requires of us is given to us in Scripture.

Furthermore, we are forbidden to add to or take away from Scripture (cf. Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18 -- 19). To do so is to lay on people's shoulders a burden that God Himself does not intend for them to bear (cf. Matthew 23:4).

Scripture is therefore the perfect and only standard of spiritual truth, revealing infallibly all that we must believe in order to be saved, and all that we must do in order to glorify God. That -- no more, no less -- is what sola Scriptura means.

The Westminster Confession of Faith defines the sufficiency of Scripture in this way: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men" (1:6).

The Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church include this statement on sola Scriptura: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required

of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation" (article 6).

So sola Scriptura simply means that Scripture is sufficient. The fact that Jesus did and taught many things not recorded in Scripture (John 20:30; 21:25) is wholly irrelevant to the principle of sola Scriptura. The fact that most of the apostles' actual sermons in the early churches were not written down and preserved for us does not diminish the truth of biblical sufficiency one bit. What is certain is that all that is necessary is in Scripture -- and we are forbidden "to exceed what is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6).

As other chapters in this volume have demonstrated and will demonstrate, Scripture clearly claims for itself this sufficiency -- and nowhere more clearly than 2 Timothy 3:15 -- 17. A brief summary of that passage is perhaps appropriate here as well. In short, verse 15 affirms that Scripture is sufficient for salvation: "The sacred writings... are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Verse 16 affirms the absolute authority of Scripture, which is "God-breathed" (Gk. theopneustos) and profitable for our instruction. And verse 17 states that Scripture is able to equip the man of God "for every good work." So the assertion that the Bible itself does not teach Sola Scriptura is simply wrong.

How Do We Know the Doctrine of the Apostles?

Now let's examine the key Scriptures Rome cites

to try to justify the existence of extrabiblical tradition. Since many of these passages are similar, it will suffice to reply to the main ones. First we'll examine the key verses that speak of how apostolic doctrine was transmitted, and then we'll explore what the apostle Paul meant when he spoke of "tradition."

2 Timothy 2:2: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." Here the apostle Paul instructs Timothy, a young pastor, to train other faithful men for the task of leadership in the church. There is no hint of apostolic succession in this verse, nor is there any suggestion that in training these men Timothy would be passing on to them an infallible tradition with authority equal to the Word of God.

On the contrary, what this verse describes is simply the process of discipleship. Far from imparting to these men some apostolic authority that would guarantee their infallibility, Timothy was to choose men who had proved themselves faithful, teach them the gospel, and equip them in the principles of church leadership he had learned from Paul. What Timothy was to entrust to them was the essential truth Paul himself had preached "in the presence of many witnesses."

What was this truth? It was not some undisclosed tradition, such as the Assumption of Mary, which would be either unheard of or disputed for centuries until a pope declared *ex cathedra* that it was truth. What Timothy was to hand on to other men was the same doctrine Paul had preached before "many witnesses."

Paul was speaking of the gospel itself. It was the same message Paul commanded Timothy to preach, and it is the same message that is preserved in Scripture and sufficient to equip every man of God (2 Timothy 3:16 -- 4:2).

In short, this verse is wholly irrelevant to the Catholic claim that tradition received from the apostles is preserved infallibly by her bishops. Nothing in this verse suggests that the truth Timothy would teach other faithful men would be preserved without error from generation to generation. That is indeed what Scripture says of itself: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching" (2 Timothy 3:16), but no such assertion is ever made for tradition handed down orally.

Like Timothy, we are to guard the truth that has been entrusted to us. But the only reliable canon, the only infallible doctrine, the only binding principles, and the only saving message, is the God-breathed truth of Scripture.

Acts 2:42: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." This verse simply states that the early church followed the apostles' teaching as their rule of faith. Once again this passage says nothing about apostolic succession and contains no hint of a guarantee that "the apostles' teaching" would be infallibly preserved through any means other than Scripture.

Note also that this verse describes the attitude of the earliest converts to Christianity. The "they" at the beginning of the verse refers back to verse

41 and the three thousand souls who were converted at Pentecost. These were for the most part rank-and-file lay people. And their one source of Christian doctrine (this was before any of the New Testament had been penned) was the oral teaching of the apostles.

This verse is even more irrelevant to the question of infallible tradition than 2 Timothy 2:2. The only point it asserts that is remotely germane to the issue is that the source of authority for the early church was apostolic teaching. No one who holds to the doctrine of Sola Scriptura would dispute that point. Let it be stated as clearly as possible: Protestants do not deny that the oral teaching of the apostles was authoritative, inerrant truth, binding as a rule of faith on those who heard it. Moreover, if there were any promise in Scripture that the exact words or full sense of the apostolic message would be infallibly preserved through word of mouth by an unbroken succession of bishops, we would be bound to obey that tradition as a rule of faith.

Scripture, however, which is God-breathed, never speaks of any other God-breathed authority; it never authorizes us to view tradition on an equal or superior plane of authority; and while it makes the claim of inerrancy for itself, it never acknowledges any other infallible source of authority. Word-of-mouth tradition is never said to be theopneustos, God-breathed, or infallible.

What Tradition Did Paul Command Adherence To?

We've already noted, however, that Catholic apologists claim they do see verses in Scripture that accord authority to tradition. Even non-Catholic versions of Scripture, speak of a certain "tradition" that is to be received and obeyed with unquestioning reverence.

What of these verses? Protestants often find them difficult to explain, but in reality they make better arguments against the Catholic position than they do against sola Scriptura. Let's examine the main ones:

1 Corinthians 11:2: "Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you." Those words of Paul to the Corinthians speak of tradition, do they not?

Yet as is often true, the meaning is plain when we look at the context. And examining the context, we discover this verse offers no support whatsoever for the Roman Catholic notion of infallible tradition.

First of all, the apostle is speaking not of traditions passed down to the Corinthians by someone else through word of mouth. This "tradition" is nothing other than doctrine the Corinthians had heard directly from Paul's own lips during his ministry in their church. The Greek word translated "traditions" is *paradosis*, translated "ordinances" in the King James Version. The Greek root contains the idea of transmission, and the idea is no doubt doctrine that was transmitted by oral means. In this case, however, it refers only to Paul's own preaching -- not to someone else's report of what Paul

taught.

The Corinthians had had the privilege of sitting under the apostle Paul's ministry for a year and a half (Acts 18:11), so it is ironic that of all the churches described in the New Testament, Corinth was one of the most problematic. Paul's first epistle to this church deals with a series of profound problems related to church discipline and practice, including serious sin in their midst, disunity among the brethren, disorder in church meetings, Christians who were taking one another to court, abuse of spiritual gifts, and so on. Second Corinthians is an extended defense of Paul's ministry in the face of opposition and hostility. Someone in the church -- possibly even someone whom Paul had entrusted with a position of leadership -- had evidently fomented a rebellion against Paul during his long absence.

The Corinthians knew Paul. He had been their pastor. Yet they were obviously slipping away from the moorings he had so carefully established during his pastorate there. Far from being instruments through which Paul's tradition was infallibly preserved and handed down, the Corinthians were rebelling against his apostleship! That is why Paul encouraged them to remember what he had heard from them and follow it to the letter. What did he teach during that year and a half in their midst? We have no way of knowing precisely, but we have every reason to believe that the substance of his teaching was the same truth that is recorded throughout his epistles and elsewhere in the New Testament. Once again, we do know for certain that everything essential for thoroughly equipping Christians for life and godliness was

preserved in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15 -- 17). The rest is not recorded for us, and nothing anywhere in Scripture indicates that it was handed down through oral tradition -- especially not through any means that guaranteed it would be inspired and infallible.

1 Corinthians 11:2 in particular teaches no such thing. It is nothing but Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians that they remember and obey his apostolic teaching. It reflects Paul's own personal struggle to protect and preserve the doctrinal tradition he had carefully established in Corinth. But again, there is no implication whatsoever that Paul expected this tradition to be infallibly preserved through any inspired means other than Scripture. On the contrary, Paul was concerned lest his ministry among the Corinthians prove to have been in vain (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:1).

2 Thessalonians 2:15: "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." This is perhaps the favorite verse of Catholic apologists when they want to support the Catholic appeal to tradition, because the verse plainly delineates between the written word and oral "traditions."

Again the Greek word is *paradosis*. Clearly, the apostle is speaking of doctrine, and it is not to be disputed that the doctrine he has in mind is authoritative, inspired truth.

So what is this inspired tradition that they received "by word of mouth"? Doesn't this verse rather clearly support the Catholic position?

No, it does not. Again, the context is essential to a clear understanding of what Paul was saying. The Thessalonians had evidently been misled by a forged letter, supposedly from the apostle Paul, telling them that the day of the Lord had already come (2 Thessalonians 2:2).

The entire church had apparently been upset by this, and the apostle Paul was eager to encourage them. For one thing, he wanted to warn them not to be taken in by phony "inspired truth." And so he told them clearly how to recognize a genuine epistle from him -- it would be signed in his own handwriting: "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write" (3:17). He wanted to ensure that they would not be fooled again by forged epistles.

But even more important, he wanted them to stand fast in the teaching they had already received from him. He had already told them, for example, that the day of the Lord would be preceded by a falling away, and the unveiling of the man of lawlessness. "Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?" 2:5). There was no excuse for them to be troubled by a phony letter, for they had heard the actual truth from his own mouth already.

Now, no one -- even the most impassioned champion of sola Scriptura -- would deny that Paul had taught the Thessalonians many things by word of mouth. No one would deny that the teaching of an apostle carried absolute authority.

The point of debate between Catholics and Protestants is whether that teaching was infallibly preserved by word of mouth. So the mere reference to truth received firsthand from Paul himself is, again, irrelevant as support for the Catholic position.

Certainly nothing here suggests that the tradition Paul delivered to the Thessalonians is infallibly preserved for us anywhere except in Scripture itself. In fact, the real thrust of what Paul is writing here is antithetical to the spirit of Roman Catholic tradition. Paul is not encouraging the Thessalonians to receive some tradition that had been delivered to them via second or third hand reports. On the contrary, he was ordering them to receive as infallible truth only what they had heard directly from his own lips.

Paul was very concerned to correct the Thessalonians' tendency to be led astray by false epistles and spurious tradition. From the very beginning the Thessalonians had not responded to the gospel message as nobly as the Bereans, who "received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

It is highly significant that the Bereans are explicitly commended for examining the apostolic message in light of Scripture. They had the priority right: Scripture is the supreme rule of faith, by which everything else is to be tested. Unsure of whether they could trust the apostolic message -- which, by the way, was as inspired and infallible and true as Scripture itself -- the Bereans erased all their doubt by double-checking the message against Scripture. Yet

Roman Catholics are forbidden by their Church to take such an approach! They are told that the Church through her bishops dispenses the only true and infallible understanding of Scripture.

Therefore it is pointless to test the Catholic Church's message by Scripture; for if there appears to be a conflict -- and make no mistake, there are many -- Rome says her traditions carry more weight than her critics' interpretation of Scripture.

What the Apostle was telling the Thessalonians was nothing like what Rome tells faithful Catholics. Paul was urging the Thessalonians to test all truth-claims by Scripture, and by the words they had heard personally from his own lips. And since the only words of the apostles that are infallibly preserved for us are found in Scripture, that means that we, like the Bereans, must compare everything with Scripture to see whether it is so.

Roman Catholic apologists protest that only a fraction of Paul's messages to the Thessalonians are preserved in the two brief epistles Paul wrote to that church. True, but may not we assume that what he taught the Thessalonians was the very truths that are found in generous measure throughout all his epistles -- justification by faith alone, the true gospel of grace, the sovereignty of God, the Lordship of Christ, and a host of other truths? The New Testament gives us a full-orbed Christian theology. Who can prove that anything essential is omitted? On the contrary, we are assured that Scripture is sufficient for salvation and spiritual life (2 Timothy 3:15 -- 17). Where does Scripture

ever suggest that there are unwritten truths that are necessary for our spiritual well-being? One thing is certain -- the words in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 imply no such thing.

2 Thessalonians 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us." This is the only other verse in all the New Testament where Paul uses the words tradition or traditions to speak of apostolic truth that is to be obeyed.

By now, Paul's use of this term should be well established. This cannot be a reference to truth passed down from generation to generation. Again, Paul is speaking of a "tradition" received firsthand from him.

This is the closing section of the epistle. Paul is summing up. And he once again underscores the importance of the teaching the Thessalonians had received directly from his mouth. The "tradition" he speaks of here is doctrine so crucial that anyone who refuses to heed it and live by it should be rejected from the fellowship.

What is this "tradition"? Is it Marian theology, or dogma about the efficacy of relics, or other teachings unique to Roman Catholicism? Not at all -- it is simple, practical apostolic doctrine, taught and lived out by example while Paul was among the Thessalonians. Paul goes on to define specifically what "tradition" he has in mind:

We did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good (3:7 -- 13).

In other words, Paul was speaking of simple, practical doctrine about stewardship of one's time, a man's responsibility to work and provide for his family, and personal discipline in daily life. These truths are now part of holy Scripture, by virtue of Paul's including them in this epistle. Put that together with everything else the New Testament records, and you have every part of the apostolic message that was infallibly preserved for us.

Is the sum of Scriptural truth a sufficient rule of faith for the Christian? We have the Bible's own assurance that it is. Scripture alone is sufficient to lead us to salvation and fully equip us for life

and eternity (2 Timothy 3:15 -- 17). Therefore we may know with certainty that every essential aspect of the apostolic message is included in Scripture.

Note that Paul clearly regarded his epistles as inspired, authoritative Scripture. He charged the Thessalonians with these instructions: "And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame" (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

So the written words of Scripture are binding. Apostolic preaching was equally binding for those who heard it from the apostles' own mouths. Beyond that, Scripture lays no burden on anyone's shoulders. But, thank God, His own Word assures us that Scripture is fully sufficient to bring us to salvation and to equip us spiritually for all that God demands of us.

No man, no church, no religious authority has any warrant from God to augment the inspired Word of Scripture with additional traditions, or to alter the plain sense of it by subjecting it to the rigors of a "traditional" meaning not found in the Word itself. To do so is clearly to invalidate the Word of God -- and we know what our Lord thinks of that (Matthew 15:6 -- 9).

1 From the Vatican II documents, Lumen Gentium, 62.

2 From an article by George Sim Johnston posted on the Catholic Information Network.

3 From a tract issued by Catholic Answers.

4 Scott Hahn, *Rome Sweet Home* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993) p. 74.

5 Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988) p. 136.

6 Patrick Madrid, in a debate with James White. Information on ordering this tape can be had by writing Alpha and Omega Ministries, P.O. Box 37106, Phoenix, AZ 85069.

7 Ibid.

This article is from Chapter 5 of Sola Scriptura! The Protestant Position on the Bible, an excellent book defending the doctrine of Sola Scriptura! and is highly recommended by this site. Contact Soli Deo Gloria Publications to order this book.

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There are two types of religion in the world today: religions of the *imagination* (what men and demons have made up) and the religion of *revelation* (what God by His grace has given to man in the Bible). The purpose of this booklet is to examine some important Roman Catholic doctrines in the light of the Bible and determine if these doctrines are in harmony with, or contrary to, the clear teaching of God's Word. Because the Roman Catholic Church believes (as does the author) that the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God, all good Roman Catholics should study the Bible for themselves and abide by its teachings. [1] As Pope Pius XII stated, "To ignore the Scripture is to ignore Christ." [2]

Authority. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Bible *and* tradition as interpreted by the Church are the final seat of authority in religion. [3] Jesus condemned tradition as a rule for religious authority and exalted the Word of God: "The Pharisees and Scribes asked him, 'Why do not thy disciples walk according to the tradition of the ancients...?' But answering he said to them, '...in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine the precepts of men. For letting go the commandment of God, you hold fast the tradition of men.... Well do you nullify the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition.... You make void the commandment of God by your tradition'" (Mk. 7:5-13 DB).

The Bible clearly condemns adding doctrine to what God has given in His Word: "You must add *nothing* to what I command you, and take nothing from it, but keep the commandments of Yahweh your God just as I lay them down to you" (Dt. 4:2 JB).

Using non-Christian systems of philosophy to formulate Christian doctrine (e.g., Thomas Aquinas) is also clearly condemned by the Bible: "Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy, and vain deceit; according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col. 2:8 DB)

The Bible teaches that we do not need extra-biblical tradition, for the Bible is all we need; it alone can make a Christian "fully competent." "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching—for reproof, correction, and training in holiness, so that the man of God may be *fully competent* and equipped for *every* good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17 NAB).

History has shown that tradition is unreliable as a guide for doctrine, as Loraine Boettner ably pointed out:

Furthermore, that the body of tradition is not of divine origin nor apostolic is proven by the fact that some traditions contradict others. The church fathers repeatedly contradict one another. When a Roman Catholic priest is ordained he solemnly vows to interpret the Scriptures only according to “the unanimous consent of the fathers.” But such “unanimous consent” is purely a myth. The fact is they scarcely agree on any doctrine. They contradict each other, and even contradict themselves as they change their minds and affirm what they previously had denied. Augustine, the greatest of the fathers, in his later life wrote a special book in which he set forth his *Retractions*. Some of the fathers of the second century held that Christ would return shortly and that he would personally reign in Jerusalem for a thousand years. But two of the best known scholars of the early church, Origen (185-254) and Augustine (354-430) wrote against that view. The early fathers condemned the use of images in worship, while later ones approve such use. The early church almost unanimously advocated the reading and free use of the Scriptures, while later ones restricted such reading and use. Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome and the greatest of the early bishops, denounced the assumption of the title of Universal Bishop as anti-Christian. But later Popes even to the present have been very insistent of using that and similar titles which assert universal authority. Where, then, is the universal tradition and unanimous consent of the fathers to papal doctrine? [\[4\]](#)

The Bible emphatically condemns the use of tradition as a source of authority because whenever tradition is set up alongside of Scripture, it eventually is placed above Scripture, and is then used to interpret Scripture. This is exactly what happened with Judaism in the days of Christ, and unfortunately what happened in the Roman Catholic Church: tradition and ritual became so important that it became necessary to keep the Bible away from the people. In fact, for centuries it was a mortal sin to possess and read the Bible in one’s own native tongue. The council of Valencia (1229), the Council of Trent (1545) and Pope Clement XI (1713) all condemned letting people have the Bible in their own language and reading it for themselves. Priests are quick to point out that Pope Leo XIII (1893) did urge people to read the Bible. But the Bible he referred to was the Latin Vulgate which virtually no one but priests could understand! Fortunately, in the twentieth century the “unchanging church” has once again changed her mind and allowed the laity to have the Bible in their own language. But Roman Catholics are only allowed to read church-approved Bibles which have explanations of “difficult” texts underneath each page by an authorized theologian.

So, for a thousand years, from the early sixth century to the sixteenth century, while the Roman Church held sway, the Bible remained a closed book. The Roman Church, instead of being a kingdom of light, became a kingdom of darkness, promoting ignorance and superstition and holding the people in bondage.

Rome’s traditional policy of seeking to limit the circulation of the Bible and of

anathematizing or destroying all copies that are not annotated with her distinctive doctrines shows that she is really afraid of it. *She is opposed to it because it is opposed to her.* The plain fact is that she cannot hold her people when they become spiritually enlightened and discover that her distinctive doctrines are merely man made inventions. [5]

Images in worship. Here is the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, decreed by the Council of Trent: “The images of Christ and the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and to be kept, especially in Churches, and due honor and veneration are to be given them.” [6]

God gave clear instructions for worship: bowing or kneeling to a graven image and making a graven image for worship are forbidden: “You shall *not* make yourself a carved image or any likeness of *anything* in heaven or on earth beneath or in the water under the earth; you shall *not* bow down to them or serve them” (Ex. 20: 4-5 JB). [7] Roman Catholics kneel before the pope and kiss his ring and kneel before the statue of St. Peter in Rome and kiss his big toe, yet the Apostle Peter forbade such conduct: “As Peter entered, Cornelius went to meet him, dropped to his knees before him and bowed low. Peter said as he helped him to his feet, ‘Get up! I am only a man myself’” (Ac. 10:25-26 NAB). As Peter refused Cornelius’ bowing, a mighty angel in heaven also refused St. John’s worship: “I fell at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, ‘No, get up! I am merely a fellow servant with you and your brother who gives witness to Jesus. *Worship God alone*’” (Rev. 19:10 NAB). Thus the Bible emphatically teaches that we can bow only before God. Roman Catholic priests, theologians and scholars insist that saints, Mary, statues and relics are not worshipped; they substitute words such as honor, veneration, and adoration for the word worship. Yet as Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has pointed out, this clever semantic sleight of hand completely breaks down in everyday church practice:

Now there is nothing that is so condemned in Scripture as idolatry. We are not to make “graven images.” But the Roman Catholic Church is full of images. She teaches her people to worship images: they worship statues and forms and representations. If you have been to any of these great cathedrals you will have seen people doing so. Go to St. Peter’s in Rome and you will notice that there is a sort of monument to the apostle Peter, and if you look at one of the toes you will find that it is smooth and worn away. Why? Because so many poor victims of Roman Catholic teaching have been there kissing the toe! They bow with reverence and they worship images, statues, and relics. They claim to have relics of certain saints, a bit of bone, something he used, and it is put in a special place and they worship it and bow down before it. This is nothing but sheer idolatry. [8]

Pope Gregory III (elected 731) condemned the use of images in worship. Pope Constantine V (elected 740), who ruled the church for nearly sixty years, condemned the use of images of Christ as heretical because only Christ’s human nature could be depicted. A church council which met near Chalcedon on February 10, 753 (and lasted seven months), condemned the use of images in worship as being “idolatrous and heretical, a temptation to the faith that originated with the devil.” [9] That council had 338 bishops in attendance, making it one of the largest councils held up to that time. So much for the idea of papal infallibility and the unchanging church! The Bible is clear: idolatry is false worship.

Mary. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary was born without original sin (this doctrine is referred to as the Immaculate Conception). [10] Is this biblical? The Bible teaches that only Jesus Christ, the second Adam, was born without original sin (see Rom. 5:18, Heb. 4:15); *all* others have original sin: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and with sin death, death thus coming to *all men* inasmuch as all sinned” (Rom. 5:12 NAB). “Death came through one man...*all men* die in Adam” (1 Cor. 15:21-22 JB).

The Roman Catholic Church also teaches that Mary never committed actual sin. [11] Is this true? The Apostle John says that anyone who claims to be without sin is a liar: “If we say we have no sin in us, we are deceiving ourselves and refusing to admit the truth” (1 Jn. 1:8 JB). The Apostle Paul says emphatically that *all* people are sinners: “Jew and Greek are all under sin’s dominion. As Scripture says: ‘There is not a good man left, no not one’” (Rom. 3:9-10 JB). Mary herself admitted her need of a Savior: “And Mary said, ‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God *my savior*’” (Lk. 1:46-47 JB). A person without sin does not need to be saved from her sins!

Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary was a virgin perpetually (that is, her entire life). Yet St. Matthew, a Jew writing to Jews, calls Jesus her *firstborn son*, an expression used by Jews if other children were born after the first one; otherwise, “only son” would have been used: “And he knew her not till she brought forth her *first born son*” (Mt. 1:25 DB). Matthew wrote his gospel at least 35 years after the birth of Christ and evidently knew that Mary had children after Jesus was born. The Bible specifically says that Jesus had brothers; St. Matthew even tells us their names: “Isn’t Mary known to be his mother, and James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas *his brothers*? Aren’t *his sisters* our neighbors?” (Mt. 13:55-56 NAB). “All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with *his brothers*” (Ac. 1:14 JB). Roman Catholic scholars claim that Matthew, Luke and Paul (1 Cor. 9:5) didn’t mean brother when they said brother, but meant cousin. This view, however, has no basis in Scripture at all. The Greek word *adelphos* is always translated “brother” and never “cousin.” The Jews compared the miracle-working Jesus to His ordinary brothers in an attempt to question the validity of His ministry; it would have been absurd to compare Jesus with His cousins. [12]

In order to understand the extent that Roman Catholic teaching concerning Mary has departed from the Scriptures, Dr. Joseph Zacchello has placed Roman Catholic teaching on Mary in one column and the Word of God in another column. The Roman Catholic teaching is from *The Glories of Mary* by Bishop Alphonse de Ligouri (Brooklyn: Redemptorist Fathers, 1931). The Bible quotations are from the Douay Bible.

Mary is given the place belonging to Christ

Roman Catholic Church:

“And she is truly a mediatrix of peace between sinners and God. Sinners receive pardon by...Mary alone” (pp. 82-83). “Mary is our life.... Mary in obtaining this grace for sinners by her intercession, thus restores them to life” (p. 80). “He fails and is *lost* who has not recourse to Mary” (p. 94).

The Word of God:

“For there is one God, and *one* Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). “Jesus saith to him: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me” (Jn. 14:6). “Christ...is our life” (Col. 4:4).

Mary is glorified more than Christ

Roman Catholic Church:

“The Holy Church commands a *worship* peculiar to Mary (p. 130). Many things...are asked from God, and are not granted; they are asked from Mary, and are obtained, for She...is even Queen of Hell, and Sovereign Mistress of the Devils” (pp. 127, 141, 143).

The Word of God:

“In the Name of Jesus Christ...For there is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved” (Ac. 3:6, 4:12). “His Name is above every name...not only in this world, but also in the world which is to come” (Eph. 1:21).

Mary is the gate to heaven instead of Christ

Roman Catholic Church:

“Mary is called...the gate of heaven because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through *her* (p. 160). The way of salvation is open to none otherwise than through Mary, and since our salvation is in the hands of Mary...he who is protected by Mary will be saved, he who is not will be lost” (pp. 169-170).

The Word of God:

“I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (Jn. 10:1). “Jesus saith to him, ‘I am the way...no man cometh to the Father but by me’” (Jn. 14:6). “Neither is there salvation in any other [than in Jesus Christ]” (Ac. 4:12).

Mary is given the power of Christ

Roman Catholic Church:

“All power is given to thee in Heaven and on earth, so that at the command of Mary all obey—*even God*...and thus...God has placed the whole Church...under the dominion of Mary” (pp. 180-181). “Mary is also the Advocate of the whole human race...for she can do what she wills with God” (p. 193).

The Word of God:

“All power is given to me in Heaven and in earth” (Mt. 28:18). “In the Name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Phil. 2:9-11). “That in all things He may hold the primacy” (Col. 1:18). “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just: and he is the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 2:1-2).

Mary is the peacemaker instead of Jesus Christ our peace

Roman Catholic Church:

“Mary is the Peace-maker between sinners and God” (p. 197). “We often more quickly obtain what we ask by calling on the name of Mary than by invoking that of Jesus. She...is our Salvation, our Life, our Hope, our Counsel, our Refuge, our Help” (pp. 254, 257).

The Word of God:

“But now in Christ Jesus, you, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace...” (Eph. 2:13, 14). “Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive, for whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us” (Jn. 16:23, 24).

Mary is given the glory that belongs to Christ alone

Roman Catholic Church:

“The whole Trinity, O Mary, gave thee a name...above every name, that at Thy name, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth” (p. 260).

The Word of God:

“God also hath highly exalted *Him*, and hath given *Him* a Name which is above all names, that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth” (Phil. 2:9, 10).

Liguori, more than any other person, has been responsible for promoting Mariolatry in the Roman Church, dethroning Christ and enthroning Mary in the hearts of the people. Yet instead of excommunicating him for his heresies, the Roman Church has canonized him as a saint and published his book in many editions (recently under the imprimatur of Cardinal Patrick Joseph Hays of New York). [\[13\]](#)

Mother of God. The Roman church calls Mary the “mother of God,” a name impossible, illogical and unscriptural. It is impossible, for God can have no mother; He is eternal and without beginning, while Mary was born and died within a few short years. It is illogical, for God does not require a mother for His existence. Jesus said, “Before Abram was born, I am” (Jn. 8:58). It is unscriptural, for the Bible gives Mary no such contradictory name. Mary was the honored mother of the human body of Jesus—no more. The divine nature of Christ existed for eternity from eternity past, long before Mary was born. Jesus never called her “mother”; He called her “woman.” [\[14\]](#)

Celibacy. The pope, cardinals, bishops, priests, monks and nuns are required by the Roman Catholic Church to abstain from marriage. [\[15\]](#) Yet Christ did not forbid the married life to Peter, who is regarded by the Roman Catholic Church as the first pope. Jesus showed his concern for Peter’s family when He healed his mother-in-law. “Jesus entered Peter’s house and found Peter’s mother-in-law in bed with a fever. He took her by the hand and the fever left” (Mt. 8:14-15 NAB). The Apostle Paul clearly states that all the apostles except himself were married: “Do we not have the right to accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brother of the Lord and Cephas [Peter]?” (1 Cor. 9:5 RSV). [\[16\]](#) Roman Catholic theologians admit that the Apostle Peter was married but assert that he left his wife and family to follow Christ and remained celibate the rest of his life. But this viewpoint completely contradicts Scripture. Paul, who wrote 1 Corinthians in A.D. 58, says that at that time Peter was married. Therefore,

comparing this date with the gospel of Matthew, we know that Peter was married at least 26 years. The Bible also teaches in 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 that husbands and wives must provide a steady sexual relationship to their marriage partner; exceptions are only made for short periods of prayer. Peter could not have left his wife to be celibate without disobeying God.

God has given explicit instructions in His Word for the qualifications of a bishop. (The Greek word for bishop, *episkopos*, is translated in different Bibles as elder, presbyter, bishop, and in some older versions, priest; keep in mind they are all translated from the same Greek word.) Not only is celibacy not required, but marriage and children are clearly allowed. Only having more than one wife is forbidden: “As I instructed you, a presbyter must be irreproachable, married only once, the father of children who are believers” (Tit. 1:5-6 NAB). “It behoveth therefore a bishop to be blameless, the husband of one wife...one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection” (1 Tim. 3:2-4 DB).

The Bible says that the doctrine of forbidding to get married is a doctrine of demons. “The Spirit distinctly says that in later times some will turn away from the faith and will heed deceitful spirits and things taught by demons through plausible liars—men with seared consciences who *forbid* marriage and require abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving” (1 Tim. 4:1-3 NAB). [\[17\]](#)

Was Peter the first pope? The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the pope is the supreme head of the church on earth, that the Apostle Peter was the first pope, and that all popes are direct successors of Peter.

Dr. Joseph Zacchello, who trained for the Roman Catholic priesthood in Italy and served as a priest in New York, carefully pointed out what the Bible teaches concerning the Apostle Peter.

At the Council of Jerusalem Peter took part in the conversations, but the Apostle James *not* Peter presided and pronounced the Council’s decision: “And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, ‘Men, brethren, hear me.... For which cause I judge...’” (Ac. 15:13, 19). Peter calls himself an elder and not a pope: “Now I have something to tell your elders: I am an elder myself” (1 Pet. 5:1 JB). The other apostles did not recognize Peter as their chief; in fact, they sent him to preach in Samaria (not the other way around): “Now when the apostles who were in Jerusalem had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John” (Ac. 8:14).

Saint Paul did not believe Peter was chief; in fact:

(a) Paul mentioned Peter more than once but he never mentioned him with any special title of honor, such as vicar or pope, or gave any indication that he held him above any of the other apostles.

(b) Paul taught that those who attached themselves to Peter (or to any other

apostle or person) as a distinct group were guilty of schism, because Christ is the head (1 Cor. 1:12-13; 3:22).

(c) Paul did not mention the papacy when referring to the officers of the church (1 Cor. 12:28, Eph. 4:11).

(d) Paul as an apostle claimed authority over the Roman church itself (Rom. 1:5-6; 16:17).

(e) Paul was “behind the very chiefest apostle in nothing” (2 Cor. 12:11-12).

(f) Paul expressly denied that Peter was the pope and further maintained that whatever Peter was to the Jews, he, Paul, was to the Gentiles. This certainly is incompatible with any idea of a pope in Paul’s day (Gal. 2:7,8).

(g) Paul rebuked Peter without any mention of Peter’s supremacy (Gal. 2:11). [\[18\]](#)

If Peter was chief, it was the duty of Paul and of the apostles to recognize him as such, respect him as chief and teach in their writings that he was the chief; but neither the gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the epistles nor the Revelation ever mention it. [\[19\]](#)

Is the pope infallible? The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the pope is infallible when he speaks on matters of doctrine. [\[20\]](#) Ralph Woodrow has disproved such a claim by examining many papal statements and decisions throughout history:

The fact is that neither in practice or in doctrine have popes been infallible. Let us notice a few of the hundreds of contradictions to this doctrine of papal infallibility:

Pope Honorious I, after his death, was denounced as a heretic by the Sixth Council in the year 680. Pope Leo confirmed his condemnation. Now if Popes are infallible, how could one condemn the other?

Pope Vigilius, after condemning certain books, removed his condemnation, afterward condemned them again and then retracted his condemnation, then condemned again! Where is infallibility here?

Dueling was authorized by Pope Eugenius III (1145-53). But later Pope Julius II (1509) and Pope Pius IV (1506) forbade it.

In the eleventh century there were three rival popes at the same time, all of which were

deposed by the council convened by the emperor Henry III. Later in the same century, Clement III was opposed by Victor III and afterwards by Urban II. How could popes be infallible when they opposed one another?

Then came the “great schism” in 1378 that lasted for fifty years. Italians elected Urban VI and the French cardinals chose Clement VII. The popes cursed each other year after year until a council deposed both and elected another!

Pope Sixtus V had a version of the Bible prepared which he declared to be authentic. Two years later Pope Clement VIII declared that it was full of errors and ordered that another be made!

Pope Gregory I repudiated the title of “universal bishop” as being “profane, superstitious, haughty, and invented by the first apostate” (Epistola 5:20-7:33). Yet through the centuries, other popes have claimed the title. How then can we say that popes are infallible in defining doctrine, if they directly contradict one another?

Pope Hadrian II (867-872) declared civil marriages to be valid, but Pope Pius VII (1800-1823) condemned them as invalid.

Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) condemned Joan of Arc to be burned at the stake as a witch. Later, another pope, Benedict IV, declared her to be a “saint.” Could this be papal infallibility?

How could all popes be infallible when a number of popes themselves denied such a teaching? Vigilinus, Innocent III, Clement IV, Gregory XI, Hadrian IV, and Paul IV all rejected the doctrine of papal infallibility. Could an infallible pope be infallible and not know it? Such inconsistency! [\[21\]](#)

Vicar of Christ? The pope, according to Roman Catholic teaching, is the vicar of Christ, Christ’s personal representative on earth. [\[22\]](#) A brief comparison will show the absurdity of such a claim.

The pope:	Jesus Christ:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wears a triple-decked crown worth over \$1,300,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wore a crown of thorns (Jn. 19:2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • claims to be head of all earthly kingdoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn. 18:36—His kingdom does not originate on earth but in heaven; it extends to all institutions, including the church)

• is waited on by servants and lives in extreme wealth and luxury	• came to serve and to suffer; had “no place to lay his head” (Mt. 8:20)
• wears ornate, expensive garments	• dressed as a lowly peasant
• many popes, especially in the Middle Ages, lived in gross immorality	• lived a life of sinless perfection (Heb. 4:15) [23]

The confessional. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that confession of our sins is to be made to an authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness. [\[24\]](#) The Bible teaches that Christians should confess their sins to each other (not just to a priest or minister), not because Christians can forgive sins but because Christians can pray for each other and encourage each other: “Confess therefore your sins *one to another*: and pray for one another, that you may be saved” (Jas. 5:16 DB). In the early church, confession as a public act of repentance was done before the whole church, not just the minister: “And many of them believed, came confessing and declaring their deeds. And many of them who followed curious arts, brought together their books and burnt them all” (Ac. 19:18-19 DB).

When the scribes asked, “Why does this man speak thus? He blasphemes. Who can forgive sins but only God?” (Mk. 2:7 DB), they were right. No one but God can forgive sins—and for a mere man to claim that he can is blasphemy. Jesus answered by saying, “The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” (v. 10); hence, He was not a mere man—He was God. But no priest or minister can forgive sins, because he is a man. We can go directly to God through our mediator Jesus Christ and be forgiven. [\[25\]](#)

In Acts 8:22, Peter told Simon Magus to “pray to God” for forgiveness—not to himself who was supposed to be the first pope. Confession of sins is commanded all through the Bible, but always it is confession to *God*, never to man. It is a striking fact that although Paul, Peter and John dealt frequently with men and women in sin, both in their teaching and in their practice they never permitted a sinner or a saint to confess to them. [\[26\]](#)

The Bible teaches that it is the privilege of every penitent sinner to confess his sins directly to God: “If we confess our sins he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (Jn. 1:9). What did Jesus say when He told the story about the Pharisee and the publican? The publican had no priest, and he did not go to a confessional. All he did was cry with bowed head, “God, be thou merciful to me a sinner” (Lk. 18:13). He went directly to God, and Jesus said that he went down to his house justified. Indeed, why would anyone confess his sins to a priest when the Scriptures declare so plainly, “There is only one God, *one mediator* also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5)? [\[27\]](#) Actually, auricular confession of sin to a priest instead of to God was a late innovation instituted by Pope Innocent III at the Lateran Council in 1215.

Indulgences. The Roman Catholic Church claims to have the power of conferring indulgences. A partial indulgence remits a part of the temporal punishment due to sin, and thus can shorten the suffering due to the sinner on earth and in purgatory. A plenary indulgence gives an entire remission of temporal punishment. [\[28\]](#) “Indulgences derive their efficacy in remitting the temporal punishment due to sin from

the superabundant merits of Christ and His saints.” [\[29\]](#)

The whole idea that God can forgive our sins and then assign to us temporal punishment is connected to the idea that we can gain merit through good works, and that some saints (especially Mary) have been so good that they have extra merits stored up for us less-saintly Christians. This teaching is totally unbiblical for two reasons:

(1) The Bible teaches that even the best saint cannot gain merit—even for himself. The Apostle John, writing to Christians, said, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:8 DB). Jesus said that even if we do obey everything we are commanded to, we do not gain merit or profit: “Even so you also, when you have done everything that was commanded you, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants; we have done what it was our duty to do’” (Lk. 17:10 DB).

(2) Christ has gained all the merit a Christian will ever need. He lived a sinless life, thus fulfilling the law of God for every Christian. He died an atoning death, thus paying with His own blood the penalty due every Christian for his sins. To suggest or teach that Christians can gain merit from their own works or from the works of saints takes away from the perfect work of Christ. Good works are not done to gain merit; they are done because of our love for Jesus Christ. “There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1 NAB). “A single righteous act brought all men acquittal and life.... Through one man’s obedience all shall become just” (Rom. 5:18-19 NAB).

What kind of doctrine of this, which gives a man (the pope) the power of dispensing the superabundant merits of Christ and His saints to those (made available also to the souls of purgatory) who pay for membership in a Purgatorian Society, a Rosary Society, a Scapular Society, a Third Order Society? We Christians do not need a pope or bishop to grant us the merits of Christ as a reward for works of penance, wearing of a scapular, etc., since we are justified not by works but by faith (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 5:1). [\[30\]](#)

Purgatory. According to the Roman Catholic Church there exists an intermediate state called purgatory where Christians go who are not good enough to go to heaven nor bad enough to go to hell. Any person dying with mortal sin goes directly to hell after death. Venial sin, though, can be eliminated through the tortures of purgatory. [\[31\]](#)

The Bible teaches that all sin will be forgiven by Jesus Christ except one: blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: “That, I assure you, is why every sin, every blasphemy, will be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Whoever says anything against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever says anything against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (Mt. 12:31 NAB). Christ in His earthly ministry often did miracles through the anointing of the Holy Spirit which He received at His baptism by John the baptist. The Pharisees, however, called forth Christ’s rebuke by their attributing His miracles to the devil. No Christian would ever attribute the miracles of Christ to the devil; therefore, the penitent Christian can be assured of absolute forgiveness for *all* sins.

All sins are mortal in that all sins are deserving of hell, yet Christ will forgive all sins of those who trust in Him. In the gospel of Luke, the Lord forgave a murderous thief who only moments before was making fun of Him: “‘Indeed I promise you,’ he replied, ‘Today you will be with me in paradise’” (Lk. 23:43 JB). The thief received complete forgiveness when he looked to the Savior in faith. Indeed, Christ promised that all who listen and believe have eternal life *now*—they do not have to merit it or to suffer in purgatory for it; they *have* it: “I tell you most solemnly, whoever listens to my words, and believes in the one who sent me, *has* eternal life; without being brought to judgment he *has* passed from death to life” (Jn. 5:24 JB).

The Apostle Paul taught that when Christians die they go immediately to be with Christ; he mentioned nothing about purgatory: “But we are confident, and have a good will to be absent rather from the body, and to be *present* with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8 DB). “To depart and to be with Christ...far the better” (Phil. 1:23 DB). When a person trusts in Jesus Christ, the Savior’s perfect life and sacrificial death actually become the possession of the believer. As far as his standing in Christ is concerned, any idea of further purification is completely wrong; further purification is unnecessary. Indeed, the believer will grow in practical holiness as he seeks to love and obey Christ, yet this holiness can in no way contribute to his justification before God. All our self-righteousness is as filthy rags in God’s sight (Isa. 64:6).

The doctrine of purgatory arose long after the death of the apostles.

The early Christians of the New Testament never believed in such a place as purgatory. The word appears nowhere in the Bible. The idea of purgatory and prayers for the souls in purgatory was not known in the professing church to any degree until A.D. 600 when Pope Gregory the Great made claims about a third state—a place for the purification of souls before their entrance into heaven. It was not accepted as a dogma of the Catholic Church, however, until 1459 at the Council of Florence. Ninety years later, the Council of Trent confirmed this dogma by cursing those who wouldn’t accept the doctrine. [\[32\]](#)

Transubstantiation. According to the Roman Catholic Church, when the wine and wafer are consecrated by a priest, the substance of bread and wine is changed into the actual body and blood of Christ; this change is called transubstantiation. Underneath what appears to be bread and wine are really the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. [\[33\]](#)

The doctrine of transubstantiation is a denial of the biblical doctrine of Christ. Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man, two distinct natures in one person; yet these two natures are not mixed or confused in any way. This view, set forth by the church at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, is accepted by Protestants and Roman Catholics alike. Yet transubstantiation attributes divine attributes to Christ’s finite human nature. [\[34\]](#) His human body, His flesh and blood, cannot be all over the world in the eucharist at the same time without having the divine attribute of omnipresence. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is *spiritually* present—not physically present—in the bread and wine.

By studying Jesus’ teaching it becomes clear that His reference to His body and blood was symbolic.

Examples of Christ using figurative and symbolic speech are numerous: He referred to Himself as a door (Jn. 10:14), a temple (Jn. 2:19), a vine (Jn. 15:5), a shepherd (Jn. 10:14), and bread (Jn. 6:35). He referred to the Holy Spirit as water (Jn. 4:14). When He instituted the Lord’s supper he called the cup the new covenant (1 Cor. 11:25).

Similarly, “we know that these elements did not become the literal flesh and blood of Jesus when he ‘blessed’ them, because He (literally) was still there! He was not changed from a person into some liquid and bread!” [35] “Jesus Christ, *after* He had blessed the sacrament, still called it ‘the fruit of the vine’—not His literal blood (see Mt. 26:29). Paul, too, says that the bread remains bread (1 Cor. 11:27-28).” [36] “If the wine did become the literal blood during the mass ritual—as it is claimed—then to drink it would be forbidden by Scripture” (see Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10, 12; Acts 15:20). [37]

“When the Roman priest consecrates the wafer it is then called the ‘host’ and they worship it as God. But if the doctrine of transubstantiation is false, then the ‘host’ is no more the body of Christ than is any other piece of bread! And if the soul and divinity of Christ are not present, then the worship of it is sheer idolatry, of the same kind as the pagan tribes who worship fetishes.” [38] According to the Roman Catholic Church, in the mass a true, proper, and propitiatory [39] sacrifice to God is offered. That sacrifice is identical with the sacrifice of the cross, inasmuch as Christ is both priest and victim. The only difference lies in the manner of offering, which is bloody upon the cross and bloodless on the altar. [40]

The Bible teaches that Christ’s sacrifice was perfect, complete, final—a one-time event *never* to be repeated: “Unlike the other high priest, he has no need to offer sacrifice day after day, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did that *once for all* when he offered himself” (Heb. 7:27 NAB). “Christ...as the high priest...has entered the sanctuary *once for all*, taking with him...his own blood, having won an eternal redemption of us” (Heb. 9:12 JB). “For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands..., he entered heaven itself that he might appear before God now on our behalf. *Not* that he might offer himself there again and again, as the high priest enters year after year into the sanctuary with blood that is not his own; if that were so he would have to suffer death over and over from the creation of the world. But now he has appeared at the end of the age to take away sins *once for all* by his sacrifice” (Heb. 9:24-26 NAB). “He...has offered *one singular sacrifice* for sins” (Heb. 10:12 JB). “Christ...will never die again...he dies once for all” (Rom. 6:9-10 JB)

The Roman Catholic Church does exactly the opposite of what the Bible teaches. Christ is sacrificed thousands of times each day in the ritual of the Mass! The Roman Catholic mass, the most central aspect of Roman Catholic faith, is sin, “for it is a denial of the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.” [41]

The following table shows a comparison between the communion supper instituted by Christ and that of the Roman Catholic mass today:

The Lord’s supper	Roman Catholic mass
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The bread was broken	The bread is served whole, round
Was taken at night	Taken early in the morning
Taken after a meal	Partaker must be fasting
Instituted by Jesus	A mixture of paganism
Bread and cup represent the Lord's body and blood	Bread and wine are said to become flesh and blood
Both bread and fruit of the vine were taken	Only the bread may be eaten by the congregation
Representative of a finished work, a perfect sacrifice	Each mass is supposed to be a fresh sacrifice of Christ
A simple blessing was given over the elements	Long prayers are chanted for the living and the dead
Featured the simplicity of a common meal	Elaborate ritualism, rites [42]

The Roman Catholic doctrine of justification. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that salvation depends ultimately upon ourselves, earned by obedience to the law of the church (for example, regular attendance at mass, rosary prayers, fasting, the wearing of medals, crucifixes or scapulars, etc.). In this system God forgives only those who try to atone for their sins through fruits of penance. [\[43\]](#) This whole system exists because Christ's sacrifice on the cross is regarded as not sufficient. The Roman Catholic doctrine of justification (how a man becomes justified or perfectly righteous before God) reflects Romanism's complicated system of salvation by works. [\[44\]](#)

Roman Catholic view	Biblical view	
Justification is God's work of grace in man.	Justification is God's work of grace in Jesus Christ. [45]	"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24 DB).
As a man, by grace, becomes more and more righteous by obeying God's law, Church canon law, and the use of the sacraments, God will accept him.	God accepts men solely on the merits of Jesus Christ.	"For we account a man to be justified by faith, without the works of the law" (Rom. 3:20 DB).
Faith <i>and</i> good works are the basis for justification. [46]	Faith in Christ <i>alone</i> is the basis for justification.	"By grace have ye been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory" (Eph. 2:8-9 DB).

<p>God's transforming grace <i>infuses</i> righteousness into men who cooperate with grace. Thus, justification is <i>subjective</i>.</p>	<p>The righteousness of Christ is <i>imputed</i> or credited to the believer through faith. Thus, justification is <i>objective</i>.</p>	<p>"When a man does nothing, yet believes in him who justifies the sinful, his faith is credited as justice.... Blest is the man to whom the Lord imputes no guilt" (Rom. 4:4-8 NAB).</p>
<p>Our righteousness is acceptable to God. In fact, some saints have done more than what God has required, and have stored extra merit that we can acquire.</p>	<p>Even the best of good works are tainted with sin. Our good works contribute nothing to our salvation.</p>	<p>"But we are as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6 RSV). "I want only the perfection that comes through faith in Christ, and is from God and based on faith" (Phil. 3:96 JB).</p>
<p>Justification is a gradual process which may not even be complete in this life. It usually is completed by the tortures of purgatory.</p>	<p>Justification is an instantaneous act. It is whole, eternal and perfect, not piecemeal or gradual.</p>	<p>"I solemnly assure you, the man who hears my word and has faith in him who sent me <i>possesses</i> eternal life. He does not come under condemnation but has passed from death to life" (Jn. 5:25 NAB). "Even when you were dead in sin...God gave you new life in company with Christ. He pardoned all our sins He cancelled the bond that stood against us with all its claims, snatching it up and nailing it to the cross" (Col 2:13-14 NAB).</p>

The Roman Catholic Church has perverted the doctrine of justification by confounding it with the doctrine of sanctification. [47] Biblically speaking, after a man is justified before God, he begins a lifelong process of sanctification where he grows in holiness and obedience to God's law. Justification is the basis, the starting point, for sanctification (Rom. 6). Justification removes the guilt of sin and restores the sinner to God's household as a child of God. Sanctification removes sinful habits and makes the sinner more and more like Christ. Justification takes place outside of the sinner in the tribunal of God. Sanctification takes place in the inner life of man. Justification takes place once and for all. Sanctification is a continuous process which is never complete in this life. [48]

Conclusion. After examining some of the key Roman Catholic doctrines, it is clear that all too often the traditions and teachings of men have been substituted for true biblical doctrine. Many Roman Catholic leaders and laymen are doing charitable deeds for which they are to be commended. And not all Roman Catholic dogma is false; the divinity of Christ and the trinity are notable examples. Yet the Roman

Catholic Church has departed from God's Word in so many crucial areas that to remain under such teaching is to gamble with one's own soul. There is no doubt that some Bible-reading, Bible-believing Roman Catholics are saved, but they are saved *in spite* of Romanism and not *because* of it.

You need to ask yourself seriously: Am I a Roman Catholic because I have studied the Bible and found that its doctrine is identical with that of the church? Or am I a Roman Catholic because I was raised in the church? Should I trust my soul to a church that practices idolatry? Should I trust the salvation of myself and my family to a church which changes its doctrine to cater to the surrounding culture (e.g., Vatican II), when biblical doctrine never has and never will change? Should I trust my place in eternity to a church which explicitly denies the biblical doctrine of salvation (e.g., Council of Trent)? Are you willing to read the Bible and obey what it says, even when it runs contrary to what your family and friends believe? Jesus said that you must love and serve Him more than your own family, even more than your own self (Lk. 14:26).

You can leave behind the heavy yoke of doubt, fear and bondage to ritual and man-made regulations by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. Believe that Jesus Christ lived a perfect, sinless life in your place. Believe that He died a sacrificial, atoning death in order to cover your sins with His blood, thus satisfying God's wrath against your sin. Believe that He rose from the dead victorious over sin and death for you. Believe that He ascended to the right hand of God in order to intercede for you, send the Holy Spirit to regenerate you (make you born again) and help you follow Him. Repent of your past, sinful lifestyle. True faith in Christ *must* issue forth into a life of godliness and good works; otherwise you do not have true faith and are still in darkness (Jas. 1-2). Remember, holiness and good works do not contribute in any way to your salvation; they are evidence that salvation has already taken place.

Suggestions for further reading

Lorraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962).

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Luther and His Message for Today* (London: Evangelical Press, 1968).

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Roman Catholicism* (London: Evangelical Press).

Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion* (Riverside, CA, 1966).

Joseph Zacchello, *Secrets of Romanism* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1948).

Footnotes:

[1] Bibles quoted in this booklet: **DB**—Douay Bible (1914). The Old Testament is the Douay version, the New Testament is the Confraternity edition; the complete Bible is commonly called the Douay Bible or Douay Version. Officially approved by the Roman Catholic Church. **JB**—Jerusalem Bible (1966). In common use among Roman Catholics. **NAB**—New American Bible, New Testament (1970). Officially approved by the Roman Catholic Church. **RSV**—Revised Standard Version (1952, 1971). An altered version has been approved for lay use. [Back](#)

[2] St. Jerome as quoted in Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (New American Bible). [Back](#)

[3] Roman Catholic teaching on authority can be seen in the following documents. The Council of Trent (4th sess., 1546) stated, “Seeing clearly that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the *unwritten traditions*.” Cf. The Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council (3rd sess., 1870), chap. 2, par. 3; the Creed of Pope Pius IV. [Back](#)

[4] Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), pp. 78-79. [Back](#)

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101, emphasis added. [Back](#)

[6] Council of Trent, 25th sess. (1563). [Back](#)

[7] In the Hebrew “You shall not bow down” is a negative hithpael imperfect; it carries the force of a causative/indirect reflexive. Thus, bowing down to a statue “as an aid to worship” causes one to worship and to serve. Attempts to separate bowing down from actual worship violate the clear teaching of the Hebrew text. [Back](#)

[8] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Roman Catholicism* (London: Evangelical Press), p. 6. [Back](#)

[9] Philip E. Hughes, *The Church in Crisis: A History of the General Councils, 325-1870*, (Garden City, N.J.: Image, 1964), p. 167. [Back](#)

[10] The doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary was set forth in a decree by Pope Pius IX on Dec. 8, 1854. [Back](#)

[11] “The Catholic Church, an infallible interpreter of Holy Scripture, declares that she kept sinless her life long by a special favor of God” (Bertrand L. Conway, *The Question-Box Answers* [New York: Paulist, 1903], p. 377; cf. Council of Trent, 4th sess., can. 23). [Back](#)

[12] The Bible teaches clearly that celibacy and marriage are not to be combined. For Mary to remain a virgin her whole life, after the birth of Christ, she would have to disobey Scripture, which a godly

woman like Mary would have refused to do. “The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse each other except perhaps for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self control” (1 Cor. 7:3-5 RSV). [Back](#)

[13] Boettner, pp. 138-140. [Back](#)

[14] *Is Rome the True Church?* p. 20. It is more theologically accurate to speak of Mary as the mother of Jesus’ human nature; this included more than just a physical body; it includes everything there is to being a human being except the inherited sin of Adam. [Back](#)

[15] The celibacy of the priesthood was decreed by Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) in A.D. 1079. [Back](#)

[16] The Greek in this verse, *adelph_n gunaika*, is literally translated “a sister, a wife.” The more idiomatic translation is “a Christian wife.” Roman Catholic Bibles translate this phrase as “a Christian woman” or “a sister, a woman” because *gunaika* is sometimes translated “woman.” But every Greek lexicographer consulted translated *gunaika* here as “wife.” The context favors “wife,” because Paul argues that he deserves financial support as the other apostles received who were burdened with the financial responsibilities of a family. [Back](#)

[17] In Mt. 19:12 Jesus Christ teaches that celibacy is voluntary. In 1 Cor. 7:8-9 Paul says that celibacy is a gift. If people are having trouble controlling their sex drive, they should get married. “In one of the very few studies based on hard data—1,500 interviews between 1960 and 1985—Maryland psychologist Richard Sipe, a former priest, concluded that about 20 percent of the 57,000 U.S. Catholic priests are homosexual and that half of them are sexually active. But since 1978, Sipe believes, the number of gay priests has increased significantly; other therapists think the true figure today may be closer to 40 percent” (Kenneth L. Woodward, “Gays in the Clergy: Homosexual Priests,” *Newsweek*, Feb. 23, 1987, p. 58). [Back](#)

[18] Joseph Zacchello, *Secrets of Romanism* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1948), pp. 43-44. [Back](#)

[19] James D. Bales as quoted by Zacchello, p. 44. [Back](#)

[20] “The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful...he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994], §891). [Back](#)

[21] Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion* (Riverside, CA, 1966), pp. 102-103. [Back](#)

- [22] “The Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church...” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §882). [Back](#)
- [23] *Ibid.*, p. 102 (slight alterations have been made by the author). [Back](#)
- [24] Baltimore Catechism, p. 231. [Back](#)
- [25] Oswald J. Smith, *The Roman Catholic Bible Has the Answer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith, Prayer and Tract League, 1953), p. 6. [Back](#)
- [26] Jas. 5:16, which tells us to declare our sins to one another and to pray for each other, is a command to be done by *all* Christians for mutual edification. By knowing each other’s weaknesses and bad habits we can pray and encourage effectively. This is completely different than Roman Catholic confession. The alleged Roman Catholic Scripture proofs (Mt. 16:19 and Jn. 20:21-23—the “keys of the kingdom of heaven”) really mean that the apostles and all Christians are “instructed with the Gospel” (1 Th. 2:4) and therefore can open and close heaven in the sense that if the Gospel is not preached, heaven cannot be opened; if it is preached, then heaven can be opened to the listener who responds in faith. To interpret these passages in any other manner would make them contradict the many passages which tell us to confess directly to God (Pr. 28:13, Da. 9:20, Mt. 3:6, Mk. 1:5, 1 Jn. 1:9, etc.); Scripture cannot contradict itself. [Back](#)
- [27] Boettner, p. 206. [Back](#)
- [28] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1471. [Back](#)
- [29] Zacchello, p. 161. [Back](#)
- [30] *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164. [Back](#)
- [31] Cf. Baltimore Catechism, sec. XIV, no. 181, p. 129; cf. the Council of Trent, 25th sess. [Back](#)
- [32] *Heresies of Rome*, as quoted by Woodrow, p. 71. [Back](#)
- [33] Council of Trent, 13th sess., can. 1. [Back](#)
- [34] The mixing of the divine and human natures of Christ into one nature (Apollinarianism) was condemned by Pope Damasus. A church council at Rome (377), synods at Alexandria (378) and Antioch (379), and a council at Constantinople (381), as well as decrees issued in 383, 384 and 388, all condemned Apollinarianism as a heresy. See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York:

Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 289-297. [Back](#)

[35] Woodrow, p. 126. [Back](#)

[36] Boettner, p. 178. [Back](#)

[37] Woodrow, p. 127. [Back](#)

[38] Boettner, p. 179. [Back](#)

[39] A propitiatory sacrifice satisfies the justice of God and removes the penalty for sin. [Back](#)

[40] “If anyone says that in the mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God...let him be anathema” (Council of Trent, 22nd sess., can. 1). “If anyone says that...Christ...did not ordain that...other priests should offer His own body and blood, let him be anathema” (can. 2). “If anyone says that the sacrifice of the mass is not a propitiatory [sacrifice]...let him be anathema” (can. 3). Cf. the New York Catechism and the Creed of Pope Pius IV. [Back](#)

[41] Boettner, p. 182. [Back](#)

[42] Woodrow, p. 140. [Back](#)

[43] Confusion was introduced by a mistranslation of the Greek word for “repent” to the Latin word for “do penance” (cf. Council of Trent, 14th sess., ch. 1); “repent” and “do penance” are completely different. [Back](#)

[44] “If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification...let him be anathema.... If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema” (Council of Trent, 6th sess., can. 9, 12). [Back](#)

[45] See Robert D. Brinsmead, *Present Truth* (Fallbrooke, CA), special issue on justification by faith. [Back](#)

[46] “Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can *merit* for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life...” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2027). [Back](#)

[47] “*Justification* is a judicial act of God, in which He declares, on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that all the claims of the law are satisfied with respect to the sinner.... *Sanctification* may be

defined as that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which He delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works” (L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 513, 532.

[Back](#)

[48] Ibid., pp. 513-514. [Back](#)

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Apostolic Succession

By Timothy G. Enloe

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In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them their own position of teaching authority." Indeed, "the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time." ([Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Section 1, Chapter 2, Article 2, Paragraph 77)

Part and parcel of Roman Catholicism's claim to authority is its conception of Apostolic Succession. As defined above, the doctrine asserts that the Gospel is preserved in the Church by means of a lineal succession of bishops who have handed down the truth from the beginning and who possess the teaching authority of the Apostles themselves. Noting the fact that even heretics claim the support of Scripture for their novelties, it further maintains that without this succession of bishops, one cannot tell where the true apostolic doctrines are being taught. The Catholic Church asserts that this doctrine is taught not only in Scripture, but in the early church as well. The following quote from the Catholic Answers tract, "[Apostolic Succession](#)" is illustrative of this idea:

THE first Christians had no doubts about how to determine which claimant, among the many contending for the title, was the true Church, and which doctrines the true teachings of Christ. The test was simple: Just trace the apostolic succession of the claimants...The Church Fathers, who were links in that chain of succession, regularly appealed to apostolic succession as a test for whether Catholics or heretics had correct doctrine. This was necessary because heretics simply put their own interpretations, even bizarre ones, on the Scriptures. Clearly, something other than Scripture had to be used as an ultimate test of doctrine in these cases.

Another example is this, from Catholic apologist Gary Hoge:

Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). He exercised that authority in many ways, for example by teaching with authority, and forgiving sins. But Jesus knew that He would not remain on earth for long. He also knew that the Church He would establish would grow old before His return. So, according to the Bible, Jesus delegated His authority to His apostles, and He made it clear that obedience to them was the same as obedience to Him (Luke 10:16, John 15:20). The apostles exercised the authority the Lord gave them as they evangelized their world and built the Church (2 Cor. 10:8, 13:10, 1 Thess. 4:2, 2 Thess. 3:14). The doctrine of

apostolic succession teaches that the apostles delegated their authority to their successors, who delegated it to their successors, and so on, down through the ages. Thus, in every age the Church continues to wield the same authority as the apostles did. ("[Was the Early Church Protestant?](#)")

Are these claims true? While I do not fancy that I can even begin to give the subject a comprehensive treatment, I do believe that I can show the falsity of Rome's claims. My critique will proceed along three lines: 1) a discussion of the concept of apostolic authority in general, 2) analysis of specific examples drawn from Scripture, and 3) quotations from the early Church Fathers.

The General Concept of Apostolic Authority and Its Transmission

No one denies that the Apostles of Christ possessed authority over other believers. But what was that authority? Was it something that was tied to direct revelations given them by Christ (the receipt of which set them apart from everyone else in the Church), or was it simply an "office" instituted by the Lord and designed to be passed on dynastically, as was the Old Testament priesthood? A brief survey of what the authority of the apostles of Christ actually entailed will serve to highlight the extraordinary nature of the Roman Magisterium's claims about itself.

Ephesians 2:20 tells us that the church (the "building" composed of the saints of God) is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone". It is of no small consequence to the current topic that a foundation is a *non-successive* structure, the base upon which the rest of the building is constructed. A foundation does not have "successors", nor does it "develop" over time; it is a given from the start of the project. On the contrary, what does "develop" is *the structure that rests on the foundation*. Thus, there can be no "apostolic succession" in the sense described in the quotes I provided above.

Furthermore, apostolic authority was directly given by Christ to only a select few, not to anyone who would come after them. We note that while Catholic apologists attempt to make Christ's words in Luke 10:16 ("The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.") and John 15:20 ("...if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.") into a general principle that encompasses not only the original hearers of the words, but their supposed "dynastic successors" also, such a principle is quite plainly absent from the texts themselves. There is no indication in these passages that the authority Christ gave His apostles was some sort of "charism" that they would pass on to others.

Indeed, what we do find being "passed on" to others in the pastoral epistles of Paul is most definitely not an *office replete with successors*, but a *body of teaching* that is said to originate from Christ Himself. For example:

"As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines..." (1 Tim. 1:3)

"This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight." (1 Tim. 1:18)

"I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:14-15). It is important to note that this command comes at the end of two full chapters of strictly doctrinal teaching.

"In pointing out these things [warnings about false teachers] to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the sound doctrine which you have been following...Prescribe and teach these things." (1 Tim. 4:6, 11)

"Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." (1 Tim. 4:16)

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality." (1 Tim. 5:21)

"I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Tim. 6:13-14)

"O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge'--which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith." (1 Tim. 6:20-21)

"Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you." (2 Tim. 1:13-14)

"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. 2:1-2)

"You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you...[the elder must be] holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." (Titus 1:5, 9)

"But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine...These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." (Titus 2:1, 15)

In sum, although Timothy and Titus were certainly ministers appointed by an inspired Apostle,

and though we might loosely refer to them as "successors" to Paul, it is more than abundantly demonstrated by the above passages that their authority over their respective churches was derived from their faithfulness to Paul's teachings. In no way did their authority stand alone, as something inherent in their "office". Finally, Paul's express command was that the *teachings*--not the *office*--that had been entrusted to them by he himself were to be passed on to other faithful men.

Analysis of Specific Examples from Scripture

Catholic apologists often make exaggerated claims about apostolic succession as presented in the New Testament. For example, Dave Armstrong writes,

"St. Paul teaches us (Ephesians 2:20) that the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles, whom Christ Himself chose (John 6:70, Acts 1:2,13; cf. Matthew 16:18). In Mark 6:30 the twelve original disciples of Jesus are called apostles, and Matthew 10:1-5 and Revelation 21:14 speak of the twelve apostles. After Judas defected, the remaining eleven Apostles appointed his successor, Matthias (Acts 1:20-26). Since Judas is called a bishop (episkopos) in this passage (1:20), then by logical extension all the Apostles can be considered bishops (albeit of an extraordinary sort).

If the Apostles are bishops, and one of them was replaced by another, after the death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ, then we have an explicit example of apostolic succession in the Bible, taking place before 35 A.D. In like fashion, St. Paul appears to be passing on his office to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:1-6), shortly before his death, around 65 A.D. This succession shows an authoritative equivalency between Apostles and bishops, who are the successors of the Apostles. As a corollary, we are also informed in Scripture that the Church itself is perpetual, infallible, and indefectible (Matthew 16:18, John 14:26, 16:18). Why should the early Church be set up in one form and the later Church in another? ("[The Visible, Hierarchical Apostolic Church](#)")

We first note that the example of Matthias replacing Judas is really irrelevant to apostolic succession as the Catholic Church understands it, because Matthias became an *apostle*, not a *bishop*. Even Armstrong himself admits in this piece that the *office* of Apostle passed away. Indeed, his own comparison of bishops with apostles in this very passage affirms that even were we to grant his basic claim that "apostles became bishops", the kind of bishops that existed after the apostolic age were not the same as the apostles themselves--"the Apostles can be considered bishops (*albeit of an extraordinary sort*)". This undermines his claim in the next paragraph that since apostles are bishops, the succession of Matthias to the place of Judas shows us something explicit about "an authoritative equivalency between Apostles and bishops".

Next, it is simply fallacious to argue that Paul was passing on an *office* to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-6. Note the words of the passage itself:

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom; *preach the word*; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.* But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my

departure has come." (emphasis mine)

The passage is quite clearly speaking of the transmission of *sound doctrine--not an authoritative office!*--in the face of those who do not want to endure it. Although Timothy certainly possessed a legitimate office as overseer of the church at Ephesus, there is no mention of *apostolic authority* (in the sense of an office) being passed on to Timothy by Paul.

A second example of exaggerated biblical claims is this, from the aforementioned Catholic Answers tract, "Apostolic Succession":

"The role of apostolic succession in preserving true doctrine is illustrated in the Bible. To make sure that the teachings of the apostles would be passed down after the deaths of the apostles, Paul told Timothy: "[W]hat you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). In this passage he refers to the first four generations of apostolic succession--his own generation, Timothy's generation, the generation Timothy will teach, and the generation they in turn will teach."

We can easily grant that this passage is teaching the concept of a transmission of authority through the generations. But the key question is, "*What authority is being transmitted?*" Does this passage give us any reason to believe that the succession of teachers it is speaking of would themselves *in their persons* possess the same kind of authority as did the Apostles? No, it does not.

First, we must note that Paul instructs Timothy to entrust the *doctrines* he has learned to *faithful* men, which immediately implies that such men are to be held to some kind of external standard by which their faithfulness can be measured. No matter what the Catholic Church may wish to claim about its hierarchy, it is simply a truism that the only thing Paul can be referring to as that which the men to follow are to be faithful *to* is *apostolic doctrine itself*. It cannot be that Paul is teaching the idea that *mere lineal succession* will guarantee the truthfulness of the doctrines being taught by the successors, for he himself had earlier instructed the elders at Ephesus that after he was gone, "savage wolves" would arise from *within their own ranks* and draw disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30).

I repeat again for emphasis, *mere lineal succession* is not what Paul has in mind in his teachings. That there will be a succession of teachers is undeniable, but the key principle to remember is that these teachers must be faithful to what was originally taught by the Apostles. ¹ The fact that many groups make this claim for their own hierarchies should serve to make us wary of accepting *de fide* Rome's claim. This point will be elaborated in the following section, which will examine some of the writings of the Church Fathers.

The Teachings of the Church Fathers

"...it is one thing to allow that a bishop has succeeded an apostle at the place of his last labors, and quite another to assume that therefore such a bishop is virtually the apostle himself. Yet this assumption is the ground of all Roman doctrine on this point." ²

A number of passages from the early Fathers are brought forth by Roman apologists in defense of their Church's understanding of apostolic succession. A primary passage is this one from Clement of Rome (often alleged to be "Pope Clement"):

"Through countryside and city [the apostles] preached, and they appointed their earliest converts, testing them by the Spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of future believers ... Our apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife for the office of bishop. For this reason, therefore, having received perfect foreknowledge, they appointed those who have already been mentioned and afterwards added the further provision that, if they should die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry. (Clement, Letter to the Corinthians 42:4-5, 44:1-3 [A.D. 80]).

Now, it is beyond question that the Fathers believed that there was a succession of teachers from the apostles--that the apostles commissioned men to lead the churches in their stead. Not only have we seen that this concept is found throughout the New Testament pastoral epistles (and even in chapter 20 of the book of Acts), but it is found in the writings of Fathers such as Irenaeus and Tertullian. Indeed, it is from Irenaeus' monumental work *Against Heresies* that Catholic apologists draw a list of successive bishops in the very see of Rome.

Nevertheless, it is one thing to say that the Apostles made provision for leadership in the churches once they were gone and quite another to say that those so commissioned were to function *as if they themselves were Apostles, e.g., that the successors of the Apostles would possess the same infallible doctrinal authority as did the Apostles themselves.* What must be noted is that the above quote says absolutely *nothing* about the most crucial aspect of the Catholic doctrine it supposedly "proves", namely, that (in the words of one Catholic apologist) "in every age the Church continues to wield the same authority as the apostles did." ³ From the quote we are given, the best that can be concluded is that the apostles appointed men to the office of bishop, and made further provision for other approved men to succeed them should they die. Nothing more, nothing less. So why is this portion of Clement's letter quoted as if it "proves" the Roman Catholic contention about the Fathers' view of apostolic succession?

Another passage often raised is from Ignatius of Antioch:

Indeed, when you submit to the bishop as you would to Jesus Christ, it is clear to me that you are living not in the manner of men but as Jesus Christ, who died for us, that through faith in his death you might escape dying. It is necessary, therefore--and such is your practice that you do nothing without the bishop, and that you be subject also to the presbytery, as to the apostles of Jesus Christ our hope, in whom we shall be found, if we live in him. It is necessary also that the deacons, the dispensers of the mysteries [sacraments] of Jesus Christ, be in every way pleasing to all men. For they are not the deacons of food and drink, but servants of the Church of God. They must therefore guard against blame as against fire. (Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Trallians 2:1-3 [A.D. 110]).

This quote does equate the authority of the bishop to that of Jesus Christ, and of the presbytery to the apostles of Jesus Christ, which would seem to confirm the Catholic thesis. However, a few words about that ever-important thing called "context" must be said. First, there are two versions of each of Ignatius' seven undisputed letters, a shorter and a longer version. Some Catholic apologists quote the shorter version, which is not problematic, since many scholars believe that the

shorter versions are the authentic ones. Nevertheless, other scholars believe there is reason for accepting the longer versions. Second, it seems beyond reasonable doubt that Ignatius would have been assuming that the bishops he spoke of submitting to were, in fact, faithful proponents of the doctrines taught by the Apostles, and not "wolves in sheep's clothing". These points come together to disconfirm the Catholic assertions in the following manner.

The longer version of chapter two of "Letter to the Trallians" begins thusly: "Be ye subject to the bishop as to the Lord, for "he watches for your souls, as one that shall give account to God..." Here we see that Ignatius certainly had *Scripture* in the background of his thoughts--specifically Hebrews 13:17. This is important because Scripture *does* exhort believers to submit to those in authority over them. However, it also lists a number of very strict qualifications for the office of bishop (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9). Significantly, especially in the Titus passage, *conformity to apostolic teaching* is listed as a qualification. The implication of the pastoral epistles on the issue of apostolic succession is precisely what Protestants maintain, e.g., that succession is succession of *apostolic doctrine*, not of *inherent personal authority*. In other words, supposing that Ignatius had been confronted with one of the "ravening wolves" that the Apostle Paul predicted would arise from *within the very eldership of the churches* (Acts 20:29-30), should we assume that Ignatius would have exhorted believers to obey such a bishop? Would he even have considered such a person to be truly a bishop? I ask these questions rhetorically because I believe the answer should be obvious even to dedicated Roman apologists.

But if we were to read into the next chapter of Ignatius' Letter to the Trallians, we would find that he explicitly disavows that he has the inherent authority of an apostle: "But shall I, when permitted to write on this point, reach such a height of self-esteem, that though being a condemned man, I should issue commands to you as if I were an apostle?" The longer version reads, "I am indeed bound for the sake of Christ, but I am not yet worthy of Christ. But when I am perfected, perhaps I shall then become so. *I do not issue orders like an apostle.*" (emphasis mine).

It seems then that *Bishop* Ignatius of Antioch did not believe that *he personally* wielded the same type of authority as did the Apostles. ⁴ If this is so, then Ignatius cannot be advanced as a proponent of the Catholic conception of apostolic succession.

A third example of the teaching of the Fathers on apostolic succession is this passage from Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*:

Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the Church, — those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father. But [it is also incumbent] to hold in suspicion others who depart from the primitive succession, and assemble themselves together in any place whatsoever, [looking upon them] either as heretics of perverse minds, or as schismatics puffed up and self-pleasing, or again as hypocrites, acting thus for the sake of lucre and vainglory. (4,26,2)

A moment's reflection on the passage will show that it says absolutely nothing about the idea that the successors of the apostles possessed *in their persons* the same authority as did the apostles.

Rather, it simply tells us that there has been a succession of teachers who have received the infallible truth. Furthermore, there are other statements in *Against Heresies* which compel us to recognize that Irenaeus simply did not hold the Roman idea of apostolic succession. Consider these words from 3:3:1--

...It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times; those who neither taught nor knew of anything like what these [heretics] rave about. For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to "the perfect" apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves. For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon [to the Church], but if they should fall away, the direst calamity.

Note that Irenaeus plainly asserts the possibility even in the minds of the apostles themselves, that their successors could possibly "fall away". This is totally in keeping with the teaching of the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:29-30), but inconsistent with the Roman doctrine.

Interestingly, a bit further on in his work, Irenaeus seems to support the view I mentioned above (that apostolic succession is a succession of sound teaching). After listing the thirteen Roman bishops between the apostles and the current one, he writes: "In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth." (*Against Heresies*, 3:3:3).

He continues, "Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time" (*ibid.*, 3:3:4). It would seem that Irenaeus linked apostolic succession to the preaching of the truth, not merely to a lineal descent of men in a teaching office.

It is very important that we follow Irenaeus' progression of thought, for it impacts not only the idea of apostolic succession, but of the authority of the Scriptures as well. In this section of *Against Heresies* (Book 3) Irenaeus tells us his reasons for speaking of an unbroken line of successors to the apostles. In Chapter 1, he writes, "We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, *handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith.*" (emphasis mine). In Chapter 2, he shows us how the Gnostics

devalue those Scriptures: "When, however, they are *confuted from the Scriptures*, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and [assert] that they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. For [they allege] that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but *viva voce...*". (emphasis mine). Finally, in Chapters 2 and 3, he begins his argument from a succession of bishops. I note with some irony that the Scriptures appear *first* in Irenaeus' line of reasoning and the institution of successive bishops *second*. In Roman Catholic apologetics, the order is generally reversed. 5

But lest the point be still unclear, we have another witness to the fact that, for the early church, apostolic succession was a matter of the truthfulness of the doctrine preached by the supposed lineal descendants of the apostles. Tertullian writes,

"It is usual, indeed, with persons of a weaker character, to be so built up (in confidence) by certain individuals who are caught by heresy, as to topple over into ruin themselves. How comes it to pass, (they ask), that this woman or that man, who were the most faithful, the most prudent, and the most approved in the church, have gone over to the other side? Who that asks such a question does not in fact reply to it himself, to the effect that men whom heresies have been able to pervert ought never to have been esteemed prudent, or faithful, or approved? This again is, I suppose, an extraordinary thing, that one who has been approved should afterwards fall back? Saul, who was good beyond all others, is afterwards subverted by envy. David, a good man "after the Lord's own heart," is guilty afterwards of murder and adultery. Solomon, endowed by the Lord with all grace and wisdom, is led into idolatry, by women. For to the Son of God alone was it reserved to persevere to the last without sin. But what if a bishop, if a deacon, if a widow, if a virgin, if a doctor, if even a martyr, have fallen from the rule (of faith), will heresies on that account appear to possess the truth? Do we prove the faith by the persons, or the persons by the faith? 6

He further writes: "The Lord teaches us that many 'ravening wolves shall come in sheep's clothing.' Now, what are these sheep's clothing's, but the *external surface of the Christian profession*? Who are the ravening wolves but those deceitful senses and spirits which are lurking *within* to waste the flock of Christ? " (Ibid, Chapter 4, emphasis mine). Note well that Tertullian is in agreement with the Apostle Paul, and that the last sentence above presupposes a substantive faith *external to the persons being discussed* by which those persons are being judged. It is simply not the case that the faith is proved by the persons who are teaching it--a fact which totally repudiates the standard Catholic claim about the authority of the institutional Church.

Conclusion

Given the fact that heretical teachers can and do arise from *within* the Church, from *within* the very hierarchical eldership established by the Apostles, how can Rome honestly maintain that her hierarchical succession is somehow proof that her doctrines are apostolic in origin? We saw that Tertullian and Irenaeus--who supposedly were some of those "good Catholics" spoken of by Roman apologists--expressly deny this idea.

By locating infallible doctrinal authority within its organizational structure, rather than in an external standard (as in the Protestant principle of *Sola Scriptura*), the Catholic Church effectively

removes itself from the possibility of being corrected when it falls into error. Of course, its official teachings expressly deny the possibility that it can fall into error in the first place, but this is simply one more confirmation that the church of Rome cannot be simplistically and numerically identified with The One, Holy, Catholic Church which was established upon the cornerstone of Christ and the foundation stones of the apostles.

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NOTES

1. I do, of course, recognize that the Catholic Church claims exactly that. However, so does the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Mormon Church, and the Watchtower Society. The point is that there must be another criteria by which we can judge the truth of doctrines--merely producing a list of successive bishops is not enough.

2. (The Ante-Nicene Fathers, volume V, pp. 557-558). Re: Cyprian's treatise "On the Unity of the Catholic Church"

3. Gary Hoge, "[Was the Early Church Protestant?](#)"

4. I am aware that the longer version of chapter 8 of "Letter to the Trallians" contains the following paragraph: "For what is the bishop but one who beyond all others possesses all power and authority, so far as it is possible for a man to possess it, who according to his ability has been made an imitator of the Christ of God? And what is the presbytery but a sacred assembly, the counselors and assessors of the bishop? And what are the deacons but imitators of the angelic powers, fulfilling a pure and blameless ministry unto him, as the holy Stephen did to the blessed James, Timothy and Linus to Paul, Anencletus and Clement to Peter? He, therefore, that will not yield obedience to such, must needs be one utterly without God, an impious man who despises Christ, and depreciates His appointments." These are even stronger words about the authority of the bishop than the ones which are usually quoted by Roman apologists. Nevertheless, I still believe that it is justifiable to assume that Ignatius had the Scriptural teachings regarding the qualifications of bishops clearly in mind, and that he would not have considered a person who did not meet these criteria to be a true bishop, even if such claimed the title. In a moment, we will see that Tertullian supports this assertion.

5. Indeed, the Catholic argument for the interpretive authority of the Church almost exactly mirrors that which Irenaeus said the Gnostics used: "*When, however, they are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and [assert] that they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. For [they allege] that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but viva voce...*" (emphasis mine). Church historian Ellen Flessman-van Leer expands on this idea:

For Irenaeus, the church doctrine is certainly never purely traditional; on the contrary, the thought that there could be some truth, transmitted exclusively viva voce (orally), is a Gnostic line of thought...If Irenaeus wants to prove the truth of a doctrine materially, he turns to scripture, because therein the teaching of the apostles is objectively accessible. Proof from tradition and scripture serve one and the same end: to identify the teaching of the church as the original apostolic teaching. The first establishes that the teaching of the church is this apostolic teaching, and the second, what this apostolic teaching is (Ellen Flessman-van Leer, Tradition and Scripture in the Early Church (Van Gorcum, 1953, pp. 184, 133, 144).

6. Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics*, Chapter 3 (emphasis mine).

Sola Historia?

Rebutting the "Historical" Argument for the Roman Catholic Church

By Timothy G. Enloe

This Article is part of Tim's site:

GRACE UNKNOWN

Please Visit Him!

Perhaps the most important aspect of the continuing controversies between Protestants and Catholics is the area of epistemology, or how we human beings know things--in this case, how we know divine truth. The question "How do you know?" is central to the Catholic polemic as it is presented to Protestants by some of the former's ablest contemporary defenders. ¹ Unfortunately, these apologists not only commit a fundamental error in the target they direct this attack against, but they also miss a fatal flaw in their own logic.

The first mistake lies in the confusion of modern "evangelical" Christianity--almost universally identified by Catholic apologists as "fundamentalism"--with the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Many Catholic apologists have honed to near perfection the technique of blasting to smithereens the anti-creedal, anti-historical, anti-intellectual positions of "Bible-Only" fundamentalists. By focusing their attention on the "no creed but Christ" foolishness of the latter and wrongly equating it with the classical Protestant formal principle of *Sola Scriptura*, they attempt to expose what they believe to be a glaring inconsistency in something they rather generically call "the Protestant view". ²

After discarding this caricature as hopelessly false, the defenders of Rome then attempt to establish the authority of their Church by building a step-by-step inductive argument, or more simply stated, by gratuitously piling up "historical" facts as if such can stand on their own outside of their basic interpretive framework. In so doing, they ironically end up exposing a basic inconsistency in their own apologetic! This inconsistency appears when the Catholic principle of how humans know divine truth meets its Protestant opponent on the field of historical battle. Let us try to follow their reasoning.

The Bible--"Just Another Ancient Book"?

The argument usually begins by admitting up front that it is not going to treat the Scriptures as if they are divinely inspired, but merely as legitimate historical documents. It then proceeds to

build a chain of "purely" historical evidence--passages of Scripture, quotations from early Christians and Councils, etc--which is supposed to show that Christ instituted a Church with certain properties, properties which are today found only in the Roman ecclesiastical hierarchy.

In a [debate on Sola Scriptura with Patrick Madrid](#) (then of Catholic Answers), James White asked Madrid how he could *know* that the Roman Church is the one true Church. Madrid responded as follows:

This is how I know, Mr. White. I can look independent of what I see in Scripture. In fact, I'm not going to even treat Scripture as an inspired document for the moment, just for the sake of argument. I'm going to look at whether or not a man named Jesus Christ lived. Can I prove that historically? Yes. Can I prove that Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead and appeared to many people who as eyewitnesses claimed that He died and rose from the dead? I can prove that. In two minutes I can't prove it for your satisfaction, but I think we would all agree that those things are true. I can demonstrate through non-Christian, unbiased sources, in fact sometimes actually biased against the Christian position, that Jesus Christ instituted a church. We can look at the writings of these early Christians, not only the apostles but also the men and women in the post-apostolic era. I can look at the Scripture and see what, independent of whether or not I believe it is inspired, I can look and see a description of the church that Jesus established. All of you know the verse in Matthew 16 verse 18, "On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Mr. White and I would argue all night long over what the rock is, but the fact is Jesus established a church. The next point is that as I look at Scripture I see that the church is described as having certain functions, certain attributes, certain characteristics, certain jobs that it has to perform, and I can compare and find out, well, historically, yes, I can show that that was done, through the writing of the Scriptures. So if I believe that Jesus is God, and I believe that His promise is true that He founded a church, then I have to say, this is the next step, I have to say, does that church, is there a church today which fits that description which is doing all the things that Jesus said. If that's true, if I can find that, and I have, by the way, it's the Catholic Church, then I know that what is described here in this book is the same church that I see today. So when that church tells me, Jesus said in Luke 10:16, "He who listens to you listens to Me, he who refuses to hear you refuses to hear Me," when I hear that Church speak I know that it is Jesus speaking through the church.

Notice that Madrid's argument follows the familiar evidentialist pattern of much of "evangelical" Protestantism, though it is used by him not to establish the authority of the Bible, but of the Roman Church ³--a fact which reveals that there are *two* competing ultimate authorities in the debate: *Sola Scriptura* and the Catholic Magisterium. It is then marshalled against a caricature of the Protestant position--which, it is said, amounts to believing the Bible is inspired simply "because it says it is". ² I quote Madrid again, from his essay ["Sola Scriptura: A Blueprint for Anarchy"](#):

Another problem for Sola Scriptura is the canon of the New Testament. "There's no inspired table of contents" in Scripture that tells us which books belong and which ones don't. That information comes to us from outside Scripture. Our knowledge of which books comprise the canon of the New Testament must be infallible; if not, there's no way to know for sure if the books we regard as inspired really are inspired. it must be binding; otherwise folks would be free to have their own customized canon containing those books they take a fancy to and lacking the ones they don't. And it must be a part of divine revelation; if it's not it's merely a tradition of men, and if that were so, Protestants would be forced into the intolerable position of championing a canon of purely human origin.

The Catholic doesn't have this problem, claim Madrid and the others, because he has an external authority--the Church--to tell him that the Bible is inspired and which books are contained in it. Madrid continues:

Sola Scriptura becomes "canon" fodder as soon as the Catholic asks the Protestant to explain how the books of the Bible got into the Bible. Under the Sola Scriptura rubric, Scripture exists in an absolute epistemological vacuum, since it and the veracity of its contents "dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church." [quoting the Westminster Confession of Faith]. If that's true, how then can anyone know with certitude what belongs in Scripture in the first place? The answer is, you can't. Without recognizing the trustworthiness of the Magisterium, endowed with Christ's own teaching authority (c.f., Matt. 16:18-19; 18:18; Luke 10:16) guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:25-26; 16:13), and the living apostolic Tradition of the Church (1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Thess. 2:15, 2 Timothy 2:2), there is no way to know for certain which books belong in Scripture and which do not. As soon as Protestants begin to appeal to the canons drawn up by this or that Father, or this or that council, they immediately concede defeat, since they are forced to appeal to the very "testimony of man and Church" that they claim not to need.

The problem with this line of reasoning should be manifestly obvious. Notice the numerous Scriptural references Madrid cites as part of his proof that we need the Church to tell us what the Scriptures are. Since he has already told us that *no one (particularly Protestants, of course) can know the Scriptures apart from the witness of the Church*, how then can he cite these passages of Scripture as part of his "proof" for how he knows those Scriptures in the first place?

The problem is particularly acute when we examine the central passage of Scripture Madrid cited--Matthew 16:18-19. These verses supposedly imply that the Church will be infallible (so that the gates of Hades will not prevail against it). But on the Catholic premise that the infallible witness of the institutional body of bishops is necessary in order for one to "know for sure" that the book of Matthew is legitimate while, say, the Gospel of Thomas is not, how can the book of Matthew be used as part of a "proof" of the existence of that infallible body of bishops? Thus, the Roman apologist uses Scripture to support his claims about the infallible Church and then inconsistently asserts that no one can know what Scripture is until the infallible Church tells him so!

These facts show us that despite the assertion that the authority of the Roman Church can be "proven" by the use of the New Testament records "merely" as legitimate historical records, exactly the opposite is occurring. Madrid and all Catholic apologists who use this type of argument are tacitly assuming from the get-go that they "know for sure" what books are trustworthy historical records, nay, even *infallible* historical records! On what basis do they reject the numerous heretical writings, many of which also claim to be presenting the "catholic" (universal) faith?

Those Marvelous, Unbiased, *Infallible* Catholic Historians

But the problems don't stop with this disingenuous use of Scripture.⁴ Catholic apologists treat *all*

of Church history with the same question-begging, "neutral" evidentialism. I will not even attempt to get into detailed refutations of Catholic historical points *as historical points*. Such is beyond the limited scope of this essay, and at any rate, has been done by others far better than I ever could. [5](#) My focus is on the inconsistent epistemology that is used by the Catholic apologists.

If we were to take the principle that such apologists apply exclusively against *Sola Scriptura* and make it into a general principle, it would be this: infallible external confirmation is a prerequisite for any claim to "know for sure" that a chosen ultimate authority is the correct one. Very well. If this principle is true, we should rightly expect Catholics to jump at the chance to show us such an *infallible* external proof for their Church, especially if they are going to parade through the town square proclaiming that *Sola Scriptura* is invalid because it has no *infallible* external proof. It seems obvious that if the identity and supreme authority of Scripture must be "proven" by means of an *infallible* external authority, then so must the identity and supreme authority of "the Catholic Church".

Oddly, this challenge goes unanswered. Though Catholic apologists often like to point out that even heretics quote the Bible in support of their errors, I have yet to find even *one* Catholic apologist who honestly attempts to grapple with the fact that many heretics (both past and present) also claim to be "the Catholic Church". [6](#) With tongue in cheek, I must ask these apologists how they can "know for sure" that the particular organization they are defending is the *real* "Catholic Church". How do they "know for sure" that the Protestant Reformers--or for that matter, the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses--weren't right after all?

Never ones to follow the supposedly Mormon-esque "I know its true because I feel it in my heart" tactic they wrongly attribute to classical Protestants, these heroically "objective" warriors tell us they have an answer to our query. They ask us to wait patiently while they zealously weld into place beam after beam of historical data, following a blueprint only they can see. Soon, they point proudly to the veritable skyscraper they have built, and note with triumph that its shadow overwhelms the pitiful shack of Protestant "novelties" that were seemingly spun from whole cloth barely five centuries ago.

Unfortunately for them, this massive edifice of historical trivia turns out to be utterly useless as a "proof". This is so because the very apologists who are compiling the evidence are not themselves infallible, and so, on their own criterion of knowledge, they cannot *really* "know for sure" that they are dealing with history fairly. How do they "know for sure" that they have not left some relevant historical facts out of the picture, or allowed their own peculiar biases to warp their reading of history, or perhaps even that the "historical" sources they are drawing upon are not clever frauds which have simply not been detected yet? [7](#)

All these questions reveal that the use of historical evidences as a ground of faith in the trustworthiness of the Roman institution is a well-meaning, but nevertheless misguided tactic. Such evidences do have their place--as warrants, or supports, of the trust these Catholics *already had* in their Church (although they can still be challenged by Protestants). But if, as the Roman defenders tell us, the warrants for our faith must be *infallible*, these warrants can never serve as the

foundations, since they, like the apologists who adduce them, are fallible.

If one still doubts the validity of my reasoning here, just ask why, if the historical skyscraper produced by Catholic apologists is really so incredible, really so "obvious", why does it not convince Protestants like James White, who is at least as well-informed about Church history as Patrick Madrid? And why can a James White or a William Webster produce similar skyscrapers that appear "obvious" to Protestants but not to Catholics? One begins to suspect that it is just not enough to say one's faith is true because it is "historical".

Conclusion

The claim that the identity and supreme authority of the Roman Catholic institutional Church can be established to be true solely by the use of non-inspired historical writings (which include those writings known as "the Bible") is false for two reasons.

First, it tacitly assumes the very thing that it is supposed to be proving. Both Catholics and Protestants take the Scriptures as reliable sources of information about God even if any given individuals in either camp cannot produce external supports for it. Protestants at least admit that this is what they are doing. Catholics, on the other hand (particularly the apologists), propose to treat Scripture "only as a historical document", which they then use to build up the authority of their Church. But in so doing, they ignore the fact that they are assuming that they "know" what books constitute "Scripture"--the very thing they deny that can be done apart from their Church!

Second, the claim that the identity and supreme authority of the Roman Catholic institutional Church can be established to be true solely by the use of non-inspired historical writings neglects to factor into its equation the fact that historical arguments are by their nature *fallible*, since they are constructed by fallible people who can *never* know *all* the facts and their inter-relationships with perfect clarity.

Thus, the apologetic tactic used by many Roman Catholic apologists today actually undermines the very "certainty of faith" it is supposed to safeguard. The Catholic tells the Protestant that he cannot *know* that Scripture is trustworthy since he doesn't have an infallible Church to vouchsafe the canon to him--that he has only a "fallible collection of infallible books".

But the Protestant need not be nervous about admitting the truth of the last phrase, for he is *still* in a better epistemological position! He can simply reverse the argument and point out that the Catholic cannot *know* that Rome is the true Church, since all he has is "a fallible collection of (possibly false) historical trivia".

Hence, like the fundamentalists they so vehemently oppose, the argument of today's Catholic apologists rests in what one of their number, Patrick Madrid, termed "an absolute epistemological vacuum". The irony is too delicious to ignore.

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NOTES

1. I am referring primarily to Gerry Matatics, Scott Hahn, James Akin, Dave Armstrong, David Palm, Scott Butler, Robert Sungenis, Patrick Madrid, and Tim Staples, though there are a host of lesser known lay apologists who follow in their footsteps.

2. I have dealt with this point in my papers "[The Reformation and Fundamentalism](#)", and "[Holy Scripture and the Holy Catholic Church](#)".

3. From a strictly *classical* Protestant--e.g., Reformed--viewpoint, this serves to show that Rome and "evangelicals", for all their disagreements, share the same fundamental view of man's spiritual problems. Just show unbelievers enough "evidence" to convince "any reasonable mind", and they will have a foundation for coming to faith. That **NOBODY grounds their most basic beliefs on collections of external evidences (but rather, at best, merely *supports* such beliefs with external evidences) is a fact of human nature that is missed by evidentialists in all camps. We shall see momentarily how this approach mires the Catholic apologist in epistemological quicksand.**

4. I say it is "disingenous" because of the intial premise that Scripture was going to be treated "only" as a collection of valid historical works. If Catholic apologists would simply admit that they, like the Protestants they criticize, are relying on a conviction about Scripture that they *brought to their apologetics*--not that they *derived from* their apologetics!--the debate might actually progress beyond the level of playground bragging about how their daddy can beat up our daddy.

5. I refer the reader to the essays at William Webster's site [Christian Resources](#), and to the much more detailed versions of the same contained in Webster's book *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*.

Also see the following articles by James White: [Looks Can Be Deceiving, Is Roman Catholic History Reliable?](#), and [Jesus, Peter, and the Keys: A Summary Response](#). Also see White's debate with "Brother John Mary" at [Resolved: The Church of the Council of Nicea is not the Roman Catholic Church](#).

6. Not only do organizations such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) claim to be the true heirs of Apostolic teaching, but so did ancient heretical groups like the Arians. Although it is a very long document, I would refer the reader to Athanasius' work *De Synodis*, which quotes at length numerous Arian creeds which all purport to be setting forth "the catholic faith" in the name of "the catholic church".

Additionally, the fifth century work by Vincent of Lerins, *The Commonitory*, notes what I said above, that even heretics are wont to quote the Scriptures profusely in the name of their own dogmas. These facts serve to show that Catholic apologists are doing the same thing with their ultimate authority (the Church) that Protestants do with theirs (the Scriptures)--they take it for granted and use its authority to deny the claims of competitors.

7. I am here referring to the fact that between the ninth and fifteenth centuries, a series of "historical" documents were used by various Popes and Roman Catholic doctors to firmly ensconce the Roman papacy as the supreme authority in the Western Church. These documents (the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, the Liber Pontificalis, and the Donation of Constantine) purported to be records from the early Church, and they clearly showed the Roman pontiff exercising dominion over other churches as their head. (For much more detail on these forgeries, see William Webster's article "[Forgeries and the Papacy](#)".) Whether or not the Popes and doctors knew these documents to be fraudulent is irrelevant.

We can give them the benefit of the doubt and still maintain that this provides us with an undeniable witness to the extreme fallibility of historical apologetics. One can *never* derive "absolute certainty" from any historical record, given the limits of the inductive process that is used to gather the data and the fallibility of the human beings who gather it.

Holy Scripture and the Holy Catholic Church

By Timothy G. Enloe

~~~~~  
*Please Visit Tim's Site:*  
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The question of ultimate spiritual authority is perhaps the watershed issue in the debate between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Protestantism, of course, locates the ultimate authority for faith and practice in the Bible. This idea is captured in the Reformation slogan *Sola Scriptura*, or "Scripture Alone". Roman Catholics, on the other hand, locate the ultimate authority in the institutional Church. Though it often invokes considerable negative attention from Catholic apologists, I believe that Protestant apologist James R. White's term for the Roman concept of authority, *Sola Ecclesia*, or "the Church Alone", is fundamentally correct. This is seen mainly in the Roman Church's view of the relationship between the Bible and the Church.

I would like to note from the outset that the relationship of the Bible to the Church is an enormous subject that I cannot hope to cover comprehensively. Nevertheless, I have divided this work into several sections which I believe will at least serve as an introduction to the central issues. First, I will examine the question "Is the Bible a Church-based book or is the Church a Bible-based Church?" Next, I will look at the concept of an infallible Church, and seek to ascertain whether or not such is required in order for believers to know what God has spoken. Finally, I will seek to contrast the Protestant position on how believers in Christ may know the extent of the canon of Scripture with that of the Catholic Church.

## Which Came First: The Bible or the Church?

In this writer's experience, the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* is the focus of some of the most heated attacks that Roman apologists can muster. Misunderstandings of the doctrine abound, and as a consequence, many misdirected attacks are made. For example, it is often claimed that *Sola Scriptura* is a useless doctrine because on the basis of Scripture *alone*, one cannot know what books are canonical and what books are not canonical. With the addition of the historical fact that the canon of the New Testament as we know it today was first formally listed by the councils of Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD), this dovetails into the argument that Scripture cannot be the ultimate authority because it was the Church that decided on the canon, thus showing that the authority of the Church is prior to that of the Bible. It is this misunderstanding of the issue of authority that I will focus on here.

The key verse of the Protestant position is 2 Timothy 3:16-17, which states, "All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Protestants

usually focus on the descriptions of Scripture as "profitable" and "adequate" for every good work a Christian needs to do, as well as for doctrine and correction of errors. In my experience, Roman apologetic responses to this are generally very weak, consisting of little more than the rebuttal, "Yes, but the verse doesn't say that Scripture is the *ONLY* authority for these things, as your doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* maintains." <sup>1</sup>

The stronger Roman counter-argument focuses on the first portion of the verse, namely, on the definition of the term "Scripture". Now, it is quite obvious that unless one knows precisely what is included in "Scripture", merely stating that "Scripture" is sufficient for faith and practice will get one nowhere fast. The term "Scripture" must be defined in a concrete manner so that we may know what God has spoken to us.

It is here that the Roman apologist thinks he has backed the Protestant into a corner. Siezing on the historical process by which the *formal listing* of canonical books was accomplished by the Church, he asserts that precisely because it was the Church that did the listing of the canonical books, the Church possesses authority that the Bible does not. One Roman apologist personally asked me how, on my view that the Bible is infallible and the Church fallible, a fallible authority could dictate the contents of the infallible authority.

Admittedly, this argument sounds quite powerful at first. It is often followed by the charge that if the list of canonical books is not infallible, then all we have is a fallible list of infallible books. Theoretically, the Church might have left out some books that are the Word of God and included others which are not the Word of God. The Roman position, it is claimed, does not suffer from this problem, for, since the Church is infallible, its decisions about the canon are also infallible. The Church has spoken, and nothing else can be said.

Like many arguments used by Roman apologists, however, this one only *sounds* good. There are three reasons why the argument is invalid: 1) it is circular, 2) it operates by confusing two different senses of the word "Bible", 3) it proves too much and is historically invalid even on Catholic criteria. Let us examine these reasons one by one.

1) The argument does not escape the very same epistemological problem it claims that only Protestants suffer from--circular reasoning. The argument usually begins by admitting up front that it is not going to treat the Scriptures as if they are inspired, but merely as legitimate historical documents. It then proceeds to build a chain of purely historical evidence--passages of Scripture, quotations from early Christians and Councils, etc--which is supposed to show that Christ instituted a Church with certain properties, properties which are today found only in the Roman ecclesiastical hierarchy. Having thus established the existence and authority of the Church as conceived by Rome, the argument then uses that Roman authority as a sledgehammer against all competing positions.

Many Catholic apologists use the above argument against a caricature of the Protestant position--which they say amounts to believing the Bible is inspired simply "because it says it is". The Catholic doesn't have this problem, claim these apologists, because he has an external authority--

**the Church--to tell him that the Bible is inspired and which books are contained in it. The problem with this line of reasoning is that the Catholic himself gets at least part of his understanding of the formation of the Church by Christ and its supposed infallibility from the very Scriptures he says he can't know apart from the witness of the Church.**

Among the passages of Scripture adduced to support the Roman doctrine of the Church is Matthew 16:18-19, which supposedly implies that the Church will be infallible. But on the Catholic premise that the infallible witness of the institutional body of bishops is necessary in order for one to know that the book of Matthew is legitimate while, say, the Gospel of Thomas is not, how can the book of Matthew be used as part of a "proof" of the existence of that infallible body of bishops?

(See my essay, [Sola Historia? Rebutting the "Historical" Argument for the Roman Catholic Church](#) for an expanded analysis of this question). Thus, the Roman apologist uses Scripture to support his claims about the infallible Church and then inconsistently asserts that no one can know what Scripture is until the infallible Church tells him so!

2) The Catholic apologist conflates two different senses of the word "Bible" when he says things like, "The Church is not a Bible-based Church; the Bible is a Church-based Book". In one sense, this statement is entirely true--the collection of canonical books that we know as the "Bible" was, in fact, compiled and listed by the institutional Church.<sup>2</sup> The Church was the instrument through which I have received a leather-bound book containing 66 writings that I know as the Word of God.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the Church itself was formed by the "Bible", where that term means what Paul refers to in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the *theopneustos*, or "God breathed" writings. Just as I would not likely possess my leather bound collection of inspired writings apart from the historical process the Church went through in the early centuries of recognizing some books and rejecting others, there would be no such thing as the Church if God had not condescended to give revelation in the first place.

The Catholic will attempt to rebut this criticism by saying that it invalidly assumes that the revelation God gave was transmitted exclusively in written form. This is not the case, however. As even Catholics must recognize, the "Bible" of the New Testament Church prior to the collection of the writings of the Apostles was the Old Testament. These writings were *theopneustos* as well, and would therefore fall under the description of 2 Timothy 3:16. Much (if not all) of the teaching of the Christ and the Apostles is simply exposition of the "veiled" truths of the Old Testament, which means that even the "oral revelation" given by them was based on the *written* Scriptures that were in existence at that time! Furthermore, since Sola Scriptura does not deny that there have been periods in the history of God's dealings with His people where revelation was given in an oral form, the fact that Apostolic teaching was first given orally in no way helps the Catholic position.

3) The charge that if the Church is not infallible no one can know which books comprise "Scripture" and which do not is spurious, for it involves the Roman apologist in the fallacy of "proving too much". It is simply a matter of the historical record that only a handful of the books we know as New Testament Scripture today were ever disputed by *any* Christians prior to the councils which supposedly definitively established their status. These councils were not held until 393 and 397 A.D. For the Roman claim to be true, it would mean that *nobody* in the first four

centuries of the Church knew with any *certainty* which of the many books in circulation were God's Word, *including the supposedly infallible successors of Peter!* <sup>4</sup>

But this is manifestly untrue. Of the 27 books of the New Testament, only *six* were ever disputed, and of these, not all were disputed at the same times or by all Christians. Indeed, one of the earliest listing of books we have, known as the Muratorian Fragment (dating from around the end of the second century A.D) lists 21 of the New Testament books along with several others which were ultimately rejected. Additionally, the great anti-Gnostic apologist Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. AD 189) provides us with early evidence of an informal canon. Though he does not produce a list, he does seem to have a clear recognition of some apostolic writings:

"For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, [in that case,] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?" (Against Heresies, 3:4:1)

These facts establish that there was a great deal of agreement in the early Church as to what books comprised the oracles of God, and this agreement was *prior* to any councils. To say that the mass of ordinary Christians *needed* these councils--and thus, some kind of proto-Roman "institution"--to distinguish what God had spoken from what mere men had spoken is to ignore the fact that the councils were not introducing something new into the equation of canonicity, but simply recognizing in a formal fashion the consensus (at least concerning the New Testament) of Christians everywhere.

Furthermore, the assumption of the argument that the councils of Hippo and Carthage "infallibly" defined the canon for the *whole* Church is simply untrue. As The New Catholic Encyclopedia admits: "According to Catholic doctrine, the proximate criterion of the biblical canon is the infallible decision of the Church. This decision was not given until rather late in the history of the Church at the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent definitively settled the matter of the Old Testament Canon. That this had not been done previously is apparent from the uncertainty that persisted up to the time of Trent ." (The New Catholic Encyclopedia, The Canon).

Although we must note that this statement references the canon of the Old Testament only, it must apply to the canon of the New as well, since Hippo and Carthage were not ecumenical Councils, but provincial councils. The fact that there was continuing dispute *after these councils* about the place of the Apocryphal, or deuterocanonical, books in the Old Testament canon while there was apparently no dispute on the canon of the New Testament after these councils is simply an interesting fact of God's providential dealings with His people--not an indication that Hippo and Carthage were "infallible" councils. To take them as such is to be grossly anachronistic in one's reading of history.

A further fact supporting the idea that the canon was not decided infallibly for the whole Church by these councils is found in this passage by the great Bishop of Hippo, Augustine, himself a participant at both Hippo and Carthage. Speaking of the "most skillful interpreter of the sacred writings", Augustine writes:

**"In the matter of canonical Scriptures he should follow the authority of the greater number of catholic Churches, among which are those which have deserved to have apostolic seats and receive epistles. He will observe this rule concerning canonical Scriptures, that he will prefer those accepted by all catholic Churches to those which some do not accept; among those which are not accepted by all, he should prefer those which are accepted by the largest number of important Churches to those held by a few minor Churches of lesser authority. If he discovers that some are maintained by the larger number of Churches, others by the Churches of weightiest authority, although this condition is not likely, he should hold them to be of equal value." (On Christian Doctrine, 2:8)**

**We must note with interest that "On Christian Doctrine" was written somewhere between 396 and 427--after the alleged listing of the canon by the Bishop of Rome, Damasus, in 382, after the "infallible" council of Hippo in 393, and perhaps even after the "infallible" council of Carthage in 397.**

**Thus, if this argument is true, it counts against Rome in exactly the same way Rome uses it against Protestants. How did loyal Catholics prior the mid-sixteenth century know that Matthew was inspired by God before the Church "infallibly" declared it to be so in that Council? If they did not know before the Council, then it would appear that it is possible for one to be a good Christian and for the Church to remain triumphant over the gates of Hades even with a Church that made *mistakes* regarding the canon of Scripture. If they did know before the Councils, then there are two questions the Catholic apologist must answer: 1) on what basis did *they* know, and 2) why can't *we* know on that basis as well?**

**It will not do to attempt to rebut this argument by saying that loyal Catholics did not need an infallible definition of the canon in the first place, since they already had an infallible rule of faith in the Church, for this is quite simply an anachronistic way of reading history. Quotations from the early Church Fathers showing the supremacy of Scripture as the rule of faith are legion. For a concise summary of these, I recommend William Webster's article "[Sola Scriptura and the Early Church](#)".**

**Still, the argument from the identity of the canon is, on its surface, a thought-provoking one. Noted Protestant apologist James R. White even says that it is "the single best argument presented by Roman Catholicism against the concept of *sola scriptura*".<sup>5</sup> On a subject as important as the identity of the Word of God, how can we be content with a fallible list of infallible books? Furthermore, if Protestants themselves go to an outside authority (Hippo and Carthage) for their definition of the canon, isn't the whole idea of Scripture *Alone* as our guide to faith and practice thereby demolished?**

**The key to answering this objection is found in understanding that the canon of Scripture is more than just a mere human list of inspired books; it is *the sum total of the inspired books themselves, as God sees them*. In other words, since God is the Author of those books which are inspired, the canon is actually determined by God Himself. The identity of the canon is what it is whether anyone outside God ever recognizes it for what it is. White uses the example of the canon of the books he has written himself, and notes that, "...The action of my writing those books creates**

the canon of my works. If a friend of mine does not have accurate or full knowledge of how many books I have written, does that mean there is no canon of my books? No, of course not. In fact, if I was the only one who knew how many books I had written, would that mean that the canon of my books does not exist?" <sup>6</sup>

The *identity* of the canon of Scripture is a different, though related issue, from the *recognition* of it by others. Everything that is *theopneustos* is canon, whether or not any human being recognizes it. So in actual point of fact, the "Bible" (where the term is precisely synonymous with the *theopneustos*) pre-existed and defined the Church, for God initiated the contact with men, God called out some men to be His own possession, and God inspired certain books and not others. The fact that the Church was the *instrument* through which the *listing* of the canon was accomplished says absolutely nothing about the *identity* of the canon, nor does it require infallibility on the part of the Church's councils (since God is infallible and guides His Church). As White puts it, "...the canon is not defined by us nor is it affected by our knowledge or ignorance." <sup>7</sup>

In sum, then, the answer to the question, "Is the Bible a Church-based book or is the Church a Bible-based Church?" is that both are true, but in two different senses. The formal list of inspired books is Church-based (though the process of recognition was guided by God's providence, something not even Catholics can deny). However, the books of Matthew and Hebrews (to take two often-cited examples) are canonical simply because God breathed them out through human writers. In this latter sense, the Church is a Bible-based Church.

## Infallibility Or Sufficient Knowledge?

In his excellent work The Roman Catholic Controversy, White has dealt with infallibility and the canon succinctly. He writes:

"The issue of certainty strikes at the heart of the Protestant system. For some reason, people think that unless you have absolute, total, and infallible certainty about all things, you have no certainty about anything. If you don't claim to know *all* truth--exhaustively, in every detail--you don't know *any* truth at all. The more you think about it, the more absurd the idea becomes: 'If you don't know calculus, you can't add or subtract.' I can be quite certain that  $2+2=4$  even if I don't know the first thing about derivations or logarithms or any such thing. It is possible to know something *truly* without knowing something *exhaustively*. I can have a certainty born of true knowledge without having an absolute certainty based upon exhaustive knowledge." <sup>8</sup>

White goes on to describe "the Great Scandal" of our fallible knowledge as it relates to the Bible:

"...My knowledge is limited. And what is more, it is fallible. The very fact that what I know is limited means I may be in error about a conclusion I have embraced simply because I don't have all the facts and have come to that conclusion prematurely. The instant we admit our fallibility the cry goes up, 'Aha! See? You need an infallible authority!' Well, before we all line up to join one of the

many groups claiming such authority, let's stop and consider a few things for a moment. Did God create us as limited creatures? Yes, he did. Did God entrust His Word to such creatures? Yes, He did. Do you really think God is shocked that human beings end up disagreeing over what His Scriptures teach? No, not for a moment. " <sup>9</sup>

The Protestant Reformers had a solution to this "problem", namely, the doctrine of "the priesthood of all believers". While it is beyond the immediate scope of this paper to diverge into a detailed discussion of this principle, it is appropriate to quote White again as to what it means regarding the believer's relationship to God's Word: "...God holds us individually responsible for what we believe and why we believe it. 'The Pope told me so' won't cut it in the end. Nor, may I add, will 'My pastor told me so.' Every limited, finite, fallible person is called to 'search the Scriptures' and 'examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.' (I Thessalonians 5:21)." <sup>10</sup>

The bottom line is that we do not need to have *infallible* certainty regarding the canon of Scripture. Infallibility is a trait that only God possesses. Finite beings simply cannot have it, nor is there any place in the Scriptures (the divine inspiration of which is not in dispute between Catholics and Protestants) where we are told to seek after it in an authority that is external to the *theopneustos* writings. To the charge that our fallible list of infallible books might be incomplete, we reply that while it is *logically possible* that it is incomplete, it is neither *actually likely or actually provable* that it is incomplete. I say "not actually likely" because the list of books was forged in the fires of great controversies that did not "leave any stones unturned", so to speak regarding the identity of the canonical books. <sup>11</sup> I say "not actually provable" for precisely the same reason that the list is fallible: infallibility does not exist in finite things, and one would have to be infallible in order to state with any certainty that some inspired books were left out.

For better or for worse, then, we are left with a fallible list of infallible books.

## **How Could Christ Hold Men Accountable to Fallible Knowledge?**

In the opinion of this writer, this question is really the *coup-de-grace* to the Catholic position. When we weigh the Catholic claims about infallibility in the balance of the teaching of Christ Himself on the role of the Scriptures, they are found wanting.

The question is based on the elementary recognition that the Old Testament Church was not infallible. Time and time again, it fell away from the truth God had given it, and was frequently reformed and restored by the rediscovery of the *written Scriptures*--not by oral teachings passed on through a priestly hierarchy. The immediate Catholic objection to this Old Testament parallel, that the New Covenant is founded on better promises (Hebrews 7:22), is nullified by the context of Hebrews, which is the method of atonement for sin, not some general outline of how the New Testament Church differs from the Old Testament assembly.

**At any rate, at no time in Old Testament history did anything even remotely like an ecumenical council gather to issue an authoritative statement on the canon of the Jewish Scriptures. To be sure, God did work with His people in a process of recognition of the books, but this was both gradual and quite apart from any kind of institutional imprimatur.**

**And yet, Christ held his opponents responsible for their perversions of "the Scriptures", as if a recognizable body of divine writings was simply a given of the religious situation in His day (Matt. 22:31). The late evangelical biblical scholar F.F. Bruce wrote of this issue: "Our Lord and His apostles might differ from the religious leaders of Israel about the meaning of the scriptures; there is no suggestion that they differed about the limits of the scriptures. 'The scriptures' on whose meaning they differed were not an amorphous collection: when they spoke of 'the scriptures' they knew which writings they had in mind and could distinguish them from other writings which were not included in 'the scriptures'." <sup>12</sup>**

**The relevance of this fact to the topic of this essay is simply, as James White likes to put it, "How did a Jewish man who lived fifty years before the time of Christ [infallibly] know that Isaiah and 2 Chronicles were Scripture?" <sup>13</sup> There are only two answers to the question, and neither one helps the Catholic position.**

**The first is to say that the Jewish man obtained his infallible knowledge of the canonicity of these books from the Jewish leadership. But this cannot be, for Christ indicted the Jewish leadership with introducing traditions of men into Jewish religious life and thereby nullifying the Word of God (Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:8). Furthermore, the Jewish Old Testament canon excludes the Apocryphal books, which puts the authority of those "to whom the oracles of God were committed" (Romans 3:2) in conflict with Rome's alleged infallible authority.**

**The second answer is to say that the Jewish man above did not *infallibly* know that Isaiah and 2 Chronicles were Scripture. But this brings us back to the question of how Christ could hold the Jews of His day responsible for their perversions of teachings they did not *infallibly know* to be divine! Either Christ was judging His opponents unfairly, or infallible knowledge of the canon was not necessary. And if it was not necessary *then*, why is it necessary *now*?**

## **So How Do We Know What Books Are the Word Of God?**

**Before proceeding, I want to propose the following statement for the reader's consideration. "We know that there is a God because the Catholic Church tells us that there is." Outrageous? Quite so. In a moment, we shall see how it is precisely this kind of statement that the Roman Catholic Church expects us to accept when it tells us that we cannot know the Word of God apart from the Church's judgment.**

**It is often claimed by Roman apologists that the Protestant position amount to a kind of subjectivism that would allow for *any* claim to divine revelation--perhaps even Islam's Koran <sup>14</sup>--to advance unhindered, thus destroying any possibility of a rational apologetic for the Christian faith. It is said that without the testimony of the Church, we cannot even tell the difference between non-**

canonical *Christian* writings (such as The Shepherd of Hermas) and, say, the book of Philippians.

The argument alleges that, in order to solve this problem, Protestants themselves rely on the Catholic Church's oral tradition of what comprises the New Testament canon, and thereby destroy their own formal principle of Sola Scriptura.

Catholic apologist Gary Hoge provides an example of this overall argument, including the second charge:

Even if sola Scriptura were valid, it would be useless if we can't be absolutely, infallibly sure that the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are inspired by God, and all the other supposedly apostolic books are not. So Protestants (inconsistently) reject the Catholic Church's authority in general, but trust it completely in this one instance. They simply have no choice. In doing this, though, they contradict the doctrine of sola Scriptura because they rely on something outside of Scripture to define what constitutes Scripture in the first place...To get around having to rely on the Catholic Church's say-so, some Protestants have advanced the idea that Scripture is "self-authenticating." John Calvin thought it was. He believed that anyone with an open mind could determine for himself what books belong in the Bible:

"Scripture is indeed self-authenticated; hence it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning . . . Illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God . . . We seek no proof, . . . such, then, is a conviction that requires no reasons . . . I speak of nothing other than what each believer experiences within himself." [Institutes of Christian Religion, Book I, chapter 7, section 5 (Battles/McNeill ed.), vol. 1, 80-81]

But clearly this is not true. No individual has the capacity, God-given or otherwise, to determine for himself which writings are Scripture and which are not. Indeed, how could he? To what would he compare each of the allegedly apostolic books to determine whether they are inspired? Everything he knows about the Christian faith comes from the twenty-seven books the Catholic Church selected in the fourth century, so he has no objective external standard for comparison. And even if, somehow, he could separate those books that did not contain errors from those that did, he would still not be able to say whether they were inspired. Human beings are capable of writing letters that contain no errors, even without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In other words, "truth" does not equal "inspiration." Only the Holy Spirit knows for sure which books He inspired, and that is something He does not reveal on an individual basis.

Christians understand this intuitively, Calvin notwithstanding, as evidenced by the fact that no Christian attempts to define Scripture on his own. When someone becomes a Christian and is given a Bible, he accepts it as the Word of God, no questions asked. He does not lock himself in a room with all of the ancient writings and try to come up with his own canon of "Scripture." ("Treatise on Sola Scriptura, Part V: Other Considerations")

It is easy to see why this objection arises--because Catholics cannot easily conceive of "authority" that is not wrapped up in a visible, hierarchical institution such as their Church. Nevertheless, the objection is based on a misunderstanding of how God works with His church. I will attempt to dispel the misunderstanding here.

I first must note that the charge of subjectivism, as it is presented above by Hoge, is based on a false dichotomy. We are given only two options: either we have the unquestionable decision of the

**infallible Church, or we have a collection of isolated individuals each trying to come up with the correct canon all on their own. But these by no means exhaust the possibilities, as the process of the canonization of the Old Testament shows. God worked with His people over time to recognize and collect His inspired written Word, both Old and New Testaments--the process was *corporate*, not *individual*, as Hoge makes the Protestant position out to be in the above citation.**

**But what of the passage from Calvin which Hoge cited? Did not Calvin explicitly say that the knowledge of the canon of Scripture is based on *feelings within each individual believer*? In order to clearly understand what Calvin is saying, we must back up to the beginning of Book III, Chapter VII of the Institutes (from which Hoge is quoting), and survey the entire context. I will quote at some length:**

**"...When that which is set forth is acknowledged to be the Word of God, there is no one so deplorably insolent--unless devoid also both of common sense and of humanity itself--as to dare impugn the credibility of Him who speaks...Hence the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard...**

**"A most pernicious error widely prevails that Scripture has only so much weight as is conceded to it by the consent of the church. As if the eternal and inviolable truth of God depended on the decision of men! For they mock the Holy Spirit when they ask: Who can convince us that these writings came from God? Who can assure us that Scripture has come down whole and intact even to our very day? Who can persuade us to receive one book in reverence but to exclude another, unless the church prescribe a sure rule for all these matters? What reverence is due Scripture and what books ought to be reckoned in its canon depend, they say, upon the determination of the church. Thus these sacrilegious men, wishing to impose an unbridled tyranny under the cover of the church, do not care with what absurdities they ensnare themselves and others, provided they can force this one idea upon the simple-minded: that the church has authority in all things. (Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1:7:1)**

**"But such wranglers are neatly refuted by just one word of the apostle. He testifies that the church is 'built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles [Eph. 2:20]. If the teaching of the prophets and apostles is the foundation, this must have had authority before the church began to exist. Groundless, too, is their subtle objection that, although the church took its beginning here, the writings to be attributed to the prophets and apostles nevertheless remain in doubt until decided by the church. For if the Christian church was from the beginning founded upon the writings of the prophets and the preaching of the apostles, wherever this doctrine is found, the acceptance of it--without which the church itself would never have existed--must certainly have preceded the church. It is utterly vain, then, to pretend that the power of judging the Scripture so lies with the church that its certainty depends on churchly assent. Thus, while the church receives and gives its seal of approval to the Scriptures, it does not thereby render authentic what is otherwise doubtful or controversial. But because the church recognizes Scripture to be the truth of its own God, as a pious duty it unhesitatingly venerates Scripture. (Ibid, 1:7:2)**

**"We ought to remember what I said a bit ago: credibility of doctrine is not established until we are persuaded beyond doubt that God is its Author. Thus, the highest proof of Scripture derives in general from the fact that God in person speaks in it. The prophets and apostles do not boast either of their keenness or of anything that obtains credit for them as they speak; nor do they dwell upon rational proofs. Rather, they bring forth God's holy name, that by it the whole world may be**

brought into obedience to him...If we desire to provide in the best way for our consciences--that they may not be perpetually beset by the instability of doubt or vacillation, and that they may not also boggle at the smallest quibbles--we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit." (Ibid, 1:7:4)

Calvin then goes on to discuss the general propriety of adducing external arguments for the inspiration of Scripture. He *does* believe that such arguments exist, and that they can "with no great trouble shatter the boasts they [despisers of God] mutter in their lurking places". Nevertheless, he notes the following truism, no doubt experienced by the most able of evidential apologists (both Catholic and Protestant!) even in our own day--that merely overthrowing the intellectual arguments of unbelief with intellectual arguments for belief cannot convince a heart that is set against God:

"But even if anyone clears God's sacred Word from man's evil speaking, he will not at once imprint upon their hearts that certainty which piety requires. Since for unbelieving men religion seems to stand by opinion alone, they, in order not to believe anything foolishly or lightly, both wish and demand rational proof that Moses and the prophets spoke divinely. But I reply: the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded...Some good folk are annoyed that a clear proof is not ready at hand when the impious, unpunished, murmur against God's Word. As if the Spirit were not called both 'seal' and 'guarantee' [2 Cor. 1:22] for confirming the faith of the godly; because until he illumines their minds, they ever waver among many doubts. (Ibid, emphasis mine)

Now let us re-read the snippet that Hoge provided us, with a bit more of the context (portions omitted by Hoge's ellipses are in non-bold font):

"Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that **Scripture is indeed self-authenticated; hence it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning.** And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit. Therefore, **illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God;** but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. **We seek no proof,** no marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean; but we subject our judgment and wit to it as to a thing far beyond any guesswork! **Such, then, is a conviction that requires no reasons;** such, a knowledge with which the best reason agrees--in which the mind truly reposes more securely and constantly than in any reasons; such finally, a feeling that can be born only of heavenly revelation. **I speak of nothing other than what each believer experiences within himself. (1:7:5)**

We must note that Calvin is speaking of how believers in Christ *themselves* know what Scripture is, not how believers in Christ are to speak of Scripture to *unbelievers*--a fact which evades the criticism about the inspiration of the Koran.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, we observe that Calvin quite plainly insists that it is not by *our own* judgment (much less anyone else's!) that we know Scripture to be from God, but by something from *outside of us* which is imprinted on our hearts by the Holy Spirit of God. This "internal witness" is also said to be "beyond guesswork" and yet in agreement with the "best reason" any mind could come up with.

**It is difficult to see how any objection can be raised to the idea that the Holy Spirit "seals our hearts" with the conviction of the truth of Scripture, especially in light of the fact that Christ himself taught that no one could even come to him for salvation unless the Father had first *made him able* to do so (John 6:44; 65).**

**This fact highlights the different understandings of man that exist in the Roman and Reformation camps. Rome's apologetic seems to be telling us that external evidence (part of which is the testimony of the Church) is sufficient of itself to bring a person to faith in the Scriptures; the Reformation disagrees, insisting that God Himself must create faith supernaturally in a person before they can believe. *After* this inward revelation, other things, such as the testimony of the Church, can be brought in as confirmations. Indeed, Calvin himself goes on in the very next chapter of the Institutes to show how "So Far As Human Reason Goes, Sufficiently Firm Proofs Are At Hand To Establish The Credibility Of Scripture." Some of the thirteen reasons adduced are the now standard arguments from miracles, preservation of the text, and fulfilled prophecies. This is far from the meaning that Hoge wishes one to see in Calvin's words--namely, a collection of isolated individuals each trying to come up with the correct canon all on their own.**

**Furthermore, while Hoge is correct in saying that "When someone becomes a Christian and is given a Bible, he accepts it as the Word of God, no questions asked.", it is by no means certain that such a person is relying on "the Catholic Church's say-so". We could ask why Hoge allows the individual in question to "intuitively" understand that he alone cannot determine the canon of Scripture, but disallows him from "intuitively" knowing Scripture to be divine in the way that Calvin speaks of--by the internal testimony of the Spirit. Hoge cannot see what is going on in any given believer's heart, and therefore, it is improper for him to attempt to judge such things as being somehow inappropriate or insufficient reasons for that person's own, internal belief.**

**But there is more to the Protestant case. Consider the words of the great Presbyterian theologian of the last century, Charles Hodge in an essay entitled, "Ground of Faith in the Scriptures":**

**How are we to tell whether any book is inspired; or on what ground does the Christian world admit that the authors of the Christian Scriptures spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? This question is, in many respects, analogous to the question, How do we know there is a God ? or that he is holy, just and good ? How do we know that we are bound to obey him, or that the moral law is an expression of his will? If these questions were asked different persons, they would probably give very different answers, and those answers might all of them be Correct, though not all adequate. Various as these answers might be, they would all resolve themselves into a statement in some form, of the self- evidencing light of the truths affirmed. We believe there is a God, because the idea of such a being is so congruous to our moral nature; so necessary as a solution of the facts of our own consciousness, that when once clearly presented, we can never rid ourselves of the conviction of its truth; nor can we shake off our sense of allegiance to him or deny our dependence. This conviction exists in the minds of thousands who have never analyzed it, nor inquired into its origin or its legitimacy. (Emphasis mine)**

**Note well this last sentence, for not only does it bear on the question of how one *knows* Scripture**

**to be divine in origin, but it will also be shown to bear on how the millions upon millions of faithful Catholics *know* that their Church is authoritative. Hodge continues:**

**And when that inquiry is started, they refer their belief to different sources, some appealing to the evidence afforded of the being of God in the works of nature; others to the logical necessity of assuming the existence of an intelligent first cause' and others to their sense of dependence, or to other facts of their moral nature; but after all, it is apparent that the conviction exists and is influential, before any such examination of the grounds on which it rests, and is really independent of the specific reasons that may be assigned to account for it.**

**The same is true with regard to moral obligation. The fact that we are bound to conform to the moral law; that we ought to love God, and do good to men, is admitted and cannot be denied. Why we are thus bound, few men take the trouble to inquire, and if they did, might be puzzled to give an answer, and no answer they could devise or that any philosopher could suggest would increase the sense of obligation. Some answers, and those among the most common, would really weaken it, and the best could only render it more enlightened, by bringing into the view of the understanding, facts and principles already existing and operating, undetected or unnamed, in our own consciousness.**

**It is much the same with regard to the Bible. That sacred volume passes among tens of thousands for the word of God, without their ever thinking of asking on what grounds they so regard it. And if called upon to give answer to such a question, unless accustomed to the work of self-inspection, they would hardly know what to say. This hesitation, however, would be no decisive evidence, either that they did not really believe, or that their faith was irrational, or merely hereditary. They would find the same difficulty in answering either of the other questions to which we have referred, How do we know there is a God? or How do we know that his law is binding? It is very possible that the mind may see a thing to be true, without being able to prove its truth, or to make any satisfactory exhibition of the grounds of its belief. If a man who had never heard of the Bible, should meet with a copy of the sacred volume, and address himself to its perusal, it cannot be denied that it would address him in the same tone of authority, which it uses towards those born in the bosom of the Christian church. He would be called upon to believe its doctrines, to confide in its promises, to obey its precepts. He would be morally guilty in the sight of God, if he did not; and he would be regarded as a wise and good man if he did. Beyond controversy then the book must contain its own evidence of being the word of God; it must prove its own inspiration just as the moral law proves its own authority...There is nothing mystical, enthusiastic, or even extraordinary in this. A mathematical work contains in itself the evidence of whatever truth belongs to its reasonings or conclusions. All that one man can do for another, in producing conviction of its truth, is to aid him in understanding, it, enabling him to see the evidence that is in the book itself. The same may be said of any work of art, or of any production of genius. Its truthfulness, its claims to admiration, its power to refine or please, are all inherent qualities, which must be perceived, in order to be really believed. SO, too, of any work which treats of our moral obligations; no matter who wrote it, if it contains truth, we assent to it, if it includes error, we reject it This is not a thing which, in the proper sense of the word, admits of proof. The only possible proof of the correctness of a moral doctrine, is to make us see its truth; its accordance with the law of God, the supreme standard, and with that law as written in our own hearts. Thus in the case, which we have supposed, of a man's reading the Bible without knowing whence it came, he would, if properly and naturally affected, be convinced of all, and judged of all, and thus the secrets of his heart being made manifest, falling down on his face, he would worship God, and report that of a truth, that book is not the word of man, but the word of God....(Emphasis mine)**

**Recall the statement with which I began this section: "We know that there is a God because the**

Catholic Church tells us that there is." Does *anyone*, even the most dedicated of Roman Catholic apologists, truly believe that the *ground* of their belief in God is the "say-so" of the visible hierarchy of bishops in communion with the Pope to whom they have given their allegiance? Even if a life-long Catholic could answer this question affirmatively, what are we to do with people (like Gary Hoge!) who confess to have believed in God *prior* to the time when they converted to Catholicism? It would be an extreme insult to suggest that these people *need* the witness of the bishops of the Catholic Church so that they may *know* that God exists! The same seems to be true of the recognition of the inspiration of Scripture.

This suggests a further objection to the Roman theory, namely, this question: "How does the individual Catholic *know* that the Roman Magisterium speaks for God?" One need only spend a few hours reading the materials produced by Catholic apologists<sup>16</sup> to discover that the guts of their answer to this question is a variety of evidential arguments--primarily the accumulation and cataloguing of a plethora of historical datum. As interesting as these materials are, it is noteworthy that Protestant apologists can and have produced materials that deal with the very same data and yet draw opposite conclusions.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, it is manifestly obvious that *none* of this evidence (whether presented by Catholics or Protestants) is in any way the ground (or foundation) of the respective faiths of individual persons on *either* side. *In fact, it would seem that for the vast mass of persons on each side, the basis of their belief is something internal to themselves.* In an e-mail debate with me on Catholicism and Protestantism <sup>18</sup>, Gary Hoge even admits this.

I had written the following to Hoge:

"...how many 'average believers' within the Roman Catholic Church can follow the complex web of historical and theological arguments that are used to support Rome's authority claims? How many even care to try? I suspect that the average Catholic does exactly what the average Protestant does: he picks which authority he will believe (for varying reasons) and then goes on about his life oblivious to the contrary claims of others."

He replied:

"Exactly my point. Since this is an undeniable fact of human nature, wouldn't Christ have designed His Church accordingly? As you've observed, most Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant, lack the natural capacity, the training, and/or the inclination to be their own theologians. Thus, most of them simply accept the doctrines of whatever church they happen to be in. Now, if Jesus was at least as smart as we are, He must have known that most believers would behave this way. In fact, He seemed to encourage it when He commanded them to "listen to the Church" (Matt. 18:17) and "obey your leaders" (Heb. 13:17). I think that Jesus promised to guide the Church into all truth, and to be with it until the end of the age, because He knew that the majority of believers would follow the Church uncritically. Therefore, if He wanted Christianity to remain true, He knew He would have to protect the doctrines of the Church."

Aside from the non sequitur conclusion of the paragraph (which I deal with in my response to Hoge's letter), the reader should take note of the phrase "the majority of believers would follow the Church uncritically." Now, if they are following the Church *uncritically*, that means they are not relying on any *external testimony* as to the veracity of the Church or its authority to bind their

consciences. This is puzzling, for the basic assumption of the Catholic criticism of how Protestants know Scripture--the criticism we have been examining in this paper--is that Protestants absolutely *need* an external authority to infallibly confirm the Scriptures so that they may have *certainty* of faith. Without this infallible external authority, Protestants are said to be "orphans", blindly groping about among a plethora of competing documents which all claim to be divine in origin.

But this line of thought presents a very serious problem for the Catholic apologist, for we can turn the question back around on them by pointing out that numerous other institutions exist which also claim to be apostolic in origin. Some of these, like the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) even claim that their identity as the true Church which Christ founded is proved by the lineal succession of teachers in their midst--the very thing many Catholic apologists claim of their own institution! <sup>19</sup> Can we not justly ask why the identity and veracity of the Scriptures is tied to an infallible external confirmation, but the identity and veracity of "the Catholic Church" is not? Can we not justly reverse the criticism and accuse the Catholic Church of undermining all hope of a rational defense of the Christian faith by resting its authority on the *pious feelings of individual Catholics*, millions of whom can give no external confirmation of their belief in the Church? It appears that Calvin was correct: Roman Catholics "do not care with what absurdities they ensnare themselves and others, provided they can force this one idea upon the simple-minded: that the church has authority in all things." (Institutes 1:7:1, cited above).

But let us not listen to Calvin alone. Charles Hodge shows us what this grandiose "authority of the Catholic Church" boils down to in the life of an individual Catholic:

"There are two fatal objections to making the authority even of an infallible church, the ground of faith. The first is, that faith founded on that ground cannot be anything more than mere intellectual assent to the truth of a proposition. But such a faith may and does exist in the minds of wicked men, and therefore cannot be that faith which is connected with salvation. If a man comes to me with a sealed book, and assures me that it is inspired, and then produces such credentials, by miracles or otherwise, as command my confidence in his integrity and competency as a witness, I may assent to the proposition that the book is the word of God, but I am not thereby a better man. Unless I know the truth the book contains, perceive it to be true, and receive it in love, I am just the man I was before; may be just as destitute of love to God, and just as unfit for heaven. All that an infallible church could do, would be to act the part of the supposed witness. Even should we admit her authority, and assent to her decisions, such assent having no better foundation than external testimony, can have no moral character' and produce no moral effect. Such a faith the most wicked men that ever lived may have, and in thousands of cases, have had, and therefore it cannot be that faith to which the Scriptures promise eternal life.

"The second objection to making the authority of the church the ground of faith, is that it is entirely inadequate. The gospel is addressed to all men; all who hear it, are bound to receive it as soon as it is presented; but how are all men to know that the church is infallible? No man can be required to believe, before the evidence on which his faith is to rest, is presented to his mind. If the infallibility of the church is the ground on which he is to receive certain writings as the word of God, that infallibility must be established before he can be required to believe. But how is this to be done, with regard to the great mass of mankind? How are the unlettered, the young, the heathen, to be rationally convinced that the church is infallible? How are they to know what the church is, or which of the many bodies so called is the true church? The peasants of Sweden, Russia, or England, never heard of any church, other than their own, and yet those bodies, according to Rome, are no

part of the Church. How are these poor peasants to find that out? Or even take a peasant of Italy or Spain, how does he know that the church is infallible? His priest says so. How is he to know what the church teaches? what his priest tells him. But his priest is not, even according to the Roman theory, inspired; and it is admitted he may be a bad man. Thus this boasted infallibility of the church, which looks so imposing, is, as it is brought into actual contact with the minds of the people, nothing more than the "say so" of a parish priest. The only foundation of faith that Rome will admit, for the great mass of her children, is the testimony of a man who is admitted to be fallible, who is in a majority of cases, ignorant, and often wicked! This is the resting-place of the precious faith of God's elect! To such a miserable conclusion does this mighty figment of an infallible church come at last. This is popery. For bread it gives a stone; and for an egg, a scorpion.<sup>20</sup> (emphasis mine)

## Conclusion

This brief survey of the relationship of the Bible and the Church has covered much ground, and should now be summarized as succinctly as possible.

We saw that the claims of Catholic apologists to the effect that Scripture cannot be the sole infallible rule of faith for the Church because the Church preceded the Scripture and had to infallibly define its canon are false for three reasons.

First, such claims are circular. They begin by asserting that nobody can know what the Scriptures are until the Church tells them, but then they proceed to "prove" the Church by a string of evidences that includes passages of the very Scriptures that are said to be in doubt outside of the "say-so" of the Church!

Second, these claims confuse two different senses of the word "Bible". The Church preceded the "Bible" where that term denotes the *completed* collection of canonical books (as in the leather-bound books we carry today), but the "Bible" preceded the Church where the term denotes the God-breathed revelation given through the apostles and prophets--some of which was initially oral and only later inscripturated, and some of which was written from the very start.

Third, such claims prove too much, for they amount to saying that *nobody* in the first four centuries of the Church knew with any *certainty* which of the many books in circulation were God's Word. We saw that such an idea is utterly false historically, for only *six* of the New Testament books we know today were ever disputed, and of these, not all were disputed at the same times or by all Christians. Additionally, the canonicity of the Apocryphal books was *never* universally accepted by all Christians, even *after* the supposedly "infallible" definitions of the canon given by the councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397).

We saw that despite disputes over *some* books in *some* quarters of the early Church (which were solved over time by a growing consensus) the *vast majority* of believers seemed to have acted as if they *knew* what Scripture was--as if their fallible knowledge of the identity of written apostolic

teaching was sufficient for their faith and practice. Furthermore, we saw that Christ Himself held the Jews of His day responsible to the teaching of the Scriptures, even though they did not have an infallible ruling on the identity of those Scriptures and were not given such a ruling by Christ. If infallible knowledge of the contents of the canon was not necessary *then*, why is it necessary *now*?

Finally, we surveyed at some length why the question put to us by our Roman Catholic interlocuters--"How can you *know* that the Bible is the Word of God when you don't have an infallible Church to tell you so?"--is really not only sacrilegious, but manifestly absurd. *The very same logic eliminates the "certainty of faith" that these Catholics claim to have regarding their Church.* Just as the masses of Protestants uncritically accept the inspiration of Scripture based on its effects on their own souls and may never seek external confirmation, so too the masses of Catholics uncritically accept the authority of their Church and may never seek external confirmation. If it is "irrational" for one group to do it, it is "irrational" for the other to do it as well.

Moreover, those Catholics who should be best able to see the incoherency of their argument --the apologists who make it so central to their cases--are strangely blind to the dilemma they have constructed for themselves. It is *absurd* to pit two competing ultimate authorities (Sola Scriptura and the Catholic Magisterium with its Sacred Tradition) against each other and demand that only *one* of them provide *infallible* external confirmation of its veracity. <sup>21</sup>

The Catholic argument is viciously circular in that it uses Scripture to verify Church and Church to verify Scripture. The Protestant position, on the other hand, rests its argument in a First Cause which cannot be and does not need to be explained or verified in order to be accepted.

External verifications for the Scriptures DO exist, but they are brought forward only as confirmations of what was already known by other means to be true. If Catholic apologists would merely admit that they do precisely the same thing in their arguments for their Church, it is conceivable that progress would be made in this long-standing debate.

When we compare the basis Rome offers us for knowing the Scriptures with the concept of God's dealings in the hearts of His own as outlined by Calvin and Hodge, the conclusion of Hodge seems most appropriate: "To teach that we cannot know the Scriptures to be the work of God, except on the testimony of the church, is to teach we cannot see the sun without the help of a candle."

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Notes

1. This is really a non-argument, for it does not engage the point that if one possesses an *adequate* authority for some action, one does not need to look elsewhere to the *possibility* that *other* authorities *might* exist. The Protestant position does not deny that the Church of Jesus Christ has authority to teach, nurture, and discipline its members; rather, it denies that the Church is the *supreme* authority in the life of the believer. Roman apologists who try to counter the use of 2 Tim. 3:16-17 in this fashion simply reveal that they are begging the question they are supposed to be answering--namely, the manner in which the Church is related to the Scriptures.

2. I will here briefly mention that, as a Protestant, my understanding of the phrase "institutional Church" differs radically from the Roman Catholic's understanding of it. The latter automatically identifies this entity as the organization of bishops in communion with the church in Rome, which itself assumes the primacy over all other churches in the world. The former understands the phrase to mean, at best, all assemblies of the "called out ones" (ecclesia, or "church") all over the world, and rejects the idea of the universal primacy of any one particular assembly over all the others.

3. I will here pass over the controversy between Protestants and Catholics over the canonical status of the Apocrypha. I do so not because it is not important, but because I cover it elsewhere (see my essay "[Why Do Protestant Bibles Exclude the Deuterocanonical Books?](#)").

4. One Catholic rebuttal of this idea would be that Christians didn't *need* an infallible understanding of the canon before it was actually so defined, for they had the Church, with its infallible successors of Peter, to teach them. While I certainly grant that Christians do not need an infallible understanding of the canon, and even that Protestants *do* acquiesce in the judgment of the early Christians regarding the New Testament canon (just as they rely on the judgment of the Jews for the Old Testament canon),

the rest of this rebuttal is quite plainly a matter of begged questions. Infallibility simply doesn't follow from the mere idea of authoritative teachers guiding Christ's flock. Furthermore, the entire concept of apostolic succession--particularly as pertains to Peter--as presented by the Catholic Church has enormous problems both with Scripture and with history (see my essay "[Apostolic Succession](#)").

5. White, James R., The Roman Catholic Controversy (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), pg. 92.

6. Ibid, pg 94

7. Ibid, pg 94

8. White, James R., The Roman Catholic Controversy , pp 50-51

9. Ibid., 51-52

10. Ibid, pg. 52

11. And of course, as both Catholics and Protestants agree, God is providentially in control of all things and has promised never to leave His Church (Matt. 28:20), to guide it into all truth (Jn. 14:26)-- which, interestingly enough, has quite obviously not yet been fulfilled even on the Catholic view of things-- and to ensure that its assaults on the gates of Hades will never be withstood (Matt. 16:19).

Catholic apologists are quite prone to simply begging the question of the nature of the Church's authority when they cite these verses, e.g., they simply assume that the only way these verses could be true is if the Church is infallible. But we should take note of the fact that in *all* of these passages, *the active work is being done by God Himself, not by His Church*. It is precisely because *God* is infallible that the Church is not and does not need to be.

12. Bruce, F.F., The Canon of Scripture (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1988), pp. 28-29

13. White, The Roman Catholic Controversy, pg. 94. The following paragraph of mine closely follows White's presentation on pp. 94-95. Also refer to his taped debate with Catholic apologist Gerry Matatics on the issue of the Apocrypha.

14. Gerry Matatics makes this very charge in the Apocrypha debate with White.

15. Regrettably, I cannot digress with great detail into the very interesting subject of the ground and warrant for believing any given proposition. Nevertheless, for clarity's sake, this point must be observed. Unless any given book claimed divine inspiration for itself, a person would have no reason to even consider whether or not it was so. And unless a person felt or thought *within himself* that the book was so inspired, the mere claim by the book that it was so would have no bearing on his life.

It is entirely appropriate for *any* believer of *any* proposition to advance as the *ground* of his belief something internal to himself. No one can deny that a Muslim or Hindu experiences something within

himself that convinces him of the truth of the Koran or the Baghavad Gita. Any external reasons advanced in support of the belief--whether internal consistency, agreement with other known facts, accreditation by an organized body of authoritative religious leaders, etc--would constitute the *warrant* for the belief. The *ground* of the belief is personal, and cannot be expected to convince an outsider.

The *warrant*, however, which consists of external proofs and reasons, may do just that. Nevertheless, no warrant, no matter how good, can be expected to persuade someone who has no ground within himself for believing it. Even the great logician Richard Weaver recognized this in his book *Ideas Have Consequences*: "How frequently it is brought to our attention that nothing good can be done if the will is wrong. Reason alone fails to justify itself...if the disposition is wrong, reason increases maleficence; if it is right, reason orders and furthers the good." (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) pg. 19

16. The reader is directed to such organizations as [Catholic Answers](#) and [Envoy Magazine](#), and to the websites of individual Catholic apologists such as [Dave Armstrong](#), David Palm, and [Gary Hoge](#) for examples of this.

17. Aside from the book by James White which I have already quoted in this piece, there is also White's organization's website, [Alpha and Omega Ministries](#), and William Webster's collection of original articles found at [Christian Resources](#).

18. The entire debate can be found at [Dialogue With Catholic Apologist Gary Hoge](#). The letters from which I am quoting here are entitled, "The Doctrinal Diversity of Protestantism".

19. We must here note that the attempt of some Catholic apologists (such as Tim Staples in a debate with James White on Sola Scriptura, available from Alpha and Omega Ministries) attempt to rebut this kind of use of the Mormon Church as a disconfirming example by scoffing at its recent origin as opposed to the (alleged) fact that the Catholic Church has been around for 2,000 years. This reasoning rings hollow because it operates by importing into the argument distinctly Catholic ideas about the indefectability of the organized body of bishops. One cannot "prove" that the Mormon Church's idea of a universal apostasy in the early Church is a false one simply by saying, "Well, our Catholic Church says that could never have happened."

20. Hodge, "Ground of Faith in the Scriptures"

21. I am here referring to the fact that the historical arguments used by the Roman apologists are simply *not* infallible, as is the case with all forms of inductive reasoning. When one is piling up facts in support of a given conclusion, it is entirely possible that one may overlook, distort, or end up "explaining away" some facts that disconfirm the conclusion. Furthermore, the Catholic apologists themselves are not infallible, and so it is ludicrous for them to suggest that they can provide infallible "certainty of faith" regarding their Church by simply constructing massive edifices of historical data. Thus, their demand that Protestants provide such "certainty" regarding the Scriptures is quite disingenuous, to say the least.

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Welcome to Roman Catholic Corner's Q&A Page! The following are archived questions and answers from our readers. If you have a question regarding Roman Catholic belief, please join our [NTRMin Discussion Board](#).

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Catholic, But Not Roman Catholic

Jason Engwer, a Research Analyst for NTRMin, has been posting a series on the NTRMin Discussion Board, titled "Catholic, But Not Roman Catholic." It has been a great help to those on the board, showing as it does the vast differences in beliefs between the patristic writers and modern Roman Catholic apologists who regularly misquote and misuse the former in an attempt to advance their cause. We thought it would be valuable to make the archives of that series available to all who visit this site looking for answers to the historical claims of Roman Catholicism. We will be adding more links as the series progresses.

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Serial Essays on the Realism and Nominalism Controversy

By Tim Enloe

It is recommended that these essays be read in the sequence they are listed below, as I have made a serious attempt to sequentially build up my presentations from foundations to conclusions.

It should also be noted that *as these stand now (that is, until further published notice on this page) the following documents are merely meant as **rough outlines** of some issues that I consider basic to understanding the flow of Church history.* These presentations are **rough outlines** meant to point the way to better things to come. I ask that the reader keep this qualification in mind.

- [Introduction](#) (10/12/02)
- [A Crucial Philosophical Problem of Classical Antiquity](#) (10/12/02)
- [The Philosophical-Cultural Milieu of the Church Fathers \(I\)](#) (10/12/02)
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- [Excursus: A Summary of Cultural-Philosophical Matters From the 5th to the 11th Centuries](#) (11/10/02)
- Boethius
- "Pseudo-Dionysius"
- Peter Abelard
- Thomas Aquinas
- Duns Scotus

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Research Papers

- [Worldviews at War: Antique Hellenism VS. Medieval Nominalism](#) (a paper submitted for credit in the Medieval Theology elective at New St. Andrews College, December 2002)
-

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(602) 973-4602**Alpha & Omega Ministries**
Christian Apologetics and TheologyDr. James White, Director
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Sean Hahn, VP**Roman Catholicism****Catholic Legends And How They Get Started: An Example**

April 11, 2000

by James White

[Please note the added comments at the end of the article]

The large gap that exists between Roman Catholic historical scholarship and Roman Catholic apologists is a large one indeed. One often finds the historians admitting what the apologists will not regarding the truths of history that are so often utterly contradictory to later Roman dogmatic claims. This is especially true regarding such modern doctrinal developments as the Marian dogmas and the infallible Papacy.

Over the past few years Roman Catholic apologists have been producing a great deal of written material of varying levels of quality. Books and magazines of this nature gain a wide audience. As in so much of our modern culture, many readers are willing to simply accept at face value whatever is said without performing any first-hand testing of the quality of the data being presented, let alone the conclusions that follow. The result has been a growing body of "Catholic legends," claims or concepts that are being presented as absolute fact by large numbers of Catholics who simply do not know better.

A glowing example of how these "urban legends" get started can be seen in the way in which Karl Keating's *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* is treated by Catholic readers starved for some kind of an answer to the Evangelical position. If it appears in the pages of C&F, it must be true! And so highly questionable statements of dubious historic integrity (easily challenged by anyone familiar with the historic sources) end up being repeated as pure fact by those who implicitly trust their sources.

On page 217 of *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* we find a paragraph that has given rise to two of these "Catholic legends," ideas that are utterly without merit, historically speaking, but are now a part of the "lore" that makes up the majority of Catholic apologetics. Just as the medieval Church built its power on the back of spurious documents and forged decretals, modern Roman Catholics find a means of propping up their faith in supposedly historical dogmas through this kind of writing:

As Christians got clearer and clearer notions of the teaching authority of the whole Church and of the primacy of the Pope, they got clearer notions of the Pope's own infallibility. This happened early on. In 433 Pope Sixtus III declared that to assent to the Bishop of Rome's decision is to assent to Peter, who lives in his successors and whose faith does not fail. Cyprian of Carthage, writing about 256, asked: "Would heretics dare to come to the very seat of Peter whence apostolic faith is derived and whither no errors can come?" Augustine of Hippo summed up the ancient attitude when he remarked, "Rome has spoken; the case is closed."

We have often seen amateur Catholic apologists confidently asserting that Cyprian believed in the infallibility of the bishop of Rome, or that Augustine took the word of Rome as the final authority. Surely that is Keating's intention, given the context, in citing both patristic sources. But, as all students of church history know (and as Roman Catholic historians have admitted for a very long time), neither early father would have agreed with the use of their words by Keating. In fact, Keating could never defend the veracity of his research against a meaningful criticism. Let's look briefly at Cyprian and Augustine and see how this Catholic legend is just that: legendary.

Cyprian

Cyprian did indeed speak of the "seat of Peter," in Latin, the "cathedra Petri." It was also very central to his view of church unity and authority. No one who broke unity with the cathedra Petri was truly in the Church. All of this is quite



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true. And beyond this, Cyprian spoke highly of the Roman see when defending Cornelius as a result of the Novationist schism in Rome. He rebuked those who rejected Cornelius' position as the bishop of Rome. Despite this, Cyprian sent a sharp rebuke to Cornelius when he gave audience to men who had been deposed in North Africa.

But it is just here that we learn how important it is to study church history as a discipline, not as a mere tool to be used in polemic debate. We can assume out of generosity that when Mr. Keating wrote his book he actually believed that when Cyprian spoke of the "cathedra Petri" that Cyprian understood this phrase as a modern Roman Catholic would. That is, he may well have assumed that the "seat of Peter" was understood by everyone back then to refer to the bishop of Rome. However, all students of church history know differently. Cyprian (and the North African church as a whole for the span of centuries) believed the "chair of Peter" referred to *all bishops in all churches* across the world. Cyprian, for example, claimed to sit upon the "cathedra Petri" as did *all* bishops. For example, he wrote in Epistle XXVI:

Our Lord, whose precepts and admonitions we ought to observe, describing the honor of a bishop and the order of His Church, speaks in the Gospel, and says to Peter: 'I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Thence, through the changes of times and successions, **the ordering of bishops** and the plan of the Church flow onwards; so that the Church is founded **upon the bishops**, and every act of the Church is controlled **by these same rulers** (emphasis added).

This fact is recognized by Roman Catholic historians. Johannes Quasten, Catholic patristic scholar, commented, (*Patrology*, vol. 2, p. 375), "Thus he understands Matth. 16, 18 of the whole episcopate, the various members of which, attached to one another by the laws of charity and concord, thus render the Church universal a single body." And a little later Quasten cites the words of an African Synod, led by Cyprian, which said:

No one among us sets himself up as a bishop of bishops, or by tyranny and terror forces his colleagues to compulsory obedience, seeing that every bishop in the freedom of his liberty and power possesses the right to his own mind and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another. We must all await the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who singly and alone has power both to appoint us to the government of his Church and to judge our acts therein (CSEL 3, 1, 436).

Quasten then comments:

From these words it is evident that Cyprian does not recognize a primacy of jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome over his colleagues. Nor does he think Peter was given power over the other apostles....No more did Peter claim it: 'Even Peter, whom the Lord first chose and upon whom He built His Church, when Paul later disputed with him over circumcision, did not claim insolently any prerogative for himself, nor make any arrogant assumptions nor say that he had the primacy and ought to be obeyed' (Epist. 71, 3).

Quasten goes on to note that Cyprian did see Rome as an important see, however,

...even in this letter he makes it quite clear that he does not concede to Rome any higher right to legislate for other sees because he expects her not to interfere in his own diocese 'since to each separate shepherd has been assigned one portion of the flock to direct and govern and render hereafter an account of his ministry to the Lord' (Epist. 59,14).

But there is more, much more, from Roman Catholic writers. Michael Winter writes in *St. Peter and the Popes* (Wesport: Greenwood, 1960, pp. 47-48):

Cyprian used the Petrine text of Matthew to defend episcopal authority, but many later theologians, influenced by the papal connections of the text, have interpreted Cyprian in a pro-papal sense which was alien to his thought....Cyprian would have used Matthew 16 to defend the authority of any bishop, but since he happened to employ it for the sake of the Bishop of Rome, it created the impression that he understood it as referring to papal authority...Catholics as well as Protestants are now generally agreed that Cyprian did not attribute a superior authority to Peter.

Robert Eno, another historian, writes in *The Rise of the Papacy* (Wilmington: Michael Glazer, 1990), p. 58, "The Chair of Peter...belongs to each lawful bishop in his own see. Cyprian holds the Chair of Peter in Carthage and Cornelius in Rome....You must hold to this unity if you are to remain in the Church." And finally, Jesuit Klaus Schatz

writes in *Papal Primacy*, p. 20, "Cyprian regarded every bishop as the successor of Peter, holder of the keys to the kingdom of heaven and possessor of the power to bind and loose. For him, Peter embodied the original unity of the Church and the episcopal office, but in principle these were also present in every bishop."

But there is more. Cornelius' successor, Stephen, was an arrogant prelate. Full of himself, he sowed discord amongst the churches. Cyprian severely reprimanded him, as did others. When Stephen attempted to meddle in the affairs of the North African churches, including overturning the deposing of one Basilides, who then went to Rome to attempt to find assistance in his cause, Cyprian and the North Africans *rejected* his attempts. Cyprian wrote,

Neither can it rescind an ordination rightly perfected, that Basilides, after the detection of his crimes, and the baring of his conscience even by his own confession, went to Rome and deceived Stephen our colleague, placed at a distance, and ignorant of what had been done, and of the truth, to canvass that he might be replaced unjustly in the episcopate from which he had been righteously deposed.

Deceived the bishop of Rome? The source of infallible and apostolic truth could be deceived about the orthodoxy of a man so as to improperly guide the church in regards to its leadership and teaching? How could such be? Obviously, the church of this day had no concept of an infallible Pope, nor any concept that the bishop of Rome was the universal head of the Church. Any reading of the correspondence between Cyprian and Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea (such as Epistle LXXIV, wherein Firmilian accuses Stephen of numerous errors, including transmitting false "tradition"), makes it very clear: neither believed as Karl Keating would like his readers to think they did.

Now we noted above that at the time Karl Keating wrote *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, it is quite possible he was ignorant of the situation. He may, like so many other Roman Catholic apologists, have assumed that "chair of Peter" always meant the Roman bishop. He had probably never read much of Cyprian for himself, and was just going on what others had told him. But, the fact of the matter is, that is no longer an excuse. In the years since the publication of the work, Keating has been shown his error, multiple times. And yet his book, and his organization, continues to promote the myth that Cyprian was a believer in Papal infallibility. A glowing Roman Catholic myth.

Augustine's Sermon 131

Even less excusable is the constant use of Augustine's comments in Sermon 131, quoted by Keating as "Rome has spoken; the case is closed." Keating puts these words in quotes, indicating that Augustine actually said this. He places it in the context of Papal Infallibility. It is clearly his intention to communicate to his readers that Augustine 1) said these words, and 2) was speaking about the subject in his sermon.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. *Augustine never said what Keating quotes*. In fact, here is the actual Latin text of the final section of Sermon 131 from Migne, PL 38:734:

Jam enim de hac causa duo concilia missa sunt ad sedem apostolicam; inde etiam rescripta venerunt; causa finita est: Utinam aliquando finiatur error.

Translated, it reads,

. . . for already on this matter two councils have sent to the Apostolic See, whence also rescripts (reports) have come. The cause is finished, would that the error may terminate likewise.

These comments are in reference to the heresy of Pelagianism, which Augustine had been battling in the church in North Africa. This sermon, delivered September 23, 416, begins, ironically, with an exposition of John 6:53 that is directly contradictory to modern Roman teaching on the doctrine of transubstantiation. Since so few take the time to actually *read* the contexts of the statements about which arguments are based in patristic sources, I provide the first two sections of this sermon, which show us the direction that Augustine was taking:

We have heard the True Master, the Divine Redeemer, the human Savior, commending to us our Ransom, His Blood. For He spake to us of His Body and Blood; He called His Body Meat, His Blood Drink. The faithful recognize the Sacrament of the faithful. But the hearers what else do they but hear? When therefore commending such Meat and such Drink He said, "Except ye shall eat My Flesh and drink My Blood, ye shall have no life in you;" (and this that He said concerning life, who else said it but the Life Itself? But that man shall have death, not life, who shall think that the Life is false), His disciples were offended, not all of them indeed, but very many, saying within themselves, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?" But when the Lord knew this in Himself, and heard the murmurings of their thought, He answered them, thinking though uttering nothing, that they might understand that they were heard, and might cease to entertain such thoughts. What then did He answer? "Doth this

offend you?" "What then if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" What meaneth this? "Doth this offend you?" "Do ye imagine that I am about to make divisions of this My Body which ye see; and to cut up My Members, and give them to you? 'What then if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?'" Assuredly, He who could ascend Whole could not be consumed. So then He both gave us of His Body and Blood a healthful refreshment, and briefly solved so great a question as to His Own Entireness. Let them then who eat, eat on, and them that drink, drink; let them hunger and thirst; eat Life, drink Life. That eating, is to be refreshed; but thou art in such wise refreshed, as that that whereby thou art refreshed, faileth not. That drinking, what is it but to live? Eat Life, drink Life; thou shalt have life, and the Life is Entire. But then this shall be, that is, the Body and the Blood of Christ shall be each man's Life; if what is taken in the Sacrament visibly is in the truth itself eaten spiritually, drunk spiritually. For we have heard the Lord Himself saying, "It is the Spirit That quickeneth, but the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken unto you, are Spirit and Life. But there are some of you," saith He, "that believe not." Such were they who said, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" It is hard, but only to the hard; that is, it is incredible, but only to the incredulous.

2. But in order to teach us that this very believing is matter of gift, not of desert, He saith, "As I have said unto you, no man cometh unto Me, except it were given him of My Father." Now as to where the Lord said this, if we call to mind the foregoing words of the Gospel, we shall find that He had said, "No man cometh unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." He did not lead, but draw. This violence is done to the heart, not the body. Why then dost thou marvel? Believe, and thou comest; love, and thou art drawn. Do not suppose here any rough and uneasy violence; it is gentle, it is sweet; it is the very sweetness that draweth thee. Is not a sheep drawn, when fresh grass is shown to it in its hunger? Yet I imagine that it is not bodily driven on, but fast bound by desire. In such wise do thou come too to Christ; do not conceive of long journeyings; where thou believest, there thou comest. For unto Him, who is everywhere we come by love, not by sailing. But forasmuch as even in this kind of voyage, waves and tempests of divers temptations abound; believe on the Crucified; that thy faith may be able to ascend the Wood. Thou shalt not sink, but shalt be borne upon the Wood. Thus, even thus, amid the waves of this world did he sail, who said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The entire sermon is a presentation of the gospel of grace. And to give the proper context to the actual words of Augustine, read the sections that immediately precede his final statements:

8. ...Hear what God saith; "Who crowneth thee with mercy and pity." Of His mercy He crowneth thee, of His pity He crowneth thee. For thou hadst no worthiness that He should call thee, and being called should justify thee, being justified glorify thee. "The remnant is saved by the election of grace. But if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. For to him that worketh, the reward shall not be reckoned according to grace, but according to debt." The Apostle saith, "Not according to grace, but according to debt." But "thee He crowneth with pity and mercy;" and if thy own merits have gone before, God saith to thee, "Examine well thy merits, and thou shalt see that they are My gifts."

9. This then is the righteousness of God. As it is called, "The Lord's salvation," not whereby the Lord is saved, but which He giveth to them whom He saveth; so too the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord is called the righteousness of God, not as that whereby the Lord is righteous, but whereby He justifieth those whom of ungodly He maketh righteous. But some, as the Jews in former times, both wish to be called Christians, and still ignorant of God's righteousness, desire to establish their own, even in our own times, in the times of open grace, the times of the full revelation of grace which before was hidden; in the times of grace now manifested in the floor, which once lay hid in the fleece. I see that a few have understood me, that more have not understood, whom I will by no means defraud by keeping silence. Gideon, one of the righteous men of old, asked for a sign from the Lord, and said, "I pray, Lord, that this fleece which I put in the floor be bedewed, and that the floor be dry." And it was so; the fleece was bedewed, the whole floor was dry. In the morning he wrung out the fleece in a basin; forasmuch as to the humble is grace given; and in a basin, ye know what the Lord did to His disciples. Again, he asked for another sign; "O Lord, I would," saith he, "that the fleece be dry, the floor bedewed." And it was so. Call to mind the time of the Old Testament, grace was hidden in a cloud, as the rain in the fleece. Mark now the time of the New Testament, consider well the nation of the Jews, thou wilt find it as a dry fleece; whereas the whole world, like that floor, is full of grace, not hidden, but manifested. Wherefore we are forced exceedingly to bewail our brethren, who strive not against hidden, but against open and manifested grace. There is allowance for the Jews. What shall we say of Christians? Wherefore are ye enemies to the grace of Christ? Why rely ye on yourselves? Why unthankful? For why did Christ come? Was not nature here before? Was not nature here, which ye only deceive by your excessive praise? Was not the Law here? But the Apostle says, "If righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain." What the Apostle says of the Law,

that say we of nature to these men. "If righteousness come by nature, then Christ is dead in vain."

The final words of the sermon, then, in which we find the key phrase (placed in bold), are in reference to this heresy, this error (Pelagianism), and its denial of grace. I simply point out that throughout the sermon you have had one source of authority cited over and over again: Holy Scripture. No quotations of Popes or prelates, just Scripture. With this in mind, we come to the actual passage:

10. What then was said of the Jews, the same altogether do we see in these men now. "They have a zeal of God: I hear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." What is, "not according to knowledge"? "For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and wishing to establish their own, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." My Brethren, share with me in my sorrow. When ye find such as these, do not hide them; be there no such misdirected mercy in you; by all means, when ye find such, hide them not. Convince the gainsayers, and those who resist, bring to us. **For already have two councils on this question been sent to the Apostolic see; and rescripts also have come from thence. The question has been brought to an issue; would that their error may sometime be brought to an issue too!** Therefore do we advise that they may take heed, we teach that they may be instructed, we pray that they may be changed. Let us turn to the Lord, etc.

It is a measure of the *utter desperation* of the Roman position to have to make reference to such things, in our opinion. The topic is not the bishop of Rome nor the authority of Rome. It is obvious, beyond question, that Augustine's point is that Pelagianism is a refuted error. It is not refuted because the bishop of Rome has refuted it. It is refuted because it is opposed to Scripture. Two councils have concluded this, and the bishop of Rome has agreed. From Augustine's position, the error has been exposed and refuted. If only those who are in error would come to know the truth! Augustine exhorts his hearers to teach the gainsayers, and pray that they may be dissuaded from their errors.

This then is the context and content of Sermon 131 of Augustine (which is, btw, Sermon 81 in the Eerdman's set, pp. 501-504 of volume VI for those who wish to read the entirety of the work). It is now painfully obvious that to place the words "Roma locuta est, causa finita est" in quotation marks and attribute them to Augustine in the context of Papal Infallibility is *simply inexcusable*. But, there is more to the situation than that. For history shows us that Augustine would *never have uttered such words in the context Keating alleges*. How he responded when Zosimus became bishop of Rome and attacked the North African churches for condemning Pelagius proves, to any person even semi-desirous of fairly dealing with Augustine's position, that Augustine did not view the bishop of Rome as the infallible leader of the Christian Church. But to appreciate fully the depth of the error of Roman Catholic controversialists at this point, we must take a few moments to study the history.

B.B. Warfield wrote concerning the history of the Pelagian controversy, and especially of Augustine's response to Zosimus, bishop of Rome:

Soon afterwards two Gallic bishops, — Heros of Arles, and Lazarus of Aix, — who were then in Palestine, lodged a formal accusation against Pelagius with the metropolitan, Eulogius of Caesarea; and he convened a synod of fourteen bishops which met at Lydda (Diospolis), in December of the same year (415), for the trial of the case. Perhaps no greater ecclesiastical farce was ever enacted than this synod exhibited. When the time arrived, the accusers were prevented from being present by illness, and Pelagius was confronted only by the written accusation. This was both unskillfully drawn, and was written in Latin which the synod did not understand. It was, therefore, not even consecutively read, and was only head rendered into Greek by an interpreter. Pelagius began by reading aloud several letters to himself from various men of reputation in the Episcopate, — among them a friendly not from Augustin. Thoroughly acquainted with both Latin and Greek, he was enabled skillfully to thread every difficulty, and pass safely through the ordeal. Jerome called this a "miserable synod," and not unjustly: at the same time it is sufficient to vindicate the honesty and earnestness of the bishops' intentions, that even in such circumstances, and despite the more undeveloped opinions of the East on the questions involved, Pelagius escaped condemnation only by a course of most ingenious disingenuousness, and only at the cost both of disowning Coelestius and his teachings, of which he had been the real father, and of leading the synod to believe that he was anathematizing the very doctrines which he was himself proclaiming. There is really no possibility of doubting, as any one will see who reads the proceedings of the synod, that Pelagius obtained his acquittal here either by a "lying condemnation or a tricky interpretation" of his own teachings; and Augustin is perfectly justified in asserting that the "heresy was not acquitted, but the man who denied the heresy," and who would himself have been anathematized had he not anathematized the heresy.

However obtained, the acquittal of Pelagius was yet an accomplished fact. Neither he nor his friends delayed to make the most widely extended use of their good fortune. Pelagius himself was jubilant.

Accounts of the synodal proceedings were sent to the West, not altogether free from uncandid alterations; and Pelagius soon put forth a work *In Defense of Free-Will*, in which he triumphed in his acquittal and "explained his explanations" at the synod. Nor were the champions of the opposite opinion idle. As soon as the news arrived in North Africa, and before the authentic records of the synod had reached that region, the condemnation of Pelagius and Coelestius was re-affirmed in two provincial synods, — one, consisting of sixty-eight bishops, met at Carthage about midsummer of 416; and the other, consisting of about sixty bishops, met soon afterwards at Mileve (Mila). Thus Palestine and North Africa were arrayed against one another, and it became of great importance to obtain the support of the Patriarchal See of Rome. Both sides made the attempt, but fortune favored the Africans. Each of the North-African synods sent a synodal letter to Innocent I., then Bishop of Rome, engaging his assent to their action: to these, five bishops, Aurelius of Carthage and Augustin among them, added a third "familiar" letter of their own, in which they urged upon Innocent to examine into Pelagius' teaching, and provided him with the material on which he might base a decision. The letters reached Innocent in time for him to take advice of his clergy, and send favorable replies on Jan. 27, 417. In these he expressed his agreement with the African decisions, asserted the necessity of inward grace, rejected the Pelagian theory of infant baptism, and declared Pelagius and Coelestius excommunicated until they should return to orthodoxy. In about six weeks more he was dead: but Zosimus, his successor, was scarcely installed in his place before Coelestius appeared at Rome in person to plead his cause; while shortly afterwards letters arrived from Pelagius addressed to Innocent, and by an artful statement of his belief and a recommendation from Praylus, lately become bishop of Jerusalem in John's stead, attempting to enlist Rome in his favor. Zosimus, who appears to have been a Greek and therefore inclined to make little of the merits of this Western controversy, went over to Coelestius at once, upon his profession of willingness to anathematize all doctrines which the pontifical see had condemned or should condemn; and wrote a sharp and arrogant letter to Africa, proclaiming Coelestius "catholic," and requiring the Africans to appear within two months at Rome to prosecute their charges, or else to abandon them.

At this point I insert the comment of Schaff, who expands upon the content of this letter from Zosimus:

Zosimus, who evidently had no independent theological opinion whatever, now issued (417) to the North African bishops an encyclical letter accompanied by the documentary evidence, censuring them for not having investigated the matter more thoroughly, and for having aspired, in foolish, overcurious controversies, to know more than the Holy Scriptures. At the same time he bore emphatic testimony to the orthodoxy of Pelagius and Coelestius, and described their chief opponents, Heros and Lazarus, as worthless characters, whom he had visited with excommunication and deposition. They in Rome, he says, could hardly refrain from tears, that such men, who so often mentioned the *gratia Dei* and the *adjutorium divinum*, should have been condemned as heretics. Finally he entreated the bishops to submit themselves to the authority of the Roman see. (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, III:798).

Lest someone mistrust Protestant writers, note this Roman Catholic author, a professor at the Catholic University of America:

Augustine...could see through the entire charade. The pope had neglected to inquire rigorously into the Pelagian's (Caelestius) understanding of grace; he had been content to accept superficial responses....A second letter from Zosimus to the Africans, *Postquam a nobis* written in September 417, did nothing to dispel Augustine's worries. Pelagius had written to the pope once again, thoroughly convincing him of his orthodoxy, and Zosimus had ordered Pelagius' letters to be read aloud at the papal court in order that everyone could be apprised of his orthodoxy. To the Africans Zosimus ebulliently exclaimed: 'Would that some of you, dearest brethren, could have been present at the reading of the letters. What was the joy of the holy men who were present; what was the admiration of each of them! Some of them could scarcely restrain themselves from tears and weeping that such men of absolutely correct faith could have been suspected. Was there a single place in which the grace of God or his aid was omitted?' At the end of his letter, however, the pope lambasted the Africans as 'whirlwinds' and 'storms of the church' and accused them of judging Pelagius and Caelestius wholly unfairly....In *Quamuis patrum* written in March 418, he deliberately flaunted his apostolic authority and claimed that no one should dispute his judgment...."So great is our authority that no decision of ours can be subjected to review....Such is the authority of Peter and the venerable decrees of the church that all questions concerning human and divine laws, as well as all disciplinary matters, must be referred to Rome for ultimate resolution." This was high-flown language indeed and, as far as the Africans were concerned, totally unacceptable (J.E. Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven: Yale University, 1997), pp. 128-129).

Keep these words in mind: Zosimus was claiming grand authority; Zosimus' conclusions were clear and unequivocal.

I continue with Warfield:

On the arrival of Pelagius' papers, this letter was followed by another (September, 417), in which Zosimus, with the approbation of the clergy, declared both Pelagius and Coelestius to be orthodox, and severely rebuked the Africans for their hasty judgment. It is difficult to understand Zosimus' action in this matter: neither of the confessions presented by the accused teachers ought to have deceived him, and if he was seizing the occasion to magnify the Roman see, his mistake was dreadful. Late in 417, or early in 418, the African bishops assembled at Carthage, in number more than two hundred and replied to Zosimus that they had decided that the sentence pronounced against Pelagius and Coelestius should remain in force until they should unequivocally acknowledge that "we are aided by the grace of God, through Christ, not only to know, but to do what is right, in each single act, so that without grace we are unable to have, think, speak, or do anything pertaining to piety." This firmness made Zosimus waver. He answered swillingly but timidly, declaring that he had maturely examined the matter, but it had not been his intention finally to acquit Coelestius; and now he had left all things in the condition in which they were before, but he claimed the right of final judgment to himself. Matters were hastening to a conclusion, however, that would leave him no opportunity to escape from the mortification of an entire change of front. This letter was written on the 21st of March, 418; it was received in Africa on the 29th of April; and on the very next day an imperial decree was issued from Ravenna ordering Pelagius and Coelestius to be banished from Rome, with all who held their opinions; while on the next day, May 1, a plenary council of about two hundred bishops met at Carthage, and in nine canons condemned all the essential features of Pelagianism. Whether this simultaneous action was the result of skillful arrangement, can only be conjectured: its effect was in any case necessarily crushing. There could be no appeal from the civil decision, and it played directly into the hands of the African definition of the faith. The synod's nine canons part naturally into three triads. The first of these deals with the relation of mankind to original sin, and anathematizes in turn those who assert that physical death is a necessity of nature, and not a result of Adam's sin; those who assert that new-born children derive nothing of original sin from Adam to be expiated by the laver of regeneration; and those who assert a distinction between the kingdom of heaven and eternal life, for entrance into the former of which alone baptism is necessary. The second triad deals with the nature of grace, and anathematizes those who assert that grace aids us not to sin, only by teaching us what is sinful, not by enabling us to will and do what we know to be right; and those who assert that grace only enables us to do more easily what we should without it still be able to do. The third triad deals with the universal sinfulness of the race, and anathematizes those who assert that the apostles' (I John 1.8) confession of sin is due only to their humility; those who say that "Forgive us our trespasses" in the Lord's Prayer, is pronounced by the saints, not for themselves, but for the sinners in their company; and those who say that the saints use these words of themselves only out of humility and not truly. Here we see a careful traversing of the whole ground of the controversy, with a conscious reference to the three chief contentions of the Pelagian teachers.

The appeal to the civil power, by whomsoever made, was, of course, indefensible, although it accorded with the opinions of the day, and was entirely approved by Augustin. But it was the ruin of the Pelagian cause. Zosimus found himself forced either to go into banishment with his wards, or to desert their cause. He appears never to have had any personal convictions on the dogmatic points involved in the controversy, and so, all the more readily, yielded to the necessity of the moment. He cited Coelestius to appear before a council for a new examination; but that heresiarch consulted prudence, and withdrew from the city. Zosimus, possibly in the effort to appear a leader in the cause he had opposed, not only condemned and excommunicated the men whom less than six months before he had pronounced "orthodox" after a 'mature consideration of the matters involved,' but, in obedience to the imperial decree, issued a stringent paper which condemned Pelagius and the Pelagians, and affirmed the African doctrines as to corruption of nature, true grace, and the necessity of baptism. To this he required subscription from all bishops as a test of orthodoxy. (*NPNF Series 1:V*, xviii-xx).

We should remember a few vital points. First, Zosimus claimed to have "maturely examined" the issue of the confession of Pelagius and Coelestus. He proclaimed them orthodox and Catholic, and gave instructions to the North Africans *based upon his self-proclaimed authority*. Next, the North Africans *rejected his instructions*. Knowing full well what he intended, the North African bishops, including Augustine, *stood their ground upon the basis of Scriptural teaching*. If a person today said, "I understand the bishop of Rome says X about such and such a person, and proclaims them orthodox on the basis of a mature examination, but I reject his conclusions based upon Scriptural teaching," would you identify that person as 1) Roman Catholic, or 2) Protestant? Third, despite his claims to authority and despite his claim to have "maturely examined" the issue *as the bishop of Rome*, Zosimus had to do a complete about-face. What changed? RC apologists say Zosimus had just been deceived and he learned of his deception, and that he would have done the right thing from the start had he known all the facts. But it is too obvious that Zosimus came into the situation desirous of flexing his new "muscle" as bishop of the largest see in the West, and foolishly and rashly made pronouncements about vital issues (here, the very nature of the gospel, rehabilitating

a rank heretic!) and only reversed course *by force* and not *by conviction*. Next, for those who ask why either side appealed to Rome in the first place, the answer is obvious: the situation pitted the Palestinian churches against the North African churches, and both sides recognized the value of having the only apostolic see in the West on their side. The fact that the North African churches likewise appealed to the Emperor in Ravenna for confirmation of their action no more means they saw the Emperor as the "head of the church" than their appeal to Rome does. Finally, it is obvious beyond question that Augustine did *not* take the view that Zosimus was an infallible leader of the Christian Church. If he and the bishops of North Africa had, they would never have acted as they did.

At this point someone might well say, "OK, well, Karl Keating was in error on that. Maybe he hadn't done his homework." Perhaps so. But many years have passed since his book was published. Surely in that time he has been faced with these facts. His organization, *Catholic Answers*, publishes a magazine, *This Rock*, that contains a regular section called "The Fathers Know Best." Surely, in all those years, the people working at *Catholic Answers* would have to become aware of the historic facts that demonstrate the error of Keating's assertion in his book. But at the very least, we hope that our readers will continue to bring this issue to his attention and challenge him to correct his error.

[For even more on this topic, see William Webster's comments: <http://www.christiantruth.com/ray5augustine.html>]

Stephen Ray's Presentation

But while we can excuse Keating on the basis of possible ignorance of the actual events of history, we cannot do so with Catholic convert Stephen K. Ray. Instead, we must soberly conclude that his treatment of this issue in his 1999 book *Upon This Rock* (Ignatius Press) is simply deceptive. This work is, in my opinion, the clearest example of the lengths to which a Roman controversialist will go in twisting history so as to support Roman claims. In a work that is without question one of the least accurate and scholarly works I have ever seen on the subject, one that argues in circles constantly, Ray addresses both Cyprian and Augustine's views. However, given that Ray does not use the tools of a historian, and in fact utterly abandons any kind of scholarly methodology, the result is predictable. He early on exposes how utterly unreliable his work will be in words such as these:

Sometimes silence is more eloquent than words. This is especially true in Church history. We hear so much about what the Fathers *say* and so little about what they *do not say*. This is revealing and should play a significant role in our research. (*Upon this Rock*, p. 12).

Such a methodology is, quite simply laughable. Ray goes on to use this to argue that unless an early Father *specifically denies Petrine primacy and succession* that this is somehow "relevant" to historical research. It is painfully obvious, to any semi-unbiased reviewer, that Ray is assuming what he seems to know he cannot prove. The grotesquely anachronistic "examination" that follows is glowing evidence of Ray's inability to accurately handle historical data and to provide any kind of meaningful presentation. Protestant apologist William Webster has thoroughly refuted Ray (see www.christiantruth.com) who, in response, has only been able to provide more thorough documentation of his own anachronistic, circular reasoning. Utilization of Ray's means of thought could provide the basis for *any* kind of belief in the early church, no matter how far-fetched.

But despite this, Ray's treatment of both Cyprian and Augustine is not just grossly flawed, it is deceptive. It is obvious Ray knows the truth of the matter, but he either suppresses that truth, or twists it into a shape unrecognizable to anyone who reads the early Fathers for themselves. When dealing with Cyprian he desperately attempts to undercut the reality of Cyprian's view of the *cathedra Petri*, and likewise somehow "forgets" to cite the passages we provided above which demonstrate Cyprian's rejection of Stephen's meddling in the affairs of the North African Church. Though providing lengthy footnotes, he does nothing but ignore Cyprian's real doctrine, while attacking William Webster for pointing out the obvious. But our concern is much more with the tremendously deceptive presentation regarding Augustine's Sermon 131.

Beginning on page 230, Ray provides a completely circular argument, not based upon Augustine, but upon Ray's desperate need to read into Augustine the concept of Petrine primacy in the bishop of Rome. His citations (as throughout the book) are meant to be relevant *only* given the assumption of what he is trying to prove, the pre-existing commitment to the modern Roman theory of Petrine primacy. He even takes a pathetically weak shot at my own discussion of Augustine's view of Matthew 16:18-19 which is so poorly constructed that there is no need to refute it: it stands as its own refutation. But on page 233 we read the following: "Roma locuta est; causa finita est [Rome has spoken; the case is closed]." Look familiar? It should. As we have seen, Augustine never said this. Ray uses the same quotes Keating did: but, he then attaches an almost page-length footnote *that shows that he is well aware Augustine never uttered these words!* This is the deception. Keating can claim ignorance: Ray has no such excuse. Look at what Ray says:

This popular, shortened version of Augustine's statement put to rest the contention caused by the

Pelagian heretics. The full text of his statement—the exact equivalent of the shortened version above—is, "[On the matter of the Pelagians] two Councils have already been sent to the Apostolic See [Rome]; and from there rescripts [decrees from the Pope] have come. The matter is at an end [*causa finita est*]; would that the error too might sometime be at an end." (Jurgens, *Faith of the Early Fathers*, 3:28).

As we see, Ray knows that Augustine did not say the words he quotes, but, he excuses this misrepresentation by re-translating the term "rescripts" (Latin: *rescripta*) as "decrees from the Pope." Upon what basis does he do this? We are not told. We know that Innocent *responded* to the actions of the councils in North Africa. It is pure anachronism to 1) assume the North Africans held to Rome's view of supremacy, 2) assume that the North Africans felt their actions *required* "ratification" by the bishop of Rome, and 3) assume that Augustine was basing his statement "the matter is at an end" on the decision of Innocent rather than (as the context shows) the Scriptural arguments he had presented against Pelagianism and the actions of the North African councils. Ray makes no reference to the actual substance of Sermon 131. He never quotes it. And what is worse, *he utterly ignores the entire issue of Zosimus and the entire history of what transpired immediately after this sermon was preached!* Instead, he provides two Roman Catholic citations that utterly ignore the historical context of Augustine's words. One, from Bernard Otten, is a simply ridiculous assertion that while Augustine never said "Roma locuta est," "its equivalents occur again and again." We have already seen Sermon 131 surely does not do this, so where else do we look for these "equivalents"? We are not told. Another pro-Rome work is cited that inserts the anachronistic idea that the North African bishops felt they had to send the conclusions of their councils to Rome "for ratification," and as normal, we are not given any foundation upon which we can examine the claim. The fact that the North Africans rejected Zosimus' clear, forceful rehabilitation of Pelagius, which included his insulting the North Africans as "storms of the church" and "whirlwinds" and which came couched within his complete claim of apostolic authority, shows this is not the case. *The North Africans rejected his authority and his conclusions.* So upon what basis can anyone say they felt the decisions of their councils needed Roman ratification? Indeed, as John Meyendorff points out, barely three years later these same African bishops wrote to Celestine, bishop of Rome, and said, "Who will believe that our God could inspire justice in the inquiries of one man only (i.e., the bishop of Rome) and refuse it to innumerable bishops gathered in council?" (*Imperial Unity and Christian Division*, 1989, p. 65). Does that sound like these men believed as Stephen Ray *assumes everyone must have?* Surely not. The facts are clear.

Myths are Dangerous

I have dialogued with many a Roman Catholic who, upon facing the biblical evidence concerning the gospel of grace, has retreated into an argument based upon the authority of Rome. And when challenged on that, they have reproduced these very Roman Catholic legends, myths, based upon the misrepresentation of men like Cyprian and Augustine. These folks really believe Augustine was a servant of an infallible Pope. He wasn't. They actually believe someone who lived as early as Cyprian believed the bishop of Rome was the sole successor of Peter. He didn't. But these legends have been used to provide a foundation upon which the authority claims of Rome are based. And just as generations lived under the lies of forgeries upon which Papal authority was based in the medieval period, so modern people are kept from truly understanding the gospel of grace by an authoritative system that continues to propagate itself on the basis of untruth, whether that comes from ignorant repetition of what one has heard somewhere else, or the purposeful, deceptive twisting of history and the early Fathers.

Added Information:

June 2, 2000

The preceding article has garnered quite a response from some of Rome's apologists. As these replies demonstrate our off-repeated assertion that Rome replies with smoke, mirrors, and a liberal dose of ad-hominem, without ever touching the *substance* of what has been said, we provide you with a link to Steven Ray's long reply (we trust the reader will be able to discern its character very early on) and another completely errant attempt by Scott Windsor. Thankfully. Scott provides the text in full of my own article, and the contrast with his response is stark.

www.catholic-convert.com/webster/sermon131.html

<http://www.a2z.org/acts/sermo131.htm>

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Chronology of the Medieval and Reformation Church

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" . . . holding forth the word of life . . . " (Philippians 2:16)

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1100 c. b. Peter Lombard († 1160). *Magister Sententiae*).

1155-58 Lombard publishes *Sententiarum libri quatuor*

1200 c. Albertus Magnus († 1280)

1215 Fourth Lateran Council

1225 c. b. Thomas at Aquino († 1274)

1231 Heidelberg becomes capitol of Palatinate

1239 Thomas studies in Naples.

1240-42 Thomas studies with Albertus Magnus.

1244 Thomas becomes a Dominican Friar.

1252 Thomas joins the faculty of Theology as Magister in Paris.

1255 The Faculty of Arts in the University of Paris makes the study of Aristotle compulsory.

1261 William of Muerbecker makes a new translation of Aristotle from Greek.

1263-65 c. b. Duns Scotus Johannes just over the border in Scotland (†1308).

1274 † Thomas Aquinas

1285 c. b. in Surrey, William of Ockham (Occam) Venerabilis Inceptor

1291 Duns Scotus ordained in Northampton

1298-1301 Duns Scotus teaches in the Faculty of Theology in Oxford

1302 Boniface VIII issues *Unam Sanctam*

1308 † John Duns Scotus in Cologne.

1327 Ockham charges Pope John XXII with heresy.

1328 c. (†.1384), John Wycliffe is born in Yorkshire.

- Ockham is excommunicated and forced to flee from Pope John XXII to the protection of Louis of Bavaria to 1347.

1331 Ockham expelled from the Franciscans.

- b. Geert (Gerard) de Groot (1340-84) founder of the Brethren of the Common Life.

1341 Petrarch is made poet laureate in Rome.

1347 † William of Ockham in Bavaria.

1348 First University founded at Prague

1349 † Thomas Bradwardine

- † Robert Holcot

1353 Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

1358 † Gregory of Rimini

1365 University of Vienna founded

1372 b. Jan Hus (1372-1415)

1378-1417 Papal schism at Avignon

1374 Conversion of Geert de Groot, foundation of the Brethren of the Common Life

1380 b. Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) most famous member of the Brethren of the Common Life, author of *Imitatio Christi*.

1384 † John Wycliffe

• † Geert Groot, founder of the Brethren of the Common Life.

1386 Heidelberg University organized

1388 University of Cologne organized

1392 University of Eurfurt founded

1396 (†) Marsilius of Ingehen, associated with the introduction of Nominalism to the University of Heidelberg.

1400 b. Nicolas of Cusa (c.1400-1464)

1406 († 1457) Lorenzo Valla.

1409 University of Leipzig founded.

1414-19 Council of Constance ending the Papal Schism

1420 Pierre d' Ailly †

• 1420 b. circa. Gabriel Biel († 1495)

1425 University of Louvain founded

1429 † Jean Gerson

1433 b. Alexander Hegius (von Heek), German humanist.

1437 Council of Basle

1440 Lorenzo Valla's *On the True Good*.

1441 Thomas a' Kempis (Van Kempen) publishes *Imitatio Christi* the primary example of the *Devotio moderna*.

1453 Fall of Constantinople: increased migration westward of Greek speaking scholars and their MSS.

1454 circa. First printing press at Mainz

1455 b. c. Jacques de d'Etaples (LeFevre/Faber Stapulensis † 1536), French humanist and precursor to the Reformation (c.1455-1536)

- Johannes Reuchlin († 1522), German humanist and Hebrew scholar and great uncle to Philip Melanchthon.

1450 Pope Nicholas V founds the Vatican Library.

1452-1519 Leonardo daVinci

1456 Johann Gutenberg publishes Latin Bible.

1460 b. Johannes von Staupitz († 1524).

- Pius II issues *Execrabilis* on 18 Jan. forbidding those who resist papal commands to appeal to a council.

1460 University of Basle founded.

1463 b. Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola [† 1494], Italian humanist.

1466 b. [† 1536 † Erasmus]

- b. [1466-1540] Guillame Budé, French legal humanist.

1469 b. († 1527) Niccolò Machiavelli

1470 († 1519) Johann Tetzel.

1471 Sixtus IV († 1484) reigns, who extended plenary indulgences to the dead.

- Thomas Wolsey († 1530)

1474 Condemnation of Via Moderna at Paris. Those sympathetic to the Via Moderna migrate to Germany.

1475-1564 Michelangelo

1477 War breaks out between France and the Hapsburgs.

1480 Karlstadt (aka Andreas Bodenstein, (c.1480-1541)

1481 b. Balthasar Hubmaier († 1528)

- Decree against Via Moderna rescinded.

1482 († 1531) Johann Oecolampadius (a supporter of Zwingli) is born

1483 b. Gasparo Contarini, leader of the Augustinians at the Council of Trent. Early in his career he attended the Diet of Worms and wrote critically of Luther. By 1541 in *Epistola De Iustificatione* he moves much closer to the Protestant position and was considered by some Roman Catholics to have capitulated.

1484 († 1531) Huldrych Zwingli born at Glarus, in NE Switzerland.

- Gabriel Biel appointed to the chair at Tubingen.

1485 († 1555)Hugh Latimer.

- Henry (Tudor) VII to 1509.
- d. Rudolph Agricola.

1486 Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*.

- Wendelin Steinbach († 1519) follows G. Biel at Tübingen until 1517.

1489 († 1565) William Farel is born.

- Thomas Müntzer (1489-1525).
- Thomas Cranmer to 1556.

1490 Albertus Pighius († 1542).

- [c.1490-1553] François Rabelais, French Humanist.

1491 b. († 1551) Martin Bucer.

- Ignatius of Loyola. b.1491 (†1556).
- J. Froben starts printing at Basle.

1492-1503 Pope Alexander VI reigns (Rodrigo de Borgia). Alexander openly kept a mistress, tried to assure his son, Cesare's ascension to papacy, which only failed because he died of syphilis!

- Christobal Colon (Christopher Columbus) discovers the New World.

1493 († 1573) Philippist Johann Pfeffinger who proposed *synergy* in salvation contra Gnesio-Lutherans.

1493-1519 Maximilian I reigns.

1494 b. (†.1536) William Tyndale

1497 († 1563) Wolfgang Musculus (Muslin).

- Staupitz arrives at Tübingen.
- b. [†1560] Philip Melancthon

1498 Zwingli begins study at the University of Vienna.

- b. Andreas Osiander († 1552) Lutheran, participant in the Marburg Colloquy and the Diet of Augsburg.

1499 b. († 1560) John a' Lasco (Laski)

- Johann Brenz († 1570) Lutheran controversialist who opposed Calvin and Beza and others over the Eucharist.

1500-1524 There are eighteen major "peasant revolts" in Swabia, Thuringia and Austria. Most of them are suppressed by the Swabian League.

- b. Peter (Pietro) Martyr Vermigli (1500-1562).

1501 Luther matriculates in the University of Eufurt.

1502 (†1546) Luther takes his B.A. from the University of Eurfurt.

- Elector Frederick of Saxony founds the University of Wittenberg.

1503 Erasmus publishes his *Enchiridion*.

22 Sept -18 Oct Pius III reigns.

Julius II reigns to 1513. Julius allowed Henry VIII to marry Catherine of Arragon and began charging general indulgences to pay for the Sistine Chapel.

1504 Henry Bullinger, Swiss successor to Zwingli born.

- b. Matthew Parker, Abp of Canterbury (1504-75).

1505 Lorenzo Valla's *Annotationes* published.

- Pico Mirandola publishes commentary on the Psalter.

- Luther receives his M.A. and enters the Augustinian monastery at Eurfurt as a result of his vow to St. Anne.

- Erasmus publishes Valla's *Annotations* on the New Testament.

1506 Reuchlin publishes the first major modern Hebrew grammar.

- Publication of the Amerbach edition *Opera Omnia Augustini* .

1507 Luther becomes a priest.

1508 Luther transferred to the University of Wittenberg where he lectures in moral philosophy.

1509 (†1564) John Calvin born at Noyon (France).

- Henry VIII (†1547) born.

- Erasmus publishes, *In Praise of Folly (Enconium Moriae)*.

- Luther obtains Bachelor of Biblical Studies degree. To 1511 Luther teaches at the University of Eurfurt.

- Melanchthon enters Heidelberg University.

1510 Joachim Westphal, Lutheran critic of Calvin, particularly on the supper.

- Luther goes to Rome to 1511.

1511 Michael Servetus (1511-1553).

- 11 June, Melanchthon receives his B.A. from the University of Heidelberg.

1512 Fifth Lateran Council meets to 1517.

- d' Etaples publishes his commentary on Romans.

- Luther receives his Th.D and visits Rome (January/February).

- Luther begins lecturing on the Bible at Wittenberg.

- His application for an M.A. rejected by Heidelberg (because of his youthful appearance), Melanchthon arrives at Tübingen to take his Master's degree.

1513 Pope Leo X (Giovanni de Medic) reigns to 1521. Leo was a great patron of the arts.

- Luther lectures on the Psalms at Wittenberg to 1515.

- (c.1513-1572) John Knox.

- Machiavelli publishes *The Prince*.

1514 Erasmus settles in Basle to 1529.

- Miles Coverall ordained.

- 25 January, Melanchthon completes his M.A. Tübingen and begins a four year stint as *Privatdocent* lecturing on the Classics and publishing translations.

1515 (†1576) 14 February Frederick III Elector of the Palatinate born at Pfalz-Simmern of the house of Wittelsbach.

- Francois I rules France until 1547.
- Luther lectures on Romans to 1516.
- Sept. Defeat of the Swiss Confederation at the Battle of Marignano which announces that it will enter into no more foreign alliances.
- Tyndale receives his MA at Oxford.
- Peter Ramus (Pierre de la Ramee; 1515-72).

1516 (†1590) Jerome Zanchi(us) born in Italy.

- Erasmus publishes the first edition of his *Novum Instrumentum Omne*
- Mary Tudor b. (†1558).
- Luther lectures on Galatians to 1517.
- Luther and Karlstadt clash over the interpretation of Augustine.
- Concordat of Bologna is reached giving Francois I effective control over the French Church.
- G. Farel joins the reforming circle of Jacques Lefevre/d'Etaples in the court of the Bishop of Meaux.

1517 26 April, Karlstadt defends 151 Augustinian theses

- October 31, All Saints Eve, Luther nails ninety-five theses on the Castle Church at Wittenberg.
- Luther Lectures on Hebrews.
- Staupitz publishes *Libellus de executione aeternae praedestinationis*

1518 March, Karlstadt reforms the theological curriculum at Wittenberg.

- April, Luther attends Heidelberg Disputations.
- Oct-Nov Luther appears before Cajetan at Augsburg.
- Zwingli called to Zurich as *Luetpriest*.
- Melanchthon publishes *Rudiments of the Greek Language*. 25 August, he arrives at the newly created University of Wittenberg.
- 29 August Melanchthon delivers his inaugural address *De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis*.

1519 Zwingli begins public preaching at the Grossmunster, Zurich.

- Theodore Beza (†1605), is born.
- Charles V, elected German Emperor reigns to 1555.
- 27 June - 8 July, Luther and Melanchthon attend Leipzig Disputation vs. Eck.
- Melanchthon begins and completes B.D. at the University of Wittenberg.
- Luther condemned by the University of Cologne, 30 Aug.
- Luther condemned by the University of Louvain, 7 November.
- Edmund Grindal (1519-83).
- Crato of Crafftheim b. 20 Nov. (†1585/86)

1520 b. (†1575) Matthias Flacius Illyricus, leader of the Gnesio-Lutheran faction at the Magdeburg School.

- Luther condemned by the University of Paris, 15 April.
- Pope Leo gives Luther sixty days to recant in *Exsurge Domine*, 15 June. Luther responds with a bonfire of the papal decrees and canon law.
- Luther publishes *On Christian Liberty; The Babylonian Captivity of the Church; Address to the Christian Nobility*.
- b. Suleiman I (†1566) ruler of the Ottoman Empire.
- Zurich city council issues a mandate requiring all preaching to be based on Scripture.

1521 Luther defends himself at Diet of Worms (27 January to 25 May). While he is gone, Zwilling and Karlstadt persuaded the Wittenberg Augustinians to burn all their images and mutilate their stone statues. The City Council promised to abolish all images and altars, save three, to "avoid

idolatry".

- The Edict of Worms is issued on 26 May. Luther is excommunicated. and placed under Imperial ban and sequestered in Wartburg. When he returns to Wittenburg, Luther partly reverses this Karlstadt's reforms and established a more tolerant attitude toward the images.
- The First Italian War begins between Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor of the German Nation) and François I. The war for control of Northern Italy (Milan, Naples), lasting to 1526, essentially provides time for Luther to gather support after the Edict is issued. It effectively prevents prosecution of Luther.
- From 1521 to 1531 Germany is effectively governed by the Second Imperial Governing Council in the absence of Charles V.

April 19, Bucer is released from his monastic vows.

- Melancthon publishes the first edition of the *Loci Communes*.
- Calvin goes up to college (Montaigu) a stronghold of *Via Moderna*.

1522 Guido De Bres, born in Belgium.

Jan - Sept 1523 Hadrian VI.

- Bucer marries and is excommunicated.
- b. Martin Chemnitz (†1586) Lutheran theologian who responded to the Canons and Decrees of Trent.
- Breaking of the Lenten fast at Zurich, defended by Zwingli on the basis of *Sola Scriptura*.
- Luther publishes his German language New Testament, September.
- b. Martin Micronius (1522-1559)

1523 Zwingli publishes his 67 Articles in Zurich, 29 January. These articles were prepared for the First Zurich Disputation against the Roman Church before the magistrate. Zwingli's theses won the day, and secured one of the first major Swiss cantons for the Reformation. The Zwinglian preaching produces an orderly removal of images under the direction of the City Council.

- June 24, Zwingli publishes *On Divine and Human Righteousness*.
- The Second Zurich disputation on the mass and images in the Church, 26-8, October.
- † Thomas Muntzer (?)
- 1523-34 Clement VII (Guilio de Medici) reigns.
- Calvin matriculates in the University of Paris where he studies the Arts and Philosophy.
- Bucer settles in Strasbourg, where his father is a citizen, and begins lecturing in the home of Matthew Zell.
- O.T. scholar, Wolfgang Capito declares himself for the reformation.

1524 Erasmus begins conflict with Luther over freedom of the will.

- The Ansbach Recommendations are the first Protestant confession.
- Battle of Novara, 30 April. Zurich city council issues decree permitting removal of icons, 15 June.
- German peasant wars reach their apex.
- † Johannes Staupitz
- b. (†1590) François Hotman

1525 Tyndale's N.T. is printed at Cologne and Worms.

- Friedrich III (1525-76).
- Anabaptism breaks out in Zurich, first re-baptisms in January.
- Zwingli publishes his *Commentary on True and False Religion*.
- Zurich abolishes the mass.
- Twelve articles of Memmingen set forth the grievances of the German peasantry.
- Thomas Muntzer executed, 27 May with fifty-three others.
- 13 June Luther secretly marries Katharina von Bora, a former nun and follows with a public ceremony 27 June.
- Luther publishes *De Servo Arbitrio*.
- Guillame Farel publishes his *Summary and Brief Description of All that is Necessary for Every*

Christian to Have Confidence in God and Help His Neighbor in 42 articles, in Basle.

1526 First German Reformed Congregation organized at Emden.

- Charles V concludes the Peace of Madrid with François I of France ending the First Italian War.
- Suleiman I defeats King Ludwig of Hungary, capturing a third of Hungary. The Hapsburgs have another war to fight, this time in the east.
- Reichstag (Diet) convened at Speyer.

1527 Henry VIII sues for divorce from Catherine of Arragon.

- The Second Italian War (François I, Henry VIII and Clement VII, allied against the Hapsburgs) until 1529. Charles sacks Rome this year.
- Schleitheim Confession published, February.
- † Niccolò Machiavelli

1528 The Ten Theses of Bern are produced after a disputation between Zwingli and Eck which begins in 1526, accepting the reformation.

- † Balthasar Hubmaier
- Calvin moves to Orleans and Bourges to read Law.
- Charles V authorizes the death penalty for Anabaptists.

1529 Second Diet/Reichstag of Speyer ends toleration of Lutheranism in Catholic districts, 21 February.

- Marburg Colloquy
- Luther produces Larger and Smaller catechisms.
- The Schwabach Articles drafted, the product of negotiations between Nuremberg and Saxony.
- Luther, Melanchthon, Justus Jonas, Johann Brenz take the as yet unpublished Schwabach Articles to the Marburg Colloquy (1-3 October) to meet with Zwingli, Oecolampius, Bucer and Heidio. The meeting produces the 14 Marburg Articles. Article 15, on the Eucharist, failed agreement. Agreement might have made a Swiss-South German union possible against the Hapsburgs.
- Catherine of Arragon appeals to Rome contra Henry VIII.
- Henry replaces Wolsey with Thomas More. Wolsey failed to secure a divorce for him.
- The Peace of Barcelona is concluded between Charles V and Pope Clement VII in June. The Peace of Cambrai is brokered in August by Francois' mother and Charles' V's aunt [hence it is known as the 'Ladies' Peace'] between Charles V and François I preventing Charles from putting into effect the Edict of Worms.
- Suleiman I attacks Vienna in September and October. Trouble at home forces him to withdraw.
- [c.1529/30 - † 1596] Jean Bodin, French political philosopher.

1530 The Reichstag meets at Augsburg. Confessio Augustana [Articles 1-21 are the Schwabach Articles and 22-28 are the Torgau Articles] is presented by Melanchthon.

- The Tetrapolitan Confession is presented and published.
- Zwingli presents the Confession of Faith to the German Emperor Charles V, to be considered at Diet at Augsburg, but like the Tetrapolitan, it failed to gain a hearing.
- Pope Clement VII crowns Charles V Emperor in Bologna.
- † Cardinal Wolsey
- Peter Viret and William Farel lead a reformed coup of Strasbourg.
- John Whitgift (1530-1604).

1531 Zwingli publishes an Exposition of the Christian Faith to King Francis I of Francis.

- Melanchthon produces his Apology for the Augsburg in response to the Roman Catholic *Confutatio*.
- 11 October, Zwingli dies in the second battle of Kappel.

- Calvin returns to Paris to study theology.
- The Schmalkald League is formed 27 February, by the signatories to the Confessio Augustana, Saxony, Hesse, Anhalt, Brandenburg, in protest to the proposed coronation of Ferdinand as 'King of the Romans'. The league unites Lutherans and Zwinglians as well as princes from the north and south to become one of the first strong anti-Hapsburg elements in Germany.

1532 Calvin publishes his commentary on *De Clementia*.

- Charles introduces the Religious Peace of Nuremberg to assure Protestant princes that no proceedings would be taken against them for religious reasons at the Imperial Cameral Tribunal. The Nuremberg Standstill effectively kills the Edict of Worms (1521).
- Thomas Cranmer marries Margaret Osiander.

1533 Henry secretly marries Anne Boleyn. Elizabeth Tudor is born.

- Thomas Cranmer is made Archbishop of Canterbury.
- Calvin and Nicholas Cop with other Protestants flee from Paris after Nicholas Cop gives a "Lutheran" (i.e., evangelical) rectorial sermon.
- Osiander issues his catechism.
- b. [†1592] Michel de Montaigne, French humanist.

1534 Oecolampadius publishes the First Confession of Basle.

- Affair of the Placards provokes François I against the evangelicals, 18 October.
- 18 July Zacharias Ursinus (Beer/Baer) is born at Breslau († 6 March 1583).
- 1534-1549 Pope Paul III.
- British parliament passes a law to prohibit appeals to Rome, also acts of supremacy, submission and of succession.
- May, Calvin returns to Noyon to renounce his benefices and later in the year publishes *Psychopannychia*.
- Martin Bucer issues his catechism.
- Luther's draft translation of the Bible is finished.
- December, Bucer, Melancthon, Bullinger attend a secret colloquy on the Lord's Supper at Constance attempting to resolve differences. Bullinger's formula that Christ is present and eaten "by faith" is accepted. Bucer submits ten articles which are also accepted.
- Anabaptists take over the city of Munster.
- A. Osiander becomes Professor of Theology at Königsburg

1535 †Thomas More.

- Calvin begins, in Basle, his first draft of the Institutes.
- Coverdale's first translation appears.
- Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603).
- Bucer recalled to Augsburg where he confesses that in the Supper the "true body and the true blood are distributed, given and received in order to strengthen our faith." Luther accepts this revision.
- Geneva declares itself a republic.
- b. Thomas Cartwright (†1603) a student in Heidelberg and English Presbyterian-Puritan divine.
- Osiander publishes *De Iustificazione* rejecting imputed righteousness for infusion.

1536 b. Caspar Olevian (von Olevig) at Trier

- The Second Confession of Basle or The First Helvetic Confession is published.
- On his way to Strasbourg to study Calvin is forced through Geneva by the war, July.
- The Lausanne Articles of 1536 are published, October.
- First Genevan Confession published.
- First Edition of Calvin's Institutes published.
- Calvin prepares and publishes a brief catechism in French.

- 27 March, H. Bullinger, Bucer, Capito, Myconius, present to the General Council of the Swiss Churches the First Helvetic Confession.
- Bucer, Melancthon, Capito and Luther reach the Wittenberg Accord, 25 May and celebrate the Supper together. Key issue of *manducatio indignorum* is resolved by substituting "unworthy" for "unfaithful." Apparently, Bucer and the Lutherans each placed different their own interpretations on the word. Significantly, Luther is willing to sign it and reach an understanding with the South Germans. However Luther does not see the Helvetic Confession until 27 May. The Zwinglians will not be moved and the sharp division over *hoc est corpus meum* re-emerges.
- Cranmer convinces Henry of the Ten Articles.
- Anne Boleyn is Beheaded.
- †Erasmus
- †Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (Faber Stapulensis)

1537 Luther draws up the Schmalkaldic Articles for the Diet of Schmalkalden. Melancthon adds *Tractatus De Poteste Papae* refuting the historical claims of the papacy but also saying that for the sake of peace in Christendom he would not object to the human power of the Pope over his Bishops if he (the Pope) did not object to the gospel. Both the Articles and the Tractatus were approved. The papal nuncio was rejected by the Protestant princes on the principle of judicial independence from the pope.

- Henry marries Jane Seymour who dies giving birth to Edward. Marries Catherine Howard who died as did Anne.
- A general council is called for Mantua, but not held due to political and military difficulties. Later re-convened at Trent, 1545.
- 21 October Frederick III marries Maria of Brandenburg-Anspach.

1538 Calvin refuses the Lord's Supper to prominent Genevans and is forced to leave Geneva, and he flees to Strasbourg where he pastors a French speaking church until 1541.

1539 Bucer helps the syphilitic Philip (Landgraf) of Hesse, who was trapped in a loveless contracted marriage, make a secret bigamous marriage to a lady in waiting in his court. Luther and Melancthon give approve by granting a private dispensation. Their fear is that the Landgraf will seek a dispensation from the pope if they don't cooperate. It was later discovered the Landgraf also had a mistress, under which conditions Luther would not have cooperated, had he known. Unfortunately, his advice after the marriage was to cover it up with a "big, strong lie."

- Coverdale revises Matthew's Great Bible and takes his doctorate at Tubingen.
- Luther publishes *Against the Antinomians* contra Agricola.
- Second edition of the *Institutes* is published.
- First edition of Luther's Works appears.

1540 Philip issues his privately revised edition of (the Variata) of the Augsburg Confession. The Edition of 1530 says, "the body and blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed..." (*Vere adsint, et distribuantur*) Whereas the Variata says that "with bread and wine are truly exhibited the body and blood of Christ..." (*quod cum pane et vino vere exhibeantur corpus et sanguinis Christi vescentibus in coena domini*).

† Thomas Cromwell.

- Henry married Anne of Cleves.
- Conference of Hagenau June -July, called by Charles V to discuss points of disagreement between Rome and Protestants. Calvin attends with the Strasbourg theologians, Melancthon is ill. The conference fails to reach any accords.
- Disputation of Worms, a colloquy arranged to reunite Protestants and Catholics in Germany. The Protestant side is represented by P. Melancthon and Catholics by J. Eck. Beginning 25 November, the colloquy ends in January 1541 with an agreement over the nature of original sin, but the colloquy ended in view of the upcoming Reichstag at (Regensburg) Ratisbon. Calvin is present.

- Calvin marries the widow Idelette de Bure.
- The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) founded.
- Calvin publishes his *Reply to Sadoleto* and his Commentary on Romans.
- † G. Budé

1541 Calvin publishes a second, larger, revision of the French Catechism of 1536/7. It was translated into Latin in 1545, German 1556. Comparison with the Heidelberg, shows a good deal of similarity.

- April 27 to May 22 Diet of Regensburg (Ratisbon) convened by Charles V. J. Eck, Julius Pflug (1549-1564), Johann Gropper (1503-59) with Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542) meet Melancthon, Bucer and Pistorious (1503-83). Agreement is reached on justification (Calvin, who attended, was amazed at Catholic capitulation here. He felt the article was unclear in places) in May but they fail to reach agreement on the Eucharist, absolution, penance and the papacy. Both Luther and the Roman Curia rejected the draft compromises reached. The agreement on justification was a chimera.
- Calvin returns to Geneva in September.
- Calvin publishes first French edition of the *Institutes*.

1542 John a' Lasco [1499-1560](Laski, pronounced Waski from i.e., from the west) serves as Pastor to GRC at Emden until 1549. Laski organizes what may have been the first Coetus in the Palatinate of 200 Ministers who met weekly for forty years.

- R. Bellarmine: (†1621) .
- Mary Stuart ascends, in her minority, in Scotland.

1543 Melchior Hoffmann †

- The threat from the Moslem empire is so grave that Schmalkald League offers aid to the hated Hapsburgs.

1544 November 1544 The Council of Trent is convened

- The Imperial Diet meets at Speyer. Charles requests help against the French and Suleiman I. The Protestants agree on the condition that "Christian reformation" will be discussed at a future "general, Christian and free council." The pope accuses Charles of overstepping his competence and Calvin, ironically, writes in his defense.
- Charles leads a campaign into France winning concessions. The Peace of Crepy signed in 14 September. On 19 September he concluded a secret treaty with the Turks. Charles is now in a position to move against the Protestant princes.

1545 Zurich Confession of Faith published.

- Slaughter begins of the Waldensian (Vaudois) communities of the Luberon in Provence.
- Imperial Diet of Worms meets and although he is promised by the pope military and financial support, Charles decides to hold another religious conference. War against the Protestants is postponed.
- Elector Frederick II receives communion in two kinds and petitions for admission to the Schmalkald League and was refused.
- John Fielde (1545-88).
- Andrew Melville (1545-1622)
- First session of the Council of Trent opens, 13 December.

1546 Luther dies in Eisleben, 18 February.

- January Frederick II introduces the Reformation to the Palatinate with the first German Mass in Heidelberg. Masses without communicants end. Devotion and reservation of the Sacrament forbidden. Easter, he receives communion in two kinds.
- The evangelical reformer George Wishart, burned in Scotland.

- The Schmalkalkic War erupts. Frederick III governs Anspach for his brother--in-law who has joined the Emperor's armies against the Princes.
- Luther releases the final version of his Bible translation after revision with the help of a committee (consisting of Melanchthon, Cruciger, Bugenhagen, Jonas, Aurogallus [a Hebraist] and Roer [Secretary]).
- Melanchthon refuses invitation to Heidelberg University.
- Fourth Session of the Council of Trent 8 April.
- b. Tycho Brahe (†1601)

1547 Edward VI ascends the English throne as a ten year old. Edward was well tutored in the classics was able to translate Cicero's *De Philosophia* into Greek and could read Aristotle's Ethics in Greek! Edward supported the reformation with the help of Cranmer and the Duke of Northumberland.

- P.M. Vermigli becomes the Regius Professor of Theology, Oxford until the Marian exile in 1553.
- Schmalkaldic Princes are defeated.

1548 (to 1549) Consensus Tigurinus signed at Zurich.

- April, Charles V having crushed the evangelical forces, imposes the Interim at the armed Diet of Augsburg. In the Palatinate, communion in two kinds is retained and married clergy.
- Miles Coverdale abandons his order.
- † Mattheus Zell, a co-worker with Wolfgang Capito in Strasbourg.

1549 Cranmer issues the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer.

- Martin Bucer is called to Cambridge as Regius Professor of Divinity.
- P. M. Vermigli made Regius Professor of Divinity, Oxford.

1550 Ursinus begins seven years study with Melanchthon at the University of Wittenberg. Ursinus will study and travel with Melanchthon until 1557.

- Olevian goes to Paris, Orleans and Bourges to study law to 1557.
- 1550-1555 Julius III (Giovanni Maria Ciocchi del Monte).
- Marian persecution begins.
- Pamphlet is published at Magdeburg justifying the Protestant doctrine of resistance.
- Peter Dathenus flees the Lowland persecutions for Edwardian England.

1551 Bucer dies at Cambridge

- In the 'Bishop's Wars [1551-1552] Charles V's power is broken.

1552 Joachim Westphal, begins attacks on both Calvin and the Consensus Tigurinus over the Lord's Supper.

1553 Cranmer issues the Forty Two Articles.

- Edward VI dies. Bloody Mary Tudor reigns in England until 1557. and drives the Reformed and Protestant to the Netherlands and elsewhere. John Laski and 175 Reformed brethren, driven from England under Mary, are denied entrance in several countries, eventually settling in East Friesland.
- November, Cranmer is tried for treason and sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered.
- Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer are arrested and taken to Oxford where they appear before a commission to be investigated for heresy.
- Jerome Zanchius succeeds Peter Martyr at Strasbourg as Professor of Theology. He is later able to obtain suppression of Hesshius' attack against the Heidelberg Reformers and Frederick III on the Supper, and was attacked as a defector from the Augsburg Confession.
- Servetus killed by the decree of the City Council in Geneva.
- b. Josias Nichols (†1639)

- † Rabelais.

1554 A catechism is prepared at Emden by John a' Lasco, following the model of Calvin's catechisms.

- Osiander is condemned at the Naumberg Assembly for confusing justification for union with Christ.
- Mary Tudor marries Philip II of Spain.
- March, Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer are taken to the Bocardo, Oxford to await trial for heresy. 14 April, they dispute at St. Mary's. 20 April all three were individually told to recant.
- Count Simon of Lippe (1554-1613) one of the Calvinist Counts. Lippe is north of Hesse-Kassel and south of Braunschweig-Kalenberg.
- Richard Hooker (1554-1600).
- (†1586) Sir Philip Sidney, English diplomat and poet who served Queen Elizabeth's efforts to establish a Protestant League.
- Summer, English refugees form a congregation in Frankfurt. Autumn, they call John Knox as pastor. A conflict between Presbyterians and Anglicans soon erupts. Knox, Whittingham et al appeal to Calvin regarding the Anglican service.
- Knox publishes, *Faithful Admonition to the Professors of God's Truth in England*.

1555 The Peace of Augsburg is established which will last until the Thirty Years War (1618). The peace is a result of an assault of the princes upon the Emperor, and resulted in recognition of two religious groups, the Roman Catholic Church and adherents of the Augsburg Confession. The question will arise in the Palatinate, are the Reformed to be considered adherents to the Augsburg Confession? The "High" (Gnesio) Lutherans said absolutely not. Frederick seems to have held to the Augsburg after conversion to Evangelical Protestantism.

- Charles V abdicates his throne. Replaced in 1556 by Ferdinand I.
- 9 April - 1 May Marcellus II.
- 23 May to 1559 Paul IV (Giampietro Carafa)
- From now until 1559 there is an explosion of new Calvinist churches in France, centering South and west of Paris.
- Early in the year until 1558 Mary and Archbishop Reginald Pole begins trying Protestants as heretics.
- September, Cranmer is tried in St. Mary the Virgin before Papal Commissioners. Two days later the proceedings are sent to Rome. Cranmer has eighty days to appeal.
- 16 October Bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley are tried for heresy, convicted and burned at the stake on Broad Street in Oxford.
- Between 1555-62 Geneva sends eighty-eight pastors from the Company of Pastors to France as missionaries.
- 4 February John Rogers, editor of Matthew's Bible, becomes the first Marian Martyr, burned at the stake at Smithfield.
- b. Robert Rollock (†1598/99).
- Martin Micronius ordains Peter Dathenus to the Reformed ministry in Frankfurt.
- Knox forced from Frankfurt to Geneva. In October he is followed by fifteen English families.

1556 • Ferdinand I begins rule (to 1564) Holy Roman Empire.

- 21 March Thomas Cranmer burns at the stake on Broad Street in Oxford.
- Olevian in boating accident with Herman Louis at Bourges France.
- Otto Henry introduces a Protestant church order including superintendents.
- Frederick II receives communion in a Protestant service on the Sunday before his death. Otto Heinrich, in ill health, succeeds from 1556-59. Otto encourages Reformation, abolishing the Mass and Catholic ceremonies in the Palatinate and is the Protestant leader at the Imperial Diet of 1556-57.
- As heir to the Palatinate Frederick III takes up residence in Amberg as governor of the Upper

Palatinate.

- Beza publishes an annotated translation of Greek Testament.
- The English congregation in Geneva adopts *The Book of Order*.

1557 Ursinus makes a study tour of Europe with Melanchthon, attending the Colloquy of Worms and including Geneva, where he receives all of Calvin's works.

- Ursinus returns to Wittenberg but receives a call to Breslau to teach at Elizabeth College until 1559.
- Melanchthon heads the reorganization of Heidelberg University as an Evangelical University under Otto Henry.
- Calvin responds to Westphal.

1558 Melanchthon, without a knowledge of Tilemann Hesshusen's' (Hesshius/Heshusius) character, recommends him for the Chair of Theology at Heidelberg.

- Electors officially accept abdication of Charles V and accession of Ferdinand I.
- At the death of Mary Tudor, Anne Boleyn daughter Elizabeth I ascends and reigns to 1603.
- Mary Stuart abdicates to James VI and is executed in Scotland.
- † Charles V
- b. Dudley Fenner (†1587)
- 12 June, Elizabeth, Frederick III's oldest daughter marries John Frederick, Duke of Saxony.
- Zacharias Ursinus gives his inaugural lecture at the Elizabeth Gymnasium in Breslau, *An Exhortation to the Study of Christian Doctrine*.

1559 Frederick III accedes to the Electorship in the Palatinate.

- John Knox returns to Scotland from Geneva.
- Olevian returns to Treves to teach.
- Calvin publishes final Latin edition of the Institutes.
- The first National Synod of the French Reformed Church is held, embracing four hundred thousand followers, and would hold twenty-nine national Synods to 1659 at Loudun after which it was banned by Louis XIV in 1660.
- Henri II dies, leading to domination of the French court by the anti-Protestant Guise family.
- Genevan academy founded.
- The Gallican Confession of Faith is published.
- 1559-65 Pius IV (Giovanni Angelo Medici)
- Count Johann VI of Nassau Dillenberg (1559-1606).
- British Parliament passes the Elizabethan Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity and restores an edited version of Edward VI's 1552 Prayer Book.
- Elizabeth makes Matthew Parker the Archbishop of Canterbury.
- Elizabethan settlement is enacted.
- † Johann Gropper.
- Ursinus publishes *Theses on the Doctrine of the Sacraments* at Breslau which led to his dismissal.

1560 Philip Melanchthon in Wittenberg. Ursinus goes to Zurich a second time and studies with Peter Martyr

- John a' Lasco dies in Poland.
- Frederick III ransoms Olevian from prison in Treves (for preaching the gospel against the state orders) to come to Heidelberg.
- 3-8 June Heidelberg Disputation of the question, is *Hoc est corpus meum* literal or metaphysical? H. Alting reports that Frederick said that the 'Lutherans won in force and repartee, and the Reformed in simplicity and modest defense of the truth.'
- Frederick orders the simplification of calendar and ornaments in Palatinate churches and imposes the Augustana Variata as the standard of discipline on the Palatinate. Those who are unable to subscribe (Gnesio-Lutheran pastors) are forced to leave.

- The Scottish Reformation Parliament meets and adopts the Scots Confession of Faith.
- Jacobus Arminius (Jakob Hermandszoon; 1560-1609).
- The Conspiracy of Amboise (by French Calvinist pastors to kidnap Francis II) fails.
- Final French edition of the *Institutes* is published.
- Musculus publishes his *Loci Communes*.

1561 20 January to 8 February Protestant princes meet at Naumberg to bring Frederick 'back from his errors.' Frederick signs the Invariata of 1531 with the proviso that it was further explained in the Variata (1540). Civil war was thus prevented.

- Guido de'Bres publishes the Belgic confession.
- Frederick III orders the Roman Altars, baptismal fonts, pictures, removed from the churches and establishes the use of plain white bread in communion.
- Philip of Hesse and Freidrich III attempt to have their adherence to the *Augustana Variata* accepted as falling within the terms of the Peace of Augsburg.

1562 Frederick orders a committee including Ursinus (age 28) and Olevian (age 26) to begin the Heidelberg Catechism. The Synod at Heidelberg (probably) adopted a draft of the Catechism.

- Edict of January touches off the First (French) War of Religion. Seventy four Protestants killed while attending a sermon near Vassy.
- † Peter Martyr Vermigli
- Ursinus publishes *Catechizes Minor*.
- 25 August Ursinus received Doctorate from the University of Heidelberg, replaces Olevian as Professor of Dogmatic Theology and gives his inaugural address on September 1.

1563 19 January The Heidelberg Catechism is approved and Johann Mayer prints the first edition in Latin and German.

- The Canons of the Council of Trent are promulgated.
- 19 March, Peace of Amboise is signed.
- Foxe's Book of Martyrs (*Acts and Monuments*) appears in English.
- The Anglican Church adopts the Thirty Nine Articles.
- † Seripando.

1564 Calvin dies in Geneva, 27 May.

- Maximillian II succeeds Ferdinand I (to 1576).
- Additional standards of church discipline are added for the Palatinate church council, the Kirchenrat.
- Edmund Grindal becomes Archbishop of Canterbury.
- b. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)
- The Scottish General Assembly adopts the Genevan (English congregation) Book of Order as Book of Common Order.

1565 M. Chemnitz begins publishing *Examen concilii Tridentini* (1565-73) against Trent.

1566 25 March Frederick III addresses Diet at Augsburg defending his Protestantism gaining quasi-legal status for Calvinism in the Empire.

- The Belgic Confession is adopted by Synod at Antwerp.
- The Second Helvetic Confession is published by Henry Bullinger.
- The Bilden storm, a wave of iconoclasm sweeps over the Low Countries.
- Pius V (St.; Michele Gislieri) to 1572.

1567 The Duke of Alva, with the cooperation of the House of Savoy, marches on the Netherlands to crackdown on all forms of religious deviation in the Netherlands. Guido de Bres hanged in Belgium

for his faith.

- Mary Stuart is defeated at Carberry Hill in June, imprisoned, and abdicates in July to the Protestant Lord James Stewart.
- The Second War of Religion begins in France with the Conspiracy of Meaux.
- Thomas Aquinas was made the fifth *Doctor Ecclesiae*.

1568 The battle over Ecclesiology begins and Dr. Thomas Erastus (Zwinglian) advances 75 theses.

- A Synod at Wesel adopts the Belgic Confession.
- June-August Beza and Bullinger cooperate in a failed attempt to raise Swiss troops for the Third War of Religion (1568-70).

1569 † Miles Coverdale.

- Thomas Cartwright serves briefly as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity (to 1570) during which time he proposes reformed style Presbyteries or Classes.

1570 The Palatinate Kirchenrat supplements the previous order for church discipline.

- Thomas Cartwright is forced to Geneva.
- August, the Peace of St. Germain is signed ending the Third War of Religion.

1571 A Synod at Emden adopts the Belgic Confession.

- Beza serves as President of the Synod of La Rochelle.
- b. Johannes Kepler (1571-1630)

1572 24 August, the assassination of Admiral Gaspard de Coligny under the supervision of the Duke of Guise sparks the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres in France, killing approximately 30,000 Huguenots.

- Gregory XIII (Ugo Boncompagni) -1585.
- † John Knox.
- John Field begins a pamphlet campaign for Presbyterian church government in England.
- The revolt of the northern provinces begins which will lead to the creation of an independent Dutch republic.

1573 The Swabian Concord toward Lutheran (Philippist and Gnesio-Lutheran) unity.

- François Hotman publishes *Franco-Gallia*.

1574 Elector Augustus of Saxony suppresses forcefully four allegedly 'crypto-Calvinist' Philippists touching off a wave of violent anti-Calvinist sentiment among German Lutherans.

- A national Synod at Dordrecht adopts the Belgic Confession.
- François Hotman publishes *Francogllia*, expounding a theory of resistance to unjust rulers.
- Beza publishes *De Jure Magistratum (Du droit de magistrats)*
- Andrew Melville is recruited from Geneva to become the head of Glasgow University. Melville leads the Erastian forces in Scotland until his exile.

1575 † H. Bullinger.

- The Swabian-Saxon Concord is signed and also the Maulbronn Formula.

1576 26 October † Frederick III.

- Louis (Ludwig), son of Frederick, ascends and re-replaces Lutheranism in the Palatinate, only Lutheran books to be sold and read. Olevian preaches against him and is jailed, then exiled to Nassau-Dillenberg.
- John Casimir returns from leading an army in support of the Huguenots.
- Ursinus and Tossanus (court preacher) are deposed by Louis VI and with six hundred pastors and

teachers flee the Palatinate to Neustadt. In Heidelberg they are replaced by high Lutherans.

- 14 October † Maximilian II who is succeeded by the sometimes insane Rudolf II (to 1612).
- The *Torgau Book* amalgamates Lutheran accords.
- P.M. Vermigli's *Loci Communes* published posthumously.
- b. William Ames (†1633).
- Bodin publishes *Six livre de la Republique*.

1577 September, an international Reformed conference meets in Frankfurt, in anticipation of the Formula of Concord. Participants try to draw up a common confession for the Reformed Churches of Europe and arrange to send a delegation to the German Lutheran princes urging them not to adopt the Formula of Concord.

- Lutheran form of Concord compiled in Bergen, near Magdeburg.

1580 25 June 25 *Liber Concordiae* signed by the electors Saxony, Brandenburg and Palatinate. The Elector Augustus of Saxony publishes the *Liber Concordiae*.

1581 A General Assembly in Nassau-Dillenberg adopts the Palatine Church order and the Heidelberg Catechism.

- Zacharias Ursinus publishes his *Admonitio*, a reply to the *Book of Concord*.

1582 General Synod established using Palatinate Order of Worship of 1563 and Heidelberg Catechism.

- †Pierre Boquin. Boquin had made an attempt to reconcile the *Augustana Variata* to Calvinism at the Heidelberg Disputation in 1560.

1583 A company of actors stages Christopher Marlowe's play, *The Massacre at Paris* rehearsing the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres.

- John Whitgift becomes Elizabeth's third Archbishop of Canterbury.
- b. Hendrick Alting, the first historian of the Heidelberg Reformation (†1644).

1584 Count Johann of Nassau and Wittgenstein establishes Johannea University in Herborn headed by Olevian and including Johannes Piscator. Olevian teaches Dogmatics from his *Epitome* of Calvin's Institutes

1585 Olevian publishes *De Substantia*.

- Sixtus V (Felice Peretti) to 1590.
- Beza publishes his Greek NT. Added to it the Vulgate and his own translation. Makes Codex Bezae.
- Colloquy of Montbeliard.
- Edict of Nantes is revoked.

1586 Johann VI converts the five Counts of the Wetterau, whose lands are included in the Herborn Synod.

- Christian I of Saxony, under the influence of Philippist Nikolas Krell, openly encourages Calvinism, suspending his allegiance to the Formula of Concord.
- †Sir Philip Sidney

1587 Mary Stuart is executed in London on Queen Elizabeth's order.

1588 Henri III engineers the assassination of the Duke and the Cardinal of Guise in his own suite and makes Henri Navarre his heir.

- 17 March, Dathenus †.

1589 Henri of Navarre converts to Catholicism in order to take the throne to become Henri IV

1590 † Girolamo Zanchi.

- † François Hotman

1592 † Count Johann Casmir.

- Landgraf Moritz, the "Learned" of Lower Hesse becomes a Calvinist. He rules until 1627.
- b. Johannes Amos Comenius († 1670). Comenius, a Bohemian Brethren, (Moravian) studied at Herborn and Heidelberg where he was influenced by millenarianism.
- † Michel de Montaigne

1594 Nikolas Krell tried for heresy after the death of Christian I of Saxony. Richard Hooker publishes the first part of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity defending the Elizabethan settlement.

1595 The Lambeth Articles are drafted and completed. The articles were compiled under a committee under Archbishop Whitgift to defend (supralapsarian) Calvinism and Puritanism. They were not formally authorized.

HISTORY of the CHRISTIAN CHURCH*

CHAPTER VI.

PROPAGATION AND PERSECUTION OF PROTESTANTISM IN GERMANY TILL 1530.

§ 91. Causes and Means of Progress.

The Reformation spread over Germany with the spontaneous and irresistible impulse of a great historical movement that struck its roots deep in the wants and necessities of the church. The only propaganda of Luther was the word and the pen, but these he used to the utmost of his time and strength. "There was no need of an arrangement," says Ranke, "or of a concerted agreement, or of any special mission. As at the first favor of the vernal sun the seed sprouts from the ploughed field, so the new convictions, which were prepared by all what men had experienced and heard, made their appearance on the slightest occasion, wherever the German language was spoken."[744](#)

The chief causes of progress were the general discontent with papal tyranny and corruption; the desire for light, liberty, and peace of conscience; the thirst for the pure word of God. The chief agencies were the German Bible, which spoke with Divine authority to the reason and conscience, and overawed the human authority of the pope; the German hymns, which sang the comforting doctrines of grace into the hearts of the people; and the writings of Luther, who discussed every question of the day with commanding ability and abundant knowledge, assuring the faith of friends, and crushing the opposition of foes. The force and fertility of his genius as a polemic are amazing, and without a parallel among fathers, schoolmen, and modern divines. He ruled like an absolute monarch in the realm of German theology and religion; and, with the gospel for his shield and weapon, he was always sure of victory.[745](#)

What Luther did for the people, Melancthon accomplished, in his gentle and

moderate way, for scholars. In their united labors they were more than a match for all the learning, skill, and material resources of the champions of Rome.

No such progress of new ideas and principles had taken place since the first introduction of Christianity. No power of pope or emperor, no council or diet, could arrest it. The very obstacles were turned into helps. Had the Emperor and his brother favored the cause of progress, all Germany might have become nominally Lutheran. But it was better that Protestantism should succeed, in spite of their opposition, by its intellectual and moral force. A Protestant Constantine or Charlemagne would have extended the territory, but endangered the purity, of the Reformation.

Secular and selfish motives and passions were mingled with the pure enthusiasm for the gospel. Violence, intrigues, and gross injustice were sometimes employed in the suppression of the old, and the introduction of the new, faith.⁷⁴⁶ But, human sin and imperfection enter into all great movements of history. Wherever God builds a church, the Devil is sure to build a chapel close by. The Devil is mighty; but God is almighty, and overrules the wrath and outwits the wit of his great enemy. Nothing but the power of truth and conviction could break down the tyranny of the papacy, which for so many centuries had controlled church and state, house and home, from the cradle to the grave, and held the keys to the kingdom of heaven. It is an insult to reason and faith to deny the all-ruling and overruling supremacy of God in the history of the world and the church.

§ 92. *The Printing-Press and the Reformation.*

The art of printing, which was one of the providential preparations for the Reformation, became the mightiest lever of Protestantism and modern culture. The books before the Reformation were, for the most part, ponderous and costly folios and quartos in Latin, for limited circulation. The rarity of complete Bibles is shown by the fact that copies in the libraries were secured by a chain against theft. Now small and portable books and leaflets were printed in the vernacular for the millions.

The statistics of the book trade in the sixteenth century reveal an extraordinary increase since Luther. In the year 1513, there appeared only ninety prints in Germany; in 1514, one hundred and six; in 1515, one hundred and forty-five; in

1516, one hundred and five; in 1517, eighty-one. They are mostly little devotional tracts, flying newspapers, official notices, medical prescriptions, stories, and satirical exposures of clerical and monastic corruptions. In 1518 the number rose to one hundred and forty-six; in 1519, to two hundred and fifty-two; in 1520, to five hundred and seventy-one; in 1521, to five hundred and twenty-three; in 1522, to six hundred and seventy-seven; in 1523, to nine hundred and forty-four. Thus the total number of prints in the five years preceding the Reformation amounted only to five hundred and twenty-seven; in the six years after the Reformation, it rose to three thousand one hundred and thirteen.⁷⁴⁷

These works are distributed over fifty different cities of Germany. Of all the works printed between 1518 and 1523 no less than six hundred appeared in Wittenberg; the others mostly in Nürnberg, Leipzig, Cologne, Strassburg, Hagenau, Augsburg, Basel, Halberstadt, and Magdeburg. Luther created the book-trade in Northern Germany, and made the little town of Wittenberg one of the principal book-marts, and a successful rival of neighboring Leipzig as long as this remained Catholic. In the year 1523 more than four-fifths of all the books published were on the side of the Reformation, while only about twenty books were decidedly Roman Catholic. Erasmus, hitherto the undisputed monarch in the realm of letters, complained that the people would read and buy no other books than Luther's. He prevailed upon Froben not to publish any more of them. "Here in Basel," he wrote to King Henry VIII., "nobody dares to print a word against Luther, but you may write as much as you please against the pope." Romish authors, as we learn from Cochlaeus and Wizel, could scarcely find a publisher, except at their own expense; and the Leipzig publishers complained that their books were unsalable.

The strongest impulse was given to the book trade by Luther's German New Testament. Of the first edition, Sept. 22, 1522, five thousand copies were printed and sold before December of the same year, at the high price of one guilder and a half per copy (about twenty-five marks of the present value). Hans Luft printed a hundred thousand copies on his press in Wittenberg. Adam Petri in Basel published seven editions between 1522 and 1525; Thomas Wolf of the same city, five editions between 1523 and 1525. Duke George commanded that all copies should be delivered up at cost, but few were returned. The precious little volume, which contains the wisdom of the whole world, made its way with lightning speed

into the palaces of princes, the castles of knights, the convents of monks, the studies of priests, the houses of citizens, the huts of peasants. Mechanics, peasants, and women carried the New Testament in their pockets, and dared to dispute with priests and doctors of theology about the gospel.⁷⁴⁸

As there was no copyright at that time, the works of the Reformers were multiplied by reprints in Nürnberg, Augsburg, Strassburg, Basel. Republication was considered a legitimate and honorable business. Luther complained, not of the business itself, but of the reckless and scandalous character of many reprints of his books, which were so full of blunders that he could hardly recognize them.⁷⁴⁹

Sometimes the printers stole his manuscript, and published it elsewhere. He was not hindered by any censorship, except that he received occasionally a gentle warning from the Elector when he did not spare the princes. He took no honorarium for his books, and was satisfied with a number of free copies for friends. Authors were usually supported by a professorship, and considered it beneath their dignity, or as ungentlemanlike, to receive a royalty, but were indirectly rewarded by free copies or other presents of the publishers or rich patrons, in return for dedications, which were originally, as they are now, nothing more than public testimonies of regard or gratitude, though often used, especially during the seventeenth century, for selfish purposes.⁷⁵⁰ Cash payments to authors were, down to the eighteenth century, rare and very low. Few could make a decent living from writing books; and, we may add, few publishers acquired wealth from their trade, which is very uncertain, and subject to great losses. "*Habent sua fata libelli.*"

But, while the progressive Reformation gave wings to the printing-press, the conservative re-action matured gradually a system of restriction, which, under the name of censorship and under the direction of book-censors, assumed the control of the publishing business with authority to prevent or suppress the publication and sale of books, pamphlets, and newspapers hostile to the prevailing religious, moral, or political sentiments.⁷⁵¹ The Peasants' War, which was kindled by inflammatory books, and threatened a general overthrow of social order, strengthened the reactionary tendencies of Protestant, as well as Roman Catholic, governments.

The burning of obnoxious books by public authority of church or state is indeed as

old as the book-trade. A work of Protagoras, in which he doubted the existence of the Greek gods, was burned at the stake in Athens about twenty years after the death of Pericles. The Emperor Augustus subjected slanderous publications (*libelli famosi*) to legal prosecution and destruction by fire. Christian emperors employed their authority against heathen, heretical, and infidel books. Constantine the Great, backed by the Council of Nicaea, issued an edict against the writings of Porphyry and Arius; Accadius, against the books of the Eunomians (398); Theodosius, against the books of the Nestorians (435). Justinian commanded the destruction of sundry obnoxious works, and forbade their re-issue on pain of losing the right arm (536). The oecumenical synod of 680 at Constantinople burned the books which it had condemned, including the letters of the Monothelitic Pope Honorius.

Papal Rome inherited this practice, and improved upon it. Leo I. caused a large number of Manichaean books to be burnt (446). The popes claimed the right and duty to superintend the religious and moral literature of Christendom. They transferred the right in the thirteenth century to the universities, but they found little to do until the art of printing facilitated the publication of books. The Council of Constance condemned the books of Wiclif and Hus, and ordered the bishops to burn all the copies they could seize (1415).

The invention of the printing-press (c. 1450) called forth sharper measures in the very city where the inventor, John Gutenberg, lived and died (1400–1467). It gave rise also to the preventive policy of book-censorship which still exists in some despotic countries of Europe. Berthold, Archbishop of Mainz, took the lead in the restriction of the press. He prohibited, Jan. 10, 1486, the sale of all unauthorized German translations of Greek and Latin works, on the plea of the inefficiency of the German language, but with a hostile aim at the German Bible. In the same year Pope Innocent VIII. issued a bull against the printers of bad books. The infamous Pope Alexander VI. prohibited in 1498, on pain of excommunication, the printing and reading of heretical books; and in a bull of June 1, 1501, which was aimed chiefly against Germany, he subjected all kinds of literary publications to episcopal supervision and censorship, and required the four archbishops of Cöln, Mainz, Trier, and Magdeburg, or their officials, carefully to examine all manuscripts before giving permission to print them. He also ordered that books already printed should be examined, and burnt if they contained any thing

contrary to the Catholic religion. This bull forms the basis of all subsequent prohibitions and restrictions of the press by papal, imperial, or other authority.⁷⁵² Leo X., who personally cared more for heathen art than Christian literature, went further, and prohibited, in a bull of March 3, 1515, the publication of any book in Rome without the imprimatur of the *magister sacri palatii* (the book-censor), and in other states and dioceses without the imprimatur of the bishop or the inquisitor of heretical depravity.⁷⁵³ Offenders were to be punished by the confiscation and public burning of their books, a fine of one hundred ducats, and excommunication. Archbishop and Elector Albrecht of Mainz was the first, and it seems the only, German prince who gave force to this bull for his own large diocese by a mandate of May 17, 1517, a few months before the outbreak of the Reformation. The papal bull of excommunication, June 15, 1520, consistently ordered the burning of, all the books of Luther."⁷⁵⁴ But he laughed it to scorn, and burned in revenge the pope's bull, with all his decretals, Dec. 10, 1520. Thus, with the freedom of conscience, was born the freedom of the press. But it had to pass through a severe ordeal, even in Protestant countries, and was constantly checked by Roman authorities as far as their power extended. The German Empire, by the Edict of Worms, made itself an ally of the pope against free thought and free press, and continued so until it died of old age in 1806.⁷⁵⁵ Fortunately, the weakness of the empire and the want of centralization prevented the execution of the prohibition of Protestant books, except in strictly papal countries, as Bavaria and Austria. But unfortunately, the Protestants themselves, who used the utmost freedom of the press against the Papists, denied it to each other; the Lutherans to the Reformed, and both to the Anabaptists, Schwenkfeldians and Socinians.⁷⁵⁶ Protestant princes liked to control the press to protect themselves against popery, or the charges of robbery of church property and other attacks. The Elector John Frederick was as narrow and intolerant as Duke George on the opposite side. But these petty restrictions are nothing compared with the radical and systematic crusade of the Papists against the freedom of the press. King Ferdinand of Austria ordered, July 24, 1528, all printers and sellers of sectarian books to be drowned, and their books to be burnt. The wholesale burning of Protestant books, including Protestant Bibles, was a favorite and very effective measure of the Jesuitical reaction which set in before

the middle of the sixteenth century, and was promoted by the political arm, and the internecine wars of the Protestants. Pope Paul IV. published in 1557 and 1559 the first official *Index Librorum prohibitorum*; Pius IV. in 1564, an enlarged edition, generally known as *Index Tridentinus*, as it was made by order of the Council of Trent. It contains a list of all the books forbidden by Rome, good, bad, and indifferent. This list has been growing ever since in size (1590, 1596, 1607, 1664, 1758, 1819, etc.), but declining in authority, till it became, like the bull against the comet, an anachronism and a *brutum fulmen*.⁷⁵⁷

§ 93. Protestantism in Saxony.

H. G. Hasse: *Meissnisch-Albertinisch-Sächsische Kirchengesch.* Leipz. 1847, 2 parts. Fr. Seifert: *Die Reformation in Leipzig*, Leipz. 1881. G. Lechler: *Die Vorgeschichte der Reform. Leipzigs*, 1885. See also the literary references in Köstlin, II. 426 and 672.

Electoral Saxony was the first conquest of the Reformation. Wittenberg was the centre of the whole movement, with Luther as the general in chief, Melancthon, Jonas, Bugenhagen, as his aids. The gradual growth of Lutheranism in this land of its birth is identical with the early history of the Reformation, and has been traced already.

In close connection with the Electorate is the Duchy of Saxony, and may here be considered, although it followed the movement much later. The Duchy included the important cities of Dresden (the residence of the present kingdom of Saxony) and Leipzig with its famous university. Duke George kept the Reformation back by force during his long reign from 1500 to 1539. He hated the papal extortions, and advocated a reform of discipline by a council, but had no sympathy whatever with Luther. He took a dislike to him at the disputation in Leipzig, forbade his Bible, issued a rival version of the New Testament by Emser, sent all the Lutherans out of the land, and kept a close watch on the booksellers.⁷⁵⁸ He executed the Edict of Worms to the extent of his power, and would have rejoiced in the burning of Luther, who in turn abused him most unmercifully by his pen as

a slave of the pope and the devil, though he prayed for his conversion.⁷⁵⁹

George made provision for the perpetuation of Romanism in his dominion but his sons died one after another. His brother and heir, Heinrich the Pious, was a Lutheran (as was his wife). Though old and weak, he introduced the Reformation by means of a church visitation after the Wittenberg model and with Wittenberg aid. The Elector of Saxony, Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas, and Cruciger were present at the inaugural festivities in Leipzig, May, 1539. Luther had the satisfaction of preaching at Pentecost before an immense audience in the city, where twenty years before he had disputed with Eck, and provoked the wrath of Duke George. Yet he was by no means quite pleased with the new state of things, and complained bitterly of the concealed malice of the semi-popish clergy, and the overbearing and avaricious conduct of the nobles and courtiers.

Nevertheless, the change was general and permanent. Leipzig became the chief Lutheran university, and the center of the Protestant book-trade, and remains so to this day. Joachim Camerarius (Kammermeister), an intimate friend and correspondent of Melanchthon, labored there as professor from 1541–1546 for the prosperity of the university, and for the promotion of classical learning and evangelical piety.

We briefly allude to the subsequent changes. Moritz, the son and heir of Heinrich, was a shrewd politician, a master in the art of dissimulation, and a double traitor, who from selfish motives in turn first ruined and then saved the cause of the Reformation. He professed the Lutheran faith, but betrayed his allies by aiding the Emperor in the Smalcaldian war for the price of the Electoral dignity of his cousin (1547); a few years later he betrayed the Emperor (1552), and thereby prepared the way for the treaty of Passau and the peace of Augsburg, which secured temporary rest to the Lutherans (1555).

His next successors, Augustus I. (his brother, 1553–1586). Christian I. (1586–1591), and Christian II. (1591–1611), were intolerant Lutherans, and suppressed Crypto-Calvinism and every other creed. Frederick Augustus I. (1694–1733) sold the faith of his ancestors for the crown of Poland. Since that time the rulers of Saxony have been Roman Catholics, while the people remained Lutheran, but gradually grew more liberal than their ancestors. Freedom of worship was granted to the Roman Church in 1807, to the German Reformed in 1818, and more recently (since 1866) to other communions.

§ 94. *The Reformation in Nürnberg.*

Priem: *Geschichte von Nürnberg*, 1874. F Roth: *Die Einführung der Reformation in Nürnberg, 1517–28*, Würzburg, 1885 (pp. 271).

The imperial cities (*Reichsstädte*) of the old German Empire, such as Nürnberg, Augsburg, Frankfurt, Strassburg, enjoyed a larger measure of liberty than other cities. They had the sovereignty over their territory, with a constitutional government, and seat and vote in the Diet (*Reichstag*). They were the centres of intelligence, wealth, and influence. For this reason the Reformation made from the beginning rapid progress in them, though not without commotion and opposition. Nürnberg (Nuremberg), the most picturesque mediaeval city of Germany, was at that time the metropolis of German commerce, politics, letters, and art, and of an unusual constellation of distinguished men, most of whom sympathized with Erasmus and Luther. Pirkheimer, the Maecenas of Nürnberg (1475–1530), prepared the way, although he afterwards withdrew, like his friend Erasmus and other humanists.⁷⁶⁰ Albrecht Dürer, the famous painter (1471–1528), admired the heroic stand of Luther at Worms, and lamented his supposed death when removed out of sight; but during the eucharistic controversy he inclined to the view of Zwingli. Hans Sachs (1494–1576), the "Mastersinger" and shoemaker-poet, saluted the "Nightingale" of Wittenberg (1523). Wenzeslaus Link, an Augustinian monk and intimate friend and correspondent of Luther, was sent by Staupitz from Wittenberg to the Augustinian convent at Nürnberg in 1518, and promoted the cause by his popular evangelical sermons. The preachers of the two splendid churches of St. Sebaldus and St. Lorenz followed the movement. The mass was abolished in 1524. The most effective promoters of the Reformation besides Link were Spengler, a layman, and Osiander, the preacher of St. Lorenz. Lazarus Spengler (1479–1534), secretary of the magistrate, an admirer of Staupitz, wrote an apology of Luther, 1519, and a popular hymn on justification by faith ("*Durch Adam's Fall ist ganz verderbt*"), helped to found an evangelical college, and left a confession of faith in his testament which Luther published

with a preface, 1535. Joachim Camerarius, on the recommendation of Melanchthon, was called to the new college in 1526, as professor of history and Greek literature, and remained there till 1535, when he was called to the University of Tübingen, and afterwards (1541) to Leipzig.

Andreas Osiander (1498–1552), an able and learned, but opinionated and quarrelsome theologian, preached in St. Lorenz against the Roman Antichrist after 1522, fought as violently against Zwinglianism, married in 1525, attended the colloquy at Marburg, 1529, and the convent at Smalcald, 1537. He published a mechanical Gospel Harmony (1537), at the request of Archbishop Cranmer, who had married his niece (1532). He left Nürnberg in 1549, and became professor of theology at the newly founded university of Königsberg. There he stirred up a bitter theological controversy with the Wittenberg divines by his mystical doctrine of an effective and progressive justification by the indwelling of Christ (1551). At Nürnberg several Diets were held during the Reformation period, and a temporary peace was concluded between Protestants and Roman Catholics in 1532.

§ 95. *The Reformation in Strassburg. Martin Bucer.*

Joh. W. Baum: *Capito und Butzer*, Elberfeld, 1860 (partly from MSS. See a complete chronological list of Bucer's works, pp. 577–611). W. Krafft: art. "Butzer" in Herzog's Encykl.², vol. III. 35–46 (abridged in Schaff-Herzog). Tim. W. Röhrich: *Gesch. der Reformation in Elsass und besonders in Strassburg*, Strassb. 1830–32, 3 vols. A. Erichson: *L'Église française de Strasbourg au seizième siècle d'après des monuments inédits*. Stasb. 1885. Max Lenz: *Briefwechsel Landgraf Philipps mit Bucer*, Leipzig, 1880 and 1887, 2 vols. Ad. Baum: *Magistrat und Reformation in Strassburg*. Strassb. 1887 (212 pages).

Strassburg, the capital of the Alsace, celebrated for its Gothic cathedral, university, and libraries, had been long before the Reformation the scene of the mystic revival preacher Tauler and the Friends of God. It was a thoroughly German city before Louis XIV. incorporated it with France (1681), and was re-

conquered by Germany in 1870.

The Reformation began there in 1523. Zell, Bucer, Capito (Köpfel), Hedio (Heil), and for a few years Calvin also (1538 to 1541), labored there with great success. The magistrate abolished the mass, 1528, and favored the Protestant cause under the lead of Jacob Sturm, an enlightened patriot, who represented the city in all important transactions at home, in the Diet, and in conferences with the Romanists, till his death (1553). He urged the establishment of a Christian college, where classical learning and evangelical piety should be cultivated. His namesake, Johann Sturm, an eminent pedagogue, was called from Paris to preside over this college (1537), which grew into an academy, and ultimately into a university. Both were moderate men, and agreed with Capito and Bucer.⁷⁶¹ The church of Strassburg was much disturbed by the Peasants' War, the Anabaptists, and still more by the unfortunate sacramental controversies.

The chief reformer of Strassburg was Martin Bucer (1491–1552).⁷⁶² He was a native of Alsace, a Dominican monk, and ordained to the priesthood. He received a deep impression from Luther at the disputation in Heidelberg, 1518; obtained papal dispensation from his monastic vows (1521); left the Roman Church; found refuge in the castle of Francis of Sickingen; married a nun, and accepted a call to Strassburg in 1523.

Here he labored as minister for twenty-five years, and had a hand in many important movements connected with the Reformation. He attended the colloquy at Marburg (1529); wrote, with Capito, the *Confessio Tetrapolitana* (1530); brought about an artificial and short-lived armistice between Luther and Zwingli by the Wittenberg Concordia (1536); connived, unfortunately, at the bigamy of Philip of Hesse; and took a leading part, with Melanchthon, in the unsuccessful reformation of Archbishop Herrmann of Cologne (1542). Serious political troubles, and his resistance to the semi-popish Interim, made his stay in Strassburg dangerous, and at last impossible. Melanchthon in Wittenberg, Myconius in Basel, and Calvin in Geneva, offered him an asylum; but he accepted, with his younger colleague Fagius, a call of Cranmer to England (1549). He aided him in his reforms; was highly esteemed by the archbishop and King Edward VI., and ended his labors as professor of theology in Cambridge. His bones were exhumed in the reign of Bloody Mary (1556), but his memory was honorably restored by Queen

Elizabeth (1560).

Bucer figures largely in the history of his age as the third (next to Luther and Melanchthon) among the Reformers of Germany, as a learned theologian and diplomatist, and especially as a unionist and peacemaker between the Lutherans and Zwinglians. He forms also a connecting link between Germany and England, and exerted some influence in framing the Anglican standards of doctrine and worship. His motto was: "We believe in Christ, not in the church."⁷⁶³

He impressed his character upon the church of Strassburg, which occupied a middle ground between Wittenberg and Zürich, and gave shelter to Calvin and the Reformed refugees of France. Strict Lutheranism triumphed for a period, but his irenic catholicity revived in the practical pietism of Spener, who was likewise an Alsatian. In recent times the Strassburg professors, under the lead of Dr. Reuss, mediated between the Protestant theology of Germany and that of France, in both languages, and furnished the best edition of the works of John Calvin.

§ 96. *The Reformation in North Germany.*

In Magdeburg the doctrines of Luther were preached in 1522 by Melchior Mirisch, an Augustinian prior, who had studied at Wittenberg. The magistrate shook off the authority of Archbishop Albrecht, invited Luther to preach in 1524, and secured the services of his friend Nicolaus von Amsdorf, who became superintendent, and introduced the, necessary changes. During the Interim troubles the city was a stronghold of the Lutheran party headed by Flacius, and laid under the imperial ban (1548). In the Thirty Years' War it was burnt by Tilly (1631), but rose anew from destruction.⁷⁶⁴

In Magdeburg appeared the first Protestant church history, 1559–1574, in thirteen folio volumes, edited by Flacius, under the title "The Magdeburg Centuries,"—a work of colossal industry, but utilizing history for sectarian purposes against popery. It called forth the *Annales* of Baronius in the opposite interest.

Breslau and Silesia were reformed chiefly by John Hess, who studied at Wittenberg, 1519, a friend of Luther and Melanchthon. He held a successful disputation in Breslau in defense of the Protestant doctrines, 1524.⁷⁶⁵

Kaspar Schwenkfeld von Ossig (1490–1561), a nobleman in the service of the Duke Frederick II. of Liegnitz, was one of the earliest promoters of the

Reformation in Silesia, but fell out with Luther in the eucharistic controversy (1524). He had peculiar views on the sacraments, similar to those of the Quakers. He also taught that the flesh of Christ was deified. He founded a new sect, which was persecuted in Germany, but is perpetuated among the Schwenkfeldian congregations in Eastern Pennsylvania.⁷⁶⁶

Among the later leaders of the Protestant cause in Breslau must be mentioned Crato von Crafftheim (d. 1585), who studied at Wittenberg six years as an inmate of Luther's household, and became an eminent physician of the Emperor Maximilian II. His younger friend, Zacharias Ursinus (d. 1583), is one of the two authors of the Heidelberg Catechism. Crato belonged to the Melanchthonian school, in distinction from the rigid Lutheranism which triumphed in the Formula of Concord.⁷⁶⁷

Bremen accepted Protestantism in November, 1522, by calling Heinrich Moller, better known as Heinrich von Zütphen (1468–1524), to the parish of Ansgari, and afterwards two other Protestant preachers. Moller had studied at Wittenberg, 1515, and taken a degree in 1521 under Melanchthon. He was prior of an Augustinian convent at Dort, and preached there and in Antwerp the doctrines of the Reformation, but had to flee for his life. He followed an invitation to preach in Ditmar, but met with opposition, and was burnt to death by a fanatical and drunken mob excited by the monks. Luther published an account of his death, and dedicated it to the Christians in Bremen, with an exposition of the tenth Psalm. He rejoiced in the return of the spirit of martyrdom, which, he says, "is horrible to behold before the world, but precious in the sight of God."⁷⁶⁸

In 1527 all the churches of Bremen were in charge of Protestant pastors, and afterwards divided between the Lutheran and Reformed Confessions. The convents were turned into schools and hospitals.

Hamburg, which shares with Bremen the supremacy in the North German and maritime commerce, followed in 1523. Five years later Dr. Bugenhagen, called Pomeranus (1485–1558), was called from Wittenberg to superintend the changes. This Reformer, Luther's faithful friend and pastor, had a special gift of government, and was the principal organizer of the Lutheran churches in Northern Germany and Denmark. For this purpose he labored in the cities of Braunschweig (1528), Hamburg (1529), Lübeck (1530–1532), in his native Pomerania (1534),

and in Denmark, where he spent nearly five years (1537–1542). His church constitutions were models.⁷⁶⁹

Lübeck, a rich commercial city, and capital of the Hanseatic League, expelled the first Lutheran preachers, but recalled them, and removed the priests in 1529.

Bugenhagen completed the work.

In Braunschweig-Lüneburg, Duke Ernst the Confessor favored the new doctrines in 1527, and committed the prosecution of the work to Urbanus Rhegius, whom he met at the Diet of Augsburg, 1530.

Rhegius⁷⁷⁰ (1489–1541) belongs to the second class of Reformers. He was the son of a priest on the Lake of Constance, educated at Lindau, Freiburg-i.-B. (in the house of Zasius), and Ingolstadt under Dr. Eck, and ordained priest at Constance (1519). He joined the humanistic school, entered into correspondence with Erasmus, Faber, and Zwingli, and became an imperial orator and poet-laureate, though his poetry is stiff and conventional. He acquired the doctorate of divinity at Basel. He was called to Augsburg by the magistrate, and labored as preacher in the Dome from 1523 to 1530. He passed from Romanism to Lutheranism, from Lutheranism to Zwinglianism, and back to a moderate Lutheranism. He sympathized most with Bucer, and labored afterwards for the Wittenberg Concordia. The imperial prohibition of Protestant preaching, June 16, 1530, terminated his career in Augsburg, though he remained till Aug. 26, and conferred much with Bucer and Melancthon.

He now entered upon his more important and permanent labors as general superintendent of Lüneberg, and took the leading part in the Reformation of Celle, Hannover, Minden, Soest, Lemgo, and other places; but he gives a doleful description of the moral condition. He attended the colloquy at Hagenau, and died soon after his return, May 27, 1541.

He wrote two catechisms and several devotional books. In his earlier career he was vain, changeable, and factious. He lacked originality, but had the talent of utilizing and popularizing the new ideas of others. Luther gives him the testimony: "He hated not only the popish abominations, but also all sectaries; he sincerely loved the pure word, and handled it with all diligence and faithfulness, as his writings abundantly show."⁷⁷¹

The Dukes of Mecklenburg, Heinrich and Albrecht, applied to Luther in 1524 for

"evangelists," and Luther sent them two Augustinian monks. Heinrich favored the Reformation, but very cautiously. The university of Rostock, founded 1419, became at a later period a school of strict Lutheran orthodoxy.

§ 97. *Protestantism in Augsburg and South Germany.*

Augsburg, first known twelve years before Christ as a Roman colony (Augusta Vindelicorum), and during the middle ages an imperial city (since 1276), the seat of a bishop, the chief emporium for the trade of Northern Europe with the Mediterranean and the East, and the home of princely merchants and bankers (the Fuggers and Welsers), figures prominently in the early history of the Reformation, and gave the name to the standard confession of the Lutheran Church in 1530, and to the treaty of peace in 1555.⁷⁷² Luther was there in 1518 at a conference with Cardinal Cajetan, and lodged with the Carmelite friar Frosch, who remained faithful to him. Peutingen, the bishop (Christoph von Stadion), and two canons (Adelmann) were friendly to reform, at least for a time. Urbanus Rhegius preached there from 1523 to 1530, and exerted great influence. He distributed, with Frosch, the communion with the cup at Christmas, 1524. Both married in 1526.

But the Zwinglians, under the lead of Michael Keller, gradually gained the upper hand among influential men. Zwingli took advantage of the situation in his famous letter to Alber, Nov. 16, 1524, in which he first fully developed his theory. Even Rhegius, who had written before against Carstadt (sic) and Zwingli, became a Zwinglian, though only for a short period.

The Anabaptist leaders, Hubmaier, Denck, Hetzer, Hut, likewise appeared in Augsburg, and gathered a congregation of eleven hundred members. They held a general synod in 1527. They baptized by immersion. Rhegius stirred up the magistrate against them: the leaders were imprisoned, and some executed.⁷⁷³ The confusion and strife among the Protestants strengthened the Roman party. The people did not know what to believe, and the magistrate hesitated. The moral condition of the city, as described by Rhegius, Musculus, and other preachers, was deplorable, and worse than under the papal rule. During the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, the Emperor prohibited all Protestant preaching in public: the magistrate made no objection, and dismissed the preachers. But the Augsburg Confession left

a permanent impression on the place.

The South-German cities of Constance, Memmingen, and Lindau were, like Augsburg, influenced by Zwingli as well as Luther, and united with Strassburg in the Tetrapolitan Confession, which Bucer and Capito prepared in great haste during the Diet of Augsburg as a document of union between the two wings of Protestantism. It failed to meet the approval of the Diet, and was, like Zwingli's Confession, not even allowed to be read; but Bucer adhered to it to the end. The most important and permanent conquest which the Reformation made in South Germany was that of the duchy (now kingdom) of Württemberg under Duke Ulrich, through the labors of Brenz, Blaurer, and Schnepf, after 1534. The University of Tübingen (founded 1477) became one of the most fruitful nurseries of Protestant theology, in all its phases, from the strictest orthodoxy to the most radical criticism.⁷⁷⁴

§ 98. *The Reformation in Hesse, and the Synod of Homberg. Philip of Hesse, and Lambert of Avignon.*

I. Lambertus Avenionensis: *Paradoxa quae Fr. L. A. apud sanctam Hessorum Synodum Hombergi congregatam pro Ecclesiarum Reformatione e Dei Verbo disputanda et definienda proposuit*, Erphordiae, 1527. (Reprinted in Sculteti *Annales*, p. 68; in Hardt, *Hist. Lit. Ref.* V. 98; an extract in Henke's *N. Kirchengesch.*, I. 101 sqq.) N. L. Richter: *Die Kirchenordnungen des 16^{ten} Jahrh.*, Weimar, 1846, vol. I. 56–69 (the Homberg Constitution). C. A. Credner: *Philipp des Grossmüthigen hessische Kirchenreformations-Ordnung. Aus schriftlichen Quellen herausgegeben, übersetzt, und mit Rücksicht auf die Gegenwart bevorwortet*, Giessen, 1852 (123 pp.)

II. F. W. Hassencamp: *Hessische Kirchengesch. seit dem Zeitalter der Reformation*, Marburg, 1852 and 1855. W. Kolbe: *Die Einführung der Reformation in Marburg*, Marburg, 1871. H. L. J. Heppe: *Kirchengesch. beider Hessen*, Marburg, 1876. (He wrote several other works on the church history of Hesse and of the Reformation generally, in the interest of Melanchthonianism and of the Reformed Church.) E. L. Henke: *Neuere Kirchengesch.* (ed. by Gass,

Halle, 1874), I. 98–109. Mejer: *Homberger Synode*, in Herzog², VI. 268 sqq. Köstlin: *M. L.*, II. 48 sqq.

III. Works on Philip of Hesse by Rommel (*Philipp der Grossmüthige, Landgraf von Hessen*, Giessen, 1830, 3 vols.), and Wille (*Philipp der Grossmüthige und die Restitution Herzog Ulrichs von Württemberg*, Tübingen, 1882). Max Lenz: *Zwingli und Landgraf Philip*, in Brieger's "Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte," 1879; and *Briefwechsel Landgraf Philipps mit Bucer*, Leipz. 1880, vol. 2d, 1887 (important for the political and ecclesiastical history of Germany between 1541 and 1547). The history of Philip is interwoven in Ranke's *Geschichte* (vols. I. to VI.), and in Janssen's *Geschichte* (vol. III.). Against Janssen is directed G. Bossert: *Württemberg und Janssen*, Halle, 1884, 2 parts.

IV. Biographies of Lambert of Avignon by Baum (Strassb. 1840), Hassencamp (Elberfeld, 1860), Ruffet (Paris, 1873), and a sketch by Wagenmann in Herzog², VIII. 371 sqq. (1881). The writings of Lambert of Avignon, mostly Theses and Commentaries, are very scarce, and have never been collected. His letters (some of them begging letters to the Elector of Saxony and Spalatin) are published by Herminjard in *Correspondance des Réformateurs*, vol. I. 112, 114, 118, 123, 131, 138, 142, 144, 146, 328, 344, 347, 371; vol. II. 239. Luther refers to him in several letters to Spalatin (see below).

Hesse or HESSIA, in Middle Germany, was Christianized by St. Boniface in the eighth century, and subject to the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Mainz. It numbered in the sixteenth century fifty convents, and more than a thousand monks and nuns.

Hesse became, next to Saxony, the chief theater of the Reformation in its early history; and its chief patron among the princes, next to Elector John, was Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, surnamed the "Magnanimous" (1504–1567). He figures prominently in the political history of Germany from 1525, when he aided in the suppression of the Peasants' War, till 1547, when he was defeated by the Emperor in the Smalcaldian War, and kept a prisoner for five years (1547–1552). The last years of his life were quiet and conciliatory, but his moral force was broken by his

misconduct and the failure of his political combinations.

His connection with the Reformation presents two different aspects, which make it difficult to decide whether it was more beneficial or more injurious. He made the acquaintance of Luther at the Diet of Worms (1521), and asked and received instruction from Melanchthon, whom he met at Heidelberg (1524). He declared in 1525, that he would rather lose body and life, land and people, than depart from the word of God, and urged the ministers to preach it in its purity.⁷⁷⁵ He openly embraced the Reformation in 1526, and remained faithful to it in his conviction and policy, though not in his moral conduct. He boldly and bravely defended it with a degree of theological knowledge which is rare among princes, and with a conciliatory liberality in regard to doctrinal controversies which was in advance of prevailing narrowness. He brought about the Marburg Colloquy with the noble aim of uniting the Protestant forces of Germany and Switzerland against the common foe (1529). By restoring Württemberg to Duke Ulrich in the brilliant victory at Laufen, he opened the way for the introduction of the Reformation into that country (1534). But, on the other hand, he repeatedly endangered the Protestant cause by his rashness, and injured it and himself most seriously by his licentiousness, which culminated in the open scandal of bigamy (1540). He resembles in many respects Henry VIII. of England.⁷⁷⁶

The Landgrave was the first prince who took advantage of the recess of the Diet of Speier, Aug. 27, 1526, and construed it into a legal permission for the introduction of the Reformation into his own territory. For this purpose he convened a synod in the little Hessian town of Homberg.⁷⁷⁷ It consisted of the clergy, the nobility, and the representatives of cities, and was held Oct. 20–22, 1526. He himself was present, and his chancellor Feige presided over the deliberations. The synod is remarkable for a premature scheme of democratic church government and discipline, which failed for the time, but contained fruitful germs for the future and for other countries. It was suggested by the disputations which had been held at Zürich for the introduction of the Zwinglican Reformation. The leading spirit of this synod was Francis Lambert of Avignon (1487–1530), the first French monk converted to Protestantism and one of the secondary reformers. He had been formerly a distinguished and efficient traveling preacher of the Franciscan order in the South of France. But he could find no peace in severe

ascetic exercises; and, when he became acquainted with some tracts of Luther in a French translation, he took advantage of a commission of his convent to deliver letters to a superior of his order in Germany, and left his native land never to return. He traveled on a mule through Geneva, Bern, Zürich, Basel, Eisenach, to Wittenberg, as a seeker after light on the great question of the day. He was half converted by Zwingli in a public disputation (July, 1522), and more fully by Luther in Wittenberg, where he arrived in January, 1523. Luther, who was often deceived by unworthy ex-priests and ex-monks, distrusted him at first, but became convinced of his integrity, and aided him.⁷⁷⁸ At his request Lambert delivered exegetical lectures in the university, translated reformatory tracts into French and Italian, and published a book in defense of his leaving the convent (February, 1523), and a commentary on the rule of the Minorites to which Luther wrote a preface (March, 1523). He advocated the transformation of convents into schools. He married a Saxon maiden (July 15, 1523), anticipating herein the Reformer, and lived with her happily, but in great poverty, which obliged him to beg for assistance. He spent over a year in Wittenberg; but, finding no prospect of a permanent situation on account of his ignorance of the German language, he suddenly left for Metz, against the advice of Luther and Melancthon, on invitation of a few secret friends of the Reformation (March 24, 1524). He addressed a letter to the king of France to gain him for the Reformation, and announced a public disputation; but the clergy prevented it, and the magistrate advised him to leave Metz. He then proceeded to Strassburg (April, 1524), was kindly received by Bucer, and presented with the right of citizenship by the magistrate. He published practical commentaries on the Canticles, the Minor Prophets, a book against Erasmus, on free-will, and a sort of dogmatic compend.⁷⁷⁹ He was highly recommended to the Landgrave, who took him into his service soon after the Diet of Speier (1526), and made him one of the reformers of Hesse.

Lambert prepared for the Synod of Homberg, at the request of the Landgrave, a hundred and fifty-eight Theses (*Paradoxa*), as a basis for the reformation of doctrine, worship, and discipline. He advocated them with fiery and passionate eloquence in a long Latin speech.⁷⁸⁰ Adam Kraft spoke in German more moderately.

His leading ideas are these. Every thing which has been deformed must be reformed by the Word of God. This is the only rule of faith and practice. All true Christians are priests, and form the church. They have the power of self-government, and the right and duty to exercise discipline, according to Matt. 18:15–18, and to exclude persons who give offense by immorality or false doctrine. The bishops (i.e., pastors) are elected and supported by the congregation, and are aided by deacons who attend to the temporalities. The general government resides in a synod, which should meet annually, and consist of the pastors and lay representatives of all the parishes. The executive body between the meetings of synod is a commission of thirteen persons. Three visitors, to be appointed first by the prince, and afterwards by the synod, should visit the churches once a year, examine, ordain, and install candidates. Papists and heretics are not to be tolerated, and should be sent out of the land. A school for training of ministers is to be established in Marburg.

It is a matter of dispute, whether Lambert originated these views, or derived them from the Franciscan, or Waldensian, or Zwinglian, or Lutheran suggestions. The last is most probable. It is certain that Luther in his earlier writings (1523) expressed similar views on church government and the ministry. They are legitimately developed from his doctrine of the general priesthood of believers.⁷⁸¹

On the basis of these principles a church constitution was prepared in three days by a synodical commission, no doubt chiefly by Lambert himself. It is a combination of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. Its leading features are congregational self-government, synodical supervision, and strict discipline. The directions for worship are based on Luther's "*Deutsche Messe*," 1526.⁷⁸²

The constitution, with the exception of a few minor features, remained a dead letter. The Landgrave was rather pleased with it, but Luther, whom he consulted, advised postponement; he did not object to its principles, but thought that the times and the people were not ripe for it, and that laws in advance of public opinion rarely succeed.⁷⁸³ Luther learned a bitter lesson from the Peasants' War and from the visitation of the churches in Saxony. Lambert himself, in his letters, complained of the prevailing corruptions and the abuse of evangelical liberty.⁷⁸⁴

A good reason both for the necessity and difficulty of discipline, which should have begun with the prince. But self-government must be acquired by actual trial

and experience. Nobody can learn to swim without going into the water.

The Landgrave put himself at the head of the church, and reformed it after the Saxon model. He abolished the mass and the canon law, confiscated the property of the convents, endowed hospitals and schools, arranged church visitations, and appointed six superintendents (1531).

The combination of Lutheran and Reformed elements in the Hessian reformation explains the confessional complication and confusion in the subsequent history, and the present status of the Protestant Church in Hesse, which is claimed by both denominations.⁷⁸⁵

The best service which the Landgrave did to the cause of learning and religion, was the founding of the University of Marburg, which was opened July 1, 1527, with a hundred and four students. It became the second nursery of the Protestant ministry, next to Wittenberg, and remains to this day an important institution.

Francis Lambert, Adam Kraft, Erhard Schnepf, and Hermann Busch were its first theological professors.

Lambert now had, after a roaming life of great poverty, a settled situation with a decent support. He lectured on his favorite books, the Canticles, the Prophets, and the Apocalypse; but he had few hearers, was not popular with his German colleagues, and felt unhappy. He attended the eucharistic Colloquy at Marburg in October, 1529, as a spectator, became a convert to the view of Zwingli, and defended it in his last work.⁷⁸⁶ This must have made his position more uncomfortable. He wished to find "some little town in Switzerland where he could teach the people what he had received from the Lord."⁷⁸⁷ But before this wish could be fulfilled, he died with his wife and daughter, of the pestilence, April 18, 1530. He was an original, but eccentric and erratic genius, with an over-sanguine temperament, with more zeal and eloquence than wisdom and discretion. His chief importance lies in the advocacy of the principle of ecclesiastical self-government and discipline. His writings are thoughtful; and the style is clear, precise, vivacious, and direct, as may be expected from a Frenchman.⁷⁸⁸

Lambert seems to have had a remote influence on Scotland, where principles of church government somewhat similar to his own were carried into practice after the model of the Reformed Church of Geneva. For among his pupils was Patrick Hamilton, the proto-martyr of the Scotch Reformation, who was burned at St.

Andrews, Feb. 29, 1528.⁷⁸⁹ According to the usual view, William Tyndale also, the pioneer of the English Bible Version, studied at Marburg about the same time; for several of his tracts contain on the titlepage or in the colophon the imprint, Hans Luft at Marborow (Marburg) in the land of Hesse."⁷⁹⁰

§ 99. *The Reformation in Prussia. Duke Albrecht and Bishop Georg Von Polenz.*

I. Luther's Letters to *Albrecht* from May 26, 1525, to May 2, 1545 (17, see list in Erl. ed. LVI. 248), to *Briesmann and Georg von Polenz*, in the collections of De Wette and Enders. J. Voigt: *Briefwechsel der berühmtesten Gelehrten des Zeitalters der Reformation mit Herzog Albrecht von Preussen*, Königsb. 1841.

II. Hartknoch: *Preussische Kirchenhistorie*, Königsberg, 1686. Arnoldt: *Preussische Kirchengeschichte*, Königsberg, 1769. Bock: *Leben Albrechts des Aelteren*, Königsb. 1750. Rhesa: *De primis sacrorum reformatoribus in Prussia*, Königsberg, 1823–1830 (seven University Programs containing biographies of Briesmann, Speratus, Poliander, Georg v. Polenz, Amandus). Gebser: *Der Dom zu Königsberg*, 1835. Erdmann: *Preussen, Ordensstaat*, in *Herzog*¹, XII. 117–165 (1860; omitted in the second ed.). Pastor (R. Cath.): *Neue Quellenberichte über den Reformator Albrecht von Brandenburg*, Mainz, 1876 (in the "Katholik," LVI. February and March). C. A. Hase: *Herzog Albrecht von Preussen und sein Hofprediger. Eine königsberger Tragödie aus dem Zeitalter der Reformation*, Leipzig, 1879. Rindfleisch: *Herzog Albrecht von Hohenzollern, der letzte Hochmeister, und die Reformation in Preussen*, Danzig, 1880. P. Tschackert (professor in Königsberg): *Georg von Polentz, Bischof von Samland*, Leipzig, 1888 (in "Kirchengeschichtl. Studien" by Brieger, Tschackert, etc., pp. 145–194).

III. The general histories of Prussia by Stenzel, Droysen, Voigt (large work, 1827–39, in 9 vols.; condensed ed. 1850, in 3 vols.), Cosel, Hahn, Pierson (4th ed. 1881, 2 vols.), Ranke (*Zwölf Bücher preussischer Gesch.* 1874), Förster, etc. For the history of the Teutonic order, see Watterich: *Die Gründung des deutschen Ordensstaates in Preussen*, Leipzig, 1857; and Joh. Voigt: *Geschichte des deutschen Ritterordens*, Berlin, 1859, 2 vols.

IV. Ranke: Vol. II. 326 sqq. Janssen: III. 70–77.

Of greater prospective importance than the conversion of Hesse and even of Saxony to Protestantism, was the evangelization of Prussia, which from a semi-barbarous Duchy on the shores of the Baltic rose to the magnitude of a highly civilized kingdom, stretching from the borders of Russia beyond the banks of the Rhine, and which is now, in connection with the new German Empire, the leading Protestant power on the Continent of Europe.⁷⁹¹

Old Prussia⁷⁹² was a colony of the Teutonic Knights (*Deutschorden*), one of the three military religious orders which arose during the crusades for the defense of the Holy Land and the protection of pilgrims. They had the same military and monastic constitution as the Knights Templars, and the Knights of St. John (*Johannitae*); but their members were all Germans. They greatly distinguished themselves in the later crusades, and their chivalrous blood still flows in the veins of the old Prussian nobility. They wore a white mantle with a black silver-lined cross, and as a special favor an imperial eagle on their arms, which descended from them to the royal house of Prussia. After the fall of Jerusalem they removed their headquarters to Venice, and afterwards to Marienburg and Königsberg (the capital, where the kings of Prussia are crowned). Emperor Frederick II. and Pope Innocent III. granted them all the lands they might conquer from the heathen on the eastern borders of Germany, and the grand-master's received the dignity of princes of the Roman Empire. They were invited by the Duke of Poland to defend the frontiers of his country against the heathen Prussians (1240). The conquest was completed in 1283. The Knights Christianized, or rather Romanized and Germanized, the Prussians, after the military fashion of Charlemagne in his dealings with the Saxons, and of Otho I. in subduing the Wends. The native heathenism was conquered, but not converted, and continued under Christian forms. Prussia is said to have contained under the Knights two millions of people and more than fifty cities, which carried on an extensive trade by means of the Hanseatic League. The chief cities were Marienburg, Königsberg, Thorn, Danzig, and Culm. But the common people were treated as slaves.

After nearly two centuries of rule the Knights degenerated, and their power

declined by internal dissensions and the hostility of Poland. In 1466 they were forced by Casimir IV. in the Peace of Thorn to cede West Prussia with the richest cities to Poland, and to accept East Prussia as a fief of that kingdom. This was virtually the destruction of the political power of the order. The incompatibility of the military and monastic life became more and more apparent. Pope Adrian VI. urged Albrecht to restore the order to its former monastic purity and dignity. But this was impossible. The order had outlived itself.⁷⁹³

Luther saw this, and inaugurated a different kind of reform. He seized a favorable opportunity, and exhorted the Knights, in a public address, March 28, 1523, to forsake the false monastic chastity so often broken, and to live in true matrimonial chastity according to the ordinance of God in paradise (Gen. 2:18), which was older and wiser than popes and Councils. "Your order," he argued, "is truly a singular order: it is both secular and spiritual, and neither; it is bound to wield the sword against infidels, and yet to live in celibacy, poverty, and obedience, like other monks. These things do not agree together, as is shown by reason and by daily experience. The order is therefore of no use either to God or the world."⁷⁹⁴

In the summer of the same year he sent, at the wish of Albrecht, the pioneer of Protestant preachers, to Prussia, in the person of his friend Dr. Johannes Briesmann (1488-1549), a theologian of learning, piety, and executive ability, who arrived in Königsberg, Sept. 27, 1523, and labored there as preacher in the Dome, and successor of Bishop Georg von Polenz, till his death, with the exception of four years which he spent as evangelist in Riga (1527-1531).⁷⁹⁵ He afterwards sent two other gifted evangelists, known for their evangelical hymns, namely, Paul Speratus (d. 1551), and John Poliander (Graumann, d. 1541), who made themselves very useful. A third one, Amandus, created disturbance by his radicalism, which resembled that of Carlstadt, and caused his removal from Königsberg.

With the help of these theologians and evangelists, Duke Albrecht and Bishop Georg von Polenz brought about a radical change in Prussia, and prepared the way for its great future destiny. The religious reformation preceded the political change.

Albrecht, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach, last grandmaster of the Teutonic Knights, and first Duke of Prussia, was born at Ansbach, May 16, 1490; destined

for the clerical profession; received into the order of the Knights, and elected its grand-master in 1511. He made his entry into Königsberg, Nov. 22, 1512. His effort to make Prussia independent and to refuse obedience to the king of Poland, involved him in a disastrous war till 1521, when an armistice for four years was concluded. He attended, as one of the princes of the empire, the Diet of Nürnberg, 1522 and 1523, and sought protection against Poland, but in vain. He diligently heard, during that time, the sermons of Andreas Osiander, and was converted to the doctrines of the Reformation. He called him his "spiritual father in Christ, through whom God first rescued him from the darkness of popery, and led him to the true divine knowledge." On a journey to Berlin he had a private conference with Luther and Melanchthon, and asked their advice (September, 1523). "Trust in God," said Luther with the consent of Melanchthon, "rather than the empire; shake off the senseless rules of your order, and make an end to that hermaphrodite monster which is neither religious nor secular; abolish the unchaste chastity of monkery; take to thyself a wife, and found a legitimate secular sovereignty." At the same time he recommended to him Paul Speratus as his assistant, who afterwards became bishop of Pomesania. The prince smiled, but said nothing.⁷⁹⁶ He wavered between obedience to the pope and to his conscience, and his open and secret instructions to the bishop of Samland were contradictory. His brother, Margrave Georg of Brandenburg, had previously given him the same advice as Luther, and he ultimately followed it.

In the mean time the evangelical doctrines had already spread in Prussia, and facilitated the proposed political change by undermining the monastic constitution of the order.

Two bishops of Prussia, differing from their brethren in Germany, favored the movement, George von Polenz of Samland, and Erhard von Queiss of Pomesania. The former took the lead. Luther was agreeably surprised, and expressed his joy that one, at least, of the bishops dared to profess the free gospel of Christ.⁷⁹⁷ He dedicated to him his commentary on Deuteronomy, with a congratulatory letter full of gratitude for the rapid flight of the gospel to Prussia in the far North (1525).⁷⁹⁸ The bishop did not reply, and seems to have preserved a dignified or prudent reserve towards the person of Luther, while allowing free course to his doctrines.⁷⁹⁹

Erhard von Queiss renounced popery in a public sermon, 1524, and resigned his worldly possessions and authority to the Duke (1527), in order to attend better to the spiritual duties of an evangelical bishop.

Georg von Polenz was the chancellor and chief counselor of Albrecht (we may say his Bismarck on a small scale) in this work of transformation. He was about five years older than Luther, and survived him four years. He descended from an old noble family of Meissen in Saxony, studied law in Italy, and was for a while private secretary at the court of Pope Julius II. Then he served as a soldier under Maximilian I. He became acquainted with Margrave Albrecht at Padua, 1509, and joined the Teutonic Knights. In 1519 he was raised to the episcopal chair, and consecrated by the neighboring bishops of Ermland and Pomesania in the Dome of Königsberg. The receipt of the Roman curia for a tax of fourteen hundred and eighty-eight ducats is still extant in the archives of that city. The first years of his office were disturbed by war with Poland, for which he had to furnish men and means. During the absence of the Duke in Germany he took his place.

In September, 1523, he became acquainted with Dr. Briesmann, and learned from him the biblical languages, the elements of theology, which he had never studied before, and the doctrines of Luther. In January, 1524, he already issued an order that baptism be celebrated in the vernacular tongue, and recommended the clergy to read diligently the Bible, and the writings of Luther, especially his book on Christian Liberty. This was the beginning of the Reformation in Prussia. We have from him three sermons, and three only, which he preached in favor of the change, at Christmas, 1523, and at Easter and Pentecost, 1524. He echoes in them the views of Briesmann. He declares, "I shall with the Divine will hold fast to the word of God and to the gospel, though I should lose body and life, goods and honor, and all I possess." He despised the authority of Pope Clement VII., who directed his legate, Campeggio, Dec. 1, 1524, to summon the bishop as a rebel and perjurer, to induce him to recant, or to depose him.

In May, 1525, he resigned the secular part of his episcopal authority into the hands of the Duke, because it was not seemly and Christian for a bishop to have so much worldly glory and power. A few days afterwards he married, June 8, 1525, five days before Luther's marriage. In the next year the Duke followed his example, and invited Luther to the wedding (June, 1526). This double marriage was a virtual dissolution of the order as a monastic institution. In 1546 Georg von

Polenz resigned his episcopal supervision into the hands of Briesmann. He died in peace, April 28, 1550, seventy-two years old, and was buried in the cathedral of Königsberg, the first Protestant bishop and chancellor of the first Prussian Hohenzollern, standing with him on the bridge of two ages with his hand on the Bible and his eye firmly fixed upon the future.

Albrecht, acting on the advice of Luther, changed the property of the Knights into a hereditary duchy. The king of Poland consented. On April 10, 1525, Albrecht was solemnly invested at Crakow with the rule of Prussia as a fief of Poland. Soon afterwards he received the homage of the Diet at Königsberg. The evangelical preachers saluted him under the ringing of the bells. The Emperor put him under the ban, but it had no effect. Most of the Knights received large fiefs, and married; the rest emigrated to Germany. Albrecht formally introduced the Reformation, July 6, 1525, and issued a Lutheran constitution and liturgy. The fasts were abolished, the number of holy days reduced, the ceremonies changed, the convents turned into hospitals, and worship conducted in the vernacular. All Romish and sectarian preaching was prohibited. He assumed all the ecclesiastical appointments, and became the supreme bishop of Prussia, the two Roman-Catholic bishops Georg and Queiss having surrendered to him their dignity. Their successors were mere superintendents. He felt, however, that the episcopal office was foreign to a worldly sovereign, and accepted it as a matter of necessity to secure order.⁸⁰⁰ He founded the University of Königsberg, the third Protestant university (after Wittenberg and Marburg). It was opened in 1544.⁸⁰¹ He called Dr. Osiander from Nürnberg to the chief theological chair (1549); but this polemical divine, by his dissertations on the law and the gospel, and on the doctrine of justification, soon turned Prussia into a scene of violent and disgraceful theological controversies.⁸⁰²

Albrecht did not enjoy his reign. It was sadly disturbed in this transition state by troubles from within and without. He repeatedly said that he would rather watch sheep than be a ruler. He was involved in heavy debts. The seven children of his first wife, a daughter of the king of Denmark, died young, except a daughter, Anna Sophia, who married a duke of Mecklenburg (1555). His pious and faithful wife died, 1547. In 1550 he married a princess of Braunschweig; her first daughter was born blind; only one son, Albrecht Friedrich, survived him, and spent his life

in melancholy. But Albrecht remained true to his evangelical faith, and died (March 20, 1568), with the words of Psa. 31:5, upon his lips, "Into Thine hand I commend my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth." He left proofs of his piety in prayers, meditations, and the testament to his son, who succeeded him, and died without male issue, 1618.

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

A few glimpses of the later history are here in place to explain the present confessional status of the Protestant church in the kingdom of Prussia.

The Duchy of Prussia in 1618 fell as an inheritance to John Sigismund, Elector of Brandenburg (1608–1619), son-in-law of the second Prussian Duke (Albert Frederick), and a descendant of Frederick of Hohenzollern, who had become margrave of Brandenburg by purchase in 1415. In this way the connection of Prussia and Brandenburg was completed.

But Prussia remained in feudal subjection to Poland till 1656, when Frederick William, "the great Elector," conquered the independence by the victory of Warsaw. He is the first, as Frederick II., his great-grandson, is the second, founder of the greatness of Prussia. After the terrible devastations of the Thirty Years' War he gathered the broken fragments of his provinces into a coherent whole during his long and successful reign (1640–1688). He was the most enlightened and most liberal among the German princes of his age. He protected the independence of Germany against French aggression. He was married to Louisa Henrietta, princess of Orange, of the Calvinistic faith, and authoress of the popular resurrection hymn, "*Jesus, meine Zuversicht*."⁸⁰³ He secured toleration to the Reformed churches in the Treaty of Westphalia. He gave refuge to over twenty thousand French Huguenots, who with their descendants became an important element in the Prussian nationality and the Reformed church. His son Frederick became the first king of Prussia, and was crowned at Königsberg, Jan. 18, 1701. He founded the University of Halle, 1693, which ultimately absorbed the University of Wittenberg by incorporation (1815), and assumed an important position in the history of German theology as the nursery, first of pietism, then of rationalism, and (since Tholuck's appointment, 1827) of the evangelical revival.

With John Sigismund began an important confessional change, which laid the

foundation for the union policy of his successors. He introduced the Reformed or Calvinistic element, which had been crushed out in Saxony, into the Court and Dome Church of Berlin, and gave the Heidelberg Catechism a place besides the Augsburg Confession. His grandson, "the great Elector," strengthened the Reformed element by his marriage to a princess from Holland, who adorned her faith, and by inviting a colony of French Huguenots who left their country for the sake of conscience. It was therefore quite natural that the Reformed rulers of a Lutheran country should cherish the idea of a union of the two confessions, which was realized in the present century. [804](#)

We have seen that Old Prussia was Lutherized under the direct influence of the Wittenberg divines with whom Albrecht was in constant correspondence. In Brandenburg also, the Lutheran type of Protestantism, after many reverses and controversies, was established under John George (1571–1598); the Formula of Concord was forcibly introduced, and all Calvinistic teaching was strictly forbidden. The Brandenburg "Corpus Doctrinae" of 1572 emphasizes Luther's word that Zwingli was no Christian, and the Brandenburg chancellor Dietelmeyer is known by his unchristian prayer: "*Impleat nos Deus odio Calvinistarum!*" But the Elector John Sigismund, who by travels and personal intercourse with Calvinistic princes and divines conceived a high regard for their superior Christian piety and courtesy, embraced the Reformed faith in 1606, and openly professed it in February, 1614, by declaring his assent to the four oecumenical symbols (including the *Chalcedonense*) and the *altered* Augsburg Confession of 1540, without imposing his creed upon his subjects, only prohibiting the preachers to condemn the Calvinists from the pulpit. In May, 1514, he issued a personal confession of faith, called the "Confession of Sigismund," or the "Brandenburg Confession" (*Confessio Marchica*). It teaches a moderate, we may say, Melancthonian and unionistic Calvinism, and differs from the Lutheran Formula of Concord in the following points: It rejects Eutychianism and the ubiquity of Christ's body, consubstantiation in the Lord's Supper, the use of the wafer instead of the broken bread, and exorcism in baptism; on the other hand, it teaches the Calvinistic view of the spiritual real presence for believers, and unconditional election, but without an unconditional decree of reprobation; it distinctly declares that God sincerely wishes the salvation of all men, and is not the author of sin and damnation.

The change of Sigismund was the result of conscientious conviction, and not dictated by political motives. The people and his own wife re-mained Lutheran. He made no use of his territorial summepiscopate and the *jus reformandi*. He disclaimed all intention to coerce the conscience, since faith is a free gift of God, and cannot be forced. No man should pre-sume to exercise dominion over man's religion. He thus set, in advance of his age, a noble example of toleration, which became the traditional policy of the Prussian rulers. The pietistic movement of Spener and Francke, which was supported by the theological faculty at Halle, weakened the confessional dissensus, and strengthened the consensus. The Moravian brotherhood exhibited long before the Prussian Union, in a small community, the real union of evangelical believers of both confessions. Frederick the Great was an unbeliever, and had as little sympathy with Pietism and Moravianism as with Lutheranism and Calvinism; but he was a decided upholder of religious toleration, which found expression in his famous declaration that in his kingdom everybody must be at liberty to get saved "after his own fashion." The toleration of indifferentism, which prevailed in the last century, broke down the reign of bigotry, and prepared the way for the higher and nobler principle of religious liberty.

The revival of religious life at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a revival of general Christianity without a confessional or denomina-tional type, and united for a time pious Lutherans, Reformed, and even Roman Catholics. It was accompanied by a new phase of evangelical theology, which since Schleiermacher and Neander laid greater stress on the consensus than the dissensus of the Protestant confessions in oppo-sition to rationalism and infidelity. The ground was thus prepared for a new attempt to establish a mode of peaceful living between the two confessions of the Reformation.

King Frederick William III. (1797–1840), a conscientious and God-fearing monarch, who had been disciplined by sad reverses and providen-tial deliverances of Prussia, introduced what is called the "Evangelical Union" of the Lutheran and Reformed confessions at the tercentennial celebration of the Reformation (Sept. 27, 1817). The term "evangelical," which was claimed by both, assumed thus a new technical sense. The object of the Union (as officially explained in 1834 and 1852) was to unite the two churches under, one government and worship, without

abolishing the doctrinal distinctions.⁸⁰⁵ It was conservative, not absorptive, and differed in this respect from all former union schemes between the Greek and Latin, the Protestant and Roman Catholic, the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, which aimed at doctrinal uniformity or at best at a doctrinal compromise. The Prussian Union introduced no new creed; the Augsburg Confession, Luther's Catechisms, and the Heidelberg Catechism continued to be used where they had been in use before; but it was assumed that the confessional differences were not vital and important enough to exclude Christian fellowship. The opposition proceeded chiefly from the "Old Lutherans," so called, who insist upon "pure doctrine," as the basis of union, to the exclusion of the Calvinistic "heresies," and who took just offense at the forcible introduction of the new liturgy of the king (the *Agende* of 1822); but the opposition was silenced by granting them the liberty of separate organization and self-government (1845). The Prussian Union suffers from the defects of Erastianism, but no more than any other state-church, or the introduction of the Reformation in the sixteenth century by the civil power. Experience has proved that moderate Lutherans and Reformed Christians can live together, commune at the same altar, and co-operate in the work of the common Master. This experience is a great gain. The union type of Protestantism has become an important historic fact and factor in the modern theology and church life of Prussia and those other parts of Germany which followed her example. The two sons and successors of the founder of the Prussian Union, King Frederick William IV. (1840–1858), and Emperor William I. (1858–1888), have faithfully adhered to it in theory and practice.

Frederick William IV. was well versed in theology, and a pronounced evangelical believer. He wished to make the church more independent, and as a means to that end he established the *Oberkirchenrath* (1850, modified 1852), which in connection with the *Cultusministerium* should administer the affairs of the church in the name of the king; while a general synod was to exercise the legislative function. Under his reign the principle of religious liberty made great progress, and was embodied in the Prussian Constitution of 1850, which guarantees in Article XII. the freedom of conscience and of private and public worship to all religious associations.⁸⁰⁶

William I., aided by Bismarck and Moltke, raised Prussia, by superior

statesmanship and diplomacy, and by brilliant victories in the wars with Austria (1866) and France (1870), to her present commanding position. He became by common consent of the German sovereigns and people the first hereditary emperor of United Germany under the lead of Prussia. He adorned this position in eighteen years of peace by his wisdom, integrity, justice, untiring industry, and simple piety, and gained the universal esteem and affection of the German nation, yea, we may say, of the civilized world, which mourned for him when on the 9th of March, 1888, in the ninety-first year of an eventful life, he entered into his rest. History has never seen a more illustrious trio than the Emperor William, "the Iron Chancellor," and "the Battle-thinker," who "feared God, and nothing else." The new German Empire with a Protestant head is the last outcome of the Reformation of Prussia, and would not have been possible without it.

§ 100. Protestant Martyrs.

No great cause in church or state, in religion or science, has ever succeeded without sacrifice. Blood is the price of liberty. "The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity." Persecution develops the heroic qualities of human nature, and the passive virtues of patience and endurance under suffering. Protestantism has its martyrs as well as Catholicism. In Germany it achieved a permanent legal existence only after the Thirty Years' War. The Reformed churches in France, Holland, England, and Scotland, passed through the fiery ordeal of persecution. It has been estimated that the victims of the Spanish Inquisition outnumber those of heathen Rome, and that more Protestants were executed by the Spaniards in a single reign, and in a single province of Holland, than Christians in the Roman empire during the first three centuries.⁸⁰⁷ Jews and heathens have persecuted Christians, Christians have persecuted Jews and heathens, Romanists have persecuted Protestants, Protestants have persecuted Romanists, and every state-church has more or less persecuted dissenters and sects. It is only within a recent period that the sacred rights of conscience have been properly appreciated, and that the line is clearly and sharply drawn between church and state, religious and civil offenses, heresy and crime, spiritual and temporal punishments.

The persecution of Protestants began at the Diet of Worms in 1521. Charles V. issued from that city the first of a series of cruel enactments, or "placards," for the

extermination of the Lutheran heresy in his hereditary dominion of the Netherlands. In 1523 two Augustinian monks, Henry Voes and John Esch, were publicly burnt, as adherents of Luther, at the stake in Brussels. After the fires were kindled, they repeated the Apostles' Creed, sang the "Te Deum laudamus," and prayed in the flames, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us." The heroic death of these Protestant proto-martyrs inspired Luther's first poem, which begins, —

*"Ein neues Lied wir heben an."*⁸⁰⁸

The prior of their convents Lampert Thorn, was suffocated in prison. The martyrdom of Henry of Zütphen has already been noticed.⁸⁰⁹ Adolph Klarenbach and Peter Flysteden suffered at the stake in Cologne with constancy and triumphant joy, Sept. 28, 1529.⁸¹⁰

George Winkler, a preacher in Halle, was cited by the Archbishop of Cologne to Aschaffenburg for distributing the communion in both kinds, and released, but murdered by unknown hands on his return, May, 1527.⁸¹¹

Duke George of Saxony persecuted the Lutherans, not by death, but by imprisonment and exile. John Herrgott, a traveling book-peddler, was beheaded (1527) for revolutionary political opinions, rather than for selling Lutheran books.⁸¹²

In Southern Germany the Edict of Worms was more rigidly executed. Many executions by fire and sword, accompanied by barbarous mutilations, took place in Austria and Bavaria. In Vienna a citizen, Caspar Tauber, was beheaded and burnt, because he denied purgatory and transubstantiation, Sept. 17, 1524.⁸¹³ In Salzburg a priest was secretly beheaded without a trial, by order of the archbishop, for Lutheran heresy.⁸¹⁴ George Wagner, a minister at Munich, was burnt Feb. 8, 1527. Leonard Käser (or Kaiser) shared the same fate, Aug. 18, 1527, by order of the bishop of Passau. Luther wrote him, while in prison, a letter of comfort.⁸¹⁵ But the Anabaptists had their martyrs as well, and they died with the same heroic faith. Hätzer was burnt in Constance, Hübmaier in Vienna. In Passau thirty

perished in prison. In Salzburg some were mutilated, others beheaded, others drowned, still others burnt alive.⁸¹⁶ Unfortunately, the Anabaptists were not much better treated by Protestant governments; even in Zürich several were drowned in the river under the eyes of Zwingli. The darkest blot on Protestantism is the burning of Servetus for heresy and blasphemy, at Geneva, with the approval of Calvin and all the surviving Reformers, including Melanchthon (1553). He had been previously condemned, and burnt in effigy, by a Roman-Catholic tribunal in France. Now such a tragedy would be impossible in any church. The same human passions exist, but the ideas and circumstances have changed.

* Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1997. This material has been carefully compared, corrected, and emended (according to the 1910 edition of Charles Scribner's Sons) by The Electronic Bible Society, Dallas, TX, 1998.

⁷⁴⁴ *Deutsche Geschichte*, etc., vol. II. 46 (6th ed.).

⁷⁴⁵ I "*Selbstherrschender, gewaltiger ist wohl nie ein Schriftsteller aufgetreten, in keiner Nation der Welt. Auch dürfte kein anderer zu nennen sein, der die vollkommenste Verständlichkeit und Popularität, gesunden, treuherzigen Menschenverstand mit so vielechtem Geist, Schwung und Genius vereinigt hätte. Er gab der Literatur den Charakter den sie seitdem behalten, der Forschung, des Tiefsinns, der Polemik.*" Ranke, II. 56. "*Fesselnder, ergreifender und packender hat kein Deutscher geschrieben. Dabei beherrschte er seine Muttersprache mit solcher Gewalt, dass er sie zur Schriftsprache zu erheben vermochte.*" Fr. Kapp, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, vol. I. p. 407.

⁷⁴⁶ Janssen dwells, we may say, exclusively on the lower motives, and by omitting the higher spiritual motives and aims utterly misrepresents the Reformers and the Reformation.

⁷⁴⁷ For these figures and several facts in this paragraph I am indebted to the instructive work of Friedrich Kapp, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels* (published by the "Börsenverein der deutschen Buchhändler," Leipzig, 1886), vol. I. 407 sq. The statistics of Ranke (II. 56) are taken from Panzer's *Annalen der*

älteren deutschen Literatur (1788 and 1802) and are superseded by the more recent and fuller investigations of Weller, Kuczynski, and Kapp.

[748](#) This was the complaint of Cochlaeus, see p. 350. Luther called him *Kochlöffel* and *Rotzlöffel* (*cochlear* = spoon).

[749](#) He called such printers thieves and highway robbers, and their work *Bubenstück, den gemeinen Mann zu betriegen*" (September, 1525).

[750](#) Kapp (I. 318) mentions that the electors of Saxony from 1571-1670 received no less than a hundred and ninety-two "most humble" (*alleruntherthänigste*) dedications from various authors, and that the magistrate of Zürich received thirty-eight from 1670-1685.

[751](#) On the history of the book censorship (*Büchercensur*) and press persecutions, compare the ninth and tenth chapters of Kapp, I. 522 sqq.

[752](#) The bull is not given in the *Bullarium*, but by Raynaldus *ad a.* 1501, No. 36, Zaccaria, and Reusch (I. 54), in part also by Kapp (*l.c.* p. 530).

[753](#) The bull "*Inter sollicitudines*" was promulgated in the fifth Lateran Council. Labbe, XIV. 257, and Reusch, I. 55 sq.

[754](#) The bull "*Exurge, Domine,*" is printed in full, p. 235 sqq.

[755](#) Kapp, *l.c.*, p. 536 sqq., shows that the Edict of Worms, drawn up by the papal legate Aleander, is the beginning of the German book-censorship, and not, as usually supposed, the recess of the Nürnberg Diet of 1524. "*Wie Rom,*" he says (539), "*die Wiege der Büchercensur für die ganze Welt, so ist Worms ihre Geburtsstätte für Deutschland.*" The restriction of the press, however, was begun in Germany, as we have seen, already in 1486, by Elector Berthold of Mainz.

[756](#) "*Derselbe Luther,*" says Kapp, p. 552, "*welcher das Papstthum für noch lange nicht genug zerscholten, zerschrieben, zersungen, zerdichtet Und zermalet hielt, rief schon 1525 die Censur für seinen nunmehrigen Standpunkt zur Hilfe.*" He refers to his attempt to secure a prohibition of Carlstadt's writings in Saxony.

[757](#) Fr. Heinrich Reusch (old catholic Prof. at Bonn): *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher*, Bonn, 1883-85, 2 vols. Of older works we mention, Fr. Zaccaria, *Storia polemica delle proibizioni de' libri*, Rom., 1777; and Jos. Mendham, *The Literary Policy of the Church of Rome exhibited in an account of her damnatory Catalogues or indexes, both prohibitory and expurgatory*, London, 1826, 3d ed.

1844.

[758](#) One of them, Johann Herrgott, was executed in Leipzig, 1527 (not 1524) for selling Lutheran books, or rather for complicity with the Peasants' War, and for agrarian socialistic doctrines. See A. Kirchhoff, *Johann Herrgott, Buchführer von Nürnberg, und sein tragisches Ende*, 1527, and Kapp, *l.c.*, I. 438 sq. and 594.

[759](#) After George's death Luther said: "I would rather that he lived and be converted now he has gone into the eternal fire [!], if the gospel is true." Köstlin, II. 424.

[760](#) See § 74, p. 434 sqq.

[761](#) On Jacob Sturm see the monograph of H. Baumgarten, Strassburg. 1876. Of John Sturm (who died 1589, in his eighty-second year), there are several biographies, by C. Schmidt (in French, 1855), Rieth (1864), Kückelhahn (1872), and Zaar (1872).

[762](#) Butzer in German, Bucerus in Latin.

[763](#) "*Wir sind Christgläubig, nicht kirchgläubig.*"

[764](#) Seckendorf, I. 246. Wolter, *Gesch. der Stadt Magdeburg* (1845); Hoffmann, *Chronik der Stadt Magdeb.* (1850, 3 vols.); Rathmann, *Gesch. Magdeb.*; Preger, *Matth. Flacius Illyricus und seine Zeit* (Erlangen, 1859-1861).

[765](#) Of this disputation Luther reported to Spalatin, May 11, 1524 (De Wette, II. 511): "*Vratislaviæ disputatio Joannis Hess processit feliciter, frustra resistantibus tot legatis regum et technis episcopi.*"

[766](#) Professor Hartranft, D. D., of Hartford, Conn., a descendant of the Pennsylvania Schwenkfelders, has investigated the Schwenkfeld literature at Breslau, and issued a prospectus for its publication (1887).

[767](#) Köstlin, biography of Hess in the "Zeitschrift des schlesischen Geschichtsvereins," vol. VI. Gilett, *Crato von Crafftheim und seine Freunde*, Frankfurt-a.-M. 1860, 2 parts. A very learned work. To Ursinus we shall return in the history of the Reformation in the Palatinate. In the cities of the Hanseatic League the Reformation was introduced at an early period.

[768](#) *Vom Bruder Heinrich in Ditmar verbrannt*, Wittenberg, 1525, in the Erl. ed. XXVI. 313-337; in Walch, XXI. 94 sqq. Comp. Paul Crocius, *Das grosse Martyrbuch*, Bremen, 1682. Klaus Harms, *Heinrich von Zütphen*, in Piper's

"Evang. Kalender," 1852.

[769](#) Printed in Richter, *Die evang. Kirchenordnungen*, vol. I. C. Bertheau, Bugenhagen's *Kirchenordnung für die Stadt Hamburg vom J. 1529*, 1885. L. Hänselmann, B.'s *Kirchenordnung f. d. Stadt Braunschweig*, 1885. Frantz, *Die evangelische Kirchenverfassung in den deutschen Städten des 16. Jahrh.*, Halle, 1876. Vogt, *Johannes Bugenhagen Pomeranus*, Elberfeld, 1867. The year 1885, the fourth centennial of Bugenhagen's birth, called out several popular sketches of his life by Knauth, Petrich, Zitzlaff, and Hering (1888). See also O. Vogt, *Bugenhagen's Briefwechsel*, Stettin, 1888.

[770](#) So he spells his name (Rieger in German), not Regius (König).

[771](#) Rhegius, *Opera latine edita*, Norimb. 1561; *Deutsche Bücher und Schriften*, Nürnberg. 1562, and again Frankf. 1577. Döllinger, *Die Reform.* II. 58 sqq. Uhlhorn, *Urbanus Rhegius*, Elberfeld, 1862, and his sketch in Herzog², XIII. 147-155.

[772](#) Friedrich Roth, *Augsburgs Reformationsgeschichte*, 1517-1527. München, 1881.

[773](#) See the description of the congregation of the "Apostolic Brethren," as the Anabaptists called themselves, in Ludwig Keller, *Ein Apostel der Wiedertäufer* (i.e., Hans Denck), Leipzig, 1882, ch. VI. 94-119.

[774](#) Römer, *Kirchliche Geschichte Württembergs*, Stuttg. 1848. Keim, *Schwäbische Reformationsgeschichte*. Tübingen, 1855. Schneider, *Württemb. Reformationsgesch.* Stuttgart, 1887.

[775](#) Ranke, II. 121.

[776](#) See pp. 308 and 481; Seckendorf's Excursus on the bigamy, III. 277-281; Ranke, IV. 186 sqq.; Köstlin, Bk. VIII., ch. 1. (II. 533 sqq.); and Janssen III. 57, 439 sqq. This nasty subject lies beyond our period, but may be disposed of here in a few remarks. Philip was a man of powerful sensuality, and married very young a daughter of Duke George of Saxony. As she was unattractive, and gave him little satisfaction, he indulged freely and long before his bigamy in his carnal passions to the injury of his health; and for this reason his conscience would not allow him to partake of the holy communion more than once in fifteen years (from 1525 to 1540), as he confessed himself in a letter to Luther, April 5, 1540 (Lenz, *Briefwechsel Philipp's mit Bucer*, I. 361, and Ranke, IV. 186, note). If Fräulein Margaretha von der Sale, who captivated his passions, had consented to become

his mistress, he would not have fallen upon the extraordinary device of bigamy. The worst feature in this shameful affair is the weak connivance of the Reformers, which furnished the Romanists a keen weapon of attack. See Janssen. But Protestantism is no more responsible for the sins of Philip of Hesse, than Romanism is for the sins of Louis XIV.

[777](#) In Kurhessen (which in 1866 was annexed to Prussia). Homberg must not be confounded with the better-known watering-place Homburg near Frankfort on the Main.

[778](#) He mentions him under the assumed name of Johannes Serranus in letters to Spalatin, Dec. 20 and 26, 1522, and Jan. 12 and 23, 1523 (in De Wette, II. 263, 272, 299, 302). In the last letter, after he had made his personal acquaintance, he writes, "*Adest Johannes ille Serranus, vero nomine Franciscus Lambertus ... De integritate viri nulla est dubitatio: testes sunt apud nos, qui illum et in Francia et in Basilea audierunt. ... Mihi per omnia placet vir, et satis spectatus mihi est ... ut dignus sit quem in exilio paululum feramus et juvemus.*" Then he asks Spalatin to secure for him from the Elector a contribution of twenty or thirty guilders for his support. In a letter of Feb. 25, 1523 (De Wette, II. 308), he repeats this request as a beggar for a poor exile of Christ. A last request he made Aug. 14, 1523 (II. 387).

[779](#) *Farrago omnium fere rerum theologicarum*. It was translated into English, 1536. This book and his *De Fidelium vocatione in Regnum Christi* contain the views which he defended in Homberg.

[780](#) Hase says (p. 387): "*Die Mönche und Prälaten verstummten vor der glühenden Beredtsamkeit des landflüchtigen Minoriten.*" But he was opposed by Ferber, the guardian of the Marburg Franciscans, who denounced him as a "runaway monk," and denied the legal competency of the synod. Lambert in turn called him a champion of Antichrist and a blasphemer, and exclaimed, "*Expellatur ex provincia!*" which Ferber misunderstood, "*Occidatur bestia!*" He confessed afterwards that he lost his temper. Hassencamp, *Fr. Lambert*, p. 39 sq., and Hencke, *l.c.* I. 103 sq.

[781](#) See above, pp. 518 and 538. Ritschl and Meier assert that Lambert borrowed his church ideal from his own order of the Minorites.

[782](#) The Latin original of the constitution is lost, but two copies are extant from which the printed editions of Schminke, Richter, and Credner are derived. Janssen

(III. 54) calls it, not quite accurately, "*ein vollständig ausgebildetes, rein demokratisches Presbyterialsystem.*"

[783](#) Letter to the Landgrave, Monday after Epiphany, 1527 (in the Erl. ed., vol. LVI. 170 sq.). He was reluctant to give an answer, from fear that nonapproval might be construed as proceeding from Wittenberg jealousy of any rivalry. He does not mention Lambert, but cautions against rash proceedings. "*Fürschreiben und Nachthun ist weit von einander*" (theory and practice are wide apart). Köstlin (II. 50) says: "*Gegen die Principien des Entwurfs an sich wandte Luther nichts ein. Der Grund, weshalb er ihn ablehnte, war das Bedürfniss allmählicher Entwicklung im Gegensatz zur plötzlichen gesetzlichen Durchführung umfassender Ideen, für welche die Gegenwart nicht vorbereitet sei.*"

[784](#) See his letter to Myconius in Hassencamp, *Lamb. v. A.*, p. 50 sq., and Döllinger, *Die Reform.* II. 18 sq. The latter quotes the Latin (from Strieder, *Hessische Gelehrten-gesch.* VII. 386): "*Dolens et gemens vivo, quod paucissimos videam recte uti evangelii libertate, et quod caritas ferme nulla sit, sed plena sint omnia obtreptionibus mendaciis, maledicentia, invidia.*" In a letter to Bucer, Lambert says, "*Horreo mores populi hujus ita ut putem me frustra in eis laborare.*" Herminjard (II. 242) adds in a note an extract from the letter of a student of Zürich, Rudolph Walther, who wrote to Bullinger from Marburg, June 17, 1540 (the year of the bigamy of the Landgrave): "*Mores [huius regionis] omnium corruptissimi. Nullum in hac Germaniae parte inter Papistas et Evangelicae doctrinae professores discrimen cernas, si morum et vitae censuram instituas.*"

[785](#) Dr. Vilmar of Marburg (originally Reformed) tried to prove that the Hessians were Lutherans, but did not know it. His colleague, Dr. Heppe, with equal learning tried to prove the opposite. A German proverb speaks of the "blind Hessians," and this applies at least to those unfortunate twenty thousand soldiers who allowed themselves to be sold by their contemptible tyrant (Frederick II., a convert to the Church of Rome, d. 1785), like so many heads of cattle, for twenty-one million thalers, to the king of England to be used as powder against the American colonies. Hence the ugly meaning of the term "Hessians" in America, which does great injustice to their innocent countrymen and descendants.

[786](#) *De Symbolo Foederis*, etc., published at Strassburg after his death, 1530. He

says in the preface: "*Volo ut mundus sciat me sententiam circa Coenam Domini demutasse.*" Herminjard, II. 240.

[787](#) Letter to Bucer, March 14, 1530, *ib.* II. 242.

[788](#) Dr. Döllinger, II. 18, uses his complaints of the prevailing immorality as a testimony against the Reformation, but judges favorably of his writings.

[789](#) His name is entered on the University Album of the year 1527, together with two other Scotchmen, John Hamilton and Gilbert Winram. See Jul. Cæsar, *Catalogus Studiorum scholae Marpurgensis*, Marb. 1875, p. 2. Comp. Lorimer, *Patrick Hamilton*, Edinb. 1857, and the careful sketch of Professor Mitchell of St. Andrews, in the Schaff-Herzog "Encycl." II. 935 sqq.

[790](#) The fact of Tyndale's sojourn in Marburg has been disputed without good reason by Mombert in the preface to his facsimile edition of *Tyndale's Pentateuch*, New York, 1884 (p. XXIX.). He conjectures that "Marborow" is a fictitious name for Wittenberg. Tyndale's name does not appear in the University Register, but he may not have entered it. Hans Luft was the well-known printer of Luther's Bible in Wittenberg in Saxony, but he may have had an agent in Marburg "in the land of Hesse."

[791](#) "*Bei weitem die merkwürdigste und durchgreifendste Veränderung fand in Preussen statt.*" Ranke, II. 326. Janssen can see in the Reformation of Prussia only a change for the worse. The best refutation of his view is the subsequent history and present condition of Prussia. The history of the past must be read in the light of the present. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

[792](#) Prussia proper is a division of the kingdom of Prussia, and comprises East or Ducal Prussia and West or Royal Prussia, with a total area of 24,114 square miles, and a population of about three millions and a half. East Prussia was united with Brandenburg by the Elector John Sigismund, 1618 West Prussia was severed from Poland by Frederick the Great in the first division of that kingdom, 1772.

[793](#) "*Der deutsche Orden,*" says Ranke (II. 334), "*und seine Herrschaft in Preussen war ohne Zweifel das eigenthümlichste Product des hierarchischritterlichen Geistes der letzten Jahrhunderte in der deutschen Nation; er hatte eine grossartige Weltenwirkung ausgeübt und ein unermessliches Verdienst um die Ausbreitung des deutschen Namens erworben; aber seine Zeit war vorüber.*"

[794](#) *An die Herren deutsches Ordens, dass sie falsche Keuschheit meiden und zur rechten ehelichen Keuschheit greifen, Ermahnung.* Wittenberg, den 28 März, 1523. In the Erl. ed. XXIX. 16-33. Walch, XIX. 2157 sqq.

[795](#) He published several sermons. Extracts in Seckendorf, I. 272. See the article "Briesmann" by Dr. Erdmann in Herzog², II. 629-631, with literature.

[796](#) Letter to John Briesmann, July 4, 1524, in De Wette, II. 526 sq.

[797](#) "At last," he wrote to Spalatin, Feb. 1, 1524, "even a bishop has given the glory to the name of Christ, and proclaims the gospel in Prussia, namely the bishop of Samland, encouraged and instructed by John Briesmann, whom I sent, so that Prussia also begins to give farewell to the kingdom of Satan." De Wette, II. 474.

[798](#) Erl. ed., *Op. Lat.* XIII. The dedicatory letter dated April, 1525, is printed also in De Wette, II. 647-651. In this letter occurs the notable passage (p. 649): "*Vide mirabilia, ad Prussiam pleno cursu plenisque telis currit Evangelion.*" Comp. the passage quoted p. 539, note 2.

[799](#) Professor Tschackert, his best biographer, says (*l.c.*, p. 187): "The correspondence of Bishop Georg von Polentz, as far as known, contains not a syllable nor even an allusion to a letter of his to Luther. Even the name of Luther occurs after the reformatory mandate of 1524 only once, in a postscript to a letter to Paul Speratus, Aug. 22, 1535." In this letter he requested his colleague, Bishop Speratus of Pomesania, to give some noble students from Lithuania letters of introduction to Luther and Melanchthon ("*litteris tuis Martino et Philippo commendes.*") See the letter, *l.c.*, p. 191.

[800](#) "*Coacti sumus,*" he said, "*alienum officium, i.e., episcopate in nos sumere, ut omnia ordine, et decenter fierent.*" Preface to the *Articuli ceremoniarum*, published by a general synod at Königsberg, May 12, 1530.

[801](#) Arnoldt, *Historie der königsberger Universität*, 1746.

[802](#) See above, p. 570. Osiander's son-in-law, Funke, Albrecht's chaplain and confessor, continued the controversies, but was at last beheaded with two others, 1566, as "*Ruhestörer, Landesverräther und Beförderer der osiandrischen Ketzerei.*"

[803](#) Several English translations; one by Miss Winkworth, "Jesus my Redeemer lives." The hymn has a long and interesting history. See A. F. W. Fischer,

Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, I. 390-396.

[804](#) For fuller information, see Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, I. 554 sqq. To the literature there given should be added Ranke, *Zwölf Bücher Preuss. Geschichte*, Leipz. 1874, I. 185-192; Kawerau in Herzog², XIV. 227-232; and Wangemann, *Joh. Sigismund und Paul Gerhard*, Berlin, 1884. The literature on the Prussian Union refers to the history after 1817, and is very large. We mention Nitzsch, *Urkundenbuch der evangelischen Union*, Berlin, 1853; Jul. Müller, *Die evangel. Union, ihr Wesen und göttliches Recht*, Berlin, 1854; Brandes, *Geschichte der kirchlichen Politik des Hauses Brandenburg*, 1872, '73, 2 vols.; Mücke, *Preussen's landeskirchliche Unionsentwicklung*, 1879; Wangemann, *Die preussische Union in ihrem Verhältniss zur Una Sancta*, Berlin, 1884.

[805](#) The *Cabinetsordre* of Feb. 18, 1834, declares: "*Die Union bezweckt und bedeutet kein Aufgeben des bisherigen Glaubensbekenntnisses; auch ist die Autorität, welche die Bekenntnisschriften der beiden evangelischen Confessionen bisher gehabt, durch sie nicht aufgehoben worden.*"

[806](#) See Schaff, *Church and State in the United States*, New York, 1888, p. 97 sq.

[807](#) See Schaff, *Church Hist.* II. 78.

[808](#) See above, p. 505, and Ranke, II. 119.

[809](#) § 96, p. 574, sq.

[810](#) See their biography in Piper's *Evang. Kalender*, VII. 408, and article "Klarenbach" by C. Krafft, in Herzog², VIII. 20-33.

[811](#) Luther wrote a letter of comfort to the Christians at Halle on the death of their minister. Walch, X. 2260. See also his letter, April 28, 1528, in De Wette, III. 305.

[812](#) See § 93, p. 567, note.

[813](#) Ranke, II. 117 sq.

[814](#) *Ibid.* p. 117.

[815](#) Letter dated May 20, 1527, in De Wette, III. 179 sq. But Käser seems to have been an Anabaptist, which Luther did not know. See Cornelius, *Gesch. des Münsterschen Aufruhrs*, II. 56.

[816](#) Ranke, III. 369.



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Roman Catholicism

How Reliable Is Roman Catholic History?

An Example in a Recent Edition of *This Rock* Magazine

By James White

Roman Catholic apologists are going about the land presenting seminars and talks in parish halls and church buildings, all designed to 1) confirm the faithful in their allegiance to Rome and the Papacy, and 2) invite the "separated brethren home to Mother Church." While the number of RC apologists has grown exponentially over the past decade, the one gentleman who has been out-front, or maybe better, in light of the article we will be reviewing, "up-front," the longest, is Karl Keating, president of *Catholic Answers*.

In a recent article in the December, 1996 edition of *This Rock* magazine, Keating introduces his readers to *Liber Pontificalis*, *The Book of Pontiffs*. Keating doesn't give his readers much background on the book. I quote from J.N.D. Kelly, who describes the work:

A collection of papal biographies from St Peter to Pius II (d. 1464), compiled in its first redaction in the middle of the 6th cent. and extended by later hands. While much of the material embodied, especially in the earlier section, is apocryphal, the work is in the main based on valuable sources, and while it is often biased it is indispensable for the history of the papacy (J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, (1986), xi).

One is struck by the fact that Keating, despite an early acknowledgement of some factual problems with the work, accepts every word of *Liber Pontificalis* that he quotes as if it were solid history, and he is dealing with the very *first* stories of the *first* Popes-material Kelly specifically identifies as mainly "apocryphal." Keating notes,

Not all of the lives are reliable, it should be noted. The *Liber Pontificalis* needs to be supplemented with information from other ancient texts. In the best-known error, the compiler lists the fifth pope as Anacletus, who turns out really to have been the same man as the third pope, Cletus, who also was known as Anacletus. The mix-up must have been because of the dual name.

Aside from the uncritical use of *Liber Pontificalis*, the main focus of our criticism of Mr. Keating's article will center upon the issues raised by the letter commonly identified as Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians. I quote from Keating:

There is no disputing, though, the identity of the "intervening" pope, Clement, known to history as Clement of Rome and the author of an epistle, addressed to the Corinthians, that is used by Catholic apologists to show the early exercise of papal authority.

We note that it is Keating himself who acknowledges the use of this epistle by Catholic apologists. It is indeed often used to present an "early exercise of papal authority." What kind of authority? Keating continues:

It seems that the Corinthians had called on Clement to settle a dispute (the poor Corinthians were still troubled, long decades after Paul had tried to straighten them out -- apparently with insufficient success). The last surviving apostle, John, lived much closer to them and would have been the logical adjudicator, but they didn't write to him. They wrote to the successor of the chief apostle, and Pope Clement replied in tones of authority.

While Keating moves on to other issues, dwelling mainly on speculations based upon the apocryphal stories contained in *Liber Pontificalis*, I would like to provide the reader with a much more accurate view of this

supposed "early exercise of papal authority" that is so easily assumed by Roman apologists. What is the truth about Clement's epistle to the Corinthians? Does it, indeed, provide us with a *first century* example of papal supremacy?

Let's Look at the Facts

First and foremost, there is tremendous confusion concerning the early "lists" of the bishops of Rome, and for good reason. Different sources give different renderings. Why? As simple as it may sound, the reason is easily discovered: no one really cared for the first century of the history of the church at Rome. All the lists come from at the earliest many decades later, and show a concern that did not arise until the Church as a whole began struggling with heresy and began formulating concepts of authority to use against heretics. But in those first decades, even into the middle of the second century, no one was particularly concerned about who the bishop of Rome was. Why? Because no one had the concepts that Rome now presents as "ancient." No one thought the bishop of any one church was above any other, or that the bishop of Rome was somehow invested with any particular authority.

No Monarchical Episcopate

What's more, there is a fatal historical fact that is overlooked consistently by Roman Catholic apologists. Joseph F. Kelly in his *The Concise Dictionary of Early Christianity* (The Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 2, notes,

The word "pope" was not used exclusively of the bishop of Rome until the ninth century, and it is likely that in the earliest Roman community a college of presbyters rather than a single bishop provided the leadership.

J.N.D. Kelly likewise notes this reality:

In the late 2nd or early 3rd cent. the tradition identified Peter as the first bishop of Rome. This was a natural development once the monarchical episcopate, i.e., government of the local church by a single bishop as distinct from a group of presbyter-bishops, finally emerged in Rome in the mid-2nd cent. (p. 6).

When speaking of Linus, Anacletus, Clement, Evaristus, Alexander, Telesphorus, and Hyginus (to A.D. 142), Kelly consistently notes the same thing: there was no monarchical episcopate in Rome at this time! Only with Hyginus does he say that the monarchical episcopate is *beginning* to emerge, and does so with Pius 1, 142-155 A.D.

What does this mean? Well, it's pretty hard for there to be an exercise of "papal authority" when there is no papacy! The primitive form of church government found in Rome is the biblical one: a plurality of elders. What is more, this is the same form of government *plainly portrayed in the epistle Mr. Keating makes reference to!* We note Kelly's words again concerning Clement:

The claim that he died a martyr, supported by *LP* [i.e., *Liber Pontificalis*, the work Keating is citing from] and the canon of the mass, should be rejected in view of the silence of the earliest authorities; the story, too, that he was banished to the Crimea, successfully preached the gospel there, and was killed by being drowned with an anchor around his neck, is without foundation.

Almost the only reliable information that survives about him is that he was responsible for, probably author of, the so-called *First Epistle of Clement*, the most important 1st cent. Christian document outside the N.T. It was a letter of remonstrance addressed c.96 to the church at Corinth (where fierce dissensions had broken out and some presbyters had been deposed) which Clement probably drafted as the leading presbyter-bishop. After setting out the principle on which the orderly succession of bishops and deacons rests and tracing it back to Jesus Christ, it called for the reinstatement of the extruded presbyters. The letter is the earliest example of the intervention, fraternal but authoritative, of the Roman church, though not of the pope personally, in the affairs of another Church. Widely read in Christian antiquity, it was sometimes treated as part of the NT canon.

While Clement's position as a leading presbyter and spokesman of the Christian community at Rome is assured, his letter suggests that the monarchical episcopate had not yet emerged there, and it is therefore impossible to form any precise conception of his constitutional role (p. 8).

A few things should be noted. First, Kelly recognizes that we are not even certain when the letter was written, nor that Clement himself wrote it. Secondly, he points out that the letter indicates a plurality of elders, not a

monarchical episcopate, existing in Rome at this time. Thirdly, and very importantly, the points out that the letter remonstrating with the Corinthians is not a *papal* letter, but a letter from *the church at Rome*.

The Church at Rome, not the Bishop at Rome

The simple historical fact is that the early examples of Roman power are not of the *bishop* of Rome but of the *church* at Rome. The prestige of the *bishop* developed from the prestige of the *church* abiding at the capital of the Roman Empire. Modern Roman dogma has it backwards: the prestige of Rome does not come from having the "Successor of Peter" within her: the bishop of Rome gained his prestige because of the geographical and political location of the church itself! J.B. Lightfoot, writing in the last century (prior to much of the research that has demonstrated the later rise of the monarchical episcopate) notes:

There is all the difference in the world between the attitude of Rome towards other churches at the close of the first century, when the Romans as a community remonstrate on terms of equality with the Corinthians on their irregularities, strong only in the righteousness of their cause, and feeling as they had a right to feel, that these counsels of peace were the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and its attitude at the close of the second century, when Victor the bishop excommunicates the Churches of Asia Minor for clinging to a usage in regard to the celebration of Easter which had been handed down to them from the Apostles, and thus foments instead of healing dissensions....Even this second stage has carried the power of Rome only a very small step in advance towards the assumptions of a Hildebrand or an Innocent or a Boniface, or even of a Leo: but it is nevertheless a decided step. The substitution of the bishop of Rome for the Church of Rome is an all important point. The later Roman theory supposes that the Church of Rome derives all its authority from the bishop of Rome, as the successor of S. Peter. History inverts this relation and shows that, as a matter of fact, the power of the bishop of Rome was built upon the power of the Church of Rome (*The Apostolic Fathers Vol 1:70*).

Other Early Witnesses

Early documents from the history of the Church make this even more plain. The 35th canon of the Apostolic Canons (dated from the 2nd to 5th centuries) says:

The bishops of every country ought to know who is the chief among them, and to esteem him as their head, and not to do any great thing without his consent; but every one to manage only the affairs that belong to his own parish, and the places subject to it. But let him not do anything without the consent of all; for it is by this means there will be unanimity, and God will be glorified by Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, the Council of Nicæa's 6th canon read:

Let the ancient customs in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis prevail, that the Bishop of Alexandria have jurisdiction in all these, since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome also. Likewise in Antioch and the other provinces, let the Churches retain their privileges.

And a full three and a half centuries after Clement's epistle, an ecumenical council at Chalcedon could clearly recognize why Rome had the prerogatives she did, as seen in the 28th canon of Chalcedon:

Following in all things the decisions of the holy Fathers, and acknowledging the canon, which has been just read...we also do enact and decree the same things concerning the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople, *which is New Rome*. For the Fathers rightly *granted* privileges to the throne of old Rome, **because it was the royal city**. And the One Hundred and Fifty most religious Bishops, actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges to the most holy throne of New Rome, justly judging that *the city which is honored with the Sovereignty and the Senate*, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome, should in ecclesiastical matters also be magnified as she is, and rank next after her.

When Ignatius wrote to the Romans, he not only did not address any one bishop (for there was no single bishop in Rome at the time), but he spoke of the "presidency" of Rome being one of love and honor, not universal jurisdiction, prompting Lightfoot to comment,

...this then was the original primacy of Rome—a primacy not of the bishop but of the whole church, a primacy not of official authority but of practical goodness, backed however by the prestige and the advantages which were necessarily enjoyed by the church of the metropolis.

Throughout the *Epistle of Clement*, the first person plural "we" is used, never "I." Clement does not speak as a Pope, does not "remonstrate" as a Pope. Instead, *the church at Rome writes as a fellow and equal body of believers*. This is the verdict of any honest, unbiased reading of the epistle.

The Power of Roman Anachronism

To read Papal prerogatives into Clement's epistle is to demonstrate what happens when you find yourself bound under the following dogmatic belief from Vatican I:

...we, therefore, for the preservation, safe-keeping, and increase of the Catholic flock, with the approval of the sacred Council, do judge it to be necessary to propose to the belief and acceptance of all the faithful, *in accordance with the ancient and constant faith of the universal Church*, the doctrine touching the institution, perpetuity, and nature of the sacred Apostolic Primacy...

At open variance with this *clear* doctrine of Holy Scripture *as it has been ever understood by the Catholic Church* are the perverse opinions of those who, while they distort the form of government established by Christ the Lord in his Church, deny that Peter in his single person, preferably to all the other Apostles, whether taken separately or together, was endowed by Christ with a true and proper primacy of jurisdiction;

The Roman Catholic apologist, bound to such a claim that runs directly in the face of history itself, has to balance the demands of faith in the Papacy with simple honesty in historical research. Sadly, allegiance to Rome normally wins out. Keating doesn't mention *any* of the historical facts about Clement's epistle mentioned above. He allows the claim that this is an early exercise of Papal power to stand *without comment*. Yet, such a claim is, in reality, nothing more than an act of blind faith, made with eyes firmly closed to the historical realities themselves.

Roman supremacy developed over time, beginning with the geographical, social, and political advantages associated with being in the capital of the Empire. Rome was the only Western apostolic see; the East had multiple apostolic sees, including Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, and eventually Constantinople as well. It is hardly a coincidence that Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy to this day demonstrate in their ecclesiology the very differences one would expect to arise from the facts of history: Rome demanding allegiance to one, centralized authority in the bishop of Rome, while Orthodoxy, forced by history to deal with multiple centers of authority, presents a concept of "collegiality."

When Rome the Empire fell, the bishop of Rome stepped into the vacuum, and the rest, as they say, is "history." But to make this historical development one that was intended by Christ and implemented by the Apostles, is to read into history a reality that is not only absent, but is *contrary* to the actual facts.

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A Study in the Tactics of Roman Catholic Apologists

by James White

You never know who is going to end up reading *anything* you say in an e-mail. Just this afternoon I responded to an e-mail sent to me by Irishchico@aol.com, a Mr. Betts. A few hours later, a lengthy missive appears in my e-mail box from Robert Sungenis. As I am reading over it, another comes from Dr. Art Sippon, and later another from Mr. Betts.

In the process of responding to Mr. Sungenis' comments, I realized that I was again looking at a classic example of the kind of "apologetics" offered by the current group of Roman Catholic apologists. To be perfectly honest, it is long on looks, but tremendously short on substance. For those who wish to be impressed, it is impressive. But for the person who has the opportunity (and the tools) to check out what these men claim for Rome, their efforts are sadly wanting.

I begin with the message Mr. Sungenis sent to me. I present it first so that you can see how impressive it looks, and so you can judge for yourself its tone and intention. Then I will provide the message of Dr. Art Sippon (a long time nemesis and one of the worst examples, behavior wise, of Roman Catholic apologists) and Mr. Betts. Then I will provide a link to my response.

Please note: a further addition has been made to the end of this correspondence as of June 4, 1999.

Gentlemen,

At the end of Mr. White's letter Irishchico, he directed Irishchico to read the following quote from Gregory of Nyssa in an attempt to convince Mr. White that Gregory believed in sola scriptura. Here is the extract of Gregory that Mr. White cites

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-95) "...we make the Holy Scriptures the rule and the measure of every tenet; we necessarily fix our eyes upon that, and approve that alone which may be made to harmonize with the intention of those writings." On the Soul And the Resurrection

This is typical of the sleight-of-hand Mr. White and his colleagues have long engaged. Notice that Mr. White does not give the exact place where one can find this quote in "On the Soul and the Resurrection." For those who are interested, it can be found in NPNF II, Vol. 5, page 439. Once you read the context, you'll know why Mr. White does not give the exact reference - because the context doesn't support what Mr. White is trying to say.

If you don't have NPNF, here is what Gregory says before and after the quote Mr. White extracted

"You are quite justified, she replied, in raising this question, and it has ere this been discussed by many elsewhere; namely, what we are to think of the principle of desire and the principle of anger within us.....The generality of men still fluctuate in their opinions about this, which are as erroneous as they are numerous. As for ourselves, if the Gentile philosophy, which deals methodically with all these points, were really adequate for a demonstration, it would certainly be superfluous to add a discussion on the soul, as far in the direction of supposed consequences as the thinker pleased, we are not entitled to such license, I mean that of affirming what we please; *we make the Holy Scriptures the rule and the measure of every tenet; we necessarily fix our eyes upon that, and approve that alone which may be made to harmonize with the intention of those writings.* We must therefore neglect the Platonic chariot and the pair of horses of dissimilar forces yoked to it, and their driver, whereby the philosopher allegorizes these facts about the soul; we must neglect also all that is said by the philosopher who succeeded him and who followed

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out probabilities by rules of art....."

I have italicized the quote which Mr. White extracted from Gregory so that you can contrast it with the context. Here's the \$64,000 Is Gregory pitting Scripture against Church authority or the Tradition of the Church? Do you find one word about such entities in here? The answer is NO. Gregory is pitting Scripture against speculative philosophy, which every Father did. When Gregory is arguing against Gentile philosophers and the like, he mainly quotes Scripture, for the pagans will listen to little else, especially in esoteric topics such as the soul.

Now, contrast Mr. White's attempt to make Gregory a sola scriptura man, with the occasion in which Gregory actually does talk about the Church and Tradition. For example Here's another quote from Gregory

"And yet if those had been the more appropriate names, the Truth Himself would not have been at a loss to discover them, nor those men either, on whom successively devolved the preaching of the mystery, whether they were from the first eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word, or, as successors to these, filled the whole world with the Evangelical doctrines, and again at various periods after this defined in a common assembly the ambiguities raised about the doctrine; whose traditions are constantly preserved in writing in the churches" (Against Eunomius, I13, NPNF II, V50).

Here's another "The doctrine of the true faith is clear in the first tradition we receive, in accordance with the Lord's wish, in the bath of the new birth" (Epistles, 24; PG 461088D).

Here's more. In Mr. White's book *Sola Scriptura The Protestant Position on the Bible*, which he recommended that John Betts read, Mr. White says the following about a quote from Basil, which, unbeknownst to Mr. White, actually comes from Gregory of Nyssa

"What is more, other statements from this same Father fly in the face of the Roman claims. For example, when addressing truly important doctrinal truths, such as the very nature of God, Basil did not appeal to some nebulous tradition. How could he, especially when he encountered others who claimed that their traditional beliefs should be held as sacred? Note the words to Eustathius the physician

Their complaint is that their custom does not accept this, and that Scripture does not agree. What is my reply? I do not consider it fair that the custom which obtains among them should be regarded as a law and rule of orthodoxy. If custom is to be taken in proof of what is right, then it is certainly competent for me to put forward on my side the custom which obtains here. If they reject this, we are clearly not bound to follow them. Therefore let God-inspired Scripture decide between us; and on whichever side be found doctrines in harmony with the word of God, in favor of that side will be cast the vote of truth.

"A sentiment hardly in line with Trent!" (James White, *Sola Scriptura!* pp. 37-38).

First, I should reiterate that patristic scholars recognize the above quote as originating in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, not Basil. Nevertheless, I will deal with the citation as it appears in Basil in NPNF. Our assumption is that Mr. White chose this citation from Basil to prove that Basil believed in the doctrine of sola scriptura, and indeed, a first reading of it might give such an impression to the unformed reader. But let's look very closely at what Basil is saying. First, Basil states that his opponent's tradition is not to be regarded as the "rule of orthodoxy." Then he says, "If custom is to be taken in proof of what is right, then it is certainly competent for me to put forward on my side the custom which obtains here" showing that it is his tradition [Basil's tradition] which is the correct tradition. Thus, on the basis of tradition versus tradition, Basil declares himself the winner. If anything, he is establishing and defending the tradition of the Church, not demoting it. He reinforces his reliance on tradition by saying, "If they reject this [the Church's tradition], we are clearly not bound to follow them.

Having said this, Basil now proceeds to Scripture and suggests that Scripture serve as the judge between them. Considering what Basil said above about his reliance on tradition, are we to assume that Basil is suddenly rejecting his belief in Tradition in favor of Scripture? Not at all. Basil is doing the same thing many of the other Fathers were forced to do if the opponent did not accept Church tradition or authority then the Father had no recourse but to argue the case from Scripture. Even then, disputes remained unsettled because their opponents would insist on their own interpretation of Scripture, as even Irenaeus complains in *Against Heresies*. [311 - "When, however, they are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and assert that they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition."]

Hence Basil is doing the same thing any apologist would do if the opponent does not accept one arm of his institution, he will use the arm the opponent does accept — in this case, Scripture. We do the same thing in this book. For the most part we argue from Scripture, because that is all our opponents will accept as authoritative.

We must also add that in Basil's argument from Scripture with his opponents, he spends most of his time reasoning out conclusions from the rudimentary but incomplete information that Scripture contains. For example, in the letter to Eustathius that the Mr White cited, Basil is trying to convince his opponents of the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. For anyone familiar with Scripture, this is no small task, since Scripture's references to these two characteristics of the Holy Spirit are sparse at best. Hence we find Basil drawing conclusions from Scripture which, from the particular passage he cites, neither speak directly about the Holy Spirit nor contain the conclusion he reaches. Consequently, we find Basil relying mostly on his reasoning from Scripture rather than explicit statements in Scripture about the nature of the Holy Spirit. He writes "Wherefrom I judge it right to hold that the Spirit, thus conjoined with Father and Son in so many sublime and divine senses, is never separated" (Letters, 1895); "...there is no reasonable ground for refusing to allow the same association in the case of that word alone..." (ibid); "...about things which are beyond our knowledge we reason on probable evidence...fire does not freeze; ice does not warm; differences of natures implies difference of the operations proceeding from them" (1896); "...nevertheless any one, arguing from what is known to us, would find it more reasonable to conclude that the power of the Spirit operates even in those beings..." (1897); "It follows that, even if the name of Godhead does signify nature, the community of essence proves that this title is very properly applied to the Holy Spirit" (ibid); "...since we find no variation in the nature, we reasonably define the Holy Trinity to be of one Godhead" (1898).

In light of this method of Basil, we note also that where the Fathers offered reasonable conclusions to be drawn from Scripture concerning the nature of the Holy Spirit, it was the Catholic Councils, affirmed by the respective Popes, that took from Tradition and the reasoned conclusions of the Fathers the information they needed to formulate dogmatic proclamations concerning the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit.

Now, let's treat the passage as it originates in Gregory of Nyssa's writing. Gregory's context is very similar to Basil's. He is in a battle with the Pneumatomachi, who, based on their own tradition, accuse Gregory of "preaching three Gods" or "they allege that while we confess three Persons we say that there is one goodness..." (NPNF, Vol. 5, p. 326). Gregory then states "But the ground of their complaint is that their custom does not admit this, and Scripture does not support it." Gregory then gives the same reply that Basil gives. Since the Pneumatomachi will not listen to the Tradition or authority of the Church, Gregory goes to Scripture to defend his case. As for Gregory's dedication to the Church and her Tradition he writes, "For it is enough for proof of our statement, that the tradition has come down to us from our Fathers, handed on, like some inheritance, by succession from the Apostles and the saints who came after them (Against Eunomius 46).

And what does Gregory think of his Church?

"While the Church teaches that we must not divide our faith amongst a plurality of beings, but must recognize no difference of being in three Subjects or Persons, whereas our opponents posit a variety and unlikeness amongst them as Beings..." (Against Eunomius, Book I, 19).

In fact, you will NEVER find a statement in Gregory which pits the authority of the Church against the authority of Scripture. In fact, you will NEVER find any Father who does it. The challenge for Mr. White is to find us such passages. Let's cease with the passages that are constantly brought forth for proof of sola scriptura which, when examined, merely extol the quality of Scripture over against man and his ideas. Let's see if Mr. White can find just one recognized Father who says that Scripture is the authority over the Church, that we are to subsume every belief under Scripture, no matter what the Church teaches; or that Scripture is the authority over Tradition, that what was passed down as apostolic tradition is not an authority as great as Scripture and should not necessarily be used to interpret Scripture. Just one will do Mr. White. Until then, I suggest you remove Gregory of Nyssa from you salutation.

Robert Sungenis

From ArtSippo@aol.com

Message-Id <db514a61.2447e10f@aol.com>

Date Thu, 15 Apr 1999 204047 EDT

Subject Re White responds

Dear Bob

A brilliant job!

As usual, an honest reading of the Fathers with an eye to understanding them in context makes a mockery of the fraudulent claims of Pseudo and his minions. Since they cannot win by telling the truth, they deliberately lie to try and fool us. But they cannot fool God. Their allegiance to lies and slander shows us who their true lord is and makes our course of action clear. We need to continue to pray for their deliverance from demonic oppression.

Art

From Irishchico@aol.com

Message-Id <eb2855cb.2448000c@aol.com>

Date Thu, 15 Apr 1999 225300 EDT

Subject Re White responds

<<

A brilliant job!

As usual, an honest reading of the Fathers with an eye to understanding them in context makes a mockery of the fraudulent claims of Pseudo and his minions. Since they cannot win by telling the truth, they deliberately lie to try and fool us. But they cannot fool God. Their allegiance to lies and slander shows us who their true lord is and makes our course of action clear. We need to continue to pray for their deliverance from demonic oppression.

>>

Ah c'mon, Art. Why are you going soft on him? Tell us how you really feel!

<VBG>

That was a brilliant job, Bob. Many thanks ;o)

God bless,

John

Now, that looks pretty impressive! But, did Mr. Sungenis do his homework? Let's find out: [click here for the response](#).

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"Our ambition...is to be pleasing to Him" (2 Cor. 5:9)

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Many Thanks, Honorius

by James White

Six and a half hours of intensive debate over the course of two evenings. That's the privilege I had July 6-7, 2000. The first three hours had an audience of hundreds of thousands, as I was privileged to join Hank Hanegraaff at the headquarters of the Christian Research Institute in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, for the third "marathon" session of **The Bible Answer Man Broadcast**. Only three times in the history of BAM have they ever gone for three consecutive hours: in 1995 when I joined Hank and discussed my book, *The King James Only Controversy*, in 1996 when I engaged in a dialogue on Roman Catholicism with James Akin of *Catholic Answers*, and now this third time, again on Catholicism, with Tim Staples of St. Joseph Communications.

I was accompanied on my journey to Southern California by my good friend Warren Smith. Warren and I were joined by Eddie Dalcour once we reached the LA area, and the three of us went to the headquarters of CRI together, and then later had dinner at the gracious invitation of Sam Wall of CRI, and thereafter clowned around a bit (see photo). Little did I know how nice it was going to be to have friends like Eddie Dalcour the next evening at the debate in Fullerton where we were outnumbered 5:1. But I'm getting ahead of myself.



The BAM broadcasts were fascinating. They are currently archived at www.equip.org (click on the programs for July 6&7—the third hour has not yet aired at the time of this writing, but should air shortly). I have become accustomed to the fact that I need to speak quickly and concisely because my opponent will get at least 20% more time than I will to make his arguments. This was true with both James Akin and Tim Staples. If a person listens to the programs and times the relative amounts of time both sides are given, they will find that it averages around 60% for the Catholic, 40% for me. Hence, I've learned to ignore the side trails as much as possible, and focus upon the important stuff.

Mr. Staples started off as I expected: in his opening monologue he covered at least six major topics, leaving me the impossible task of refuting false assertions on a broad spectrum of things. We took no calls at all the first hour, even though BAM set a new record for call volume during the three hours, with people still calling in even as we finished the third hour. Then as the callers came in I was pleased to note a fair consistency in the questions. Though one RC caller in the second hour made it clear she considered me a liar, most calls were on the subject of Mary. During one of the breaks Tim commented on how surprised he was about that, and he wondered aloud why more people were not calling about salvation/justification. I replied, "Tim, you've added Mary to the gospel. What do you expect people to ask about?" He had, in fact, admitted on the program that belief in the Bodily Assumption of Mary is part and parcel of the gospel as preached by Rome.

Unfortunately, Mr. Staples does not share my commitment to fairness in dialogue. Any person listening to the broadcasts can hear that he would often interrupt me while I was speaking, or, he would simply make comments over top of me, like, "that's a lie." Strangely, he refused to call me a *liar*, while styling a number of my comments *lies*. Mr. Staples sounded very nervous and would often stumble over his words, or he would start a sentence and then stop half-way through to start a whole new thought. A common response I heard to both the BAM broadcasts and the debate was, "I had no idea what he was saying. He rambled on, going from topic to topic, never making a point."

During the second or third hour we got into the topic of justification a little, and Mr. Staples illustrated the truth of the phrase, "a little Greek is a dangerous thing." In attempting to respond to Romans 5:1 ("Therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ") he immediately left the passage and went to Galatians 2, and there he attempted to make the point that Paul taught that justification was not a certainty. He referred to Galatians 2:16 which states,

nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in

Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

I sat in utter amazement as he insisted that the phrase “so that we may be justified” is a doubtful affirmation because it is in the subjunctive in the Greek. That is, “so that we *might* be justified.” I could tell by looking at the clock that I had little time, but I had to point out the egregious error of such a statement. Any person who can read Greek can see that there is a reason “may be justified” is in the subjunctive: it is in a *hina* clause. This is the classic purpose/result clause in Greek. Paul’s point is so obvious that it is amazing that a Roman Catholic apologist would attempt to use this passage to get around Romans 5:1. Paul says that we (Paul and Peter, Jews by nature) have believed in Christ Jesus *so that* they might be justified: the purpose of their faith in Christ was so that they would be justified by that faith. To read into the passage doubt or hesitation is *utterly unfounded*. No one who is a serious scholar of the language would ever say such a thing. Yet, when I pointed out the grammar of the passage refuted Mr. Staples, as with so much else, his only response was to talk over me and say “that’s a lie.”

Mr. Staples also demonstrated his lack of understanding of the mindset of a true believing Protestant. Mr. Staples, unlike other Roman Catholic apologists like Gerry Matatics or Robert Sungenis, came from a background of Pentecostalism, specifically, he attended the Jimmy Swaggart Bible College. Because of this, he simply did not realize that he was truly “shooting himself in the foot” when he responded as he did to my reading of the classic Marian prayer reproduced below:

O Mother of Perpetual Help, thou art the dispenser of all the goods which God grants to us miserable sinners, and for this reason he has made thee so powerful, so rich, and so bountiful, that thou mayest help us in our misery. Thou art the advocate of the most wretched and abandoned sinners who have recourse to thee. Come then, to my help, dearest Mother, for I recommend myself to thee. In thy hands I place my eternal salvation and to thee do I entrust my soul. Count me among thy most devoted servants; take me under thy protection, and it is enough for me. For, if thou protect me, dear Mother, I fear nothing; not from my sins, because thou wilt obtain for me the pardon of them; nor from the devils, because thou art more powerful than all hell together; nor even from Jesus, my Judge himself, because by one prayer from thee he will be appeased. But one thing I fear, that in the hour of temptation I may neglect to call on thee and thus perish miserably. Obtain for me, then, the pardon of my sins, love for Jesus, final perseverance, and the grace always to have recourse to thee, O Mother of Perpetual Help.

When I read this on the air, not only did Tim Staples keep saying, “Amen” as I read it and nodding his head in agreement, but when I got to the end he said, “And your problem is?” Surely he could not possibly understand how tremendously *offensive* such words are to the ears of any lover of Scripture or the gospel. He handled it with such a cavalier attitude that he immediately lost the ears of any biblically-based Protestant who was still listening at that point, and those who had already figured out where he was coming from were pushed that much farther into a full rejection of all of his claims.

Everyone at the CRI programs agreed that the encounter did not bode well for the coming debate. I was especially concerned about things Tim Staples had done four years earlier when we debated in Fullerton. As you can see from my open letter written after that debate (www.aomin.org/OpenLetter.html), Mr. Staples had constantly gone past his time limits, and he had encouraged the behavior of his “students” who were loud, obnoxious, and rude, one even crying out, “The Eucharist!” at one point during the question and answer period, resulting in a round of applause...for what reason we can only guess. What was most troubling was the proposed cross-examination period. I had requested that we handle this most important part of the debate in the way that is best for the audience: in the formal debate style, where the questioner asks questions, the respondent provides concise responses, and the interaction is free-flowing. Seeing how Mr. Staples couldn’t even let me respond to him without talking over me and saying things like “that’s a lie” on BAM, I was very concerned he would completely run amuck during the cross-exam, which requires control and restraint on the part of both participants. So, prior to the debate, I expressed my reservations to the moderator, Jerry Usher, who like Tim Staples works for St. Joseph’s Communications. He said he would get Tim and I together before the debate to discuss it.

This led to a “huddle” immediately before the debate with Tim Staples, Jerry Usher, and myself. During this discussion I specifically pointed them both to the example set by myself and Mitchell Pacwa during our cross-examination period on Long Island in 1998. Both said they had watched that portion of the debate, and Mr. Staples *specifically* promised to follow the rules for cross-examination. Succinct questions, concise answers, no filibustering. It is a simple rule of debate that the person cross-examining does so in the form of *questions*. That person does *not* comment on the answers. That is left for closing statements. I was so concerned that Mr. Staples would violate the rules that I suggested we impose time limits, but I was assured that he would, in fact, follow the rules. We will see, such was a very, very empty promise.

The Plummer Auditorium is a perfect place for a debate, as far as facilities go. But we are always in the minority

there, and such was the case again for this debate. And since the topic would be significantly more “emotional” for the Roman Catholics than the previous debate, where I was defending the biblical truth of *sola scriptura*, I knew it would be a “rough crowd.” But, I love these opportunities, for though I know a large portion of the Roman Catholics in attendance will not hear my words, *some* will, and God can bless in that situation.

As you walked into Plummer you could see posters, hung by St. Joseph Communications, announcing the debate. Prominently displayed was the title: “Papal Infallibility.” Each program likewise had the title clearly displayed. Why is this important? Because, for the first 30 minutes, it seemed Mr. Staples forgot what the topic was supposed to be.



Since the topic was Papal Infallibility, the Roman Catholic representative gets to go first, so as to define the topic and provide the initial defense of it. So I fully expected Mr. Staples to define the dogma, give some background on it, and then launch pre-emptive strikes in defense of the most commonly used examples of papal error, especially that of Honorius. So I must have looked more than a little confused as Mr. Staples delivered a rambling dissertation, aimed almost only at his fellow, already-convinced Catholics, about the primacy of Peter in the New Testament. Matthew 16, Luke 22, John 21...all the classic passages, but not a *word* about Honorius, Liberius, or anyone else. No defense of Papal Infallibility (hereafter PI). Not even a definition. He never even read from the First Vatican Council. Nothing. Just a presentation about Peter’s alleged primacy.

When my turn came I delivered a 30-minute presentation on the topic of the debate: papal infallibility. I started by providing a short recitation of the statements John Henry Cardinal Newman had made in *opposing* the definition of PI at the Vatican I, and how he had eventually given in to the teaching, resulting in a truly self-contradictory position. I then pointed out that I believe the Pope to have taught many errors, such as the Bodily Assumption of Mary, or transubstantiation. But, I said that these kinds of errors are dismissed by Roman Catholics because of their dedication to the higher authority of the Pope himself. So, I said that we have to focus upon examples that would show the Pope to be in error *on the basis laid out by Roman Catholicism itself*. And this is I sought to prove by presenting information on three papal errors: most of my time was spent on the condemnation of Honorius by the 6th, 7th, and 8th ecumenical Councils; then I spoke of Zosimus’ error in rehabilitating Pelagius and commanding the North African Churches to drop their condemnation of Pelagius and Coelestius (a position the North Africans rejected, and eventually Zosimus had to do a complete about-face); and finally, briefly, I noted the error of Sixtus V and his allegedly infallible Vulgate.

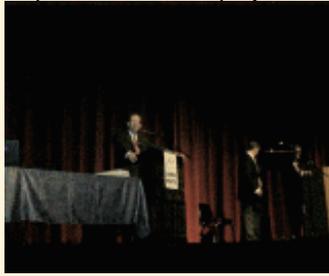
The Protestants in the audience were more than a little surprised when Mr. Staples returned to the podium for his 15 minute rebuttal. He started off by saying that at least *he* had stuck with the Scriptures in his presentation, and he then spoke of the “tactic” I was using of focusing solely upon papal infallibility! When I responded in my time I pointed out that it is amazing to be accused of engaging in the use of a “tactic” just to debate the very topic you were invited to debate in the first place, and that was on every poster hanging in the foyer announcing the event! What a strange thing that is! And I likewise said I would enjoy sticking to Scripture too, but, since the Bible knows nothing of PI, that would be an impossibility. Staples attempted to begin playing catch-up by trying to respond to the information I had presented. But it was an impossible task. I had already provided far too much documentation on the case of Honorius, so that all he could do was attempt to make the same arguments I had already refuted.

At the end of my rebuttal period I pointed out yet another problem for Mr. Staples. I quoted from a papal decree of Alexander IV which prohibited laymen (and Staples is a layman) from engaging in debates with heretics on theological issues. I pointed out that Rome had used these decrees as recently as less than a century earlier. I then said that Mr. Staples would have to explain why these decrees did not apply to him, tell us if they had been rescinded, etc. I quoted extensively from Staples himself, from a tape of his on the papacy, wherein he had asserted that even the *juridical* pronouncements of the Papacy are binding upon Catholics. I closed by saying that either Tim would have to quit and forfeit the rest of the debate in obedience to the Pope, or he would have to demonstrate the fact that Roman Catholics have to privately interpret the Pope themselves. In either case, my point would be made, and it was.

Then came a 15 minutes intermission, during which time I had the pleasure of meeting many fine folks who can come out to support us. But this rest was short, and soon I was standing behind my podium, waiting for Staples to begin his cross-examination.

Remembering the conversation from before the debate, and the clear concerns I had expressed to both the moderator and Mr. Staples, I was experiencing true apprehension. It took no time at all to realize that I had been right all along. [I did a Rush Limbaugh style, “stop the tape!” review of the cross-examination period on the Dividing Line program of 7/22/00, which can be heard by Real Audio by [clicking here](#)]. Staples began by saying he just *had* to respond to what I had said about Alexander IV, and it would only take “5 seconds.” It took a minute. A plain, inexcusable breach of the rules, and the moderator said *nothing*. Then Staples launched into his first “question.” He

made statement after statement, assertion after assertion, and finally, after taking another long period of time, finished his sermonette with the off-topic question, "How do you know Hebrews was in the canon?" Remember, this is supposed to be a debate on PI. The questions are supposed to be on the material already presented. Instead, Mr. Staples decided to go for the old "canon" question. Again, no moderator action. So I answered the question. Staples said, "Perhaps you didn't hear it, let me try again." Another period of commentary leading up to the question. I respond again. This time, he replies not with a question, but by arguing with me. "Is that a question?" I ask. No response, more diatribe. I have not made the effort to time it, but, I would *conservatively* estimate that in the 12 minutes of cross-exam, Staples himself talked, normally making statements, catching up on stuff he wanted to say in earlier sections, or arguing my replies, for 8 of the 12 minutes. One of our regular visitors in our chatroom listened closely to the tapes and counted a grand total of five questions asked by Mr. Staples, one of which was more of a statement to which I answered, "Was that a question, sir?" Five questions in twelve minutes! Only a couple were even on the Papacy, let alone on the topic of the debate. It was *exactly* what I had predicted. He made no effort, at all, to abide by what he had personally *said* he would do only 90 minutes earlier.



At the end of his time period he went on and on and on for about three minutes, with his "question" finally coming right as his time ran out. I began to reply, but halfway through decided it would be best to just get on with my section as I could address the issues better in that format. When I asked the moderator, he agreed, but then the RC's in the audience started yelling out, "Answer the question!" The moderator again said I did not have to, but I pressed on and indicated the answer would come in the next section. And so began the longest twelve minutes Tim Staples had ever spent behind a podium. He never once looked at me the entire time. The same individual who listened to the tapes and counted five questions by Staples counted *thirty one unique* questions by me in my 12 minute period, with a further 8 repetitive questions, "Yes or no, sir?" That means not counting the one statement/question by Mr. Staples, I asked almost *nine times* the number of questions he did, in the same period of time. And they happened to be on the topic of PI. And they happened to be on the information already presented in the debate. In other words, I followed the rules, despite the fact that Mr. Staples acted as if there were no rules at all for how debates are to be run.

The defense Staples used for Honorius, (that Leo II had in essence "corrected" the condemnation of the 6th ecumenical council) collapsed quickly under questioning. Staples insisted that no council is truly infallible until the Pope affirms it. I asked him what councils before the 6th, or where in the 6th itself, we were taught this. He had obviously never even considered the idea, and it was likewise clear he was completely unaware that the idea that a council is dependent upon papal approval made its way into canon law not from the ancient church, but from the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, forgeries that were written around the year A.D. 845, one hundred and fifty years *after* the 6th ecumenical council. Reading that back into the preceding time period is an obvious example of anachronism and is invalid. Staples had no meaningful response. He angrily insisted that Honorius was condemned *only* for his *negligence*. I asked him if, in fact, Honorius' letters had been burned before the Council as "hurtful to the soul." He didn't know. But when he again insisted Honorius was condemned for his actions not his teachings I asked, "Were his letters actions, or teachings?" He was obviously flustered, and often had to look for words. To any person with any level of fairness in their thinking, the debate was over at that point. Well, at least the debate on the announced topic.

In my opening I had said that time failed us to mention so many other possible examples of papal error. I then listed some of those examples that have been used over the years, though I did not even begin to base my case upon them. Yet, Staples chose to focus primarily on some of those, as he seemed more comfortable debating examples I didn't even begin to present and elucidate. This continued in his closing remarks, but even here he blundered badly. He had no response for the Zosimus situation, and when he decided to launch into the fall of Liberius, he made the incredible statement that the Sirmium Creed that Liberius had signed was not really heretical! I was incredulous. But then, as soon as he finished, his ardent supporters were on their feet, applauding wildly and cheering with gusto. It was quite the display.

Then I had the opportunity to speak. I replied to a number of issues, including how Staples had completely dodged the decree of Alexander IV, and then I concluded with these words. I quote directly from the notes I carried with me that evening:

You cannot avoid your duty this evening. You will be the one held accountable for what you believe: no man can bear your responsibility before the throne of God. I cannot convince the mind that is unwilling to listen to facts and reason. But I can, out of love for God and love for His truth, warn any and all who have embraced a deception, a falsehood. And that is why I am here this evening. It is an act of love for God, love for his truth, and love for my fellow man, that has brought me to this place this evening. We have seen that those who desire to believe in Papal Infallibility labor hard and long at finding ways to maintain that belief, even when the facts are clear and compelling. I assert that

unless one had already embraced the theory of Papal primacy and infallibility that the excuses and defenses offered this evening would not even suggest themselves, let alone provide a compelling argument for faith in the infallibility of the bishop of Rome.

Let's review what we have seen thus far this evening. A guide that leads you down the wrong path is not an infallible guide. A guide that leads you to jump off a cliff is not an infallible guide. A guide that has to constantly double-back and make corrections in his guidance is not an infallible guide. "Whoops" is not a valid excuse for one who claims to be infallible. "We made a mistake, we are going to go back and take a second shot at this" does not work when you are telling folks they have to believe everything you have to say to be right with God. In light of this, we have seen how Zosimus had to say "whoops" when Augustine and the North African bishops corrected him and refused his direct command, as bishop of Rome, to accept Pelagius and Caelestius back into communion. He reversed himself and his "mature examination" upon which he had commanded, by the authority of his Apostolic See, the North Africans to reverse course. Instead, he reversed course and contradicted everything he had said before. Who, here, was the infallible guide, Zosimus, or the North African bishops led by Augustine? We have seen how the entire Papacy had to say "whoops" with reference to Honorius who was condemned by not one, not two, but three Ecumenical Councils, and every Pope who took the oath of the papal office for the space of three hundred years. We saw how Pope Leo II likewise anathematized Honorius and said that he had "permitted her who was undefiled to be polluted by profane teaching." If someone had followed the understanding of the bishop of Rome during those years, they would have embraced formal heresy. We have likewise seen how Cardinal Bellarmine had to come up with a lie to cover for Sixtus V's not-quite-as-infallible-as-we-thought Vulgate, a woops of truly biblical proportions.

In each of these instances we have seen that it would have been impossible, on the grounds taken by Rome today, to know if the Pope was speaking the truth or not.

Finally, I reiterate what I believe is an inescapable argument against belief in the infallibility of the Pope. You can't have any confidence that the interpretation you hold this evening of the current Pope's teaching is actually right. You may understand *Ut Unum Sint* or *Veritatis Splendor* or *Redemptoris Mater* one way, but history teaches you one thing without contradiction: fifty years from now, or a hundred years from now, the understanding of the same documents, the same doctrines, may be substantially different than it is today. You may accept a Papal teaching today as authoritative that will not only be abandoned in the future, but may be contradicted in the future. A person who accepted the doctrinal content of Honorius' first letter to Sergius and died in that state would find himself anathematized by the next three ecumenical councils. Remember, Honorius' heretical letters existed for more than 45 years before the official correction of their error. A person who accepted Zosimus' considered and careful conclusion in his encyclical *Magnum Pondus*, as bishop of Rome, that Pelagius and Coelestius were Catholic and orthodox would likewise take heresy into his very soul. The simple fact of the matter is, you don't know that what you *think* the Pope is currently teaching *is* what he is teaching, and what's more, you have no way of knowing if what he really *is* teaching today will be considered orthodox and proper a hundred years from now.

And so I urge you to consider the contrast between the uncertain guide that is the bishop of Rome and the certain guide that is God's Holy Word. While the bishop of Rome is subject to ignorance, political intrigue, abuse of power, sin, greed, and lust, the Scriptures are subject to none of these things. The Scriptures have never led any person into Arianism, Pelagianism, or Monothelism. Only men's own traditions, lusts, and sin have caused them to reject God's truth in the Scriptures and enter into error. The fault has always been that of man, never that of the infallible guide that is the inspired and Holy Word of God. No matter how challenging the exegetical task of understanding even the most difficult passages of Scripture, in comparison with attempting to sort through the maze of Roman history, the volumes of papal encyclicals, the tomes of canon law, the numerous false decretals and forgeries, the reversals and clarifications and canons and decrees and everything else Rome offers the exegetical task of understanding Scripture is nigh unto simplistic. Give me Romans 8 any day over the code of canon law.

As I finished my remarks, the brave and greatly outnumbered band of Protestants likewise leapt to their feet in applause, led, I did not fail to notice, by the young folks in the front row, including my own children, and the children of my good friend Simon Escobedo (see his comments in his review of the debate by [clicking here](#)). They were joined by the students I met from Master's Seminary, by some who had traveled from Talbot Seminary, and our good friends from New Life Orthodox Presbyterian Church in San Diego.

But closing remarks are not the end of a debate. Audience questions are always that wonderfully anti-climactic, never on the topic, never-ending, slow-death to a debate. And so it began. I believe two questions were asked of

Staples: all the rest were aimed directly at me, and almost none had anything at all to do with anything I had said. No one wanted to touch Honorius. No one wanted to attempt to rehabilitate Zosimus. No, they wanted to attack *sola scriptura*, nothing more. It's all they knew, for it is about all the Roman Catholic apologists who have trained them know. But the "lets get the Protestant for daring to say the Pope is wrong" tactic didn't work, for the person to whom the question was asked got 60 seconds to respond, while the other only got 30 to comment. That meant that in the last half hour of the debate, I got to speak about ten minutes, while Tim Staples got to speak about five! I wondered if the folks on the other side realized that was happening.

Finally it was over. A crowd gathered around as I was packing up my computer and my books. My good friend Eddie Dalcour towered over me and kept an eye on things. The Protestants in the audience were ecstatic. They knew what had just happened. A little Catholic lady came up on stage and said to me, "I believe you owe Jesus an apology for calling Him a liar!" I replied, "I would never call Jesus a liar, mam, and I do wish you had listened to *something* I had said." The folks at the auditorium were really hacked with us for going so long, so we got rushed out the door in a matter of minutes.

Before we left I expressed to Jerry Usher, the moderator, my dismay at Mr. Staples' inability to keep his own word and obey rules--rules that exist to give the *audience* a fair shake at following the debate. Mr. Staples showed great disrespect for Mr. Usher, myself, and the audience by his behavior, and I informed Mr. Usher that if Mr. Staples ever wants to debate again, he will need to do some serious review of debate rules.

In the vast majority of my debates I let the tapes speak for themselves, and in this instance, they do so with tremendous clarity. But I will do something very unusual here, and make the clear proclamation: we won the debate Friday night July 7th, 2000, in Fullerton, California. We won it on every level you can win a debate. We won on content, for Mr. Staples chose to ignore the debate topic until we were an hour into the battle. We won on cross-examination, where he failed to even attempt to engage the debate and collapsed on his part when pressed with the issues. We won on every technical question of debate as well. And we won simply because we had the truth on our side and no amount of obfuscation could hide it. And you know why I am *certain* we won? It's easy: if I knew of a person who was considering embracing papal claims, I would not hesitate for a *moment* to send them the tapes of this debate, and I know my fellow Protestants would not either. But while Mr. Staples himself might venture to send the tapes of this debate to such a person, *other Catholics apologists who know better would not*. And *that* proves the point.

---James White

For a review of the debate by Mrs. James White, [click here](#), and for one by Summer White, Dr. White's daughter, [click here](#). Jason Engwer has also written an excellent rebuttal of the comments made by Mr. Staples in his not-quite-on-the-topic opening that I was unable to respond to without abandoning the actual topic of the evening. [Click Here](#) for Jason's article.

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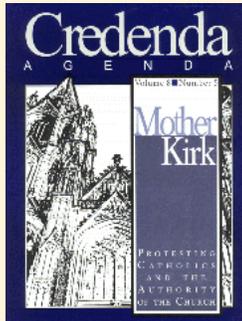
Roman Catholicism

Of Athanasius and Infallibility

Brief Comments and Ruminations Regarding the Written Interchange
Between Douglas Jones and Patrick Madrid on the Subject of
Sola Scriptura.

by James White

The complaint is always the same: you never have enough time to *say* what you want to say in an oral debate, and you never have enough space to *write* what you want to write in a written one. I'm sure both Douglas Jones and Patrick Madrid wish they had more space to dedicate to the topic of *sola scriptura* than the four columns of small print that appeared in the recent issue of *Credenda Agenda* (Volume 8, Number 5, pp. 30-31). But publications generally keep a close eye on the usage of column inches, and the sparring match ended much too soon. A few points needed further comment, and I provide a very brief response below.



The reader is encouraged to peruse the article on the *Credenda Agenda* web site: <http://www.moscow.com/Resources/Credenda/>. I will only reproduce those sections that especially call for comment and expanded response. "PM" stands for Patrick Madrid (of course), and "DJ" for Douglas Jones. I quote from the article:

PM: I'm simply trying to force you to defend the WCF claim, but you seem unwilling to do so. You haven't explained how Scripture can be its own "infallible interpreter," where Scripture claims this, and when Scripture ever actually functioned as such. These elements must be proven if you're to vindicate the *WCF* version of *sola Scriptura*. I contend that you can't prove them since your position is epistemologically untenable. The "who decides?" dilemma pivots on the a priori question: "which 'church' is the Church?" Under the WCF rubric, you can't even determine that with certitude; just as you can't be completely certain the Anabaptist or any view (Rome's, for example) is incorrect. That certainty requires infallibility, otherwise, you're simply guessing.

As I have noted in other articles on this page (such as my [response](#) to Patrick's article on our *sola scriptura* debate), this is the classic Roman argument, and it is certainly one that Patrick uses over and over again. Indeed, I have been told that the book he is writing against the sufficiency of Scripture is titled, *Sola Scriptura: Blueprint for Anarchy*. Yet, it continues to amaze me that Madrid and other apologists like him don't see that they have not escaped the dilemma they claim hangs over the Protestant head. I remember clearly talking with Madrid one afternoon on the phone. We were discussing some of the various viewpoints expressed by Roman Catholics, and I remember saying, "It is so obvious that there are all sorts of different understandings of what Rome teaches-about as many as there are Roman Catholics! You better not ever use that old argument about how many different Protestant denominations there are! It's obviously a double-standard!" Well, seemingly Patrick doesn't see it that way.

The argument used by Patrick here fails for one simple reason: he can't claim infallibility in *interpreting* the *interpretation!* All he's done, epistemologically speaking, is move things back one step. The Protestant openly admits his fallibility in approaching the infallible Scriptures. The Protestant does not claim personal infallibility for himself, or even for the body of believers that is the Church, whether local or universal. Infallibility is a function of the divine. God may well grant *certainty* to a person through the work of the Spirit of God in their heart, but that does not make that person *an infallible authority*. That kind of assurance and certainty is the result of regeneration and spiritual maturity.

Rome claims to get past all of that by claiming infallibility for the Church. You don't have to wonder what the Bible says anymore: Rome will tell you (as I call it, *sola Ecclesia*). But what does this accomplish? Now you have to interpret the teachings of Rome, rather than just the Bible. And it is painfully obvious to anyone who even observes the attacks of Traditionalists upon Karl Keating, or the modernists scoffing at the backward ways of the

conservatives, that Rome's teachings are liable to just as many different understandings as the Bible's. Patrick has wrongly asserted in the past that if *sola scriptura* is true, then there should be no doctrinal differences amongst Protestants (talk about a straw-man view of *sola scriptura*!). If that's the case, then doesn't it follow that if the Roman view is true, all Roman Catholics should be in agreement with each other?

You see, once Rome puts an interpretation of the Bible into writing (and there are precious few of these infallible interpretations around, I might add), that writing now becomes subject to interpretation. Shall we begin to look for an infallible interpreter of the infallible interpretation of the infallible Scriptures? The series would never end, of course, for one simply can't get beyond one fact: we as human beings are fallible. And you, as an individual human being, will always be fallible in your knowledge of any infallible source, whether that be the Scriptures, or some other source you hold in esteem. Does Patrick claim infallible knowledge of all Roman teachings? Is it possible that he might just be *wrong* on a point or two? Well, doesn't he then fall into the very same dilemma he says Protestants are under?

One might expect the response, "But, the Church is alive, and can explain herself." That hasn't changed much, has it? Has the existence of a living Pope who can explain his teachings made all Catholics pro-life, for example? I mean, the current Pope couldn't be much more clear on an issue, could he? Do all Catholics reject the ordination of women to the priesthood, too? And even on issues where there is a true desire to be fully obedient to the Papacy, are there not differences amongst Roman Catholics as to what, exactly, the Church teaches on any one issue? Do we not see different groups citing this encyclical against that one, this pronouncement against that bull? Rome hasn't made the issue simpler with her claims: she's only complicated things.

Patrick's epistemology is only tenable under the rubric of *sola Ecclesia*: the church alone is the final authority in all things. Rome defines the canon, Rome defines the meaning of Scripture. Rome defines tradition, Rome defines the meaning of tradition. Her pronouncements are infallible and unquestionable, and as a matter of faith, they are all self-consistent, too. From that ground you can prove, or disprove, anything, and repulse any and all attacks. Error by a Pope? Can't be, by definition. Error by the Church. Not possible, must be another explanation. Inconsistency between the IVth Lateran Council and Vatican II? Dismiss it as mere ignorance on the part of Protestants. Such an epistemology is just as consistent as the Mormon testimony: and just as tightly circular, too.

PM: Please furnish even one example of Scripture interpreting itself. I reject your interpretation of the verses you cited and your premise that "Scripture alone is . . . infallible." On the contrary, Christ's Church is infallible (cf. Matt. 10:40, 16:18, 18:18,28:20; Luke 10:16; John 14:25-26,16:13; 1 Thess. 2:13; Tim. 3:15). Your argument entails the conclusion that the dogmas promulgated by Nicea I, Ephesus, and Chalcedon were merely fallible, as was the Church's determination of the NT canon. (If this is true, we're all in big trouble!) Your syllogism is flawed, and it's *non sequitur* to claim that Scripture requires an infallible Church (cf. 1 Pet. 1:20-21; 3:15-16). And this debate is your perfect opportunity to prove otherwise: Please demonstrate how Scripture can "infallibly interpret itself" so as to solve this particular standoff.

Let's look at the passages Patrick claims teach that the Church is infallible:

(Mat 10:40) "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

Christ is present in His people, most true. But does that make them infallible? No more than it makes them divine.

(Mat 16:18) "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

Does the eternal plan of God for the Church mean the Church is infallible? This would require Patrick to say that if the Church ever errs, then it has been overpowered by Satan. Does he believe this of himself? When he fails, is he lost? Such requires a tremendous amount of ecclesiastical baggage to be read back into the text. The Church that is united upon the rock of the Messiahship of Jesus (not Peter, I note), will not be overcome, that is quite true. But to extend that to mean that there is a single teaching magisterium, headed up by a Pope, that is infallible in all its doctrinal teachings, is to demonstrate oh so clearly how Roman eisegesis functions when trying to present a biblical basis for its claims.

(Mat 18:18) "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

Again we search in vain for infallibility. The Church's proclamation of the forgiveness of sins represents perfectly the reality that exists in heaven. Again most true, but how that makes Roman prelates infallible is a bit beyond the passage.

(Mat 28:20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Again, this no more makes us infallible than it makes us divine. Christ is with the Church-even when the Church stumbles, becomes enamored with worldly things, and loses sight of what is most important. Aren't we glad for that?

(Luke 10:16) "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

Same comments as above on Matthew 10:40.

(John 14:25-26) "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Quite true again-but what does this have to do with the bishop of Rome in the 10th century, or any other time? Nothing at all.

(John 16:13) "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

The Spirit does guide into all truth. The Spirit is infallible. I am led by the Spirit. But I am not infallible. Does Patrick claim to be led by the Spirit? Is Patrick infallible?

(1 Th 2:13) For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not as the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

A wonderful passage extolling the authority and power of the Word of God. What it has to do with Rome is hard to say, however, and how it makes the Church infallible, again, is hard to say.

Finally, the passage that is always cited:

(1 Tim 3:15) but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

The Church *is* the pillar and support of the truth-which specifically differentiates the Church *from* the truth. The Church holds up, supports, presents, the truth. The question then is, where does she learn the truth? Not from herself, that's for certain. She learns the truth from the voice of God speaking to her. And where does she find the voice of God? In the Scriptures, the voice of the husband to the loving wife, the voice of the Shepherd to the sheep. Nothing about infallibility here, either.

Then Patrick points out that if the Church is not infallible, then the dogmas of the early Councils are likewise fallible. Does Patrick think this is a surprising thing to a Protestant? The authority of creeds and councils is always secondary and derivative. As we shall see, Athanasius defended the decisions of Nicæa on a better ground than the Council itself: that of Scripture. Nicæa was true and "sufficient" not because the "Church" is infallible, but because what Nicæa said was in harmony with Scripture! Anyone familiar with the history of these councils (especially the later ones) knows full well that they were hardly models of Christian behavior, and the wonder is that the main creedal statements were protected from error and kept in line with Scripture! Obviously, secondary issues decided upon by those councils were most definitely fallible, and often contained errors.

As to the claim that the Roman Church (at least in Patrick's figuring) created the NT canon, I refer the reader to the discussion of this large and complex subject in my book, [The Roman Catholic Controversy](#), p. 92ff.

Finally, Patrick claims the Scriptures *require* an infallible Church. Let's look at the passages he offers. Now, I believe we have a typographical error, and Patrick was trying to make reference to 2 Peter, not first:

(2 Pet 1:20-21) But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, [21] for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the

Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Seemingly, Patrick is focusing upon the phrase "one's own interpretation," for I can't see anything else even slightly relevant. But how this presupposes an infallible Church is difficult to say. For a discussion of this passage, and the translational difficulties associated with it, see [The Roman Catholic Controversy](#), pp. 237-239. The next passage cited is another commonly misused text:

(2 Pet 3:15-16) and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, [16] as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

It is the *untaught* and *unstable* who distort the Scriptures to their destruction; hence, what, logically, can the *taught* and *stable* Christian do with the Scriptures?

PM: We agree that the Church weighs passages, but notice that it has always done considerably more than that. The aforementioned councils show that since apostolic times the magisterium saw itself as teaching infallibly, imposing its interpretation of Scripture as dogmatic (Acts 15:28, 1 Thess. 2:13). St. Athanasius explained in *De Decretis* that First Nicaea's definition of Christ as *homoousious* with the Father was not a merely fallible interpretation. This is hardly a "Roman novelty," as you allege. (The nascent Catholic model is visible in Acts 15:15-35, 16:4.) And remember, Orthodoxy also rejects *sola Scriptura*. Like the Catholic Church, they have preserved the ancient Christian teaching that the Church, at least in its ecumenical councils, teaches infallibly. Historically, *sola Scriptura* is the novelty.

I find Patrick's new fascination with Athanasius most heartening, since I have been presenting Athanasius' viewpoints for quite some time now (though Patrick has always accused me of doing little more than cutting and pasting from patristic texts). Indeed, in our debate in 1993, Mr. Madrid blustered that he would "bury" me under 53 pages of citations from the early Fathers! Yet, every time I find Patrick citing from the Fathers, he's providing nothing new at all. And here he's simply stumbled into a morass of error, since Athanasius is the last person he wants to attempt to enlist for the Roman viewpoint.

As Jones points out, Madrid doesn't actually quote from *De Decretis* in his response; instead, he quotes from *Ad Afros*, a later work. Why? Well, I won't repeat all the citations I provided in my article on *sola scriptura* in the [Soli Deo Gloria publication](#) of the same title (1995), nor will I re-enter all the citations I provide from him in their original language found in my [open letter to Tim Staples](#). However, I will simply point out a few interesting things about *De Decretis*.

- *Nowhere in the text will you find an appeal to the Papacy, a Pope, or any similar concept. Why not?*
- *Athanasius defends the Council of Nicæa on one basic, fundamental basis: Scripture.*
- *He does assert that his doctrines are in harmony with those who came before (a clear mark of truth-consistency).*
- *Passage after passage of Scripture is cited as being finally decisive in the matter.*

What is most important, however, is the witness of Athanasius himself. Merely listen to his words:

We have learned from divine Scripture, that the Son of God, as was said above, is the very Word and Wisdom of the Father. For the Apostle says, 'Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God ;'

If then they deny Scripture, they are at once aliens to their name, and may fitly be called of all men atheists , and Christ's enemies, for they have brought upon themselves these names. But if they agree with us that the sayings of Scripture are divinely inspired, let them dare to say openly what they think in secret that God was once wordless and wisdomless ;

yet they do not confess that He is the Son of God,-which is ignorance of the truth, and inexperience in divine Scripture.

And we have proof of this, not from external sources, but from the Scriptures; for God Himself says by Isaiah the Prophet;

Yes, it behooved, say I too; for the tokens of truth are more exact as drawn from Scripture, than from other sources ; but the ill disposition and the versatile and crafty irreligion of Eusebius and his fellows, compelled the Bishops, as I said before, to publish more distinctly the terms which overthrew their irreligion; and what the Council did write has already been shown to have an orthodox sense, while the Arians have been shown to be corrupt in their phrases, and evil in their dispositions.

That Scripture is Athanasius' infallible source is beyond question. That he has high regard for Nicæa is likewise beyond question. That he believes God was involved in Nicæa is quite true. That he believes what Nicæa decided is divine truth no one doubts. But Madrid is simply confusing categories when he tries to have Athanasius make the Church itself infallible *along with* Scripture. For Athanasius, the one is infallible, the other is only in so far as she speaks in harmony with the Scriptures. And it is just because Athanasius can honestly say that he has proven that Nicæa spoke in harmony with the Bible (just as any Protestant apologist today can say the same thing, having provided a full biblical defense of the deity of Christ), that he can utter the only words in *De Decretis* that Madrid might have reference to:

For the faith which the Council has confessed in writing, that is the faith of the Catholic Church; to assert this, the blessed Fathers so expressed themselves while condemning the Arian heresy; and this is a chief reason why these apply themselves to calumniate the Council.

But such a statement is hardly useful in its context. It does not provide Patrick with a denial of the material and formal sufficiency of Scripture from Athanasius. It does not deny in any way that Scripture is the sole *infallible* rule of faith for the Church. Hence, Madrid did not go to *De Decretis*, but to another source for his one citation of Athanasius:

PM: Your dismissal of *De Decretis* as "weak" evidence boggles the mind. Athanasius composed it precisely to refute the Arian claim that the Church teaches fallibly and erroneously. He did appeal "just to the council" to quell the dispute (as Orthodoxy does): "The Confession arrived at Nicea was, we should say, *more sufficient and enough by itself for the subversion of all religious heresies and for the security and furtherance of the doctrine of the Church*" (*Ad Afros*).

Let's take that second sentence: "Athanasius composed it precisely to refute the Arian claim that the Church teaches fallibly and erroneously." I invite any reader to read *Ad Afros* for yourself. It is readily available in the web at various places (for example, <http://ccel.wheaton.edu/fathers/> is one source, the Sage CD Library contains it as well). Read *De Decretis* as well. Ask yourself a question: how can someone read these materials and say that Athanasius is specifically writing to defend *the infallibility of the Church*? He's writing against men who are in positions *in* the Church, who have convened council after council *in* the Church to condemn his own theology and the position of Nicæa! If anyone proves that you should always believe in the *infallibility of Scripture* over against any supposed *infallibility of the Church*, Athanasius proves this! He held out, almost alone, for decades against the combined weight of the institutional Church of his day! It is quite obvious that someone has to be looking for something that comes from another source to be able to read such a concern into Athanasius. His words, quoted above, are easily understood in their context: the definition of Nicæa was *sufficient* to refute Arianism. But the simple fact of history is, it took long years of fighting, replete with in-depth biblical exegesis and study, for the Nicene definition to gain acceptance and obedience. It did not win the final battle because it claimed inherent infallibility: it won that battle because it was in *harmony with* that which is inherently infallible: the revealed Word of God, the Scriptures.

I'm truly glad that Mr. Jones and Mr. Madrid took the time to discuss these issues. I salute them both for having the temerity to "buck the trends" so to speak in tackling the tough topics. I hope Christians will be challenged to look into these things for themselves, and consider well whether they will believe in *sola scriptura*, or *sola Ecclesia*. The decision has eternal consequences.

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Whitewashing the History of the Church

by James White

Catholic writer Steven O'Reilly Demonstrates Yet Again the Utter Circularity of Rome's Use of Patristic Sources: A Response to an Article in the February, 2000 *This Rock* Magazine.

It is the constant theme of the modern resurgence in Roman Catholic apologetics: take the teaching of the Magisterium as the final word, and do to the early Fathers whatever you need to do so as to substantiate the dogmatic teachings of Rome. It is pleasant to read Roman scholars who have come to recognize that the early Church was not Roman in nature. But Roman Catholic apologists have not caught on to the facts of the matter: they continue to function on the basis of pure anachronism, reading back into patristic writings concepts and ideas that were not a part of the theology and belief of the early Church.

Examples abound, but the most recent issue of *This Rock* magazine, from *Catholic Answers*, provides us with a glowing example of this kind of eisegetical interpretation of historical materials. Catholic writer Steven O'Reilly joins the growing group of writers repeating, endlessly, the chant provided by the Magisterium regarding papal primacy. In an article that again shows the propensity of Catholic apologists to engage in Gail Riplinger-like behavior (i.e., to play games with the names of those they are reviewing), we are informed that my brief discussion of the patristic interpretation of John 21:15-17 is in fact "An Attempt to Whitewash Peter's Primacy." It seems *This Rock* really loves my last name (the reader may wish to review the refutation of a previous article, "The White Man's Burden." To do so, [click here](#)). I cannot help but note in passing the irony of the fact that we have had a standing challenge to Karl Keating and *Catholic Answers* to debate right there in San Diego (their headquarters) that has gone unanswered for quite some time now. It seems they prefer one-sided presentations to the type where both sides get equal time.

This new article from *Catholic Answers* focuses upon a page and a half of my book, *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, which, interestingly enough, has never been reviewed by any Roman Catholic apologetics journal. I should be thankful, however, that 1) the book has finally been mentioned, four years after its release, and 2) Mr. O'Reilly does not engage in the same kind of ad-hominem writing that has marked previous articles in *This Rock* and *Envoy* magazines.

The section reviewed begins with the citation of John 21:15-17, and then reads as follows:

Cyril of Alexandria demonstrates that the earliest, and most logical, understanding of this passage is that held by Protestants, not Roman Catholics. In commenting on this passage he said,

If anyone asks for what cause he asked Simon only, though the other disciples were present, and what he means by "Feed my lambs," and the like, we answer that St. Peter, with the other disciples, had been already chosen to the Apostleship, but because meanwhile Peter had fallen (for under great fear he had thrice denied the Lord), he now heals him that was sick, and exacts a threefold confession in place of his triple denial, contrasting the former with the latter, and compensating the fault with the correction.

Here we have the gracious Lord restoring the Apostle who, in his brash impetuosity, had promised to follow Him even to death, and yet had denied Him three times. The three-fold question of Peter, followed by the command to feed or shepherd Christ's sheep, is restorative in nature. Nothing in the passage would even begin to suggest to us that this means that the other Apostles were not likewise commissioned to feed and pastor Christ's flock on an equal basis with Simon Peter. There is no indication that *only* Peter is told to shepherd God's flock. Indeed, if such were the case, Paul seems to have been ignorant of this, for he instructed the Ephesians elders in Acts 20:28 to "Be on guard for

yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Paul does not say, "As Peter is the chief shepherd, you act as undershepherds of the flock of God." No, again, the only way that such an understanding can be found is if we take a much later development and read it back into the texts, as our Roman Catholic friends are forced to do. This passage in no way sets Peter apart as the prince of the Apostles. Instead, it shows that he was in need of special pastoral care on the part of Christ.

A footnote is attached to the quote of Cyril which reads:

As cited by George Salmon, *The Infallibility of the Church*, pp. 345-346. B.C. Butler [*The Church and Infallibility: A Reply to the Abridged "Salmon"* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), pp. 190-191] can only point to another reference in Cyril (Migne, *Patrologiæ Græcæ*, lxxii, 424) that refers not to John 21, but Matthew 16, which says the Lord appointed Peter "shepherd." Of course He did: just as He appointed the rest of the Apostles.

This is the material ostensibly under review. Unfortunately, the article makes no pretense to fair review of the material: it begins, and ends, with the assertion of Roman dogmatic interpretation. No attempt is made to provide a positive defense of that dogmatic interpretation: it is assumed, never proven. In fact, that is the problem with all Roman attempts at exegesis: they cannot meaningfully engage the text due to the over-riding consideration of Rome's dogmatic teachings. The proposed meaning of the text does not come *from* the text but from Rome's theology. It is placed *onto* the text eisegetically. O'Reilly begins his article with the assertion of what John 21 means: no attempt is made, whatsoever, to actually address the passage on *any* level: grammatically, lexically, syntactically, contextually, or in any other way. He begins,

In John's gospel Jesus—addressing himself specifically to Peter—charges Peter to "feed my lambs," "tend my sheep," and "feed my sheep." "Tending" and "feeding" are metaphors for governing and teaching, a clear indication that Christ intended Peter to govern and teach his "sheep," i.e., the whole Church. Peter, and through him his successors, the bishops of Rome, are granted a universal primacy over the Church.

Nothing in the rest of the article provides us with any basis upon which to accept these claims. This is merely the repetition of the claims of Vatican I, yet, it becomes obvious that this is where O'Reilly begins and therefore, not surprisingly, ends as well. The fact that this involves circular reasoning does not seem to find a place in the consciousness of the defender of Roman claims, but to the person seeking meaningful biblical and historical argumentation, it is a clear indication of the fallacy of the Roman position. We are not told why "tending" and "feeding" are metaphors for governing and teaching in the Papal sense. We are not told why, in light of the context, and the preponderance of the interpretation of the early church (even admitted by O'Reilly), these words do not simply indicate the restoration of Peter to the position of apostle and leader in the Church, along with the rest of the Apostles. We are not told why shepherding sheep must mean shepherding *all* sheep everywhere. No passage, anywhere in Scripture, makes reference to Peter's "successors," nor to the bishop of Rome (nor could it: there was no single bishop in Rome until long after the last of the Apostles had died). The fact that O'Reilly can find in this passage such momentous conclusions proves that something other than the text is in view.

As we review the article, I will ask a few questions: 1) Did Cyril say what I said he said? 2) Is Cyril's interpretation (that John 21:15-17 is restorative in nature) the earliest we find in the patristic writings? 3) Do we find other fathers, earlier than Cyril, applying this passage as modern Rome does? 4) What is the general viewpoint of the fathers who do address this passage? With which interpretation is it consistent? By keeping these things in view, we will discover that this article in fact demonstrates that my assertion was correct: despite all the other issues raised by O'Reilly, in the end, it is confirmed that Cyril did write these words and that in fact the majority of early Fathers agreed.

Indistinguishable?

Twice in his article O'Reilly is not perfectly accurate in his statement of the Protestant view regarding Peter expressed in my writings. In the introduction to the article it is said that I attempt "to show that Peter's role was indistinguishable from that of the other apostles." And later he writes, "White claims that Peter's role is indistinguishable from the other apostles, saying John 21:15-17 does not establish that 'only Peter was told to shepherd God's flock.'" It is true that as far as apostleship is concerned, there is no exaltation of Peter to a position of primacy above his fellows. But surely his role is "distinguishable." Peter is the first to preach the gospel to Gentiles, and takes the lead in many of the initial works of the church. He is the apostle to the Jews, just as Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. So it is not the Protestant claim that Peter's ministry is not special or unique: the claim is that he is not given a primacy, made a Pope, with absolute jurisdictional authority over even the other apostles.

The Ephesian Elders

The first point of disagreement raised by O'Reilly has to do with my comments on Acts 20 and Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders. He argues that this does not mean that Paul was not aware of the "Petrine primacy" since the shepherding referred to in Acts 20 is limited in scope. The Ephesian elders were bishops only in the Ephesian church. Peter, it is claimed, was shepherd over all. However, O'Reilly *assumes* the existence of the Petrine primacy. He makes no effort to prove his point. He writes,

The Lord, on the other hand, in addressing Peter neither implies nor places any such limitations upon the jurisdiction of his office. Peter is to feed and shepherd—teach and govern—the Lord's flock "among which" the Lord placed him—that is, the whole flock, the universal Church.

This is classic circular argumentation. If Christ chose to place Peter in a position of apostleship where He ministered to only a portion of the Church, would this not involve feeding and shepherding the sheep? Of course. So, upon what basis do we assume, as O'Reilly does, that these words, which make no reference to an office, make no reference to successors, and make no reference to power, jurisdiction, or the church, mean that Jesus is here making Peter a singular, distinctive leader of the universal Church? The only source of such an interpretation is Rome's own claims for herself: the text says nothing in support of O'Reilly's conclusion.

But, let's accept the argument for a moment and see where it leads. If the limitation of the sphere of the Ephesians elders is relevant, then it follows that the following would be relevant as well:

(for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles) (Galatians 2:8)

Peter's apostleship was specifically to the "circumcised"? Such is the statement of the text. By the time of Paul's meeting with Peter the role Peter had exercised in opening the door of the gospel had been reduced. God chose Paul, not Peter, to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. One could easily argue that since the Gentile mission was *significantly* larger and more central to the future of the Church than the Jewish, that this would "clearly" indicate a supremacy of Paul, not Peter, but such would involve the same kind of eisegetical interpretation rampant in Roman Catholic writings. The fact of the matter is that nowhere in the New Testament do we see this "universal authority" of Peter *outside of the universal authority held by all apostles of Christ in the primitive Church*. The Ephesian elders ruled in the Church in Ephesus, not as underlings of Peter in Rome, but as appointed by the Apostle Paul so to carry out those duties. When the apostles were no longer on earth, the eldership functioned as the New Testament indicated: as the office that gives direction and guidance to the local assemblies, which was the order of the Church ordained by the Apostles. This primitive form continued side-by-side with the episcopal form in the earliest years, even prevailing at Rome until the fifth decade of the second century.

Cyril on Papal Primacy

O'Reilly continues his review by noting that "it is true Cyril stresses the restorative nature of the passage in question." This is at the very least encouraging: a recognition of the truthfulness of my assertion. But our author is quick to assert that "it does not follow that Cyril's statement is incompatible with the Catholic understanding." I quickly point out that the assertion I made is that Cyril 1) does not see in the text the establishment of Peter in a position of primacy, as modern Rome asserts, and 2) that this is the earliest interpretation found amongst the Fathers: the *Roman* interpretation is the later (much later) development. O'Reilly never provides a *single* counter-citation showing an earlier pro-Roman interpretation of the passage at hand, which seems, in and of itself, to prove my point. Instead, he attempts to say that Cyril must have understood the passage in a way commensurate with Rome since, elsewhere, he makes statements O'Reilly interprets as being consistent with Roman claims. No attempt is made to provide any quotations from Cyril *about John 21*. Instead, a lengthy discussion is introduced that attempts to say that Cyril believed that the bishop of Rome was the sole successor of Peter, which, evidently, means that he must have understood John 21 as modern Roman Catholics do *even if we have no evidence in his own writings that he did so*. This end-run, while most interesting, only shows the desperation of the Roman apologist who refuses to admit that in fact the earliest interpretations found in tradition do *not* present the very belief they *must* read into all ancient patristic literature: the belief in Roman supremacy.

The evidence presented that Cyril would have held to the Roman concept of Papal primacy consists of three points: 1) that elsewhere Cyril speaks of Peter being appointed "shepherd." O'Reilly assumes this means *chief* shepherd of the Church universal; 2) That in speaking of Matthew 16 Cyril teaches that Christ set Peter as shepherd over the Church (no reference is given); and 3) that Cyril referred the case of Nestorius to Pope Celestine and acted as representative of the bishop of Rome at the Council of Ephesus. However, even if all of these things proved that Cyril viewed Peter as having a primacy over Paul and the other apostles, and that this primacy was passed on to the bishop of Rome *alone* (and no attempt is made to prove this from the data cited), it would not follow that Cyril viewed

John 21:15-17 as establishing Peter as the chief shepherd of the flock. But, even here, the Roman apologist is in a difficult position. In response I note:

1) Yes, Peter was appointed shepherd of the flock of God. As I have noted, it is the burden of the Roman controversialist to prove that it is the “universal faith” of the Church, found in the “unanimous consent” of the Fathers, that this means Peter is a Pope, the chief shepherd, the pastor of all Christians in a way utterly unlike Paul or John. What is sure is that even if Cyril believed this (and saying Peter is shepherd does not, without invoking the most obvious form of special pleading, mean this), *he did not see John 21:15-17 teaching it.*

2) It is interesting to note the selective use of patristic sources that, of necessity, marks Roman Catholic controversialists. While the Protestant is free to allow the Fathers to be themselves, recognizing that each ancient writer was closer or farther from biblical truth, depending on their learning, their historical context, etc., the Roman Catholic is forced to place each writer in a preconceived mold, often resulting in great contradiction. We will see this below in the citation of John Chrysostom. Here we find Cyril’s position being only partially presented. The same Cyril, commenting on Luke 9:43-45 in Homily 53, said,

When the blessed Peter had been counted worthy of a grace thus glorious and wonderful, being in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi, he made a correct and faultless confession of faith in Him, saying, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And what was the reward of which he was thought worthy? It was to hear Christ say, Blessed art thou, Simeon, son of Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father in heaven. And he further received surpassing honors; for he was entrusted by Him with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the confession of his faith was made the firm foundation for the Church. For thou, He says, art a stone; and upon this stone I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not overpower it. Saint Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke*, Homily 53, trans. R. Payne Smith (Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983), p. 232.

Are we to believe that an ancient writer who saw Matthew 16 being fulfilled in the *confession* of Peter (in opposition to the dogmatic interpretation of Rome that sees this being fulfilled in Peter himself) was actually intent upon believing that the bishop of Rome was the sole successor of Peter, the vicar of Christ on earth? It seems it is being suggested that a man who interpreted *both* John 21 and Matthew 16 *contrary to Rome’s modern view* still, in spite of this, held to the Roman view! We can see here how a precommitment to Roman supremacy determines the outcome of any study of patristic sources, facts and logic notwithstanding.

3) The final argument is based upon Cyril’s alliance with Celestine regarding the Nestorian situation. But anyone familiar with Cyril’s personal behavior well knows this is not much of an argument. As Schaff notes:

He was the most zealous and the most influential champion of the anti-Nestorian orthodoxy at the third ecumenical council, and scrupled at no measures to annihilate his antagonist. Besides the weapons of theological learning and acumen, he allowed himself also the use of wilful misrepresentation, artifice, violence, instigation of people and monks at Constantinople, and repeated bribery of imperial officers, even of the emperor’s sister Pulcheria. By his bribes he loaded the church property at Alexandria with debt, though he left considerable wealth even to his kindred, and adjured his successor, the worthless Dioscurus, with the most solemn religious ceremonies, not to disturb his heirs. (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, III:944).

Pointing to flowery and exalted language used by such a person in the prosecution of a cause that saw him use violence and bribery to execute is hardly an argument that will carry much weight with anyone familiar with the historical context. Cyril was not above lauding anyone who would support him, nor above beating senseless anyone who opposed him. But, of course, none of this is relevant to the actual topic at hand: the fact remains, despite all the dust thrown in the air in the attempt to obscure it, that Cyril’s understanding of John 21 is non-Papal, and *does* represent the earliest and most widely taken view.

Proto-Protestants?

Before looking at the next section we must lament the seemingly unavoidable straw-man argumentation that marks everything *Catholic Answers* does. Without any reason or basis, O’Reilly writes, “Further, it was Cyril, whom White attempts to conscript to his cause as if the Alexandrine patriarch was a proto-Protestant...” Just as *Envoy* magazine falsely accused me of turning the church leaders at Nicea into Baptists (see my article at <http://www.equip.org/free/DN-206.htm> and my response to the *Envoy* article in the *CRI Journal* volume 21, number 4), so too *This Rock* cannot abide the fact that a Protestant can quote the early Fathers *against their own position*. In reality, it is the Roman apologist who must turn all the early Fathers into Roman Catholics: I can simply allow them to be what they were. I don’t have to turn them into Protestants or anything else: by just letting them speak for

themselves it becomes obvious that such things as the modern Papal interpretation of John 21:15-17 was *not* the view of the early Church.

Cyril of Jerusalem

Next Mr. O'Reilly attempts to enlist the aid of Cyril of Jerusalem. He does so in this context:

White claims ancient Christian commentators "did not find the constitution of the Church in these [biblical] passages, as later claimed by Rome." However, this is simply not the case. Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386), in the same breath that he speaks of Peter's three denials, calls Peter "the chiefest and foremost of the apostles" (*Catechetical Lectures* 2:19).

So does it follow that the early Church *did* see the very constitution of the Church in Matthew 16 and John 21? Surely such is a huge leap. Let's look first at what Cyril of Jerusalem actually said in *Catechetical Lectures* 2:19:

What then? When Nabuchodonosor, after having done such deeds, had made confession, did God give him pardon and the kingdom, and when thou repentest shall He not give thee the remission of sins, and the kingdom of heaven, if thou live a worthy life? The LORD is loving unto man, and swift to pardon, but slow to punish. Let no man therefore despair of his own salvation. Peter, the chiefest and foremost of the Apostles, denied the Lord thrice before a little main: but he repented himself, and wept bitterly. Now weeping shews the repentance of the heart: and therefore he not only received forgiveness for his denial, but also held his Apostolic dignity unforfeited.

What a difference context makes! We note just a few things: 1) the passage is about the need for repentance. It is not about the church, offices in the church, or the interpretation of John 21, specifically. 2) Peter is brought forward as a tremendous example because of his position as apostle. 3) If there is any reference to John 21 here, it is obviously in reference to the very viewpoint Cyril of Alexandria presented, for Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of Peter's receiving forgiveness and also holding "his Apostolic dignity unforfeited"! This would support the restorative interpretation presented by Cyril of Alexandria, not the exaltation interpretation of modern Rome. The very fact that a passage that presents Peter as an example of *restorative repentance* has to be pressed into use in this manner shows how utterly desperate the Roman Catholic apologist is to find substantiation for his anachronistic interpretation of patristic sources.

But again we find no basis for saying that the early Church saw in these passages the constitution of the entire Church. Where is the constant discussion of these passages from Ignatius forward, if, indeed, these are the passages upon which the very Church herself is founded? They do not exist. Therefore, the assertion stands unchallenged.

John Chrysostom

O'Reilly comes closest to providing a meaningful counter-citation in Chrysostom's interpretation (*Commentary on St. John's Gospel*, 88). The mixed view Chrysostom provides, including both the restorative view as well as an assertion that Peter is here given a "chief authority" is almost supportive of the Roman viewpoint. Unfortunately for O'Reilly, Chrysostom is no friend to the exalted claims of the Roman papacy. Even if Chrysostom were to believe Peter was a Pope, it does not follow that he would believe the bishops of Rome were Peter's sole successors. Indeed, it is well known that he did not believe any such thing. For even though he saw an element of authority in the restoration of Peter, he likewise did not see Matthew 16 (the *key* Papal passage) in the way Rome does today. There are numerous passages that could be cited, but the clearest is:

Upon this rock. He did not say 'upon Peter' for it is not upon the man, but upon his own faith that the church is built. And what is this faith? 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" (*In Pentecosten*, Migne 52.806.75-807.1)

Vatican I described such a view as "perverse," but as the student of history knows, it was a well-attested position in ancient times, *far better attested* than any view commensurate with Rome's. Still, the citation of Chrysostom is O'Reilly's best work: and it shows again that 1) Cyril's view preceded Chrysostom's, and 2) the restorative emphasis was found even when a special privilege was seen in the passage. Interestingly, this did not lead Chrysostom to believe the bishop of Rome was his superior, nor did it lead him to view Matthew 16 as Rome does, nor Luke 22:31-32.

Augustine

It does not seem that any discussion of ancient theology can be pursued without invoking the great name of Augustine. But surely by now Roman controversialists should be aware that Augustine is no friend of their cause. Unless it is assumed that their audience will not check things out for themselves, the citation of Augustine is devastating to Roman pretensions on this topic. Only a glancing (and a-contextual) citation is provided, that being the famous passage in Augustine's anti-Manichaean work. It is admitted, thankfully, that even Augustine gives the restorative interpretation of the passage (supporting my own position). The quotation is given, unfortunately, to make it look like the words cited are relevant to John 21 when they are not. Augustine stands firmly in the non-Papal class in his interpretation of the key Papal texts, including Matthew 16, John 21, and Luke 22. And should anyone think he held a view of the bishop of Rome as the universal head of the Church with infallible teaching authority, I suggest a brief review of the reaction of Augustine and the North African Churches to the silly restoration of Pelagius by the incompetent bishop of Rome Zosimus is in order.

Quoting Rome in Support of Rome

Following the failed attempt to find any relevant citations on John 21 that precede Cyril, and having hopefully lost the reader in the large number of issues raised since the original thesis was introduced, citations from Roman pontiffs made in the service of their own aggrandizement are adduced. What is incredible is the fact that the statement of the Council of Florence (written eleven hundred years after Cyril) is quoted as if relevant to the issue at hand! Anyone slightly familiar with the history of this "council" and its utter rejection by Orthodoxy can only find its citation further evidence of the bankruptcy of the position being defended. See Schaff's History (VI: 179-185) for details.

O'Reilly's Conclusion

After a few pages of disjointed and often irrelevant citations, our author concludes,

Clearly, the constitution of the Church, contrary to White's objections, has been seen in such verses down through the centuries since the time of Christ.

Obviously, this is a statement of faith, words of wishful thinking, not the conclusion of any meaningful argument. The earliest materials presented come from the period of the fourth century (not the time of Christ); they skip past entire centuries where not a word in support of Papal pretensions is to be found; and we have seen that the materials that were presented were based upon either avoiding the real issue (the historic interpretation of the key papal passages, especially John 21) or by inserting anachronistic interpretations into passages far too feeble to bear the load. Yet, the Roman apologist can offer such piece-meal material and then conclude, "See, I have proven my case. Everyone has always agreed with me." Such wishful thinking is obvious to the person approaching the topic with any semblance of fairness. O'Reilly continues:

We have the plain words of Scripture that Jesus bestowed to Peter universal jurisdiction over the Church. The Greek and Latin Fathers understood the verses in question in the sense of and Catholic teaching (*sic*).

It almost takes one's breath away to realize that our writer is being perfectly serious here. Though not a shred of evidence has been offered to support these grand sweeping claims, yet they are actually seen in the mind of the person submitted to Roman supremacy as having been established. From the very start this has been the assertion of the article: the opening paragraph begins with this assumption, and here we have the very same concept appearing in the conclusion. Unbiased persons recognize this as circular reasoning. The faithful son of Rome thinks it is valid argumentation.

So what have we seen? First, every statement cited from *The Roman Catholic Controversy* has been verified. No earlier or more pervasive understanding of John 21:15-17 has been presented. Therefore, the entire article is a study in how to *not* respond to meaningful Protestant argumentation. Next, we have been offered no foundation upon which to accept the very first assertion of the article: that John 21 speaks of a universal teaching office given to Peter and then through Peter to his successors. No attempt has been made to show how it is that the passage can speak to *both* the restoration of Peter from his fall *as well as* the establishment in him of an infallible and perpetual teaching office. While the article attempts to say that the early church did see in these passages the very constitution of the Church, no evidence has been provided outside of disjointed citations that bear no direct relationship to the interpretation of the passage. The self-serving claims of Popes, and the humorous example of the "ecumenical" council of Florence is all that our writer has mustered, and these come from *long* after the time of Cyril of Alexandria. Such amounts to saying, "The modern Roman position is true because modern Rome says so." But then again, when one thinks about it, that is all Rome has to say in any case. And that is why knowledgeable Protestants reject Rome's claims, and invite all men everywhere to likewise reject such pretensions and stand for the freedom of the Christian faith.

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was martin luther wrong?

was martin luther wrong? justified by faith alone r.c. sproul

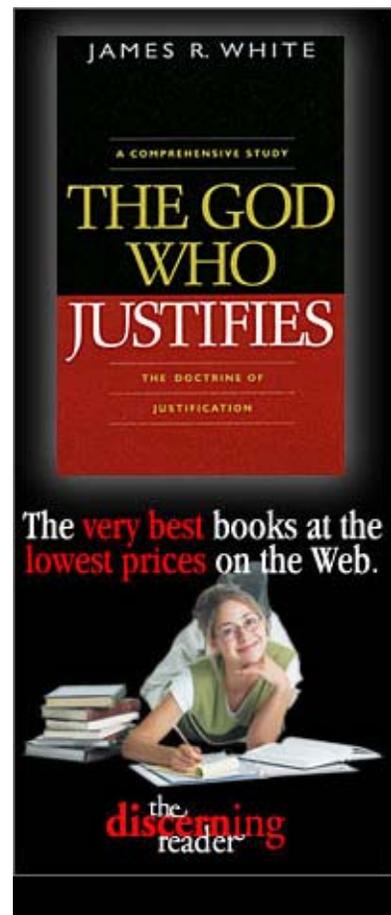
Since the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, “by faith alone” (*sola fide*) has been the defining doctrine of evangelical Christianity — and the way of justification the defining difference between Roman Catholics and evangelicals. But in recent years these differences have been downplayed — or seemingly ignored — by leading evangelical leaders such as Billy Graham and Charles Colson. Most so-called “Christian booksellers” carry books from both evangelical and Roman Catholic publishing houses. A leading Christian recording artist, Michael Card, recently recorded and toured with Roman Catholic monk/musician John Michael Talbot. While these things have not gone without criticism, their widespread acceptance has led a number of evangelicals to ask:

Whatever happened to the Reformation?
Was Martin Luther wrong?
Does it matter any more?

In this article R. C. Sproul examines what justification is according to Scripture, compares the Roman Catholic and evangelical stances on this core doctrine, and discusses the relationship of faith and works — all to show why “by faith alone” is so essential. As Sproul puts it,

The crucial issue of infusion verses imputation remains irreconcilable. We are either justified by a righteousness that is in us or by a righteousness that is apart from us. There is no third way.

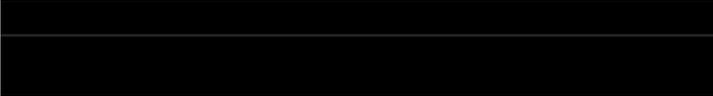
The gospel according to Rome is the “good news” that a sinner may be justified if he or she receives the sacraments, has faith, and cooperates with grace to the point of becoming inherently righteous. That justification is effective as long as the believer refrains from mortal sin. If the person loses justification by mortal sin, he or she may be restored to justification by the sacrament of penance. If the person



dies not in mortal sin but with impurities, he or she can get to heaven after being cleansed in purgatory.

Was Luther wrong in standing against this teaching?

Using the Bible as your guide, you be the judge.



R. C. Sproul is the founder and principal teacher of Ligonier Ministries, which provides Christians with materials on theology, history, Bible study, apologetics, and Christian ethics. He is also Visiting Professor of Theology and Apologetics at Knox Theological Seminary in Florida and holds positions at Reformed Theological Seminary and Westminster Theological Seminary.

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What Was Wrong with Luther?

What was the matter with Martin Luther? some might ask. The matter with Luther was a matter of the greatest possible urgency.

The matter with Luther was that **sin** matters.
The matter with Luther was that **salvation** matters,
ultimately and eternally.

Luther felt the weight of these matters to a degree few people, if any, have felt them in human history. These issues mattered enough to Luther to compel him to stand against the authority of church and state in a lonely and often bitter contest that made him Luther *contra mundum*. [=against the world]

Following the ancient Aristotelian form-matter schema, historians have pinpointed the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) as the material cause of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. It was the chief matter under dispute. Luther considered it "the article upon which the church stands or falls." At a personal level he understood that it was the article upon which he himself stood or fell.

Thus, since the Reformation the doctrine of *sola fide* has been the defining doctrine of evangelical Christianity. It has functioned as a normative doctrine because it has been understood as essential to the Gospel itself. Without *sola fide* one does not have the Gospel; and without the Gospel one does not have the Christian faith. When an ecclesiastical communion rejects *sola fide*, as Rome did at the Council of Trent, it ceases being a true church, no matter how orthodox it may be in other matters, because it has condemned an essential of the faith. Whereas at Worms Luther stood, at Trent Rome fell and remains fallen to this day.

The Character of God

The dilemma Luther experienced in the anguish of his soul was related in the first instance to his correct understanding of the character of God. One of the essential attributes of God (essential in that without it God would not be God) is his justice. The Scriptures clearly reveal that the God of heaven and earth is just. This means far more than that the judgment he renders is equitable. It is not only that God does what is just, but that he does what is just because he is just. His righteous actions flow out of his righteous character.

That God is eternally and immutably just posed for Luther (as it should also pose for us) the ultimate dilemma, because we are not just. We are sinners lacking the perfect justness of God. Our sin violates the supreme standard of righteousness found in God's character. This is the burden Luther felt so keenly, but which we tend to treat lightly. We are inclined to think that God is so merciful that his mercy will annul or cancel out his justice. We assume that God will grade us on a curve and that he is quite willing to negotiate his own righteousness.

As sinners with recalcitrant hearts, human beings have no fear of the justice of God, in part because they are ignorant of his law and additionally because, when they are aware of it, they hold it in contempt. We have all become, as Jeremiah said of Israel, like a harlot who has lost the capacity to blush (Jer. 6:15; 8: 12). We assume that our works are good enough to pass the scrutiny of God at the final tribunal. And we do this despite the apostolic warning that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified (Rom. 3:20).

People who consider themselves just enough in their own goodness do not tremble before the law and feel no need for the Gospel. For such, the matter of justification is not of great importance. It is merely a "doctrine," and to the contemporary church few things are deemed less important than doctrine. "Doctrine divides," we are told. "What matters is that we have a personal relationship with Jesus. The doctrine of justification doesn't save us; it is Christ who saves us."

Doctrines Unite

Certainly doctrines do divide. Certainly doctrines do not in themselves save us. Certainly we are called to have a personal relationship with Christ. However, doctrine also unites. It unites those who share one Lord, one faith, one baptism. And though doctrines do not save us, they correctly inform us of how we are saved.

It must be added, too, that having a personal relationship with Jesus does not save us unless it is a saving relationship. Everyone has a personal relationship with Jesus. Even the devil has a personal relationship with Christ, but it is a relationship of estrangement, of hostility to him. We are all related to Christ, but we are not all united to Christ, which union comes by faith and faith alone.

Luther understood what David understood when he asked the rhetorical question,

If you, o LORD, kept a record of sins,
o LORD, who could stand?
| Ps. 130:3 |

The question is rhetorical because no explicit answer is given. The answer is nevertheless obvious:

No one.

No one by himself can stand before a God who takes note of our iniquities, for we are all sinners. The problem is that the Lord does mark iniquities and promises to bring every one of them into judgment. Moreover, as long as we remain outside of Christ we are continually heaping up judgment against the day of wrath.

The only way an unjust person can escape the day of God's wrath is to be justified. Only the justified will stand in that day That is why the matter of justification is so vital. It is not a mere theological abstraction or a petty doctrine. The struggle of the Reformation was not a contest of shadowboxing, nor was it a tempest in a teapot. It is perilous to think it was much ado about nothing or simply a misunderstanding among theologians and clerics. To be sure there were issues that were confused and obscured in the heat of the debate. But it was crystal-clear that the core issue was the way of justification, and the two sides took not only differing positions but mutually exclusive and irreconcilable positions in the debate.

What Is Justification?

Justification refers to a legal action by God by which he declares a person just in his sight. The Protestant view is often described as "forensic justification," meaning that justification is a "legal declaration" made by God.

What is often overlooked in discussions about justification is that the Roman Catholic communion also has its version of forensic justification. That is, Catholics agree that justification occurs when God declares a person just. However, when evangelicals speak of forensic justification, the phrase is used as a kind of theological shorthand for *sola fide*, and what is tacit is the assumption that God declares people to be just who in themselves are not just. Rome teaches that God declares people just only when they are in fact just. They are declared to be just only if and when justness inheres within them. Both sides see justification as a divine declaration, but the ground for such a declaration differs radically.

Rome saw justification as meaning "making just," based on the Latin roots for the word *justificare* (*Justus* and *facio, facere*), which in Roman jurisprudence meant "to make righteous." For Rome, God only declares to be just those who have first been made just.

The easiest way to understand the evangelical doctrine of justification is to place it against the backdrop of the Roman Catholic view.

The Roman Catholic Teaching

The Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is sacerdotal. This means that justification is accomplished sacramentally through the ministrations of the priesthood of the church.

Although this understanding embraces and requires each of the seven sacraments put forward by the Roman Church, justification takes place initially through the sacrament of baptism, which Rome defines as justification's "instrumental cause." The language of instrumental causality is drawn from Aristotle's distinctions among various types of causes. He defined an instrumental cause as the means by which a change is effected in something. For example, when a sculptor makes a statue out of a block of stone, the stone would be the material cause, that out of which the thing is made, and the chisel would be the instrumental cause or the instrument by which the statue is shaped.

Justification Begins with Baptism

According to Roman Catholic theology, a person receives the grace of justification in baptism by infusion. That is, the righteousness of Christ is infused or "poured into" the soul of the baptized person. The recipient is cleansed of original sin, sacramentally regenerated, and put into a state of grace. This action is accomplished *ex opere operato* ("by the working of the work"), which means that the work is efficacious in itself as long as the recipient does nothing to hinder it.

The [New Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church](#) puts it this way:

Justification is conferred in baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. | Liguori, Mo.: Ligouri Press, 1994, p. 482, par. 1992|

Thus Rome speaks of justification being "conferred" in baptism and as making people "inwardly just." This is seen as a result of divine mercy.

1. The Necessity of Faith. Baptism is also called "the sacrament of faith." It is important to note that for Rome justification is truly "by faith." So the issue at the time of the Reformation was not whether faith is requisite for justification —both sides acknowledged that — but whether it was the sole requisite. It was the *sola* of *sola fide*, not the *fide*, that was crucial, though differences did exist with respect to the role of faith *itself* in justification.

That Rome sees faith as necessary for justification is made clear in the sixth session of [The Council of] Trent:

We are therefore said to be justified by faith,

because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, 'without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6) and to come to the fellowship of his sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification. | Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: Original Text with English Translation, trans. H. J. Schroeder [London: Herder, 1941], pp. 34, 35 |

Far from excluding faith as a necessary condition for justification, Rome declares that faith is a necessary ingredient. She declares that: 1) justification is by faith (*perfidem*); 2) faith is the "beginning" (*initium*) of salvation; 3) faith is the "foundation" (*fundamentum*) of justification; and 4) faith is the "root" (*radix*) of all justification (ibid., p. 313).

Often Protestants have slandered Rome by stating their differences with Rome on justification in a simplistic and erroneous manner, saying that the Protestant view is justification by faith and the Catholic view is justification by works, as if Rome did not make faith a necessary condition for justification. This is wrong. For Rome, faith plays a necessary role in justification, serving as its initiation, foundation, and root.

2. The Insufficiency of Faith. What Rome does not say, and in fact denies, is that faith is a "sufficient condition" for justification. The difference between a necessary condition and a sufficient condition is of paramount importance. Oxygen is a necessary condition for fire, but it is not a sufficient condition. In order to have fire there must also be present the substance that burns or combines with oxygen in combustion, as well as sufficient heat and other things. If all that was required for fire were the mere presence of oxygen, then in every place oxygen was present the world would be in flames.

3. Mortal Sin. For Rome a person may have faith and still not be justified. We see this partly in Rome's view of mortal sin. Rome distinguishes between mortal and venial sins. Mortal sins are called "mortal" because they "kill" or destroy the grace of justification. At Trent Rome declared:

Against the subtle wits of some also, who "by pleasing speeches and good words seduce the hearts of the innocent" (Romans 16:18), it must be maintained that the grace of justification once received is lost not only by infidelity, whereby also faith itself is lost, but also by every other mortal sin. Though in this case faith is not lost; thus defending the teaching of the divine law which excludes from the kingdom of God not only unbelievers, but also the faithful [who are] "fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, liars with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, railers, extortioners" (I Cor. 6:9f.; I Tim. 1:90, and all others who commit deadly sins, from which with

the help of divine grace they can refrain, and on account of which they are cut off from the grace of Christ. | *bid.*, p. 40 |

The concept of mortal sin includes infidelity, which is unbelief. If a person who once had faith loses or abandons that faith, thereby committing apostasy, that person loses justification. By the loss of faith the person loses with it the necessary condition for justification and therefore justification itself.

But, as Trent clearly declared, infidelity is not the only sin by which a person may lose his or her justification. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that people who have not lost faith, indeed may even still be numbered among the "faithful," can lose their justification by committing other deadly sins such as drunkenness or adultery.

The Reformers understood these biblical texts in a different manner. They agreed that people whose lives are characterized by these deadly sins will not enter the Kingdom of God precisely because such lifestyles indicate the absence of true faith, not its presence. This does not preclude the possibility of true believers lapsing into these sins, as David and virtually all the other Bible characters did. We all sin, often greatly. But the Reformers did argue that believers will not stay in such a sinful condition unrepentantly. Though such sins are deemed egregious and worthy of church discipline, in themselves they are not considered mortal.

Calvin argued rightly that all sins are "mortal" in the sense that they deserve death, but no sin is mortal to the true believer in that it kills his justification.

What is most clear from this Tridentine passage is that, according to Rome, a person can have true faith and not be in a state of justification. This clearly indicates that for Rome, though faith is a necessary condition for justification, it is not a sufficient condition for justification. Something else is needed besides true faith for the person to be justified—namely inherent righteousness. Here the *sola* of *sola fide* is demolished.

Again it is important to note that for the Reformers, true faith precludes a person's living consistently in deadly sin, whereas for Rome such a lifestyle is possible for a person who possesses true faith.

4. Cooperating with God — Grace. For Rome justification does not occur until or unless a person cooperates with (*co-operare*) and assents to (*assentire*) the grace of justification, by which he or she fully satisfies God's Law. To be declared just by God, a person must in fact be just. Again Trent declared:

For since Christ Jesus himself, as the head into the members and the vine into the branches (John 15:1f.), continually infuses strength into those justified, which strength always precedes, accompanies and follows their good works, and without which they could not in any manner be

pleasing and meritorious before God, we must believe that nothing further is wanting to those justified to prevent them from being considered to have, by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life and to have truly merited eternal life. | Ibid., p. 41|

Again we see that Rome does not believe we are justified by self-righteousness. In ourselves we lack the strength to become truly just. Rome rejects pure Pelagianism. To be just requires the infusion of grace. However, with the aid and assistance of this infused grace we are able to yield the fruit of good works. And nothing further is needed to fully satisfy the divine law and truly merit eternal life. Trent continued:

Thus, neither is our own justice established as our own from ourselves (ROM 10:3; 2 Cor. 3:5), nor is the justice of God ignored or repudiated, for that justice which is called ours, because we are justified by its inference in us, that same is [the justice] of God, because it is infused into us by God through the merit of Christ. | ibid. |

Here we see that the justness by which we are declared just by God is not a justness of righteousness that comes from ourselves. Its origin is in the infusion of grace. But it is nevertheless a righteousness that is in ourselves; that is, it inheres within us. It is at this point that the most volatile issue of the debate resides.

Justification Is Restored by Penance

We have seen that according to Rome the grace of justification can be augmented or diminished. This is bad, but the full story is even worse. In reality faith can be diminished to the point that it is lost altogether by the commission of mortal sins.

Since justification comes initially through the instrumental cause of baptism, does that mean then that those who commit mortal sin and lose their justification have to be rebaptized in order to be restored to a state of grace? No. Even though the grace infused at baptism is lost by mortal sin, the baptized person retains an "indelible mark" on the soul. A different provision from baptism is then required in order to be restored to a state of justification. This provision is found in the sacrament of penance. Penance serves as the secondary instrumental cause of justification. It is called the second plank of justification for those who have made shipwreck of their souls. The Council of Trent stated:

Those who through sin have forfeited the received grace of justification, can again be justified when, moved by God, they exert themselves to obtain through the sacrament of penance the recovery, by the merits of Christ, of the grace lost. For this manner of justification is restoration for those fallen, which the holy fathers have aptly called a second plank after the shipwreck of grace lost. | Ibid., p. 39. |

It was the sacrament of penance that took center stage in the Reformation controversy. Penance embraced several elements, including confession (an act of contrition), priestly absolution, and "works of satisfaction." The Reformers were not opposed to the first two of these—confession itself or even priestly absolution rightly understood. The controversy focused on "works of satisfaction."

According to Rome, in order for penance to be complete, the penitent sinner had to perform certain actions that yield a particular kind of merit called "congruous merit" (*meritum de congruo*). Trent declares:

It is in keeping with divine clemency that sins be not thus pardoned without any satisfaction, lest seizing the occasion and considering sins as trivial and offering insult and affront to the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10:29), we should fall into graver ones.... For without doubt, these satisfactions greatly restrain from sin, check as it were with a bit and make penitents more cautious and vigilant in the future; they also remove remnants of sin, and by acts of the opposite virtues destroy habits acquired by evil living. | *Bid*, p. 97 |

Certainly the Reformers agreed that the making of restitution where possible is an integral aspect of true repentance. But they saw no merit of any kind in such actions. For Rome the merits of congruity gained by works of satisfaction do not reach the level of "condign" or deserved merit but are still meritorious, though of a lesser order. They are called congruent because they are meritorious enough to make it congruous or "fitting" for God to restore a person to justification. God is not morally obligated to reward congruous merit, but if he did not so reward it, he would be acting in an incongruous or unfitting manner.

Both Calvin and Luther argued that the merit of Christ is the sole merit by which sinners are justified. His merit excludes all human merit, both condign and congruous.

Rome seeks to maintain the central role of Christ's merit by insisting that whatever merit we achieve rests ultimately on God's grace. The New Catechism says:

With regard to God, there is no strict right to any merit on the part of man. The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace. The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man's merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit. | *Op. cit.*, p. 486 |

Here human merit is deemed not to be "strict" merit. But this does not mean that the merit is not real merit. It is not "strict" because it depends first on grace. But the merit remains real and effectual by human collaboration so that it yields the merit of good works.

By congruous merit one gains the merits of Christ. In effect this involves a meriting of merit. The Reformers insisted that the merit of Christ and the benefits of his saving work are applied freely to the sinner by faith alone. Rome has the sinner doing necessary works of satisfaction by which he gains congruous merit in order to be justified by Christ.

The Indulgence Controversy

Luther's famous [Ninety-Five Theses](#) were written in response to the preaching and actions of [Johann Tetzel](#) in 1517. The theological background for the controversy was rooted in the church's doctrine of the Treasury of Merit.

1. The Power of the Keys. According to Roman Catholic teaching, which was affirmed by Clement VI in 1343 and later by Sixtus IV in 1476 the Church possesses the "power of the keys" given by Jesus to Peter by which sins on earth may be loosed in heaven. In this scheme indulgences may be granted when the Pope applies merit from the Treasury of Merit to needy sinners. The Treasury of Merit is made up of both the merit of Christ and the merit of the saints. The saints live lives of such sanctity that they accrue more merit than they need for themselves. They do this by performing works of supererogation, works done above and beyond the call of duty. Thus the surplus merits of the saints are added to the merit of Christ and may be drawn from the Treasury to aid those who receive indulgences.

An economic crisis in the Church sparked the indulgence controversy of the sixteenth century. Pope Leo X faced a financial crisis that was related to his dealings with Prince Albert of Brandenburg, which included the Fugger bankers in the process. Leo's predecessor, Pope Julius II, had inaugurated a plenary indulgence to raise funds for rebuilding the basilica of St. Peter's. This indulgence was revived by Leo X with the announced purpose of using it to rebuild St. Peter's, though half of the proceeds were actually to go to Albert and the Fuggers.

A plenary indulgence of this sort included the remission of all sins by participation in the merits of the saints, and it could be applied not merely to a living person but to souls in purgatory too.

Rome insisted that the terms of receiving indulgences included the requirement that there be true contrition and confession. So Rome was not simply offering forgiveness for sale. The indulgences were limited to the sacrament of penance, and one form of works of satisfaction was that of almsgiving. To gain the congruous merit from this work, it was necessary that the alms be given in a true spirit of contrition. The problem was that the need for true contrition was ignored by Tetzel. Carrying out his mission with great pomp and pageantry, he preached messages like these:

You should know: Whoever has confessed and is contrite and puts alms into the box, as his confessor counsels him, will have all of his sins forgiven.... So why are you standing idly? Run, all of you, for the salvation of your souls.... Do you not hear the voices of your dead parents and other people, screaming and saying: "Have pity on me, have pity on me.... We are suffering severe punishments and pain, from which you could rescue us." | Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989], p. 38|

2. Luther's Reaction. Luther reacted vigorously against this type of huckstering as well as against Tetzels infamous slogan, "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs." It was the kind of reaction any devout person of that day might have had. However, although Luther set out only to call attention to the abuses Tetzels was making of the system, he was soon drawn on to examine and critique the entire system of indulgences and ultimately the sacrament of penance itself.

The issue of purgatory also became a serious matter. Purgatory is called "purgatory" because it is the place believers go upon their death if they have impurities remaining in them. It is the place of purging, a person remaining in purgatory until he or she is purged or cleansed of all remaining impurities, at which point he or she goes to heaven.

It is important to note that the doctrines of purgatory, the Treasury of Merit, and indulgences are still an integral part of the Roman Catholic system of doctrine since they, as well as Trent's view of justification, have been reaffirmed in [The New Catechism](#). The indulgence controversy of the sixteenth century focused on the issue of the sufficiency of the merit of Christ to secure our redemption. The Reformers viewed the redemptive work of Christ as totally sufficient both with respect to its positive and negative aspects. The atonement totally expiates the sin of the believer, fully satisfying the demands of God's justice. The value of Christ's sacrifice satisfies all the negative judgment of God with respect to our demerits before him. This satisfaction can be neither augmented nor diminished by any works of the believer.

On the positive side, the perfect obedience of Christ fulfills all God's requirements for righteousness, earning all the merit necessary to save the believer. Nothing can be added to Christ's righteousness by us to enhance its value or merit.

3. A Summary of Roman Catholic Doctrine. The Roman Catholic doctrine of justification may be summarized by the following points:

1. Baptism is the instrumental cause of justification.
2. Justification is by infused grace.

3. Believers must cooperate with and assent to grace to the extent that righteousness becomes inherent within them.
4. Faith is necessary for justification but not sufficient for it.
5. A person is justified until or unless he or she commits a mortal sin.
6. The second plank of justification is the sacrament of penance by which works of satisfaction must be done to gain congruous merit.
7. Believers who die without being pure must go to purgatory for cleansing before they enter heaven.
8. A person is justified by faith plus works.
9. A person is justified by grace plus merit.
10. Justification is effected sacramentally.
11. *Sola fide* is rejected and anathematized as a false gospel.

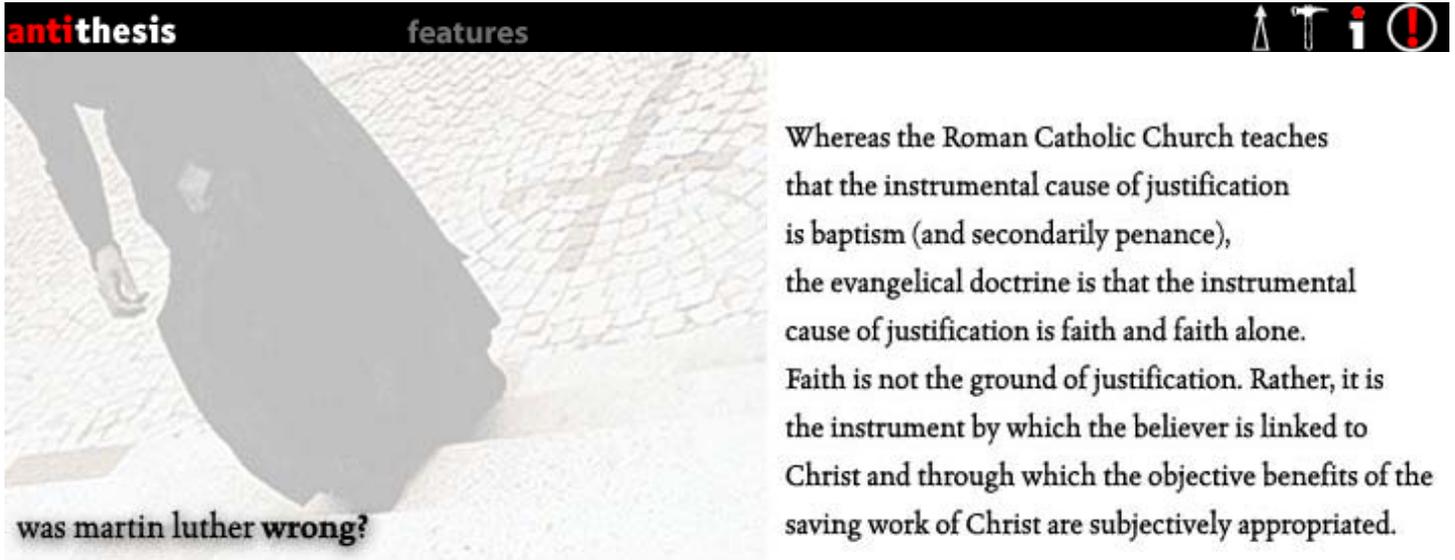
The gospel according to Rome is the "good news" that a sinner may be justified if he or she receives the sacraments, has faith, and cooperates with grace to the point of becoming inherently righteous. That justification is effective as long as the believer refrains from mortal sin. If the person loses justification by mortal sin, he or she may be restored to justification by the sacrament of penance. If the person dies not in mortal sin but with impurities, he or she can get to heaven after being cleansed in purgatory.

Some believers become so righteous that they not only bypass purgatory and go directly to heaven at death, but also accrue surplus merit that is deposited in the Treasury of Merit to be used by the church in its exercise of the "power of the keys."

[[continues on page 2](#) |



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Whereas the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the instrumental cause of justification is baptism (and secondarily penance), the evangelical doctrine is that the instrumental cause of justification is faith and faith alone. Faith is not the ground of justification. Rather, it is the instrument by which the believer is linked to Christ and through which the objective benefits of the saving work of Christ are subjectively appropriated.

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The Evangelical Teaching

The evangelical doctrine of justification is communicated by the Reformation slogan *sola fide*, which declares that justification is by faith alone. Even this formula is a kind of theological shorthand for the concept that **justification is by Christ alone.**

By faith we receive the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, whose righteousness is the sole and sufficient ground of our justification.

Justification refers to that act of God by which he forensically declares believers to be just in Christ.

The Instrumental Cause of Justification

Whereas the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the instrumental cause of justification is baptism (and secondarily penance), the evangelical doctrine is that the instrumental cause of justification is faith and faith alone. Faith is not the ground of justification. Rather, it is the instrument by which the believer is linked to Christ and through which the objective benefits of the saving work of Christ are subjectively appropriated. The phrase introduced by by or through when we speak of justification, "by faith" or "through faith," indicates the means by which we receive our justification. That justification, the justification in which God declares us just in his sight, occurs the moment we believe and before righteousness is ever inherent in us.

Luther's *Simul Justus et Peccator*

Martin Luther made use of the Latin phrase *simul justus et peccator* to illustrate the biblical view of justification. Let us examine it carefully to insure a clear understanding of it. It is made up of four words: *simul*, *justus*, *et*, and *peccator*.

Simul. This word means "at the same time" and is the Latin term from which our English word simultaneously is derived.

Justus. This is the Latin word for "just" or "righteous."

Et. This is the simple Latin conjunction "and."

Peccator. This is the Latin word for "sinner" and is the term from which such English words as *impeccable* or *peccadillo* are derived.

When we assemble these terms, we render the entire phrase by the English, "at the same time just and sinner." This phrase is paradoxical in that at first glance it seems to be a contradiction. We tend to think of saint (a just person) and sinner as being mutually exclusive categories.

The definition of contradiction rests upon the classic formula for "the law of non-contradiction," expressed by saying, "A cannot be A and non-A at the same time and in the same relationship." It means that something cannot be what it is and not what it is at the same time and in the same sense. A man can be both a father and a son at the same time, but not in the same relationship. A father cannot be his own son, nor a son his own father.

To see that Luther's formula is not a contradiction we need only apply the law of non-contradiction to it. Luther says that justified believers are at the same time just and sinner, but not in the same sense or in the same relationship. The point Luther was making is that we are justified before we are sanctified. A justified person is declared righteous in Christ while he is still a sinner.

This does not mean that a justified person is an unchanged person. An unjustified person has no saving faith and is unregenerate. A justified person is a regenerate person and is a person who possesses faith. However, though the believer is regenerated and possesses faith, neither his regeneration nor his faith makes him instantly righteous inwardly. The regenerate, believing, justified person still sins. To be sure, the process of sanctification has begun, and he is inwardly being brought into conformity to the image of Christ, but he is declared just by God before that process is completed. We are justified before we are sanctified fully.

It is also crucial to understand that though a justified person is a changed person, those changes wrought in him by the grace of God are not the ground of his justification. That ground remains exclusively the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to him. We are just by virtue of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, which righteousness is imputed to people who are still sinners and in whom sinfulness still inheres.

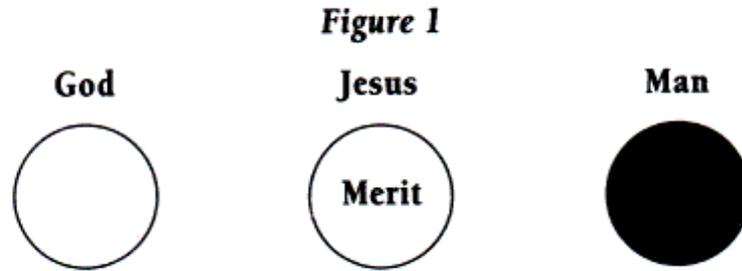
Herein is the critical difference between the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification and the evangelical view. It is the difference between infused and inherent righteousness versus imputed righteousness.

Imputation

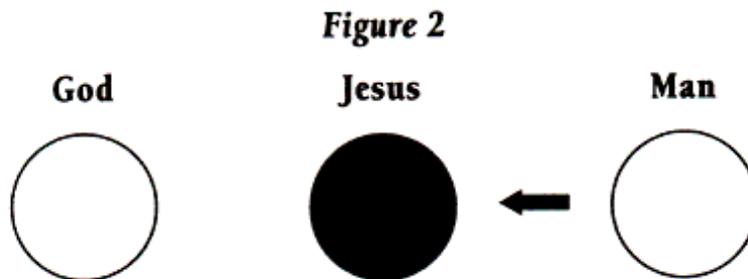
The difference between infusion and imputation captures the

essential difference between the Roman Catholic and the evangelical doctrines of justification. Imputation refers to that act by which God "counts" or "reckons" us just by legally transferring the righteousness of Christ to our account. This involves the transfer of Christ's merit to us. Christ's righteousness is not infused in us but is assigned to us and is counted for us.

1. A Double Imputation. Our redemption is grounded in a double imputation by which our sins are transferred to Christ in the atonement and his righteousness is transferred to us. We can illustrate this double transfer by the following chart.



The three circles in **Figure 1** show God's circle having no marks inside of it, representing his purity without blemish. The circle representing Jesus; likewise has no black marks within it, representing his sinlessness; and perfect obedience, his perfect merit. The circle representing man is shaded black, representing the radical pollution of sin in our lives.

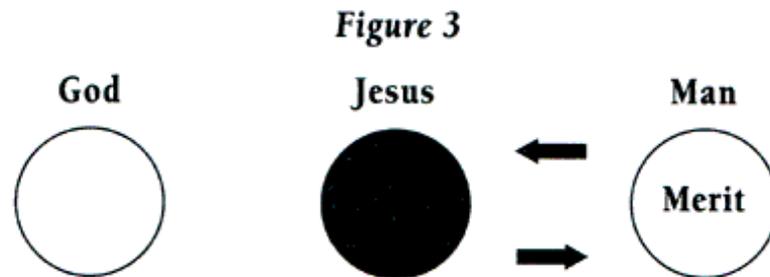


In **Figure 2** we see the change in the circle of Jesus in that now his circle is covered by sin. The arrow from man's circle to Jesus' circle illustrates that the sin of man is transferred to Jesus. This is what takes place on the cross. In the atonement, God lays upon Jesus our sins. Jesus is the lamb without blemish who receives our blemishes by imputation. He is our substitute, so that God pours out the wrath of his judgment on Christ who vicariously accepts the imputation of our guilt and sin.

On the cross Jesus was *simul justus et peccator* in the opposite way from us in our justification. On the cross Jesus was just in himself and sinner by imputation. When Scripture speaks of Jesus becoming sin for us, it does not mean that he became in himself a sinner. If that were the case, he would not have been worthy to save himself, let alone us.

On the cross Christ paid the price for our sin. This was both a work of expiation and propitiation. By expiation he "took away" our sins from us. By propitiation he satisfied the justice of God by undergoing the penalty for our guilt.

Christ's work on the cross is but half the transaction necessary for our justification. By paying the penalty for our sins, he took care of the negative side of our problem in that he atoned for our guilt. To have our sins punished for us in Christ is to leave us now innocent in the sight of God. But to be in a state of innocence is not the same thing as possessing positive righteousness or merit. To be innocent is to be free or empty of sin. One can be empty of sin and still be empty of righteousness. Salvation requires more than innocence. It demands positive obedience to the Law of God. This is why what is required is not merely a single imputation but a double imputation.



In **Figure 3** we see that the circle of man is now clean and righteous. The lower arrow pointing from Jesus to man represents the transfer of the righteousness and merit of Jesus to us. In justification not only are our sins imputed to him by God, but his righteousness is imputed to us. By imputation we possess the righteousness of Jesus in the sight of God.

2. Alien Righteousness. Luther and the Reformers insisted that the righteousness by which we are justified is an "alien righteousness" (*justitia alienum*). This means that it is the righteousness of another, one who is a "foreigner" to us. He is foreign to us, not in the sense that he is unknown by us or that he remains a mysterious stranger to us, but in the sense that he is ever and always distinguishable from us, even though by faith we are "in" him and he is "in" us. James Buchanan wrote:

the righteousness of Christ considered as the merit of his mediatorial work must ever continue, even when it is imputed to us, to belong primarily, and, in one important respect, exclusively to him by whom alone that work was accomplished. It is his righteousness in a sense in which it can never be ours: It is his, as having been wrought out by him; and it is ours, only as it is imputed to us. (The Doctrine Of Justification [1867; reprint, London: Banner of Truth, 1961], p. 326)

Alien righteousness is what Luther called a righteousness that is *extra nos*, that is, a righteousness that is apart from or outside of us. That is precisely because it is Christ's own righteousness achieved in his own life in his perfect active obedience to the

Law of God and to the will of his Father. In terms of the old covenant by which dual sanctions were attached to the Law, God's curse was placed on disobedience, and his blessing was promised for obedience. In the double imputation by which we are justified, Christ took our curse upon himself and won the blessing of the covenant for his people. By faith the justified person receives all the blessings of God due to Jesus for his perfect obedience. In this regard Christ is our righteousness. The righteousness that Luther described as being *extra nos* is an extra that becomes ours in the sight of God. Again, the focus is on the grounds of our justification. The righteousness by which I am declared righteous is one that was achieved and merited before I was ever born. It is the righteousness of "another," even Jesus Christ the Righteous. His righteousness becomes mine only by forensic imputation. It is reckoned to my account, but it was neither achieved nor wrought by me.

The chief model for justification via imputation set forth by the apostle Paul is that of the patriarch Abraham. Paul argues in Romans 4:

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-but not before God. What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works. | vv. 1-6 |

Paul belabors the point that according to the record of Genesis 15 Abraham was counted righteous when he believed. He was justified before he was circumcised or performed any works of the Law.

Synthetic Justification

The evangelical doctrine of justification by faith alone through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the believing person is sometimes referred to as synthetic justification. This view is set in sharp contrast to the Roman Catholic view, which may be described as analytical justification.

Linguistic philosophy differentiates sharply between analytical and synthetic statements. An analytical statement is basically a tautology or redundancy. It is a statement that is "true by definition" or by analysis. In an analytical statement nothing is added in the predicate that is not already inherent in the subject. For example, the statement "a bachelor is an unmarried man" is analytical. Both the subject and the predicate say the same thing. Here the word "is," a form of the verb "to be," serves as a connection making an equation of identity between subject and predicate. There is no such thing as a married bachelor. If we analyze the word bachelor, we realize that it refers inherently to an unmarried man. An analytical statement is like the

equation $2 + 2 = 4$. There is nothing in "fourness" that is not already in "two plus two-ness."

On the other hand, a synthetic statement adds information in the predicate that is not inherent or already present in the subject. The statement "the bachelor is bald" tells us something about the bachelor that is not true of all bachelors and therefore not inherent in the concept of "bachelorness." Here we have a synthesis of two distinct concepts, "bachelorness" and baldness. The concept of baldness is added to the concept of "bachelorness" in this specific instance. One particular from the universal category of "bachelorness" (the bachelor) is combined with another particular trait of humans, namely, baldness.

When we say that the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is analytical, we mean that according to this view God declares a person to be just when justness (or righteousness) inheres in the subject. For Rome a justified person is just. To say that a person is justified means that the person must in fact be just. The subject, under divine analysis or scrutiny, is found to be just. God justifies the just and only the just. The just may have been formerly unjust, but now by means of the assistance of grace they have become just, and God then declares them to be so. He declares them to be what they are under analysis. There is no *simul justus et peccator* here.

By stark and radical contrast the Reformation view of justification is synthetic. In this view God declares a person just based not upon his analysis of the person but based upon something that is added to the person, the imputed righteousness of Christ. Here God is justifying the unjust by adding to the unjust the justness of Christ. This synthetic view is what Luther meant by his *simul justus et peccator*.

Justification: A Legal Fiction?

Paul teaches in Romans 3:26 that God sent Christ as an atoning sacrifice "to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus." This certainly means that in his declaratory act of forensic justification, when God justifies us, he does not abandon his own justice. He remains just and righteous himself.

It is at this point that Rome protests against Protestantism. The protest is lodged against the doctrine of imputation and synthetic justification. If God "counts" or "declares" people to be just who are not inherently just, that would involve God in what Rome calls a "legal 'fiction.'" Fiction departs from reality. The Reformation view has God reckoning people just who are not really just. Rome sees this as casting a shadow over the integrity of God and his justice. For God to consider someone just who is not inherently just is for God to be guilty of some sort of deceit. To do this he would have to compromise his own justice.

Rome cannot tolerate Luther's *simul justus et peccator*. A person is either just or sinner; one cannot be both at the same time. The only kind of righteousness or justness is that which is inherent.

This objection by Rome misses the heart of the biblical Gospel and betrays her rejection of it. If her argument were sound, it would prove too much. It would annihilate the atonement since the atonement also rests upon imputation and would also have to be considered a legal fiction. In the atonement God counts our sin and guilt against Christ. If this were not so, there could be neither substitution nor satisfaction in the cross for us. Each individual would have to atone for his or her own sins. The biblical doctrine of justification is not a legal fiction. It is a legal reality. It is a reality because it is based upon a real and true imputation of real and true righteousness. James Buchanan observed:

The imputation of sin and righteousness is not "a legal fiction" if by that expression be meant anything that is unreal or untrue. We made this statement with a limitation, because there are some "legal fictions," so called, which are very far from being unreal. It is a "legal fiction" to say that "the king can do no wrong," for unquestionably in his private and personal capacity he can commit sin and may even be guilty of crime; but in his public and official capacity, as the head of the State, he is held in the law of this country to be irresponsible; and the errors or crimes of the government are imputed to his constitutional advisers, who are regarded and treated, by reason of their official position, as alone answerable for them. (The Doctrine of Justification , pp. 334, 335)

The charge of legal fiction is the most serious charge that can be leveled against the Reformation doctrine of sola fide, for nothing less than the Gospel is at stake. This is because the charge of legal fiction makes the Gospel itself a fiction. Thus the biblical Gospel stands or falls with this concept. Without the imputation of our sins to Christ, there is no atonement, and without the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, all the infused grace we may have will not save us. For Christians can and do sin and thus always and continually fall short of the glory of God. The true Gospel is that we are saved by grace alone because of Christ's work alone.

The Nature and Role of Saving Faith

When we speak of justification by or through faith, we mean that faith is the instrumental cause of justification, not its ground. Justification is *per fidem* (by or through faith) but never *propter fidem* (on account of or on the ground of faith). Again we view justification as being *propter Christum* (on account of Christ). *Sola fide* (justification by faith alone) is theological shorthand for justification by Christ alone.

**We are justified by grace alone
through faith alone
because of Christ alone.**

The faith that links us to Christ is not a meritorious work.

Indeed, saving faith is itself a gift of God wrought in us by the Holy Spirit.

During the Reformation, the Reformers were frequently accused of easy-believism and even antinomianism with charges that the apostle James makes it clear that faith without works is dead and therefore faith can be barren or dead and by itself cannot justify anyone. This made it necessary for the Reformers to carefully define the nature of saving faith.

Luther argued that saving faith or true faith is a *fides viva*, a vital or living faith. Such faith was seen as consisting of three distinct but connected aspects or elements. This threefold definition of saving faith consisted of the constituent elements of *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*. These distinctions were designed to capture the major ways in which the New Testament speaks of faith.

1. Notitia. The aspect of faith termed *notitia* (or *notae*) refers to the content of faith that is apprehended by the mind. Though faith is not identical with knowledge, it is by no means devoid of knowledge. Faith does not operate in a vacuum. When we "believe," there must be something that we believe. To be saved one must believe some basic information. Proclaiming the Gospel includes more than imparting information, but by no means less. There is a basic content to the Gospel, which includes information about God, man, the person and work of Christ, and how his benefits are appropriated, which we must have some awareness of in order to exercise saving faith.

2. Assensus. The aspect of faith termed assensus refers to intellectual assent to the truth of the data or content of the Gospel. To believe that George Washington was the first president of the United States means that we affirm the truth of that proposition. We cannot have saving faith if we do not believe that the Gospel is true.

It is important to note that at the level of assensus faith is not a matter of volition. I cannot "decide" to believe something if my mind is not convinced that it is true. I can "hope" that something questionable is true and act according to that hope. I can exercise what Augustine called provisional faith, that is, take steps according to a provisional hypothesis. What I cannot do is actually be convinced of a truth by a mere decision. "Faith" without genuine assent is no more than credulity or superstition.

3. Fiducia. This third element of saving faith involves personal trust. This is usually understood as involving something in addition to the cognitive or purely intellectual element. It involves the volitional and affective elements of human response. It includes an awareness (which is also intellectual and cognitive) of the sweetness and excellence of Christ. It involves a change in us wrought by regeneration, which change includes a change in affection, disposition, inclination, and volition. We now choose Christ. We embrace Christ. We gladly receive Christ. Indeed, we flee to Christ. Reformation theology (especially *sola gratia*) insists that the regeneration that changes the heart of the sinner must precede faith.

Francis Tarretin defined *fiducia* as follows:

The third act is fiducial and practical assent or a persuasion of the practical intellect by which we judge the gospel to be not only true, but also good and therefore most worthy of our love and desire; also the promises of grace to be most certain concerning the remission of sins and the bestowal of salvation upon all believers and penitents and so also upon me if I shall believe and repent. (Institutes of Elenctic Theology, trans. George Musgrace, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994], p. 562)

The three elements of saving faith — *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia* — separately and individually fall short of being a sufficient condition for justification. But added together, they constitute the essence of saving faith and are the solely sufficient condition by which God's declaration of justification is applied to believing persons.

Faith and Works

The Roman Catholic Church accused the Reformers of being antinomian by denigrating the importance of works. They cited James 2:14-26 ("faith without deeds is dead," verse 26) to support their rejection of *solafide*. In response the Reformers insisted that true saving faith is not devoid of good works. They argued that "justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone."

Calvin was very thorough at this point. He argued that faith and works are linked but that they can and must be distinguished. No one is justified who is not also sanctified. Faith without works is indeed a dead faith that will justify no one. If works do not follow faith as a matter of necessity, that will prove conclusively that true saving faith is not present. The presence of works "justifies" or "verifies" the presence of true faith just as Abraham's actions in Genesis 22 demonstrated the reality of his faith by his works. Yet, however necessary works are to true faith, works never serve as the ground of our justification. Only the work of Christ can accomplish this. The only sense in which we may say that we are justified by works is if we understand this to mean that we are justified by the work of Christ.

The following chart shows the difference between the Roman Catholic view of faith and works with respect to justification and that of the evangelical (and [antinomian](#)) views.

Roman Catholic	Faith + Works = Justification
Evangelical	Faith = Justification + Works
Antinomianism	Faith = Justification - Works

We conclude by providing a chart to highlight the chief differences between the Roman Catholic and Reformation views

of justification.

The Roman Catholic View

1. Baptism (with penance) is the instrumental cause of justification.
2. Justification is by infusion.
3. Justification is analytical.
4. Justification is based on an inherent righteousness.
5. Justification is by faith plus works.
6. Justification is by grace and merit.
7. Justification is on the basis of Christ's righteousness and my righteousness.
8. Justification can be undone by mortal sin.
9. Justification may be completed in purgatory.
10. Justification may be obtained by drawing from the Treasury of Merit.
11. Justification is sacerdotal.

The Reformation View

1. Faith is the instrumental cause of justification.
2. Justification is by imputation.
3. Justification is synthetic.
4. Justification is based on an alien (Christ's) righteousness.
5. Justification is by faith alone.
6. Justification is by grace alone.
7. Justification is on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone.
8. There is no "mortal sin" for a person who is justified.
9. There is no purgatory or need for it.
10. The only merit is that of Christ alone.
11. Justification is non-sacerdotal.

The differences between these two "gospels" is in grave danger of being lost in our day. Efforts to heal the breach between Rome and the Reformation have yielded confusion among many. The issue cannot be resolved by studied ambiguities or different meanings attached to the same words. The crucial issue of infusion versus imputation remains the irreconcilable issue. We are either justified by a righteousness that is in us or by a righteousness that is apart from us.

There is no third way.

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Scripture and Tradition

The Bible and Tradition in Roman Catholicism

Dr. Sinclair Ferguson

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The year 1996 marks the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the death of Martin Luther, whose famous Ninety-Five Theses sparked off a religious fire in Europe which the Roman Catholic Church was unable to extinguish. The theological conflict which ensued has often been characterized as focusing on the so-called four-fold "alones" of the Reformation: sola gratia, solo Christo, sola fide, sola Scriptura -- salvation is by grace alone, in Christ alone, by faith alone, and all that is necessary for salvation is taught in Scripture alone. Each of these principles, and certainly all four together, served as a canon by which the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church was assessed and found to be wanting.

In these great slogans the nouns -- grace, Christ, faith, Scripture -- were and are of great importance. But in each case the qualifying sola

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(alone) was in some ways even more significant. For Rome had always taught that salvation was by grace through faith in Christ, and had always held that the Bible was the Word of God -- but never alone. To speak of sola Scriptura has almost always been viewed in Rome as a prescription for spiritual anarchy in which everyone would create for himself the message of the Bible. The only safeguard against this was the living tradition of the Church viewed as a further channel of the divine revelation.

The printing press (and therefore widespread access to the Bible) is a Renaissance phenomenon, and literacy levels were low in the Middle Ages. But this alone does not account for the Reformation horror stories about the large-scale ignorance of the Bible among both priest and people. Nevertheless it would be uncharitable to extrapolate from those dark days to the present day as though no counter-reformations had taken place in the interim. And it would reveal considerable ignorance on the part of Protestants if they did not recognize that in the past century a widespread interest in the Bible has developed within the Roman Catholic Church.

Can it be, then, that we now face a new situation in Roman Catholicism? For the first time since the Reformation "common" Bibles are being published. Moreover, not only within the World Council of Churches (largely dominated by liberal theology), but also within evangelicalism substantial rapprochement has been viewed as possible in our own time. So it is timely to ask: Has something unprecedented happened within Roman Catholicism's interpretation of the Bible

so that the old differences can, at last, be laid to rest?

During the past century and a quarter -- from the First Vatican Council (1870) to the publication of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's important work *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993) -- the Roman Magisterium has published a series of significant statements on the nature, interpretation and role of the Bible in the Church. These began in the nineteenth century in the widespread crisis for faith created by the effect of Enlightenment thought and thereafter by the onslaught of scientific humanism which found its impetus in the evolutionism of the late nineteenth century. Pronouncements have continued to appear up to the present day, when the Vatican has sought to wed together contemporary historical-critical methods of biblical interpretation with the ancient dogmas of the Church. Each of these statements is of interest on its own account; together they mark a development which has been significant for the work of large numbers of Roman Catholic biblical scholars.

The story of this development is not well known among Protestants. Indeed probably most Roman Catholics are relatively unfamiliar with it. It is worth narrating, at least in broad outline.

Developments in Rome In 1893 Pope Leo XIII issued the Encyclical Letter *Providentissimus Deus*. It was the first wide ranging attempt of the Roman Church to deal specifically with the impact of the critical methodologies which had come to characterize theological scholarship in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In them

the Bible was treated as an ancient Near Eastern text and assessed from the standpoint of critical historical investigation and linguistic and religious development. In sophisticated theological terms, Scripture's "humanity" was explored (and, in fact, its divinity was increasingly ignored and denied).

Against this background, in which the idea of human evolution played a major role, Providentissimus Deus insisted on a long-standing principle of Christian orthodoxy: If God is Author of both Nature and Scripture, these two "books" of divine revelation must be in harmony with each other. The encyclical emphasized that there could therefore be no ultimate conflict between the Bible and either the natural sciences or historical investigation. It urged both theologians and scientists to respect the limits of their own spheres. In addition, biblical exegetes who employed the fruits of secular scientific and historical studies were counseled to remember the importance of the *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith): the Scriptures should always be interpreted in keeping with the apostolic rule of faith to which the church subscribed. The last word on what the Bible taught lay with the Roman Magisterium.

Providentissimus Deus was thus characterized by a conservative (some would have said "reactionary") character, expressed particularly in its negative criticisms of the way in which historical-critical principles were being used. The underlying anxiety of the entire encyclical was that the results of this critical movement would prove to be injurious to the faith of which the Church was called to be the guardian, not the

destroyer.

Fifty years later the face of Europe had changed dramatically. The Great War had been fought from 1914 -- 18; the Second World War of 1939 - - 45 was in full course. The misplaced and anthropocentric optimism of nineteenth-century liberal theology had collapsed, shattered before the enormity of human need; the notion that humanity was evolving from a lower to a higher moral condition had been dealt an embarrassing blow. The "gospel" of the universal Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man stood exposed in all of its inherent poverty. There arose a new sense of need for some powerful word from God. In Protestantism the "theology of crisis" emerged and what came to be known as the "Biblical Theology" movement was stirring into life.

Significant developments had also taken place within the world of Roman Catholic biblical scholarship. The Pontifical Biblical Commission was created by Leo XIII in 1902. In the wake of *Providentissimus Deus*, its earliest responses (*responsa*) to questions of biblical interpretation were characterized by negative reaction to higher criticism. But in due season (it was completely reorganized in 1971 following the Second Vatican Council) it would prove to be a spearhead of the new way of reading the Bible.

In 1943, Pius XII issued his Encyclical Letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. It was promulgated when the Second World War was in full flood, but not until the turn of the decade did its full impact begin to be felt. Now a more positive note was struck. For one thing, Roman Catholic biblical

scholars were largely set free from the burden which the Church had carried for centuries: the use of the Vulgate (Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible). It had been regarded as the authoritative text for ecclesiastical use since the time of the Council of Trent (even now it was still declared to be "free from all error in matters of faith and morals").

In a manner reminiscent of the humanists of the Renaissance, with the motto *ad fontes* ("back to the original sources"), Roman Catholic scholars now enjoyed a new freedom and fresh impetus to gain and employ expertise in the biblical languages to enable a true understanding of the text of Scripture. A new value was recognized in the use of such tools as textual, literary and form criticism. The importance of history, ethnology, archaeology "and other sciences" was affirmed. The "true meaning," indeed the so-called "literal sense" of Scripture was to be sought as well as the "spiritual significance." Precritical ways of reading the Bible were widely (but not entirely) replaced by the new approach. Now a clear distinction was made between the "meaning" of the original text and the contemporary application ("significance") of it. Principles of interpretation which had long been familiar to Protestants were now increasingly recognized as essential to proper biblical exegesis. The historical-critical method had come to stay.

All this was encouraged (it could scarcely have been prevented, but the genius of Rome, unlike Wittenberg and Geneva, has always been its ability to hold opposite tendencies together). The underlying principle was that the Scriptures cannot be charged with error. Supposed errors

in Scripture, it was held, could be resolved by a right reading of the text. Any tensions between Scripture and "reality" could always be resolved in favor of biblical integrity. Harmonization was an essential key to reading the Bible as a modern Catholic.

Times change, and we change with them. The second half of the twentieth century has seen continued movement in Roman Catholic biblical scholarship. This has not been without ecclesiastical bloodletting (at one point professors at the Biblical Institute were banned from teaching!). But the overall result has been that some of the most erudite biblical studies published during this period carry the imprimatur and nihil obstat which identify them as the work of Roman Catholic scholars which has been declared "free of doctrinal or moral error."

The most recent succinct expression of this development can be seen in the Pontifical Biblical Commission's statement on biblical interpretation, published in 1993. Here the fruits of critical scholarship set within the context of the Church's tradition are warmly welcomed. Indeed, strikingly -- in view of the importance of the principle of harmonization at all costs which marked earlier Roman Catholic pronouncements -- it is now of a Protestant-style fundamentalist approach to Scripture that the Church seems to have become most critical, and perhaps most fearful.

But why should this development since 1870 be of interest to Protestant Christians? For a reason which lies on the surface of much of the very best Catholic biblical scholarship. There is a

clear recognition in Roman Catholic biblical scholarship that there is a gulf -- or at least a distance -- between what the text of Sacred Scripture states and the teaching of the Sacred Tradition of the Church. There is also recognition that the words of Jesus recorded in John 16:12 -- 15, often taken as a specific promise guaranteeing the truth and infallibility of Sacred Tradition, do not refer to such Tradition at all.(1) By necessity, therefore, some Roman Catholic interpreters of Scripture have found it necessary to develop a novel view of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition in order to hold them Together: Tradition adds to Scripture, but Scripture is "open" to Tradition.

Can this contention be readily illustrated from Roman Catholic biblical scholarship?

In critical discussion it is always a great temptation to treat the most extreme examples of the opposition's viewpoint as though they were representative. That is an unworthy tactic and often merely hardens prejudices on both sides. In this context, however, the point can readily be illustrated not from the worst historical examples of Roman Catholic biblical interpretation, but -- albeit from a necessarily limited sample -- by what is widely regarded as its best.

It would be hard to find a better illustration of the new approach to the Bible in Roman Catholicism than the recent widely acclaimed commentary on Romans by Joseph A. Fitzmyer. Professor Fitzmyer is a leading Roman Catholic scholar whose outstanding academic gifts pervade his almost 800-page commentary. While it is often

true in the matter of commentaries that "one man's meat is another man's poison," it is impossible to imagine any student of Scripture failing to find considerable profit from the erudition and stimulus of Fitzmyer's work. Raymond E. Brown, the outstanding American Catholic Johannine scholar, describes Fitzmyer as "the most learned N[ew] T[estament] scholar on the American Catholic scene."⁽²⁾ Elsewhere he says of his work on Romans that "It can lay fair claim to being the best commentary on Romans in English."⁽³⁾ Even those who might award the palm to someone other than Fitzmyer recognize the value of the commendation.

But it is precisely because of the quality of this commentary that its contents are so significant. A desire for careful exegesis coupled with faithfulness to the Magisterium of the Church leads Fitzmyer (a Jesuit) to state, albeit with appropriate sensitivity and discretion, that the teaching of the Scriptures cannot simpliciter be identified with the teachings of the Sacred Tradition. The following selection of illustrations will underline this.

A Roman Catholic on Romans In an extensive introductory chapter on Pauline theology, Fitzmyer includes an essay on faith. In the developed theology of the medieval period, theologians had spoken and written much of *fides caritate formata*, justifying faith which was "faith formed by love." This, not "faith alone," justifies. This view was confirmed at the Council of Trent.

Many of the Tridentine statements reveal misunderstandings of the teaching of Luther and

the other Reformers; nevertheless, its teaching in this connection is clearly intended as a rejection of the principles the Reformers regarded as central to the gospel. Trent's Decree on Justification reads as follows: If anyone says that people are justified either by the sole imputation of the righteousness (justitia) of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and charity which is poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit and inheres in them; or even that the grace by which we are justified is only the favour of God, let him be anathema.(4) Rome's great fear has always been that sola fide would breed antinomianism and moral license. Christians, it was held, were preserved from this by the fact that justification takes place through faith which is formed by love; i.e., justification involves personal transformation. But, comments Fitzmyer, Paul's notion of faith which "blossoms" in love is to be distinguished from this fides caritate formata:

That is a philosophical transposition of the Pauline teaching -- acceptable or not depending on whether one agrees with the philosophy involved -- but the genuine Pauline idea of "faith working itself out through love" is implicit in Romans... he does not equate faith with love; nor does he ascribe to love what he does to faith (viz., justification, salvation), even though he recognizes the necessity of the two working in tandem. (5)

Here is an important recognition of the fact that we must distinguish between what the Tradition

has said and what the Scriptures actually affirm. The idea of faith and love being instrumental in justification cannot be read out of the text as such. It is no part of the exegesis of Paul's words.

Note however that Fitzmyer is careful to suggest only that there is distance between what is affirmed by Paul and what is stated in the Tradition. He does not affirm that there is any necessary contradiction between Scripture and Tradition.

More is to follow. Commenting on the central passage, Romans 3:21 -- 26, Fitzmyer states that Paul here formulates "three, or possibly four, effects of the Christ-event [i.e., the work of Christ]...: justification, redemption, expiation, and possibly pardon" and adds, "It is important to recognize that such effects of the Christ-event are appropriated through faith in Christ Jesus, and only through faith. It is the means whereby human beings experience what Christ has done."(6) Here again the Pauline text is to be read on its own terms without recourse to post-Pauline developments in the Church. Fitzmyer knows that within the Church there have always been those who have read Paul's words as implying the principle of sola fide. It would be quite wrong, however (indeed naive), to read this distancing of the Church's pronouncements from the statements of the biblical text as a capitulation to the Protestant exposition. For Fitzmyer is no less careful to point out the difference between the text and the way in which it has been interpreted within the Protestant churches.

Within a page of the previous citation we find Professor Fitzmyer rejecting the interpretation of a Protestant scholar on the grounds that "that reading would introduce an Anselmian distinction into the Pauline text, which does not warrant it."(7) But even here the concern is to allow Paul to speak for himself in distinction from reading him through the eyes of the construction of a postbiblical tradition (in this case one which also appealed to Protestantism). Whether or not Fitzmyer's critique is accurate, what is at first sight remarkable is the way in which his recognition of Paul's emphasis on the unique role of faith might easily be mistaken for the comment of a Protestant exegete.

There are other noteworthy illustrations of an exegesis which self-consciously seeks to let the Scriptures speak for themselves apart from the dominance of theological tradition. In this sense the Roman Catholic scholar is approaching the text in a manner similar to the Protestant.

Commenting on the words "justified freely by his grace" in Romans 3:24, Fitzmyer notes:

It should be superfluous to stress... that in using *dorean* and *te autou chariti*, Paul is not referring to the efficient cause of justification by the former and the formal cause by the latter (as if *chris* were "sanctifying grace"). That is anachronistic exegesis, a distinction born of later medieval and Tridentine theology.(8)

Here again, without rejecting Tridentine teaching as such, a distinction is made between what the

text itself states and the theology which has developed within the Catholic tradition.

The comments which may strike the Protestant mind as most unexpected are to be found in Professor Fitzmyer's exposition of Romans 3:27 - 31. It was in his translation of Romans 3:28 in 1522 that Luther's appeal to sola fide emerged as seminal for the Reformation understanding of the gospel. Fitzmyer recognizes that in fact this language long predates Luther and can be found already in the writings of the early Fathers. He frankly states that "in this context" Paul means "by faith alone" although he contends that in the Lutheran sense its use is an extension of what Paul says. This inevitably prompts questions as to what the nature of this "extension" is, and whether there is any Roman Catholic "sense" in which justification is genuinely "by faith alone." But the admission in and of itself is significant.

The same distance between Scripture and Tradition is further indicated when Fitzmyer turns to the exposition of Romans 5:12. The traditional Roman Catholic view of this text is to see here a reference to "original" sin. This was made explicit by the Council of Trent, which not only set its imprimatur to this exegesis of Paul's words, but also forbade any other understanding of his statement. Fitzmyer comments:

This tradition found its formal conciliar expression in the Tridentine Decretum de peccato originali, Sess. V, 2 -- 4... This decree gave a definitive interpretation to the Pauline text in the sense that his words teach a form of the dogma of Original Sin, a

rare text that enjoys such an interpretation.

Care must be taken, however, to understand what Paul is saying and not to transform his mode of expression too facilely into the precision of later dogmatic development... Paul's teaching is regarded as seminal and open to later dogmatic development, but it does not say all that the Tridentine decree says. (9)

Again we can hardly avoid noting the caution which emerges with respect to reading Church Tradition back into Scripture. The dogma as such is not rejected; what is made clear is that it is not to be identified simpliciter with the teaching contained in the New Testament.

Next, in commenting on Romans 6:12, Fitzmyer alludes to the teaching of the Council of Trent that what Paul sometimes calls "sin" (as, for example, in Romans 6: 12) is not described as such by the Roman Catholic Church, but rather is understood as the *fomes peccati*. The allusion here is to one of the most astonishing (and surely embarrassing) statements in the documents of Trent, in the Decree Concerning Original Sin:

This concupiscence, which the apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy Synod declares that the Catholic Church has never understood it to be called sin, as being truly and properly sin in those born again, but because

it is of sin, and inclines to sin. And if anyone is of a contrary sentiment, let him be anathema.(10)

Again we must not make the mistake of thinking that Fitzmyer has ceased to be a faithful son of the Church. For this, he notes (in agreement with the earlier biblical scholar M-J. Lagrange), "might be an exact theological transposition," but it is a precision not yet found in the Pauline text.

Our concern here is not to discuss the precision of the theology involved in this statement, but once more to underline the gap -- although for Fitzmyer manifestly not an unbridgeable historical gulf -- which is fixed between the revelation as it comes to us in Scripture and what the Church has received as its authoritative Tradition.

No doubt this whole approach strikes anxiety in the hearts of Roman Catholics who are conservative and traditionalist (there are "fundamentalists" in both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism). They may find some relief in the way Professor Fitzmyer's concurrence with the Roman Tradition is given notable expression in his handling of Paul's teaching on justification. Professor Fitzmyer nuances the meaning of *dikaioo* in the direction of "being made upright." Here, at perhaps the most critical point, his exegesis harmonizes with the Vulgate's translation of the New Testament's *dikaioo* by *justum facere*.

Despite the presence of Lutheran sympathizers at Trent, the Council committed the Church irrevocably to a transformationist doctrine of

justification:

Justification... is not the removal of our sins alone, but also the sanctification and renovation of the inner man through the willing reception of the grace and the other gifts by which a man from being unjust (ex injusto) becomes just, and from being an enemy becomes a friend so that he may be an heir according to the hope of eternal life.(11)

Even Fitzmyer's further qualification -- he notes that this justification takes place "gratuitously through God's powerful declaration of acquittal" -- does not eliminate a distinctively Tridentine exegesis, as he makes clear:

The sinful human being is not only "declared upright," but is "made upright" (as in 5:19), for the sinner's condition has changed. (12)

Much is at stake here. In many areas where Sacred Tradition is not already present and perspicuous in Sacred Scripture, Fitzmyer and other Roman Catholic scholars reduce the gap between what is taught in the biblical text and the dogma of Sacred Tradition by an appeal to the "open" character of biblical teaching. In this way they minimize the force of the Reformation criticism that Tradition contradicts Scripture.

Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet and His exhortation to them to imitate Him John 13:1 -- 15) give an example of this "open" character of

Scripture. Foot washing might well have developed into a Sacrament, in a manner parallel to the development which took place in another "open" passage, James 5:14. Here, "under the Spirit-guided development of Tradition" the text became the basis for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.(13)

No appeal to the theory of Scripture's "open" character can be of service, however, in relationship to the doctrine of justification. It would simply not be possible for Fitzmyer at this juncture to agree with the Reformation exegesis of justification as declaratory, imputed righteousness yet appeal to the "open" character of Paul's teaching and to the Spirit's continuing work in the Church as bringing out the fullness of meaning in justification as including infused righteousness. For these two things stand in contradiction.

Fitzmyer's interpretation is, nevertheless, based on an exegetical appeal -- to his own exegesis of Romans 5:19: "Just as through the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one many will be made upright."(14) He takes Paul's verb *kathistanai* ("made") in the sense of subjective condition, i.e., in a transformationist sense.

Two things should be said here. First, we believe Fitzmyer's interpretation of Romans 5:19 can be demonstrated to be mistaken.(15) But second, his logic is wrong. Even were *kathistanai* understood in a subjective-transformationist sense, it does not necessarily follow that Paul's use of *dikaioo* is transformationist rather than forensic and declaratory. Consistently to

interpret "justify" in the light of this assumption is an exegetical procedure without justification!

But even here there is a formal recognition of the principle: Sacred Scripture must be distinguished from Sacred Tradition; we should not assume that the latter is an exegesis of the former.

Naturally Protestants view this distinction through Protestantized spectacles. Anyone convinced of the sole authority and sufficiency of Scripture is bound to ask how it is possible for a scholar of integrity to recognize this gap and yet to remain a faithful Roman Catholic.

It is too simple a construction, however, to conclude that there is manifest duplicity here. Rather, the general consistency and clarity with which Fitzmyer's exegesis illustrates the gap between Scripture and Tradition highlights why it is that the Protestant appeal to Scripture alone to refute Roman Catholic dogma seems to cut little ice: For Rome, neither Scripture nor Tradition can stand on its own. The rationale for this should now be clear: In the Roman Catholic Church, Sacred Tradition stands beside Sacred Scripture as a valid and authoritative source of divine revelation. In fact both emerge within one and the same context: the Catholic Church.

Understanding this principle helps us to see the mindset of the Roman Catholic Church's approach to interpreting the Bible at this juncture.

Scripture and Tradition For Rome, the Bible itself emerges from within the Church. The Church

exists prior to the Bible; the Bible is itself an expression of the living voice of the Church -- in its own way it is Tradition. In the words of the recent Catechism of the Catholic Church, "the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition."(16) The New Testament is Tradition -- the earliest tradition inscripturated in distinction from the living Tradition which arises within the ongoing life of the Church in the context of apostolic succession.

This perspective is well attested in the succession of Rome's authoritative doctrinal statements.

Appeal in this context is made to the Profession of Faith composed in connection with the Second Council of Constantinople (553), to the Council of Lateran (649) and to the Second Council of Nicea (787). It was, however, in the context of the Counter-Reformation that the Church's position was set in concrete by the Council of Trent:

The holy ecumenical and general Council of Trent... clearly perceives that this truth and rule are contained in the written books and unwritten traditions which have come down to us.... Following, then, the example of the orthodox Fathers, it receives and venerates with the same sense of loyalty and reverence all the books of the Old and New Testaments -- for God alone is the author of both -- together with all the traditions concerning faith and morals, as coming from the mouth of Christ or

being inspired by the Holy Spirit and preserved in continuous succession in the Catholic Church.(17)

The implication of this, specifically drawn out by the Council itself, was that no one should dare to interpret the Scripture in a way contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, even though such interpretations are not intended for publication.

Leaving to one side the doubtful concept of "the unanimous consent of the Fathers," it is clear here why the Tradition becomes the master element in the Scripture-Tradition liaison. Historically it has always been the case that a "living" (in the sense of contemporaneous) word of revelation will become the rule for Christians de facto (whatever may be claimed to the contrary). That is virtually a psychological inevitability. In the case of Rome, what may have begun as a limiting concept (the *regulum fidei*) developed into the master concept.

This position, with appeal to these very citations, was later confirmed by the Church at the First Vatican Council in the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* (1870). A quarter of a century later, *Providentissimus Deus* (1893) appealed to the principle of the analogy of faith understood as the *consensus fidelium* as an essential principle for Catholic exposition. Roman Catholic exegetes were summoned to use critical skills with the specific agenda of confirming the received interpretation.

All this was stated within the context of Leo XIII's affirmation of the inerrancy and infallibility of

Scripture. Such was the continuing impact of modernism, however, that within two decades the Decree Lamentabili (1907) was issued to stem the tide of theological corruption. It repudiated and condemned the view that "The Church's teaching office cannot, even by dogmatic definition, determine the genuine meaning of Sacred Scripture."(18) As recently as the International Theological Commission's brief but seminal work *The Interpretation of Theological Truths* (1988) Rome has continued to affirm that any conflict between exegesis and dogma is provoked by unfaithful exegesis. Genuinely Catholic exegesis will, by definition, always seek and find the appropriate harmony between biblical text and ecclesiastical dogma. In this light, the Pontifical Biblical Commission comments:

False paths [i.e., in exegesis] will be avoided if actualization of the biblical message begins with a correct interpretation of the text and continues within the stream of the living Tradition, under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium.(19)

The circle of reasoning here appears to be "Vicious."

In the nineteenth century the Magisterium rightly recognised that the rise of Higher Criticism and of theological Modernism would endanger the faith of Catholics (as it had already done among Protestants). But Rome faced an additional problem. The view that Sacred Tradition is also Revelation implies that the Tradition possesses the attributes of Revelation, including infallibility

and inerrancy. Consequently the Tradition had to be regarded as infallible. The inevitable correlate of this emerged in Vatican I's Dogmatic Constitution Pastor Aeternus in which papal infallibility was promulgated as a "divinely revealed dogma". The Pope's ex cathedra definitions of faith were stated to be "irreformable of themselves and not from the consent of the Church" ("I myself am the Tradition," commented Pius IX). The anathema sit was pronounced on any who might "contradict this our definition."

The later pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council continued basically to affirm what was historically regarded as the Tridentine view of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition reaffirmed in Vatican I's Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Dei Filius. Tradition, declared Vatican II,

...derived from the apostles, develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit... The words of the holy fathers witness to the presence of this living tradition... Through the same tradition the Church's full canon of the sacred books is known.... (20)

Especially significant is the statement made on the relationship between Tradition and Scripture. It employed the phraseology of Trent, apparently on papal insistence (presumably in view of the need to hold together the traditionalist and the progressive wings of the Church):

Hence there exists a close

connection and communication between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the Word of God, while Sacred Tradition takes the Word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity.

Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence. Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the Word of God, committed to the Church....

It is clear, therefore, that Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, contribute effectively to the salvation of men.(21)

We ought not to make the mistake of assuming that the Roman Catholic Church is thoroughly monolithic. As we have noted, it too has a

conservative and liberal wing. Problems and disagreements arise in tracing and exegeting the Tradition as much as in exegeting the Scriptures! Thus, for example, it has become characteristic of many Roman Catholic scholars to reread the Tradition in as ecumenical a fashion as possible.

One of the most interesting developments within this context has been the emergence of a school of thought especially stimulated by the work of the Tübingen theologian J. R. Geiselmann. This school argues that the view that Scripture and Tradition are twin sources of revelation, complementing one another, is a misreading of the teaching of the Council of Trent. Geiselmann appealed to what he held to be the significant change introduced into the final text of the decree through the influence of Bishop Pietro Bertano of Fano and Angelo Bonucci, the General of the Servites. The draft for the Decree on Scripture and Tradition had stated that revealed truth was to be found partly in the books of Scripture, partly in the Traditions ("partim in libris... partim in... traditionibus"). But the final document spoke of this truth being in the scriptural books and in the unwritten traditions ("in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus"). Geiselmann argued from this change that Trent did not deny that all saving truth is contained in the Scriptures. The truth of divine revelation is found not partly in Scripture while the remainder is found in the traditions (the draft formulation); it is all in Scripture. It is also all to be found in the tradition. It could be argued therefore that the sola Scriptura principle, properly understood, is consistent with Trent.(22)

In response to Geiselmann's position, however, Cardinal Ratzinger (now Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith) has argued that as a Catholic theologian, [Geiselmann] has to hold fast to Catholic dogmas as such, but none of them is to be had sola scriptura, neither the great dogmas of Christian antiquity, of what was once the consensus quinquesaecularis, nor, even less, the new ones of 1854 and 1950. In that case, however, what sense is there in talking about the sufficiency of scripture?(23) In a word, the deposit of the faith (depositum fidei) is contained in both Scripture and Tradition, and the task of interpreting it is "entrusted to bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome."(24)

The recent document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, continues to affirm this position, if in a less polemical and dogmatic manner and in an ecumenically conscious fashion: "What characterizes Catholic exegesis is that it deliberately places itself within the living tradition of the Church."(25) In this context, however, the Commission is careful to add:

All pre-understanding, however, brings dangers with it. As regards Catholic exegesis, the risk is that of attributing to biblical texts a meaning which they do not contain but which is the product of a later development within the tradition. The exegete must beware of such a danger.(26)

No hint of criticism is made of the fact that Sacred Tradition requires belief in dogma which is not contained in Sacred Scripture. But there is present here a hint that exegetes in the past (and still today) may read the New Testament as though it had been written in the light of the Tradition, and thus distort the teaching of Sacred Scripture (and by implication perhaps also the function of the Tradition). Implicit in this is the recognition of the substance-gap between Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

The historic Protestant view is that this gap becomes a chasm at certain strategic points. There is an unbearable discrepancy, not merely a healthy tension, between Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition in many areas.

In the earlier Roman Catholic handling of Scripture, any gap between the exegesis of Scripture and the content of the Tradition was minimized. The faithful Catholic exegete should not even in private exegete Scripture in a manner contrary to the Tradition:

Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, it [the Council] decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall -- in matters of faith, and of morals, pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine -- wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church -- whose it is to judge the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures -- hath held and doth hold; or even

contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never [intended] to be at any time published.

Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established.(27)

A wide variety of factors contributed to the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Among the chief was the discovery, fueled by the Renaissance spirit of *ad fontes*, that the gap between the clear teaching of Scripture and the teaching of the Tradition was at points so great as to involve not merely development but contradiction.

Roman Catholic scholars such as Professor Fitzmyer have been given the freedom to explore what Scripture teaches. They discover themselves looking over their shoulders at the Roman Catholic traditionalists who do not hide their anxiety that such open distancing between Scripture and Tradition will be the downfall of the Church. Consequently their characteristic refrain is that the difference between the content of Scripture and the content of the Tradition does not involve contradiction but only development. What becomes clearer than ever, however, is that the principle of *sola Scriptura* remains a watershed. As Cardinal Ratzinger as much as admitted in his reaction to Geiselman, there are major Roman doctrines which are simply not found in the Scriptures. In this sense Scripture alone cannot be regarded as sufficient for the life of the Church.

But we must go further. There are important teachings in the Tradition which are not only additional to, but different from and contradictory to, the teaching of Sacred Scripture. These include the very doctrines which were the centerpiece of the Reformation struggle: the nature of justification; the importance of the principle of sola fide; the number of the sacraments; the sufficiency of the work of Christ, the effect of baptism, the presence of Christ at the Supper, the priesthood of all believers, the celibacy of the priesthood, the character and role of Mary, and much else. The more that Scripture is exegeted on its own terms the more it will become clear that in these areas Sacred Tradition does not merely add to Sacred Scripture, it contradicts it. And if it does, can it any longer be "sacred"?

A major development has taken place, then, in Roman Catholic interpretation of Scripture. For this we may be grateful. We should not grudgingly minimize the rediscovery of the Bible. Indeed it might help us greatly if we recalled more often than we do that responsibility for the confusion in Rome's understanding of justification rests partly on the shoulders of the great Augustine himself whom we often claim with Calvin as "wholly ours." Having said this, however, it is now clearer than ever (pace Geiselmann) that the Roman Catholic Church cannot and will not subscribe to sola Scriptura. It must deny the sole sufficiency of the Bible. And, as the Reformers recognized, so long as Rome appeals to two sources, or even tributaries, of revelation, the contents of Scripture and the substance of its own Tradition, it is inevitable that it will also withstand the message of

Scripture and of the Reformation: sola gratia,
solo Christo, sola fide.

--Endnotes--

1 See, for example, Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John, Vol. 2* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1966) pp. 714-717.

2 Raymond E. Brown, *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) p.9.

3 Cited on the dustjacket of Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York, 1994).

4 Council of Trent's Decree on Justification, Canon XI.. See Rev. H. J. Schroeder, O. P. *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Rockford, Ill.: Tan, 1978).

5 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p. 138.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 342.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 343.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 348.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 348.

10 Council of Trent's Decree Concerning Original Sin, Session V in Schroeder.

11 Council of Trent's Decree on Justification, Session VII in Schroeder.

12 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p. 347

13 J.A. Fitzmyer, *Scripture, The Soul of Theology*, p. 78

14 The translation is Fitzmyer's.

15 See, e.g. Douglas Moo, *Romans, Vol. 1* (Chicago.: Moody, 1991) pp. 358-9; J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans, Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) pp. 205 -- 6, 336 -- 362.

16 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liquori, Mo.: Liquori, 1994) p. 26, #83.

17 *Decrees on Sacred Books and on Traditions to be Received*, 1S46.

18 J. Neuner and J. Dupois, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, rev. ed. (Staten Island,: Alba, 1982) p. 79.

19 *The interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Boston, 1993) p. 121. 20 *Dogmatic Consitution on Divine Revelation*, II:8. (For an English translation of the pronouncements of Vatican II, see Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, New York: Crossroad, 1966).

21 *Ibid.*, II. [10].

22 The view Geiselman rejects has been the view of the major Roman apologists since Trent. For a brief account see J. R. Geiselman, "Scripture, Tradition, and the Church: An Ecumenical Problem" in D. J. Callahan, H. A. Obermann, and D. J. O'Hanlon, eds., *Christianity*

Divided (London, 1962) pp. 39 -- 72.

23 J. Ratzinger in K. Rahner and J. Ratzinger, Revelation and Tradition, translated from the German, Offenbarung und Überlieferung, by W. J. O'Hara (New York, 1966) p. 33. The references to 1854 and 1950 are to the Bull Ineffabilis Deus promulgating the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (i.e., the perpetual sinlessness of the virgin Mary) and to the Apostolic Constitution Munificentissimus Deus which promulgated the Bodily Assumption into heaven of the virgin Mary.

24 Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 27, #85.

25 The interpretation of the Bible in the Church, p. 89.

26 Ibid.

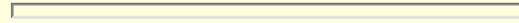
27 "Decree Concerning the Edition, and the Use, of the Sacred Books," in Phillip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom, Vol.2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966) p. 83.

This article is from Chapter 6 of Sola Scriptura! The Protestant Position on the Bible, an excellent book defending the doctrine of Sola Scriptura! and is highly recommended by this site. Contact Soli Deo Gloria Publications to order this book.

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Is Sola Scriptura a Protestant Concoction?

A Biblical Defense of Sola Scriptura

by Dr. Greg Bahnsen

(Transcribed from a taped lecture by David T. King and edited for the WWW by James Anderson)

The issue of Scripture and Scripture Alone (or what Protestants have come to call the principle of *sola Scriptura*) is a matter that divides professing Christians as to the foundation of their faith and what defines their faith. Back in the days of the Reformation when there were men who felt that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ had been not only corrupted by the Roman Catholic Church, but had virtually disappeared under the mask of human traditions and rituals and things that kept people from actually hearing the good news of Jesus Christ, in order to reform the Church, in order to have the grace of God more clearly proclaimed to people, Protestants realized they had to take a stand not only for ‘Sola Gratia’ (i.e., in Latin, ‘By Grace Alone’ for our salvation), but that had to be proclaimed on the basis of *sola Scriptura* (‘Scripture Alone’) because the Roman Catholic Church used its appeal to human tradition in the Church (or what they considered divine tradition in the Church) as a basis for its most distinctive doctrines.

When Martin Luther was called before the ‘Diet of Worms’ and there told that he had to recant his teaching about ‘Justification by Faith Alone’ (you may know the story very well), Luther (which was the better part of valor) asked for a night to think it over before he gave his answer to the Council. And then on the next day in appearing before that tribunal which was demanding that he recant of this

teaching which really amounted to the purity of the Gospel, Luther responded with those famous words: “Here I stand, I can do no other!” Now what do we make of that? Is that just the stuff of which dramatic movies can be made? Or is there something about what Luther said that is crucial to what it is to be a Christian, crucial to the purity of the Gospel and the truth of the Scriptures themselves?

The response of Roman Catholics to Luther’s dramatic stand that he would not recant unless he could be shown to be wrong from the Bible...the response of Roman Catholics (for years) has been, “Well, Protestants simply have their ‘paper’ pope (the Bible)!” Back when I was a seminary student, I had a student in my class who was very antagonistic to the conservatism and theology of the school where I was studying. And he used to make that point over and over again in debates with other students that “You Protestants simply have your paper pope; we have our ‘living’ pope; you have your ‘paper’ pope!”

Of course in saying that, it seemed to me that he was really demonstrating why it is Protestants have to hold out for *sola Scriptura*, because when he pits the ‘paper’ pope of the Bible against the ‘living’ pope who sits in Rome, what he is telling us is that finally that person who sits on the papal chair in Rome is more authoritative than the Bible itself! And that’s exactly what Luther was concerned about. That’s what the Protestant Reformers were concerned about. And frankly, that’s what I’m concerned about tonight! Because we have in our day and age something of a mini-movement (it’s not big enough to be considered even a trickle), but a mini-movement of former Protestants going into the Roman Catholic communion. And they are being convinced that it’s an appropriate thing for them to do, and they are being told that the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* (the formative principle of theology presented in the Reformation, namely that the Bible alone is sufficient) is not itself authoritative, and in fact is not even itself taught in the Bible! “If *sola Scriptura* is so important,” they tell us, “then why isn’t it taught in the Bible alone? Why do Presbyterians prove their doctrine of *sola Scriptura* by going to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, rather than to the Bible?” And so with rhetoric like this, they convince the minds (I think) of weak and unstable people that really Roman Catholicism is not that big a threat. After

all, everybody has their traditions; we have to live with traditions as well as Scripture!

Well, there was a humorous P.S. (it seems to me) to all of this in that a number of other people who had formerly been in the Reformed Churches (not a whole lot of people, but some... some with reputations, and therefore a great deal of media attention is given to them), they have left the Protestant fold and have gone into the Eastern Orthodox Church. And one of these people that I've had some contact with has written a paper on *sola Scriptura* in which he lays out all the reasons why *sola Scriptura* is not an acceptable principle of theology, and it's illogical and unhistorical and on and on and on. And throughout the paper he uses exactly the same rhetoric, exactly the same polemic as do Roman Catholics against Protestants with respect to Sola Scriptura, and throughout the paper promotes the idea of Scripture plus holy tradition.

Well, as I started reading his paper, I started laughing out loud, not in disrespect of the person himself, but in what I saw as the irony of the situation! Roman Catholics present these very same arguments to argue in favor of Roman tradition, papal tradition! And then you turn around and find out that Eastern Orthodox polemicists use exactly the same arguments in favor of what they call their 'Holy Tradition' which is contrary to papal tradition. And so here you have two august Christian bodies (professedly Christian bodies) claiming the authority of tradition, and yet their authorities conflict with each other; their traditions conflict with each other. And yet, they laugh at Protestants for their 'paper' pope.

Well, what I'd like to do in our short time this evening is offer a defense of the Protestant doctrine of *sola Scriptura*. I'm not embarrassed by that doctrine. I believe it is absolutely necessary to the health of the Church, and I am convinced (as Luther was convinced) that if we give up *sola Scriptura*, we will inevitably give up *sola Gratia* as well. Because the giving up of the Protestant authority (the principle of *sola Scriptura*) simply opens the door for other ways of pleasing God to enter in that are not based upon His own revelation. And it's a very short step from thinking that I can follow a religious tradition that cannot be verified objectively by the Word of God to the idea that I can please God by something

that He has not provided. It is a very short step from the denial of *sola Scriptura* to the denial of *sola Gratia* when it comes to salvation.

So I will try to keep you up to date on where I am in presenting this case, and I am going to begin by asking: What does the Bible itself tell us about the authority for our doctrinal convictions? When two people who profess to be Christians disagree with each other over some premise or dogma, how does the Bible tell us these disagreements should be adjudicated?

I. And the first step, which I hope is an obvious one but becomes crucial as we move ahead, the first step is for us to recognize that the Bible teaches that our convictions are not to be based upon human wisdom! Human wisdom isn't always wrong; sometimes people used their intellect and their independent ability to research, and find facts and come to truths which are very valuable. The problem is not that human wisdom is always wrong. The problem is that human wisdom is (1) fallible, and (2) not a sufficient foundation for believing anything about God. Because only God is adequate to witness to Himself!

Therefore our doctrinal convictions are not (should not) based upon human wisdom. The Christian faith is rather based upon God's own self-revelation rather than the conflicting opinions of men or the untrustworthy speculations of men. If you have your Bibles with you tonight, turn to I Corinthians 2:5, and notice the burden of the Apostle Paul as to how to control the beliefs of the Christians there in Corinth. I Corinthians 2:5, in verse 4 he says, "And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power..." Why?... Why is Paul making that point? Why is this necessary to emphasize? Verse 5: "...that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (ASV)

Think about Paul's conceptual scheme here as you read this verse. Notice how he puts the power of God over here on one side, and the wisdom of men on the other. And not only is the power of God and the wisdom of men in two different categories, he said, "Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men." In I Corinthians 2, verses 10 and 13 (you'll notice while you're right there) that Paul

draws a sharp contrast between the words which man's wisdom teaches and those which God reveals unto us through the Spirit. On the one hand, you have words taught by the wisdom of men, and on the other hand you have words revealed through the Spirit. Those are contrasted in Paul's theology. And he makes the point in verse 4 of chapter 2 that the apostolic message did not originate in words of human wisdom or insight; but rather the apostolic message rests in the power of God and comes through the wisdom of God's own Spirit!

Paul thanked God in I Thessalonians 2:13... Paul thanked God that the Thessalonians received his message (and now I'm using his words) "Not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God." All I'm trying to get across at this fundamental level in tonight's lecture is that Paul contrasts the words of God to the words of men, the wisdom of God to the wisdom of men. These are set apart from each other. He says, "I praise God that you received my preaching not as the words of men!" (Of course, he is a man; he did use words... They were human words.) But Paul says that you received it rather as the Word of God Himself!

In II Timothy 3, verses 15 to 17, Paul spoke of the 'sacred writings' which make us 'wise unto Salvation!' And he said that "every one of them is God-breathed," is inspired by God. The Bible would have us beware of the uninspired words of men. God's people must not submit to the uninspired words of men. Jeremiah 23:16, the prophet says, "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they teach you vanity; they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah." (ASV) There again we see in the Old Testament this contrast between a message that comes out of the heart of a man and that which comes from the mouth of Jehovah!

It's not as though the heart of man can't ever speak the truth; it's not as though human wisdom never gets anything right, but God's people cannot rest secure in anything that does not come from the mouth of Jehovah Himself.

In the New Testament, in Colossians 2 and verse 8, Paul warns God's people not to allow their faith to be compromised by any philosophy which he says is "after

the tradition of men... and not after Christ!” There you have it again, the contrast between man’s authority and Christ’s authority, the tradition of men on the one hand, and the authority of Christ on the other. Not this but that, your faith stands in the power of God, in the ‘breathed-out’ Word of God, in a philosophy that is after Christ and not after human tradition. Not after the wisdom of men; not after the tradition of men! Indeed, in the 15th chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, verse 6, our Lord Jesus condemned those who, He says, “make void the Word of God” because of their “tradition.” (ASV)

One other thing about human wisdom. We read in the Bible that God forbids us to subtract anything from His Word, and as well forbids us to add anything to His Word. Look at Deuteronomy 4, verse 2: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you.” (ASV) It’s a very serious thing to violate this principle. It’s a very serious thing for any human (in his or her wisdom) to subtract from the Word of God, or (in his or her wisdom) to add anything to the Word of God.

I’ll tell you how serious it is. In Revelation 22, verses 18 and 19, John says of this Revelation that he is giving that if any man dares to add to it, God will add to that person the curses (“plagues”) of the Book! And if any man dares to take away from that Revelation that God will take away the blessings of that Book from the individual. This is not some kind of minor, trivial point of theological dispute! God, over and over again, says that your faith is not to rest in human wisdom. You are not to use human wisdom to tamper with My Word! You are not to add your own thought: “Hearken not to the Prophets who don’t speak from the mouth of Jehovah”! You are not in your wisdom to correct or subtract from My thoughts. And if you dare do so, then I will punish you with the curses of the covenant! I will withdraw the blessing; I will impose the curses if you tamper with My Word!

Well, I trust at this point we can see that this dispute between Roman Catholics and Protestants (whoever happens to be right) is not some meaningless point of idle theological debate! Are we under the curse of God? Have we violated His

Word? Have we presumed (in our own human wisdom) to add to His own Word?

II. Let's take our discussion a step further now by talking about the Apostles and the issue of tradition. The reason it's necessary to do this is that many of the contemporary polemicists for returning to Rome, I think, have confused the people of God by appealing to passages in the New Testament that speak about tradition, and then just letting it be assumed (or wanting people to take for granted) that when the New Testament speaks of tradition, it means tradition in the sense of the Roman Catholic (or Eastern Orthodox, whichever you want to pick) way of understanding tradition. There will be found in your English translations of the New Testament verses that talk about tradition as authoritative. And I'd like to now to take a look at that so you understand it properly, and especially if you see it in light of our first premise that we are not in our Christian faith to follow the dogmas that are rooted in human wisdom. The New Testament approach to tradition is not the approach to tradition of the Roman Catholic Church!

So where should we begin? How about with Hebrews 1, verses 1-2, for the author of that epistle tells us that in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways — but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son! The author of Hebrews makes it clear that the epitome of God's revelation is found in the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has spoken to us in these last days by His Son! That is the high point, the apex of all of God's revelatory manners and means. Jesus Christ is the highest revelation, the clearest revelation of God because obviously Jesus is God Himself. The grandest expression of God's Word is found in the very person of Jesus, who John the Apostle, in John 1:1 and in Revelation 19 calls "the Word of God." Jesus is "the Word of God," he is the highest expression, the clearest, fullest expression of Who God is to us as men!

And how do we know about Jesus? Jesus isn't on earth now, revealing Himself to men in the way that He did to Matthew, John, and the others. How do we know about Jesus today? Well, what we know about Christ is dependent upon the written word of the Gospels, the Gospels that were written by men like Matthew

and Luke and Mark and John. Jesus commissioned certain men to act as His authorized representatives, i.e., Jesus delegated to certain men the right to speak for Him. They had His ‘power of attorney’ (if I can use the legal expression). In fact, that is very close to what the word ‘apostle’ meant in the days of the New Testament. The apostle of a man was considered the man himself in a court of law. The apostle could speak for that man, and the words spoken by the apostle was legally accounted to be the word of the one that commissioned him!

Now in John 14:26 we see that Jesus inspired the Apostles with His Word. John 14:26, “But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.” (ASV) Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be given so that the Apostles will have brought to their remembrance all that Jesus taught, i.e., Jesus wants to pass on to the world through the Apostles not their wisdom, not their insight, but His own Word! Jesus, remember, is the high point of God’s revelation. Jesus turns to the Apostles and says, “The Spirit will bring to your mind everything that I have taught.”

In Matthew 10:40, Jesus explains the concept of an apostle known well in that day when He said, “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” (NKJV) Jesus was sent by the Father, and Jesus turns and sends the Apostles into the world. And He says “the person who receives you (as My apostle) in fact receives Me; and in so doing, receives the Father Who sent Me!” So you see that the Apostles were spokesmen for Christ, authorized to speak His Word, not their own, but to have brought to their remembrance what He had taught. The Bible tells us that what the Apostles spoke they did not speak by flesh and blood. They did not speak according to human instruction. But rather they spoke by the revelation of the Father and the Son!

Think of Peter’s magnificent testimony to Jesus in Matthew 16:17. Jesus says, “Who do you say that I am?” — he’s heard the Gallup Poll results of what people in the culture are saying, but He wants to know about His most intimate followers — “Who do you say that I am?” And Peter, speaking for the Apostles, says, “You are the Christ; You’re the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!” To which Jesus

responds with the commendation, “Peter, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven.” “You know this, not by human wisdom, not by human reasoning; you know this by the revelation of God the Father!”

Or if you look at Galatians 1:11-12 you will see that Paul himself is jealous for the truth of the gospel and what he has taught precisely because it is not his word, but the Word of Jesus Christ! Galatians 1:11-12, “For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ.” (ASV) Boy, we just see this everywhere in the New Testament, not man but God — not man but God! Paul says this is not a revelation that came to me from man, but it came to me from Jesus Christ Himself.

The Father and Jesus Christ revealed the Word to Apostles — and they are taught by the Holy Spirit (as John 14:26 tells us) that Jesus would give the Spirit to lead them into all truth and remind them what He had taught. And the Bible tells us it’s in virtue of this revelatory work of the Apostles — as they reveal the Father and the Son in the power of the Spirit — it’s in virtue of this revelatory work that Christ builds His Church upon the foundation of the Apostles. When Peter makes his grand confession that Jesus is the Messiah, He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Jesus then names him ‘Peter’ — and He says, “Upon this Rock, I will build My Church!” Upon the Rock? What Rock? Well, I know that it is popular among some Protestants to teach that Jesus was referring to Himself. And there’s some reason to think that because God is considered “the Rock,” and in the Bible Jesus has taught that the wise man builds his house upon “the Rock,” which are the very Words of Jesus — there would be some New Testament support for that kind of imagery! But there is not much support for that in the text itself. If Jesus says, “You are Peter (masculine form of ‘Rock’) and upon this Rock I will build My Church,” where ‘this Rock’ refers to Jesus, you almost have to be there to understand it! Because there you have Jesus saying, “And you are Peter, you are Rock, and upon this Rock (now pointing back to Himself) I will build My Church,” and that’s just too much exegetical gymnastics, I think, to be a satisfactory interpretation.

Jesus does build the Church upon — well, should we say Peter because that sounds personal! It can't be Peter as a person — and how do you know that? Because if you read on in just a few verses Jesus calls Peter 'Satan'! He says, "Get thee behind Me Satan!" So if Roman Catholics want to interpret that passage as referring Peter personally, and they're going to take the whole paragraph into account where Jesus later calls Peter 'Satan', then I guess we're left with the conclusion that the Church is built upon the foundation of Satan! Now that isn't going to work either.

Well then, what is 'the Rock' upon which the Church is built? Well, I think it's (1) important that you realize that Peter was speaking for all of the Apostles. This wasn't just one man's opinion! Jesus said, "But who do you (plural) say that I am? Not, "Who do you (singular, Peter) say that I am?" And Peter now speaks for the you plural and gives the answer, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!" As Peter represents the confessing Apostles, Jesus builds His Church upon Peter and the others. But Peter, as a person, can just as much be Satan when he departs from the Word of God, and later receives the rebuke from Jesus! And so Jesus builds His Church upon the confessing Apostles. I think that support for that interpretation will be found in Ephesians 2:20 where Paul says (speaking of the household of God) that it's built upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone." (ASV) There's a sense in which the Church then is built upon the foundation of the Apostles as they confess Christ truly and faithfully... as they bring the Word of God... as they are the authorized spokesmen for Jesus, then they provide the foundation for the Church.

And now this teaching of the Apostles was received as a body of truth which was a criteria for doctrine and for life in the Church of Jesus Christ. The teaching of the Apostles was received as a body of truth that was the standard for doctrine and for life. To make my point here, let me just refer to what the Apostles had as the truth. Now this truth comes from God (we've already seen that it's a revelation of the Father and the Son and the power of the Spirit) — this truth from God (I'm saying) was the standard for doctrine and life in the early days of the

Church.

I don't think anyone has any problem with that, at this point. But the question is: how did the Church come to know this Truth? How did the Church, in its earliest days, learn of the apostolic truth from God? How did they come into contact with this body of dogma that the Apostles had every right and authority to communicate to God's people? Well, we know that the body of truth was 'passed down' to the Church and through the Church. And because it was 'passed down' from the Apostles, it was often called "that which was delivered" or "the deposit".

See, the truth gets 'passed down' to the Church! And because it's "passed down" or "handed over" — the Greek word *paradosis* is used which means "to hand over" — it can be translated "the deposit," "that which is given by hand," that which is communicated from one person to another. And that is translated into English often as "the tradition," that which is entrusted, that which is deposited, that which is delivered. Or as I've said, handed over or committed to another, the tradition. The Apostles have the truth from God and they hand it over to the Church. They deliver it to the Church. And that comes to be called the 'tradition'! The 'tradition' is just the truth that the Apostles teach as a revelation from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Now what does the New Testament tell us about this 'tradition'? Let's look at a few verses together here for a few moments. Turn in your Bibles please to II Timothy 1:13 and 14. II Timothy 1:13, Paul says, "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us." (ASV) Here Paul speaks of the 'deposit' — that which has been committed unto him — the 'deposit' that he has received, he passes on and he says is to be guarded! The Apostolic 'deposit' then is the pattern of sound words for the Church. Notice that? "Hold the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee" — that 'deposit', that 'pattern of sound words' that is the system of doctrine ('pattern of sound words'), that system or network

of healthy truth and teaching, the ‘pattern of sound words’, is the Apostolic deposit.

In I Timothy 6:20-21, we learn that this is to be guarded: “O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith.” (ASV) The pattern of sound words, the deposit of the Apostles, is to be guarded. People put their faith in jeopardy when they do not! Timothy is warned by Paul that some people professing to know the truth have erred concerning the faith because they haven’t guarded the Apostolic deposit.

Indeed, the Apostolic deposit, “the pattern of sound words,” passed to the Church by the Apostles was the standard for Christian life — look at II Thessalonians 3:6 — “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us.” (ASV) Here the English word ‘tradition’ is used — “that which was delivered from us and you received” — if any brother departs from that, then you’re to withdraw yourselves from him! That is the standard for Christian living: “the pattern of sound words” delivered by the Apostles to the Church and received by the Church.

Look at II Peter 2:21, “For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” To turn away from that which has been delivered by the Apostles is a horrible thing to do! It’d be better that you never knew the truth than you should reject it after the Apostolic deposit has been received.

And moreover this ‘pattern of sound words’ which is to be guarded as the standard for Christian living is to be the standard for all future teaching in the Church — II Timothy 2:2, “And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” The Apostles have a truth (a body of truth, a ‘pattern of sound words’) received from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit — they pass it on to the

Church. And the Church is to guard that Apostolic pattern of sound words — they are to mark off as heretics those who depart from it! They are to use that as the standard for all future teachers in the Church.

What is this tradition? Is it the holy tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church? Is it the tradition of the popes in the Roman Catholic Church? No, it is the Apostolic tradition that truth which they have received from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Can you not see that? It should be obvious in the reading of Scripture unless you go to the Bible trying to make it prove some preconceived idea! That tradition, the deposit, that which is handed over or delivered is not Church tradition, papal tradition — it's rather the pattern of sound words taught by the Apostles. And they teach that on the basis of revelation from God the Father.

Now, we have to ask the next question. We know what the truth is (it's the deposit). We know why it's called tradition (because it's 'passed on' to the Church and through the Church). Now the question is: how was it passed? In what form was it passed to the Church? And to answer that let's turn in our Bibles to II Thessalonians 2:15. Paul says, "So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours." Paul says, "Stand fast in the traditions," that is, what the Apostles have delivered, handed over to the Church! Stand fast by that pattern of sound words, the truth, the deposit that they have from God to give to God's people. Stand fast by it! And how did the Church learn about this deposit? How did the Apostles hand it over or deliver it? Well, Paul tells us right here. They did it not only by word but by epistle, by letter, by writing (if you will). "So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours."

And so what I want to say is the truth was passed to the Church orally and in writing. In two ways that same deposit (or pattern of sound words) came to the Church. Is there any hint at all in this verse that what Paul means is part of the tradition came orally and part of the tradition came in writing — so make sure you keep the two of them together so you get everything? Is there any hint of that? It's just the traditions; it's just the deposit; it's just the pattern of sound words that is communicated in two different ways! Paul doesn't suggest that one

or the other supplement the opposite. He simply says guard the traditions — and you received them in writing and you received them orally!

Now why am I stressing this point? Because, you see, Roman Catholics maintain that if you only keep to the Written Apostolic Tradition, you haven't got the whole Word of God! You've got to have the Oral Apostolic Tradition as well. Well, there's just a huge logical fallacy involved in that thinking! Because Paul doesn't say, "Make sure you hold on to the oral traditions and to the written traditions," does he? He says, "Hold fast to the traditions whether you heard them orally or in writing." Can you see the difference there? Do you have one thing that comes to the Church in two ways? Or do you have two things that come to the Church?

If I might schematize the two different positions here, and what I have been arguing is that Paul says the Apostolic traditions are the pattern of sound words that govern the Church. And the Church, in that day, learned of them both orally and in writing, because there's no suggestion when Paul says that there's an oral aspect to the teaching and a written aspect, and you've got to make sure you keep the two together. And I'm emphasizing this because this is the favorite verse of contemporary Roman Catholic apologists where they try to prove that God's people today must have oral tradition as well, because it says right here that you're to hold fast to those traditions whether by word or epistle of ours. And the answer to that, first of all, is that if you have it in either form you've got the 'pattern of sound words'. But more than that, why is it that the truth could be passed through the Church orally and that would be binding on the Church? It's because the one who was speaking this word had Apostolic authority! Remember Jesus said, "He who receives you receives Me!" So when the Apostles went to various congregations and taught, that was to be received as the very Word of Jesus Christ Himself. When the Apostles speak the Word of Christ, then that binds the Church.

But how about other teachers? Is their oral teaching authoritative in virtue of it being oral? Do they carry Apostolic authority? How about Dr. Bahnsen? Many of you (I'm happy to say) have some regard for my teaching; you have a desire to

learn and you invite me here to have this nice conference, and dinner with you and so forth... What if I were to stand up here and say, “I want you to believe what I’m teaching you because I say it?” Do I have the right to do that? God forbid! And you wouldn’t flatter me if you say, “You know, I think you’re right because you’re so smart, or you’re Greg Bahnsen, or you’re a minister in the OPC,” or whatever it is, “therefore I’m going to believe it!” That’s not flattery! I have no right, and you aren’t under any obligation to receive my oral teaching just because it’s me speaking. I don’t have Apostolic authority. Paul, on the other hand, did! John, on the other hand, did! And when they taught orally, that was the truth passed down from God to the Church.

Now when contemporary Roman Catholic apologists look at II Thessalonians 2:15 and say, “We’re bound to follow the traditions, oral as well as written,” my response to that is not only are oral and written two different ways of saying the same thing; but my response to that is simply, I’m under obligation to listen to the oral teaching of the Apostles; you’re absolutely right, and they’re not around any more! And you know, catch up with what’s happening in the Church, friend — we don’t have Apostles today! Where do you get the idea — even on your misreading of this verse — where do you get the idea that the authority of the Apostles in oral instruction has passed on to other people?

Well of course, those of you familiar with the Roman Catholic Church know that they have something of an answer to that. However, I’ve never known a Roman Catholic to think that their answer to that question was based on biblical exegesis. They believe that the tradition of the Apostles (or the authority of the Apostles) can be passed through the office, particularly, of the vicar of Christ on earth, the pope, and the pope has been ordained by previous popes ordained by previous popes, the vicar of Christ, the deputy of Christ on earth. The problem is, that’s not biblically founded! And that’s the closest they would be able to show that the authority of the Apostles continues in the Church.

But you see, the authority of the Apostles continues in the Church not by their oral instruction — that should be obvious; the Apostles are dead! The authority of the Apostles continues in the Church through their teaching, through the deposit

that they have passed to the Church. And the only way in which we now receive that deposit is in writing. The Apostles are dead! They don't orally instruct us! But what they taught continues in their writings, in the Scriptures, which we take as the standard of our faith.

Indeed, in the NT, what the Apostles wrote was to be accounted as the very Word of God. Look at I Corinthians 14:37, "If any man thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord." And indeed, what the Apostles wrote was not only accounted as the very Word of God, their written epistles came to have for the Church the same authority as what Peter called "the other Scriptures." Look at II Peter 3:16! Peter's talking about "our beloved brother Paul," and he says, "as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." Peter puts the writings of Paul in the same category as "the other Scriptures" (that would be the OT). Paul and what he writes has the same authority as did the Old Testament for God's people in that day! There is no continuing supply of new Apostolic oral instruction! But in the Scriptures, written by the Apostles, we find the same authority, the same inspired Word of God as the Old Testament for us. Beyond the first generation of the Church, after the Apostles passed away, the authority of the Apostles was found in their written word in the objective testimony that they left the Church, not in their subjective personal instruction. Because the office of Apostle and the gifts which accompany the ministry of the Apostles were intended to be temporary, they were confined to the founding of the Church.

The office of Apostle is not a continuing office in the Church! To be an Apostle it was required to be a witness of the resurrected Christ as we see in Acts 1:22 — also reflected in Paul's defense of his Apostolic credentials in I Corinthians 9:1. Moreover, it was required that you be personally commissioned by the Lord Himself which is what Paul claims in Galatians 1:1, that He is an Apostle not by the Word of men but by revelation of Jesus Christ! The Apostles were those who were witnesses of the resurrected Christ and personally commissioned by Him. And thus the Apostolic office was restricted to the first generation of the Church.

Paul considered Himself “the least” (perhaps translated “the last”) of the Apostles in I Corinthians 15. And Paul’s personal successor Timothy is never given that title in the New Testament. And so in the very nature of the case, Apostolic revelation did not extend beyond the Apostolic generation. It never extended beyond the foundational days of the Church! Ephesians 2:20 says the Church is founded upon the Apostles and Prophets, Christ being the chief cornerstone. And beyond the foundational days of the Church, the foundation-laying days of the Church, there is no Apostolic revelation. And that’s why when you look at Jude (the 3rd verse) you see the author in his own day — when Apostolic instruction was still current by the way — Jude in his own day could speak of “the faith” as “once for all delivered unto the saints.” The ‘faith’ here is the teaching content of the Christian faith! It is that dogma (if you will), that truth given by the Apostles through the Revelation of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Jude says “the faith” has “once for all” been “delivered unto the saints.”

About that verse, F. F. Bruce wrote these words: “Therefore all claims to convey an additional revelation are false claims, whether these claims are embodied in books which aim at superseding or supplementing the Bible, or take the form of extra-biblical traditions, which are promulgated as dogma by ecclesiastical authority.” The faith, the deposit, the tradition has once and for all been delivered to the Church! And that was accomplished in the generation of the Apostles. It is not a growing tradition. It is not a living tradition by which we mean something the pope or others can add to! It is simply the body of truth that the Apostles, having received by divine revelation, passed on to the Church, whether orally in their own day or by writing.

Now, what governs the Church today? Is it the oral teaching of the Apostles? Well, that couldn’t very easily be true; the Apostles are dead (just to repeat that point). And so it has to be the teaching of the Apostles in some objective form. That means it would be the written word of the Apostles.

III. So thirdly, we need to look at the need for inscripturation—the need for God’s Word to be committed to writing. God verbally revealed Himself in many ways from the beginning of redemptive history. God was not restricted to writing!

Throughout the development of redemptive history and the growth of God's people, God revealed Himself not only in writing, but through personal messengers, sometimes by personal address and appearing to people. God spoke directly to Adam; He spoke directly to Abraham. God was heard in the inspired preaching of Jonah, Amos, and Ezekiel. Christ and the Apostles engaged in oral instruction. We've already granted that that the Apostolic tradition came both in written form and oral instruction.

But that's not the only way God has communicated with His people throughout history. He's also sent His Word in writing to them. From the tablets of the Mosaic Law to the written messages of Isaiah or Jeremiah, as well as the epistles of Paul, God has revealed Himself in writing, in inscripturated form! Now this is the stuff that I want you to pick up on here. The Word of God, which was originally delivered orally, needed to be reduced to writing in order for the rest of God's people to know about it and for it to function as an objective standard for faith and obedience. Where God had spoken by personal address orally, if that was going to be a standard for the Church at large (for all of God's people), that oral instruction (as authoritative as it was in itself) needed to be reduced to writing so that it would be an objective standard that governed all of God's people... An objective standard to test the prophets who proclaimed these words... An objective standard to test later claims to revelation... To have a standard by which to compare what other alleged prophets would say... An objective standard for the establishment of a corporate body as the church and by which it could be defined in all generations... An objective standard for the better preserving and propagating of that truth... An objective standard to guard against corruption and the malice of Satan and the world who would love to foul-up the lines of communication if we're just going to depend upon oral instruction... An objective standard to communicate assurance of salvation to people against human opinions, and the way in which even their preacher or their priest might communicate God's Word to them.

God's Word needed to be inscripturated to govern His people through all generations. And so it's not surprising that this written Scripture became the standard for testing even the prophets — and this is the amazing thing — and the

standard for testing the Apostles!

Now in my second point up here, I've already granted that the Apostles have authority in their oral instruction to deliver the deposit of God to the Church. And now I'm adding another dimension which (I think) is very important that the Apostles — when there was any question about what they taught — the Apostles who had the authority of Christ nevertheless appealed to inscripturated revelation as the basis for what they taught.

In the Old Testament, the word of false prophets was exposed by the previously inscribed Law. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 says if any prophet comes and teaches contrary to what's been revealed before that that prophet is to be executed. That prophet presumes to speak for himself and he says something contrary to what is already written down in the Law. In Isaiah 8:20 we read, "To the Law and to the Testimony!" That didn't mean to the oral testimony; it meant to the written inscribed testimony of God's prophets and the Law which was already there in writing.

Even our Lord Jesus Christ, when not appealing to His own inherent authority, clinched His arguments with His opponents by saying, "It stands written!" or "Have you not read" in the Bible? He said, "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me." John 5:39 (ASV) In Jesus' day, Jesus acknowledges that the appropriate approach to salvation was to search for it in the Scriptures! And you know, that in Jesus' day, the scribes had about as much authority as has ever been given to human tradition. And yet, Jesus pointed them to the Scriptures, not to the oral tradition, not to the authority of the scribes, but to the Scriptures. And then He said, "The Scriptures bear witness of Me!"

In the New Testament, the "spirit of error" was to be identified by comparing whatever the prophets are saying to the teaching of the Apostles. In I John 4:6, the Apostle John says, "He who knows God hears us!" That's the standard; what we have taught! In I Corinthians 14:37, Paul says, "If any man thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto

you, that they are the commandment of the Lord.” And yet, even the Apostles called for the Church to test their own instruction according to the written revelation of God, according to the Scriptures which were in hand.

Why did Paul commend the Bereans? What were the Bereans doing? In Acts 17:11, you’ll read of this commendation because (he says) “they examined the Scriptures daily whether these things were so,” i.e., the things taught by Paul. Paul commends that; and he’s an Apostle! He’s got ‘Power of Attorney’ for the Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks with the authority of the Savior Himself! And yet, even with that Apostolic authority, Paul commends them, because when they wanted to test what he was saying, they went to the written Scriptures to see if these things were so.

In I Corinthians 4:6, we have what amounts to a virtual declaration of the Protestant doctrine or principle of Sola Scriptura! I Corinthians 4:6, Paul says, “Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us you might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other.” Paul says, “Brothers, I have applied (I’ve used a figure of speech) I’ve applied these things (I think he’s referring here “these things” about pride in men, or in their ministries) — I’ve applied these things to myself and to Apollos for your benefit in order that you might learn by us,” the saying, “not to go beyond the things which are written.

Isn’t that amazing? Here’s Paul (long before Luther, long before Calvin, long before the controversy in the late 20th century) saying, I want you to learn the meaning of this, “Not to go beyond the things which are written!” That you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written!” (That’s the NIV.) The RSV says, “that you may learn by us to live according to Scripture.” Or in the Tyndale Commentary on this verse, Leon Morris says, “that what Paul is referring to is a ‘catch’ cry familiar to Paul and his readers, directing attention to the need for conformity to Scripture.” A ‘catch’ cry, a popular slogan! “Not to go beyond the things written!” And Paul says I want you to learn the meaning of that! That is an important principle for you! It is very simply the

Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura*.

Now, let me end here by asking three, maybe four, pointed questions, or making three or four pointed observations rhetorically about the Roman Catholic Church and its appeal to tradition over and above the words of the Old and New Testament.

(1) The first question is this: What is it precisely that Rome accepts as a source of doctrinal truth and authority in addition to the Scriptures? What is it that they accept? Because, you see, when they talk to some Roman Catholics, they'll tell you, "We accept the tradition of the Church because it stems from the Apostles!" As though the Apostles orally taught something, and in every generation that teaching has been passed on orally. I don't know why it would never be (you know) put down in writing! But, it never was put down in writing; it comes down to us only in oral form. Other Roman Catholics will tell you that they are committed to tradition not only from the original teaching of the Apostles allegedly, but also ecclesiastical tradition (i.e., what the Church itself has generated through papal decree or the councils) whether the Apostles originally said it or not!

And so you need to be clear when you're talking to a Roman Catholic. What is it they would add to the Scripture? What do they mean by tradition? And then after they answer that question, we have to ask, "Well, how do you properly identify tradition?" After all, not all tradition is tradition to the Roman Catholic. There are some things which were done traditionally in the Church which Roman Catholics would say should not have been done, or which they do not consider authoritative. Not all tradition counts then as authoritative tradition! Well, how do you properly identify authoritative tradition?

And then another question, "What are the proper bounds of authoritative tradition?" Has all oral tradition now been divulged? Has everything the Apostles taught now been given to the Church? That has to be answered by Roman Catholics; or are we still waiting for this to build and build and build? Is tradition limited to what was orally taught by the Apostles? Is every tradition allegedly

something that traces back to them (the Apostles)? And then, “By what warrant, theological or epistemological, by what warrant does Rome accept this additional source of doctrine or ethical truth?”

So let me focus all of this in a challenge. (This is still part of number one here in conclusion.) My challenges to my Roman Catholic friends: give me a convincing example of some doctrinal or ethical principle which make the following five criteria. Give me an example of some doctrinal or ethical principle that is (1) not already in Scripture; (2) not contrary to Scripture; (3) based upon what is properly identified as tradition (that’s what all these introductory questions were about); (4) is necessary in some sense to the Christian life or Church (necessary); and (5) could not have been revealed during the days of the Apostles.

If the Roman Catholic Church intends to be taken seriously when it tells us that tradition supplements Scripture, then it should be able to offer an example of something that is not in the Bible, that’s not contrary to the Bible, it’s part of what’s properly considered tradition, is necessary for the Church but could not be revealed in the days of the Apostles. We have to understand why it couldn’t have been revealed in the days of the Apostles! That’s the first problem that I would give to my Roman Catholic friends. Can you even give me a convincing illustration of something that matches all these criteria?

(2) Secondly, I want you to notice the problem with the oral nature of tradition, and it’s found right in the pages of the New Testament itself in John 21... John 21 at the 23rd verse... This follows the words of our Lord Jesus to Peter about being “girded about and taken where he does not wish to go”... Verse 19 says, “Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God.” Verse 20: “Peter, turning about, sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following (John); who also leaned back on his breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee? Peter therefore seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.” Now verse 23: “This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, that he should not die; but, If I will that he (John) tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”

In verse 23, we already have an indication in the New Testament of the unreliability of oral tradition. Right there, it's called down! That is not what Jesus was trying to communicate. And so secondly, you have to understand that, Roman Catholics who think they're relying upon what orally traces all the way back to the Apostles, already (in the days of the New Testament) what was orally taught was being corrupted — and testimony is given to it!

(3) Thirdly, what is a believer to do when Church traditions contradict each other? There are many traditions in the Church and they are not all harmonious. Some traditions in the church support the office of the universal bishop; other traditions denounce the office of a universal bishop (read Gregory the Great and Cyprian for instance).

What are we to do with the tradition that was alive in the early Church that said Christ would shortly return and establish an earthly kingdom? Other traditions contradict it! What do we do about the use of images as a help to worship, or a help to prayer? Some traditions in the Church endorse the use of images; other traditions in the Church condemn the use of images! If tradition is authoritative, what are we to do with conflicting traditions?

(4) And then finally, fourth, I would just make this observation: that the distinctive and the controversial doctrines or practices of the Roman Catholic Church (the distinctive and controversial doctrines, and practices of the Roman Church) are all founded solely upon alleged tradition! Purgatory, the mass, transubstantiation, indulgences, the treasury of merit, penance, the rosary, prayers to Mary, holy water, the papacy, and on and on. Those things which are distinctive to the Roman Catholic Church, you will find, that when you get into debates with Roman Catholics, they appeal not to biblical exegesis to support, but they appeal to this alleged Apostolic Oral Tradition that supposed to still be alive in the Church. And I think that's just asking a bit too much of anybody to expect that those heavy and controversial points could be founded not upon an objective Word from God (in the way that we've seen at the beginning of tonight's lecture), but to be founded upon an unverifiable, subjectively adduced tradition that is said

to be Apostolic.

Now I think that once you think about this and what the Bible has to say about authority in our doctrinal convictions and our practices — when you think about the abuses that arise, and the confusion that arises from trying to follow oral tradition — when you see that even the Apostles were tested by the written Word of God, I think that I would still like to stand with Martin Luther. I'm not willing to recant or to affirm any doctrine unless it can be shown to be taught on the basis of Scripture and Scripture alone! That's not a Protestant concoction; that, you see, is just honing very closely to the very teaching of God's Word itself! We should all learn this principle: "Not to go beyond the things which are written!"

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Think on These Things

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Evangelicals and Catholics Together

By Gary E. Gilley, Pastor-teacher of Southern View Chapel

Was the Reformation a mistake, or do fundamental points of doctrine still separate the Roman Catholic Church from us?

Perhaps no one has been more productive for the cause of ecumenicalism in recent years than Chuck Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship. Colson, in particular, has defended the concept of the evangelical Catholic. That the teachings of the Catholic Church is "another gospel," does not seem to be of concern to Colson. As a matter of fact, Colson is constantly offended by believers who would challenge the salvation of his wife (a practicing Catholic) or Mother Teresa (one of his favorite "heros of the faith"). In His book, *The Body*, Catholic leaders throughout the world serve as his examples of truly born again, dedicated Christians. So, anyone familiar with Colson's work should not be overly shocked by his recent publication of "Evangelical and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." This is a statement hammered out by Colson and Catholic priest, Richard John Neuhaus of NYC. It has been signed by both leading Catholics and evangelicals including: Bill Bright, Os Guinness, J.I. Packer, and Pat Robertson. This document, among other things, calls for Catholics and Protestants to cease "proselytizing" one another's people. In other words, if a Catholic is a believer (which would be possible only if that believer denies the official teachings of the RCC) then we must allow those believers to remain within the Catholic church. We must stop stealing Catholic sheep, instead we must unite in our efforts against the common enemy: the humanistic world. To accept this concept would completely reverse the Reformation and bring to a halt evangelistic efforts all over the world. For, according to this document, Catholics are believers every bit as much as evangelicals are. To be sure "dialogue" between the two sides needs to be continued, but our differences are not so fundamental as to call for separation. Luther was apparently mistaken. And so was Paul who pronounced an anathema upon any who would dare preach "another gospel" (Gal 1:6-10). Rather than unite with those who teach false doctrine Paul told Titus that the elders of the local church must, "(Hold) fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). Ecumenicalism is running rampant in the church today. Many, who should know better, are choosing to close their eyes to fundamental differences of faith and practice for the sake of unity. What has brought the evangelical church to this point? Although many things could be identified let us suggest three steps that have led us to the present condition: 1) Ecumenical evangelism. For decades many believers have been willing to compromise essential doctrines for the sake of winning the lost. Ultimately, of course, such compromise always leads to the watering down of certain Biblical teachings in order to avoid offending certain groups. 2) Ecumenical social involvement: It has become increasing popular to unite with moral conservatives of all stripes in order to change society. Thus, we

are becoming comfortable working with those who cling to some of our values, even while they deny our Lord. 3) The minimizing of the importance of doctrine. Experience rather than truth is the battle cry of the church today. People want life, not doctrine, having forgotten that it is TRUTH that sets us free (Jh 8:32). With this view of the Christian life, God's people are set up to be blown about by any and every wind of doctrine.

David Wells has written an excellent book that powerfully deals with the third step above. It is entitled, *No Place for Truth*, and carefully examines the trend in our churches toward programs, entertainment, great music and productions in place of sound Biblical teaching. For example Wells says, "Within the church, strong winds are blowing from a range of religious consumers who look to the churches and ministers to meet their needs — and who quickly look elsewhere if they feel those needs are not being met. Basically, these consumers are looking for the sort of thing the self movement is offering; they just want it in evangelical dress. A genuinely biblical and God-centered ministry is almost certain to collide head-on with the self-absorption and anthropocentric focus that are now normative in so many evangelical churches" (p256). The church in Brazil may as yet not face this exact problem — but it is coming. Solid teaching now is imperative.

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The following was transcribed from a television broadcast of a "roundtable discussion," titled "Irreconcilable Differences: Catholics, Evangelicals, and the New Quest for Unity" that took place in Ft Lauderdale, Florida between Dr. James Kennedy, Dr. John MacArthur, Dr. R. C. Sproul, and John Ankerberg.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in open discussions and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article. It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Tony Capoccia

NOTE: Actual ECT (Evangelicals and Catholics Together) Document appears at the end of this article.

Irreconcilable Differences: Catholics, Evangelicals, and the New Quest for Unity

Parts 1 - 6

Ft Lauderdale, Florida, 1995

Part 1

JOHN ANKERBERG: We are here in Ft Lauderdale, Florida in the beautiful Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church. My guests are Dr. D. James Kennedy, who is the pastor of this wonderful church. And the well known, popular, Dr. John MacArthur, and Dr. R. C. Sproul.

Our program today is about a document that is called the *Evangelicals and Catholics Together - The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*. We are also going to be talking about a new clarifying doctrinal statement that was just written by the Evangelical signees of this document. The **ECT, The Evangelicals and Catholics Together document**, as we call it, was written by twenty well-know

Evangelical leaders and twenty well-known Roman Catholic leaders.

The purpose of this document was stated to be:

1. To provide a statement that would advance Christian fellowship, cooperation, and mutual trust, between Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics.
2. It was to provide a world-view for Protestants and Catholics to unite on, in defense of the truth, here in the North American culture wars. That is, these men saw the benefit of Catholics and Protestants standing and fighting together on the critical moral issues of our day.
3. The document was written to establish some basis for servility and mutual respect between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Latin America, and some other countries, who because of rivalry were in conflict over evangelism.

Now, I want to make it clear that those who wrote this document said, "It is not an official document binding Roman Catholics and Protestants together. It is not meant to be precise or theologically comprehensive, and the only authority it has stems from the personal creditability of those who signed it." At the same time the signatories of this document said they "Hoped it would make waves and change established patterns of behavior in this country and overseas." If it did, they thought its strategic importance would be far-reaching, and apparently its impact has been wide, and powerful. For example, its been reported to have circulated inside the Vatican and been received there with great enthusiasm. One Christian publication said "It was a landmark document." *Christianity Today* and the *Christian Coalition* have both referred to it as a "Historic Document." *The Wall Street Journal*, of all places, said, "This document was the wave of the future." Now, the very fact, that many people feel this document is uniting Catholics and Protestants in North America to stand together on social issues, and it is helping stop the conflict in Latin America and other countries—it shows how important and influential this document is.

Now, Chuck Colson, who helped draft this document, has acknowledged that it has created a lot of controversy and it has raised genuine concern over whether it clearly represents what Evangelical Christians believe. Just a few weeks ago, Chuck requested a private meeting with ten Evangelical leaders, including the four of us that are here. He expressed his concern over the document in the confusion that it has caused as well as its lack of clarity concerning what Evangelicals believe, and he said that he wanted "to resolve and remove any contentious issues, so that there would no longer be any doubt as to where he and the other Protestants signees stood." To this end, together, we all composed a statement that clarifies and clearly defines our Evangelical beliefs—not all of them, but some primary ones.

To begin, I would like to come to you, Dr. R. C. Sproul. When we all got together, we were concerned about the statements and the Evangelicals and Catholics Together document, that seemed to give an unwarranted stamp of legitimacy to Roman Catholic doctrine. For example, the ECT document implies

that Evangelicals and Roman Catholics should and can be united on the basis of their being able to affirm this statement:

"That we are justified by grace, through faith, because of Christ"

Now, we all agreed this statement still needed to be clarified. Some may wonder, "What in the world is wrong with that phrase?" All Roman Catholics will say that they accept and believe these words, but we know that if you add the word "alone" to this sentence, so that it reads this way:

"That we are justified by grace *alone*, through faith *alone*, because of Christ *alone*"

The Roman Catholic friend that you are saying this to will back away from it, and he won't accept it. R. C., why is that one little word, "sola" the Latin word "sola" (alone), that's missing in the ECT document—why is this so important to us? And then please explain why we did place it in the new clarifying doctrinal statement.

R. C. SPROUL: Well, John as you will certainly remember when we had our private discussions behind closed doors, with Chuck, and Jim Packer, and Bill Bright, and the other signatories there, I made the comment at the time that, that word "alone" which is so conspicuously absent from ECT, has emerged as something of a "shibboleth" in Church history, not in the pejorative sense (in the negative sense), but in the positive sense of the "shibboleth" that this is a watershed statement that separates people on what they really believe. Now to get to the heart of that let me jump down the funnel to the bottom line of the controversy, historically, between the Roman Catholic Church and Evangelicals that provoked the Reformation.

I will try to say this in a way, that my mother, God bless her if she were still alive, would be able to understand it, and I hope that she understands it now far more clearly than I do, in her felicity in heaven. In any case, if my mother were here I would say, "Mom, here's my problem" "God is just, God is righteous, and I'm not! How can I possibly survive a tribunal before a just and holy God? Since I know that that God requires and demands perfect righteousness for Him to justify anyone." And so the issue in the 16th century was, not whether God demands righteousness in order for Him to declare somebody just, but the issue is: "Where do we get that righteousness?"

The Protestant view was this: that the only righteousness that has the merit necessary to meet the requirements of the holiness of God, is that righteousness that was achieved and performed by Jesus Christ—and by Jesus Christ "alone!"

There is where the word "alone" comes in John, because all Protestants have acknowledged, historically, that the phrase, "justification by faith alone," really means, it's shorthand for, "Justification by the righteousness of Christ alone—that only His righteousness is sufficient to save us." The Roman Catholic Church said that the only way God will ever declare me righteous, or you righteous, or anybody else righteous, is if they have a righteousness that inheres within them, an intrinsic righteousness, a

righteousness that really belongs to John Ankerberg. They would say that you can't be righteous, John, apart from the help of Christ, and the grace of Christ, and the infusion of His power and so on, with which you must assent and cooperate (assentari (sp.), cooperari (sp.), is the (L.) language they use). And so you can't be saved without the help of Christ, or without grace, or without faith. But, added to that faith, added to that grace, added to that Christ—must be the contribution of John Ankerberg, without which God will not declare you just.

Now, that is all the difference in the world! The word "alone" is trying to draw a line in the sand and say that the Gospel of Jesus Christ says that, "The only way that a person can be saved is by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us by faith."

JOHN ANKERBERG: Amen, how do we clarify that in our doctrinal statement?

R. C. SPROUL: In the doctrinal statement, we spent most of our discussion time that day focusing on this question, "What is the gospel?" "And is the doctrine of "sola fide (L.)" (Justification by faith alone) essential to the gospel, and essential to Christianity and to salvation?" Because the problem that I had and others had with ECT is with the statement that "we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ." I have been saying for ten months, that every delegate to the Roman Catholic Council of Trent in the 16th century would have happily signed that. That the ECT nowhere explicitly mentions the Protestant and reformation doctrine of "sola fide (L.)" (Justification by faith alone). It doesn't affirm it; it doesn't deny it, but what I have been concerned to say is that implicitly and inferentially, and I think the necessary inference of the document is that "sola fide (L.)" is not necessary to believe, in order for one to be a brother or sister in Christ. Because the Roman Catholic Church certainly does not affirm "solo fide (L.)."

JOHN MACARTHUR: I think that, if I may jump in, I think that more than implicit in the document, I think that it's explicit.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Yes, let me come to a question for you John, that will help us out on that, and that is one of the things that we told Chuck, and Jim Packer, and Bill Bright, and that was this statement [from the ECT]:

"We together, Evangelicals and Catholics, confess our sins against the unity, that Christ intends for all His disciples" (ECT).

Now the assumption in that statement is that Evangelicals and Catholics are all Christ's disciples. What do you think of that assumption?

JOHN MACARTHUR: Well, I think that is in grave error! And just going back, if I can make the point solidly, to borrow the language of the Apostle Paul, "Any attempt at self-righteousness, no matter how noble the effort, no matter how frequently the "God" vocabulary is used and the divine is brought into it—any attempt at self-righteousness, Paul classifies as "skubalon" (Greek), in Philippians 3. That word

is about as vivid a word as he could possibly use. It could be translated "rubbish"—the most accurate translation is "dung."

When you talk about a work-righteousness system, of any kind, it is so far from saving that it is rubbish, it's garbage. That's why Paul said, "All my life" he said, "I tried to achieve this stuff, and I had all this stuff in my gain column," remember that in Philippians 3? "And then I saw Christ, and a righteousness which came not by the law, but a righteousness was given to me by faith—the righteousness of God and immediately all what was gained was "skubalon."

What you have got is a whole system built on "skubalon" and you can't throw your arms around that system. You can't embrace it, and simply say, "Well, they talk about Jesus, and they talk about God, and they talk about faith, and they talk about grace, and we have got to embrace them. And if we don't embrace them then we are violating the unity of the Body, and we are being ungracious to other disciples." That is a frightening misrepresentation of the distinctiveness of "Justification by faith, and faith alone."

JOHN ANKERBERG: Dr. Kennedy, Catholicism believes that Evangelical Protestants do not emphasized, or put enough significance on the changed life. O.K., they hear us talk about "Justification by faith alone," and they think that nothing has to happen in terms of the life. But they get mixed up: Justification with Sanctification. Would you define those, and talk about the relationship?"

JAMES KENNEDY: They state very clearly, both in Trent [Council of Trent] and also in their modern catechism, that just came out, that Justification encompasses Sanctification—so they confound the two. Justification and Sanctification must always be distinguished, but they can never be separated. Justification is an act, once and forever, instantaneous, whereby God declares a sinner, an ungodly, unrighteous sinful man, declares him righteous for the sake of Christ. Having imputed to him the righteousness, or the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ, and that is "once and for all done." No Christian is more or less justified than another, we are all justified instantaneously; all justified totally and completely.

Sanctification is a process, which begins at that moment of regeneration, the moment of salvation, and grows all through our lives. It is different in every believer. Sometimes you hear people say that they don't like people that are "holier than thou"—holier than me! But the fact of the matter is, there are Christians that are holier than I am, holier than you are, and holier than everyone here is. Everyone sitting in this room is at some different degree of cleansing in growth, in the Christian faith—that is completed by glorification, which again is an act, which takes place after death, immediately after death, where all the vestigial remains of sin are removed and we are made absolutely perfect. It is as if the perfect white robe of Christ's righteousness were placed upon us once and for all—but they make Sanctification a part of Justification, so that a person must work long and labor hard.

I was just reading some of the things, which they tell a person they must "do" in order to receive the grace of justification. Consider these things, they must:

- Love and worship God
- Pray
- Fast
- Love one's neighbor
- Practice self-renunciation
- Obey the commandments of God
- Bear witness to the Catholic faith
- Follow supernatural inspiration in deeds
- Confess the major doctrines of the Church

And if they do all of these things, they may become worthy of Justification. But the Bible says that God Justifies the ungodly and that we are justified apart from works. In the third chapter of Romans, where Paul gives the fullest statement of the Gospel, he concludes with this concluding statement:

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."

Now that is nothing other than "sola fide (L.)" if stated in other words—"faith alone." "A man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law." But they are saying, "A man is justified by faith based upon his completion of a whole series of years of efforts to keep the law, and finally he is justified by his own merit," in effect.

JOHN MACARTHUR: I was just going to add, the process of justification, and it is a process in the Catholic faith; starts with infant baptism. They say that justification is initiated as a process at infant baptism, and it progresses through life, based upon what you "do" with infused grace. Grace is infused into you supernaturally; it's infused into you through the Mass; it's infused into you through the sacraments, and as it is infused and you cooperate with it—you keep the justifying process going. Now, you can stop that process at any point in time with a mortal sin, but you keep it going even when you get to the end of your life. The odds are that you haven't kept it going good enough and you are going to Purgatory. Nothing could be a more convoluted view of what is an instantaneous act in the Word of God, as he said exactly, by which God places the righteousness of Christ on you. The truth is, I am no more righteous to the satisfaction of God now, than I was before I was declared righteous.

R. C. SPROUL: That's not true! That's not the truth! The truth is John MacArthur is a changed man. And the truth is John MacArthur has had some degree of sanctification in his life.

JOHN MACARTHUR: This is true, this is true, but what I said was (you got to get my qualifier), I said that I am no more righteous, in the sense of satisfying a just God, in other words, I cannot achieve a righteousness that satisfies His requirement. Yes, I believe in regeneration—that's a different issue, and that there is a work of God in my life that is a sanctifying work.

R. C. SPROUL: That's why I was joshing him there, because we don't want to give the impression that people think that just because we believe that we are justified by faith that nothing happens, that we

remain unchanged.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Take 45 seconds, for the person that tuned into, just to this program, that would like to have his sins forgiven, and have Christ's righteousness imputed to him—R. C., How does he do it?

R. C. SPROUL: Forty-five seconds, I would say that His only hope of being forgiven and restored to a relationship with God is to confess his sins, acknowledge his sin, and repent of his sins, and look to Christ and to Christ alone, who is the only person who is sufficient to give him what he desperately needs to be reconciled to God. That Christ will cover your nakedness; that Christ will supply the righteousness from himself and grant you all of His righteousness as a robe to put upon your nakedness. If you would receive Him by faith and trust in His righteousness, then you will be received by the Father, into the Father's house and adopted into his family.

Part 2

JOHN ANKERBERG: Now, Dr. John MacArthur, when we met together, we agreed that the ECT document, the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" document was attempting to join Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants together as "cobelligerents," the word the Francis Schaeffer coined "working at the grass-roots level" in terms of social issues. And we were going to work together against the many social evils, including secular humanism, the riding tide of Islam, pornography, abortion, and things like that. But we also agreed that this work [ECT] has been perceived as going too far in proclaiming the kind of unity that exists. I would like you to define the kind of unity that can exist between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics, and the kind of unity that cannot exist until the doctrine of "Justification by faith alone" has been dealt with clearly.

JOHN MACARTHUR: Well, I might be a little bit radical on this, but I will go ahead. I think the way we can work together on it is for the Catholics to work against those things, like they want to work against them, and we will work against those things, like we want to work against them, but we can't really throw our arms around each other in a common effort because that confounds the issue of spiritual truth.

Look, if the Catholic Church is already a cobelligerent, if they are already anti-abortion, and pornography, and homosexuality; they are going to use all of their energies within the framework of their system to go after that. We are committed to that, and we are going after that. There is already a collective movement. Once you then sort of try to define that as "common spiritual mission" built on "common spiritual unity" you just take doctrine and throw it out the window, and perception is violated, particularly because the Catholic Church claims to be true Christianity, and when we reverse 450 years of history, and just throw our arms around the Roman system, which I think we have to say, John, in all honesty, is not a group of wayward brothers but is an apostate form of Christianity.

It is a false religion, it is another religion. When you throw your arms around that you literally have to undo any doctrinal distinction. In fact, ECT doesn't just do that implicitly, they do that explicitly. In the

document, in effect, they say, "we have to accept all baptized Roman Catholics as brothers and sisters in Christ. In an article that followed that up in Christianity Today, J. I. Packer said, "We should acknowledge as brothers and sisters in Christ, anyone who lives to the highest ideals of their communion." My response to that is the opposite. I maybe could fellowship with a bad Roman Catholic, that is, one who has rejected the system, but was still in the church and came to know Christ. But one who holds the highest ideals of Roman Catholicism—on what grounds do I have spiritual unity? And when you get spiritual leaders from both churches, coming together to sign a common effort—you may say that it is to fight a cultural war, but people are going to see it as confusion over doctrine.

R. C. SPROUL: John, can I say something?

JOHN ANKERBERG: Yes, let me just throw in here, that is why we put in here, paragraph one in this new doctrinal statement, which, let me read it:

"Our parachurch cooperation with evangelically committed Roman Catholics, for the pursuit of agreed objectives, does not imply acceptance of Roman Catholic doctrinal distinctives, or endorsement of the Roman Catholic Church system."

R. C. SPROUL: That is important, John, that Chuck and Dr. Packer, and Bill Bright wanted to make that point clear. I just wanted to comment on John's statement that he prefaced by saying he was "a little bit radical," you know, like being a "little bit pregnant" I think. Because when somebody, representing evangelicalism makes the comment, "that in their opinion or their judgment, the Roman Catholic Church is apostate—it is not a true Christian community." In this day and age of tolerance and pluralism and relativism, and the milieu or irenic peaceful, gentle coexistence. . . .we live in a world that is fed up with theological controversy and disputes, and divisions and all of that. You see we don't live back in the 16th century where people burned each other at the stake over that.

For John MacArthur to make a statement like that, about the Roman Catholic Church, which is the largest professing body in the world, that claims a Christian position—it's just flame inflammatory, incinerary (sp.), and will provoke a howling outcry of people—you're going to get an enormous amount of mail for saying that John, you know that! [Great Applause].

The one thing that the spirit of tolerance of our day cannot tolerate is intolerance, because relationships have become more important than truth. Now what's at stake here, if I understand the New Testament where the Apostle Paul writes the Galatians and says, "If anybody, anybody, if it's Peter, if it's Barnabus, if it's an angel from heaven teaches any other gospel—let him be anathema." That's not Sproul, that's not MacArthur, that's not Kennedy, that's not Ankerberg—that is the Apostolic position, and Paul wanted to make sure that he made himself clear so he repeated that.

And then he goes on to say that he had to resist Peter himself, as Peter started to crack and compromise and negotiate the gospel. Now think about the people in the first century who got that letter—they were horrified. They said the last thing we can have happen is a break-up of fellowship and unity between

Peter and Paul! All I have listened to for ten months is "Oh, my goodness, what would happen if we saw a split among people like Colson, Packer, and Sproul, and MacArthur—we cannot have that happen! Well, I am the last person in the world to want to have that happen—I can't stand that either, these people are my friends, my comrades and everything. But John, what he [John MacArthur] is saying here, the Catholic Church understood in the 16th century, and Trent and Rome placed its unambiguous anathema on the Protestant doctrine of "Justification by faith alone" and has never, in any magisterial sense removed that anathema.

The Roman Catholic Church condemns "sola fide! (L.)" Now if, please understand this, if "sola fide (L.)" is the gospel, then the Roman Catholic Church has condemned the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, nobody who went to the Council of Trent, as a delegate, went there with the intention of condemning the gospel. The theologians of Rome really believed that they were defending the gospel and that the Protestants had in fact committed apostasy. And I admire the Church, the Roman communion of the 16th century for at least understanding what apparently people don't understand today, and that is what is at stake here. That they understood that somebody is under the anathema of God! And we can be as nice, and as pleasant, and as gentle, and as loving, and as charitable, and tolerant as we can possibly be, but it's not going to change that folks. Somebody is preaching a different gospel! And when Rome condemned the Protestant declaration of "Justification by faith alone" I believe, Rome, when placing the anathema on "sola fide (L.)," placed the anathema of God upon themselves. I agree with his [John MacArthur] assessment, that the institution [Roman Catholic Church] is apostate!

JOHN MACARTHUR: I don't want to leave Jim [James Kennedy] out of this, but I think that it is so important to know this. In a time like this of tolerance, listen, false teaching will always cry intolerance. It will always say you are being divisive, you are being unloving, you are being ungracious, because it can only survive when it doesn't get scrutinized. So it cries against any intolerance. It cries against any examination, any scrutiny—just let's embrace each other; let's love each other; let's put all that behind us. False doctrine cries the loudest about unity. Listen carefully when you hear the cry for unity, because it may be the cover of false doctrine encroaching. If ever we should follow 1 Thessalonians 5, and examine everything carefully, it's when somebody is crying unity, love, and acceptance.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Dr. Kennedy, not Chuck, and not J. I. Packer, and some of our Evangelical buddies that came out with the ECT document, but others have gone one step further, and have said, "You know, Evangelicals and Catholics should overlook doctrinal differences and distinctives and unite to survive today here in America. If we don't stand together; if we don't fight together; we are all going down. How does that come into your theology of the sovereignty of God? Should we give up doctrinal distinctives just to survive? What do you think about that?"

JAMES KENNEDY: John, first of all, let me if I could just add one little thing to this discussion that went on here, and then I will get back to that. For those lay people here that are not familiar—the Council of Trent, eighteen years that they spent examining the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, and at the end of that time they came out with many Canons of the Council of Trent, and this is the particular one that R. C. was referring to, and I just like to have you hear the words. This has never been altered or denied by the Catholic Church, "If anyone says that the faith which justifies is nothing else but trust in

the Divine mercy, which pardons sins because of Christ, or that it is trust alone by which we are justified" Which is what every Evangelical Christian would say. And they end with, "let him be anathema," which means "let him be accursed."

Every Evangelical Christian in the world stands under the official, never changed curse of the Roman Church, and we need to be aware of that fact. Now, the Bible says that we are to hold to the truth—in love. Now, that is difficult to do. Only Christ did that perfectly. We always tend either to slip into a rigidity or a legalism or to slide on the other side into some sort of "wishy-washy" compromise of the gospel.

But, getting to your question, and that was one of the reasons for ECT, that we live (as Chuck told me on the phone when he called me). We live in a time when the concept of truth is under attack. When the values and morals that Christians hold in common are under enormous assault, that we must stand together, or we are going to fall together. But, the problem with this document is that it gives the appearance of compromising the basic doctrine of the gospel of the Bible, which is the gospel, and this is the heart of all Christianity. This is why we had this meeting, right here in my office, to try to work these things out so there would not be a schism among Evangelicals, and happily got all of these gentlemen to sign a statement that they do affirm the basic Reformational truths. I still would have difficulty having my name on that document [ECT], which it is not, because I think of the ambiguity of it; the lack of clarity, and the way it opens a door for people to think that there is no difference of any significance, pertaining to the Gospel of Salvation between Protestants and Catholics.

JOHN ANKERBERG: It is very important right now, that we, for the people who are tuning in, because they want to know, "Where do we stand right now?" "What does this doctrinal statement mean in terms of where we are at?"

R. C. SPROUL: That's what I was going to address, John, so that we have an understanding of this. The purpose of this meeting for the clarification, was as Chuck Colson had a compassionate concern to communicate. He said, can't we come together and agree to disagree as brothers in Christ, because the controversy had escalated to such a point that the issue became now: not what is the relationship between Catholics and Evangelicals, but what will the relationship now be between evangelicals who endorse this position and those who didn't. Are we facing a serious and permanent breach within Evangelical ranks? I mean, are we going to break fellowship over our disagreement over ECT, and that is what provoked this. At that meeting everybody expressed their concerns in a candid way, and Chuck, of course, said, "The whole thing was provoked in the first place because of their deep concern of what was happening in Latin America, and they didn't want to see another Belfast erupt, and trying to come to a united front to an increasing hostile secularism." And we all said, "Hey, we share that concern. We don't want to see Latin America become a Belfast, and we recognize the hostility of secularism."

Our concern was, as I stated it in that meeting, as clearly as I knew how, "that as far as I could see ECT, in my judgment, betrayed the gospel of Jesus Christ." I also went on to say, and I have said this as loudly as I can every time that I discuss this, "I don't for one minute think that Bill Bright, Jim Packer, Charles

Colson, et all, ever in their wildest dreams, ever intended any such thing. But by the same token, neither did the signers of the Council of Trent." This is not a personal thing with me. I was saying the document, in what it says and proclaims because it goes beyond this standing together as cobelligerents—it declares a unity of faith, John, where there is not a unity of faith. That's what deeply, deeply, concerns me. So what the concern of the men was, at this meeting was to say, "Hey, look, let's say to the world, 'We do believe in `sola fide (L.)' and Chuck Colson says, 'I believe in Justification by faith alone' and he wanted to put his print on paper his statement that this is central to the gospel of Jesus Christ, because he realized that people were interpreting the document the way that I was interpreting it, and he believed that that was a misinterpretation. Packer thinks that it is a misinterpretation. I think that it is the one that the document screams, but we still disagree on that, and Chuck is still committed to ECT—my fondest hope was that these men would remove their names from it—"A." And if they couldn't do that, if they couldn't formally recant of it, "B" that they would at least revise the document itself, and if we couldn't get them to do that—at least, please give a clarification that we can print separately of what you meant.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Dr. MacArthur, there might be some people that are listening in that are saying, "That's all fine and dandy in terms of what you guys are debating," but they picked up on some good things in terms of the relationship they might have with God. Take 45 seconds and close this with the Good News" that we think is so important, and how can the people that are watching get into it themselves?

JOHN MACARTHUR: I think the simplest way that I can say that is, "God has commanded all men everywhere to repent, because He has ordained a day in which He will judge the world by that Man whom He raised from the dead—even Jesus Christ." There is forgiveness for sin to those who repent, and it is as simple as a beggar coming and crying out for something. It is as simple as hungering and thirsting for a righteousness you desperately need, don't have, and can't earn. It's pleading with a gracious God to give you the forgiveness of your sins, purely and simply because He wants to do it. It's a beggar's position, and if a person is overwrought with sin, and feels the burden and the weight of sin, and the heart anguish of sin; comes to God and cries for mercy, and God in His grace will reach out and by virtue of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which satisfied His justice with regard to your sin, will grant you saving grace.

Part 3

JOHN ANKERBERG: I have told Chuck [Colson] that we would talk about some of the things in the ECT document that we have felt, since we wrote a clear doctrinal statement to clarify some of the things that were in there, that there would be no way that we could without sounding a little bit critical of that document, simply because we felt there were things that did need to be clarified. One of those things has to do with "sheep-stealing, " proselytization, that comes into the Great Commission. Jesus commanded every Christian to go into all the world and preach the gospel. The ECT document, though, in talking about this area says, "The one Christ and one mission includes many other Christians, notably the Eastern Orthodox, and those Protestants not commonly identified as Evangelical," (and we assume that means liberal Protestants), "all Christians are encompassed in the prayer, 'May they all be one.'"

Now, before we get on to the "sheep-stealing" and proselytization, I think that we wanted to stop right there Dr. Kennedy, and we took exception to the assumption that, "all of these folks under these church titles were automatically Christians." Now Chuck says, "That's not what he intended!" He never intended to say that they were all Christians, but that's the way a lot of people have interpreted it, including Dr. Carl Henry, who said, "That as he looked at the mass media—that's how they interpreted it." Now we clarified that, but let's start at the beginning, "Do you assume that everyone that a member of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, an Evangelical Church, or everybody that's in a Roman Catholic Church, just because they are a member of a Catholic Church, or a Liberal Protestant Church—that all of these, under these titles—that they are automatically true Christians?"

JAMES KENNEDY: I certainly don't make any such assumption, John. In fact, I have said from this pulpit, right here, "That there are a number of members of my church that I would not want to be handcuffed to when they die!" The ECT document says, "That all active Roman Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ and therefore should not be evangelized." Well, I am certainly not ready to give up evangelizing active Presbyterians, much less active Roman Catholics, or anybody else.

My wife, to use a very personal example, went to the Presbyterian Church six times a week—all of her life! She was a soloist, she was a choir member, she played the piano, she taught Sunday School, her father was an elder—she was as active a Presbyterian as Paul was a Jew, and yet she was not saved!

I witnessed to her and someone else witnessed to her and finally she accepted Christ. I can tell you this, my wife would be very happy to stand up here and tell this audience that she is very happy that I did not assume that all Presbyterians, active Presbyterians, were Christians. I don't assume anything about anyone, and when we evangelize we use diagnostic questions.

Wouldn't it be foolish of a doctor to assume that all blondes are healthy, and therefore they don't have to be checked—they have good hearts, so they don't have to check their hearts. That would be very foolish. And we would be foolish to make such assumptions, so we ask diagnostic questions. We as evangelists, which every Christian is to be, should be spiritual physicians. We should ask diagnostic questions: "Do you know that you have eternal life? What are you basing your hope [on]? Why should God let you into heaven, if you were to die tonight?" So we find out. I don't care what the label on the person's back says, whether it says Presbyterian, Baptist, Catholic or Muslim, if that person is not trusting in Jesus Christ alone for his salvation—that person, in my opinion and I believe certainly in the historic opinion of all Protestant churches, is not really a Christian and is desperately in need of hearing the gospel and being saved. We have among the thousands of members of this church, thousands of them who have been active members of all kinds of churches, including Roman Catholics, who discovered years into their maturity, after 30, 40, 50, 60 years of active service in this church or some other church, that they really never really understood the gospel, they had never put their trust in Christ alone, and they had never experienced the saving power of the grace of God, which can not only declare us righteous in the sight of God, but it can change and transform our lives and make us new creatures and turn us around and start us off in a new direction, and give us a joy and a purpose and a meaning in our life that we never had before. That's what I believe every Christian ought to be doing—not checking to see the label in the coat before you decide to share the gospel with them, but finding out, diagnostically, in whom are they

trusting for their salvation. And that is what I believe that the Great Commission commands everyone to do.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Dr. Kennedy, I think that you would be great at instructing Christians on how to witness, do you know that?

JAMES KENNEDY: I have thought about starting that!

JOHN ANKERBERG: John MacArthur, let me come to you, because I want to get to this thing of "sheep-stealing." I have heard you preach on this and you have got some neat illustrations here. Carl Henry, so it's not us saying this, and it is not other folks that are close by, but he quotes the media and he says, "The ECT document deplores proselytizing or `sheep-stealing,'" saying, "that the energies might be better deployed in reaching the unchurched." Whatever may have been the intention of the ECT writers, this was interpreted by the media and by many Evangelicals as an annulment of the Great Commission.

Now, let me read the statement, and we told Chuck this, and we have also written a clarifying statement on this, "There is a necessary distinction," ECT said, "between evangelizing and what is today commonly called proselytizing or `sheep-stealing.' We condemn the practice of recruiting people from another community (Protestants from Catholics or Catholics from Protestants) for purposes of denominational or institutional aggrandizement, and we call upon Christians to refrain from such activities." One more statement, it says, "In this country and elsewhere, Evangelicals and Catholics attempt to win converts from one another's folds. Such efforts at recruitment," ECT says, "undermine the Christian mission, by which we are bound." Talk to me.

JOHN MACARTHUR: That's a frightening statement. That little sort of caveat in there about, "for institutional aggrandizement" is meaningless, because they come right back and used the words "convert people" which is a distinctively spiritual term—not an organizational term.

Look, I could start as a pastor of a church, like Jim [James Kennedy] has seen, and my church has particularly filled with ex-Roman Catholics because of the large Hispanic community in Southern California. The most conservative figure that I could give you, would be that 50%, the upper end would be 70% of the entire membership of our church, and we probably have 10,000 people on a Sunday—50 to 70 percent of those people are converted Roman Catholics. Now you are talking about a massive amount of people who have had Roman Catholic influence.

Every Sunday night in our Church, every Sunday night of the year we have Baptism. When we have baptism, people stand there who are confessing Christ publicly, and they give their testimony. There is not a Sunday night that goes by, in my memory, when there hasn't been, one, two, three, and there will be anywhere from five to ten people on a Sunday night, who say that, "I was in the Catholic Church. I went through Catholic School. I grew up in that whole system—I never knew Christ—I never knew God. I was in a system. The Church [Catholic Church] is a surrogate Christ; the Church has all the authority; I sucked my life from the Church, from the system, but as far as the knowledge of Christ, or the reality of

the forgiveness of sin, or of the power of the Holy Spirit in my life—absolutely didn't have any idea about that."

I am talking from a pastoral standpoint, the Catholic Church, from my vantage point is the single most fertile ground for evangelism that exists in this community in which I minister. These people know about Christ, they know about the Bible, they believe all that, what they don't know about is how to become a Christian—how to be genuinely converted and saved—they don't know that! For somebody to try to back me off of that, would to bring me under the judgment of God, because I am commanded to be faithful to the discharge of the Gospel—to the ends of the earth and to every creature that I can reach. I think what that document did, immediately with one sweep, just sanctify, or justify (whatever you want to say) all the Roman Catholics and say, "Hands Off!" You know, all the Protestants unloaded all their guns and said, "Oh, well that's good news. We don't have to bother with those folks, we will just relabel them." I mean, that's the way the thing reads and that's what frighten me.

People, actually in my church, came to me in tears, saying that they had read that thing [ECT], and saying that if somebody hadn't given the gospel to them—they would have never come to know the Lord Jesus Christ at that point. So, I think it's a tragic thing. As far as this unity thing goes, I need to add a footnote. I am really kind of weary of this misinterpretation of John 17, that Jesus praying, "That they may be one, that they may be one," like "Oh, please, You know I just really want you to do this. And I really hope that it works out this way."

Listen, when Jesus prayed "that they may be one"—that prayer is fulfilled in the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, that takes every single believer and baptizes them into the one body—that is a fact—that is not a wish! And they are one, but the ones that are one are "He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit." So we can't just say, "Well, the Catholics, he wants them to be one with us, and he wants the Orthodox to be one, and the Liberals to be one, and he's hoping that we will all get together in an organizational way—that's not it, that prayer is fulfilled in the baptism of the Spirit.

JAMES KENNEDY: John, just let me add an illustration to that. Just a few weeks ago, I was out on visitation, and I ended up in a home where there were seventeen people present. There was a family that were in our new member class. There was a visiting family that were a part of our sponsors that happened to be there. There were a bunch of kids, and there was a mother of one of the adults there, an elderly woman from Brooklyn and she was a Roman Catholic. Now there were some other relatives there—they came from five or six, maybe different churches and backgrounds. I went around and asked them these questions: I asked each of them, one by one, "In what were they trusting for their hope of eternal life. Why should God admit them into heaven?" This woman, before, had said, with a little bit of hostility, that she thought it was terrible that there was all these different religions. Everybody had their own religion, there own views, they are all different, and she didn't like this idea that everybody had a different religion—they all ought to be one. It was fascinating to see that one, after another, after another—the person said the reason God should let me into heaven is:

"Christ died for my sins."

"Jesus paid for my sins."

"I have no hope but Christ."

"By the grace of God, through faith in Christ alone"

"It was through Christ who died for me."

"I put my trust in Jesus Christ."

"Christ paid for my sins."

"I am trusting in Jesus Christ."

"Christ is my Savior."

"I have no hope but Jesus."

And on and on it went, and this woman said, "Because I'm good!" But she was stunned by the fact that what she thought were all of these different churches, in disunity, were all in perfect unity when it came to the essence of the gospel. I think as John has said, there is a unity of Christians, of true believers. You can go anywhere in the world, as many of you have, and you will find a person is a true Christian and you have discovered a brother or a sister in Christ, regardless of what denomination he's in—if he really trusts in Christ. You have been joined together in one, and you are one in Him.

R. C. SPROUL: I think what Dr. Kennedy has just said gets to the heart of the concern of those who did sign ECT, as well as getting to the heart of the concern of those who would never sign ECT, and let me explain what I mean by that. Chuck Colson, Jim Packer, Bill Bright, they say, "We don't embrace the system of doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. We acknowledge that there are long standing things that divide us and that these matters are serious, but we want to affirm, as the document did, that everyone who accepts Christ as Lord and Savior is a brother and sister in Christ, and that Catholics and Evangelicals are brothers and sisters in Christ." What is behind that, I believe, is a conviction that those there are serious divisions historically, between Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism, there is an agreement at the essential level of historic Christianity.

For example, both communions affirm the Apostle's Creed. All evangelical confessions, historically have reaffirmed the so-called ecumenical councils of Nicaea, Chalcedon, etc., and we share a common Catholicity, in terms of essential things to the Christian faith, like the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the resurrection of Christ—all of these doctrines have been attacked by modern liberalism. At least the Roman Catholic communion has been heroic in defending the deity of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the supernatural elements that the Protestant liberals have jettisoned. And so they

say, "Hey, the Catholic Church has been heroic and faithful in holding to these essential truths." And I say, "That's right, those are essential truths. But tragically, what breaks my heart, John, is that I believe is that "Justification by faith alone" is an essential truth. Oh, if Rome would repent of her rejection of "sola fide (L.)" and be as heroic and consistent in reaffirming the gospel of Jesus Christ as well as the person of Jesus Christ, we wouldn't have this problem.

But what is the dispute here is the essential aspect of the "work of Jesus Christ." So I cannot sign ECT because I cannot recognize that we have a common faith, and a common witness, and a common ecclesiastical vision, for the simple fact that we don't agree on the gospel—and that's essential.

JOHN ANKERBERG: I think that we need to say that this area of "sheep-stealing" and proselytization and evangelism, we have two points in the new doctrinal statement that Chuck, and J. I., and the Protestant signees have agreed to. But, Dr. Kennedy, with a minute left, for people that again, are listening—the gospel is always good news. When you start to grasp it, it really grabs your soul. And the fact is, in this one minute that we have got left, for the person that's listening and saying, "Hey, don't leave me hanging now. How do I get into this relationship with Jesus? Tell me more!"

JAMES KENNEDY: Delighted to do it! The great joy of my life! God is Holy and we are sinful—that's the problem. If that were all there were to the problem—God would solve it very simply—He would send us all to Hell! But God is also loving, infinitely so, and because he loved us, He sent His own Son into the world. And He imputed, or laid upon Jesus Christ all of our guilt and sin. And then, something which astounded me when I first learned it, as a Father, God poured out all of His wrath for sin, upon His own Son. And Jesus Christ in body and soul suffered infinitely in our behalf and paid for the penalty for our sins. As I have told many, the problem for you is simple—your sins are going to be punished by God. The question is, are they going to be punished on you, in Hell forever, or on Jesus Christ on the Cross? If you would prefer the latter—you need to abandon all trust in yourself, repent of your sins, and receive Him into your heart as Savior and Lord, trusting in His atoning death and perfect life as your only hope of salvation. And His promise is, "He that trusts in Me, already has everlasting life."

Part 4

JOHN ANKERBERG: Dr. R. C. Sproul, I am going to come to you with a very controversial area, and that is, that when you sit down with two groups that are basically holding to different views: you had twenty Protestants signees, twenty Catholic signees of the Evangelicals and Catholics Together document (ECT), and they said that when they sat down, and basically were writing this thing, that they were seeking for common ground of our core beliefs—common ground of our core beliefs. What's the bottom line that we can unite on? They said, "They found it!" And it consisted of the following:

— To accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

— Affirming the Apostle's Creed.

— To accept the proposition, "We are justified by grace through faith because of Christ."

— To affirm to seek more love, less misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

They went on to talk about some other things as well. But those are pretty heavy little things that they have put on the table, and yet, when we met to talk together, we said, "It wasn't enough." I think a particular sticking point was—isn't it good enough to say, "All who accept Christ as Lord and Savior, are brothers and sisters in Christ?" Because right after that statement in the ECT document, you find "Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ," that is, anybody that can affirm the first one—fits the second one—if you are a Protestant or a Roman Catholic. We said "No, it needs to be clarified," and did clarify it, but some of the people in our television audience might say, "What in the world was wrong with that? If you can't agree on that—if that doesn't bring unity—what's the problem?"

R. C. SPROUL: Well, John, you've just quoted the portion of this document, and the document is some twenty-five pages long, and most of it does not get into theological matters like that. You have just quoted exactly, the portion of that document that most distressed me personally. I have to say, before I try to answer your question, that in my career as a teacher of theology, and in my life as a Christian, I cannot think of anything that has come remotely close to distressing me to the depths of my soul, as much as this document has distressed me. What distressed me the most about it is that segment that you just mentioned.

In last week's discussion, we discussed this business about, "Do we assumed that everybody in an Evangelical Church is a Christian?" Of course not! That's not the issue. Nor do these people ever intend to say that everybody in the Roman Catholic Church is a Christian. The statement, "Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ," does not mean that everybody in the Roman Catholic Church is a Christian, or every Evangelical is a Christian. Any sober reading of the document would illustrate that.

At the same time, those who have resisted this document have for the most part agreed that yes, there are believers, true believers, here and there in the Roman Catholic Church, and Liberal Churches and so on. They are mavericks to their community, and I personally believe that those people who truly accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior in the Biblical sense, who live in the Roman Catholic Church, have a moral and spiritual duty to leave that communion immediately! They are living in sin by continuing to be a visible member of an institution that anathematizes the Gospel of Jesus Christ! That is what I would say to that point. But then you say, "But wait a minute R.C., are you one of these theologians that's insisting on dotting every I, and you are in a witch-hunt, and all of that kind of stuff?"

Chuck, for example, Colson, is very jealous to say, "R. C., you just can't read that statement in the naked way, 'That Catholics and Evangelicals are brothers and sisters in Christ,'—there's a context." And that is right—there is, because right before that, as you read, it says, "That all who accept Jesus as Savior and

Lord are brothers and sisters in Christ," and "Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ," and the elliptical sense of this is that those two statements are connected—meaning that only those Catholics, and only those Evangelicals who truly accept Jesus as Savior and Lord are brothers and sisters in Christ, and what Evangelical would quibble over that? Me! For this reason. Precisely at the heart of the debate in the 16th century was not the question "Is Jesus Lord or is Jesus Savior?" Beloved, the issue that tore apart Christendom in the 16th century was this, "What does it mean that Jesus is Savior?" "How is Jesus the Savior?" Is he a Savior in the liberal sense, where he is an existential Hebrew, a hero, a symbol of liberation? Do I believe that Jesus is my Savior in the sense that He reveals to me authentic existential existence? Do I mean that Jesus is my Savior when I say, "That Jesus on the cross revealed the seriousness of sin and demonstrated the love of God and so restored a moral influence to the universe, and saved me in that way?" Or, as the Roman Catholic Church has said repeatedly, "Yes, Jesus is my Savior in that He infuses the necessary grace into my soul, by which, with my cooperation I can be saved and justified before Almighty God."

When my Roman Catholic friends tell me they believe in Jesus as Savior, do they mean by that statement that they are trusting in the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ to their account, forensically by God, through faith alone? Or, do they mean, that Jesus is their Savior in the sense that He helps them, have the ability to gain the merit necessary for God, to declare them just? Do you see that, that is a world of difference in understanding Jesus as Savior?

Now when Chuck Colson says, "All who believe in Christ as Savior," he is filling that with the content of his own evangelical heritage, because if you ask Chuck Colson what he means by "accepting Jesus as his Savior;" if you ask J. I. Packer what he means by "accepting Jesus as Savior," they will give you the unvarnished orthodox Protestant faith. But the question is, "Is that true for the Roman Catholic Church?" Now, they will be quick to say, "But, we are just talking about those forty guys; these are just a group of individuals talking from their communion, to their communion, and they have insisted on that over and over again—that this is not an official document, and it isn't an official document. But I have said to Chuck and to J. I., I said, "Look, Jim, that may be true, but you are speaking `about' these communions, and as soon as you speak `about' the two communions—you have gone way beyond forty people. You are making a blanket statement about Evangelicals and Catholics, who profess to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that they are brothers and sisters in Christ. Now, if they do accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, in the biblical sense—they are brothers and sisters in Christ and I have no dispute. But the doctrine of Justification, upon which we are united is far more than that statement that we have looked at already, "That we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ."

JOHN ANKERBERG: People that are listening might say, "But, boy are you narrow-minded."

R. C. SPROUL: I hope so! John, let me explain that comment. I don't mean to be flip about that, because I think one of the most difficult things in the Christian life is to know when to be tolerant, and when to be narrow.

The same Apostle Paul who tells us that we are not to be contentious, and divisive, and argumentative,

and belligerent—that the same Apostle who teaches us that the "fruit of the Spirit, of the Holy Spirit," is the fruit of "gentleness, and kindness, and long-suffering, and meekness, and goodness," and so on—that same Apostle who tells us that we are to judge each other always with the judgment of charity and not harshly, with a love that covers a multitude of sins—that's the same Apostle who said, "When it comes to the gospel, you can't negotiate it! Ever! For any reason!" That's why when Luther said, "That this was the article upon which the Church stands or falls"—and I agree with Luther's assessment there. I mean, I don't think that we should fight over every doctrine and over every pedantic point of theology. But, John, this isn't a pedantic point—this is not the "small print." This is the article upon which the Church stands or falls—the Gospel itself!

JOHN ANKERBERG: John, do you think that the gospel is at stake in what we are talking about?

JOHN MACARTHUR: Oh, absolutely—that is what is at stake. I was just going to mention a parallel. The Apostle Paul in Romans 10, obviously we know his heart and his passion for Israel, he actually said he, "could almost wish himself accursed for their salvation." Nobody would question that Israel was devoted to God, that they had a zeal for God, that they tried their best to follow the Law and all of the prescriptions. I mean, that it is a very close parallel to the same kind of situation, and he says in Romans 10, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is for their salvation." I mean, it was clear that they had missed the whole point of a gracious salvation. A salvation that came from God and God alone—apart from any works.

He said, "I bear them witness, this I'll grant them: they have a zeal for God, but it is not according to knowledge. Because they do not understand God's righteousness and they seek to establish their own." That is exactly what you have going on in the Roman Catholic Church. And, "so they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God," in other words, they did not understand the righteousness of God—they went to seek their own righteousness, therefore they missed the righteousness of God, and he says in the next verse, "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Christ is the righteousness, and Israel missed it and Paul confronted it, Jesus confronted it, I mean He blistered the Jewish leaders for their defection.

I hate to say that if I had been in the meeting with twenty Roman Catholics, I think I would have been a troubled person. I don't think we would have come out with any document which we all agreed on, because I would have had to confront the fact that they have a zeal for God, but it is apart from understanding the righteousness of God, which is the only means by which salvation can occur. Yes, it's absolutely the definitive issue.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Dr Kennedy, all through the years that I have known you, you have had the reputation among evangelical leaders of being the statesman—the one that constantly wants to bring us together—you don't want any splits, and even in this situation we met in your office. But what is at stake is that the cry for tolerance today and love between Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants is very, very strong. And when we make some of these statements, people say, "Don't you have any love for Roman Catholics? Are you guys so harsh?" Talk about love and tolerance and the priority that truth has

over that, and that when we stand for the truth that does not necessarily mean that we don't love people, in fact, when we stand for the truth it means that we actually love them more.

JAMES KENNEDY: Absolutely John, if we believe, as Christians, the truth of the Scripture. If we believe what Christ said, that He, "Is the way, the truth, and the life." If we believe as Peter said, "There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." If there is no other way than through justification by faith in Christ alone. If we are willing for sake of some temporal, earthly peace and tolerance to ignore proclaiming that truth to people, then we are not demonstrating to them love—we are actually demonstrating hate, because we are allowing those people to go to the judgment of God without ever telling them the one way by which they can be justified in the eyes of a just and holy God, and that is a false love—true love confronts, and it should do it with grace and with kindness, but never the less firmly.

I have always felt that we need to have a velvet glove, but as I was saying to R. C., in my office this afternoon, that I have always felt that there should be a velvet glove, but inside that velvet glove there is to be a steel fist. We can never become "wishy-washy" and spongy when it comes to the essential truth, upon which the eternal wheel or woe of human beings rest and that is the gospel. We can't compromise on this truth. We can agree to disagree on a lot of the nonessentials, as Pascal said, but when it comes to the heart of the gospel we have to insist that there is only one way, and Christ is that way, and to ignore that is a false love. It is a personal apostatizing on our own part from what Christ called us to be.

I commend these men as I commended R. C., in that meeting that I mentioned, that he made it very clear to these men what was at stake here, and what was at stake, ultimately, was whether or not we could maintain fellowship if they were going to leave a confused idea as to whether or not they accepted the distinctives of the Reformational Theology, and happily they made it clear that they do not reject those, they do clearly accept them, and in that we do rejoice, although we would of all been happier if they would have taken their names off of the document altogether.

JOHN ANKERBERG: R. C., summarize where we are at. I think that it is very important for the people that are listening, they want to know, "well, where are we at here with Chuck [Colson] and our own fellows—where do we stand?"

R. C. SPROUL: I am not sure. I received a wonderful letter from Chuck just this week. John, this is so hard, because like Chuck writes in a scroll in the bottom, "I am so glad that we had this meeting because this has been torturing my soul." He has been in tears, I have been in tears—it tears of our personal friendship that is for so long and so deep. J. I. Packer, few people in my life have I had a deeper camaraderie with—standing shoulder to shoulder, proclaiming the reformed faith to our generation. These are the last people in the world I wanted to break fellowship with, and that is certainly Chuck's heart, and that is why we got together here.

Now, how I feel personally about these guys, after that meeting, is I feel a lot more comfortable about it—knowing what their concerns were. They are perfectly willing to stand and say to the world, "We

believe in justification by faith alone and that is essential to the Gospel of Jesus Christ." I want them to say that from the housetops. Where are we? I am delighted in that, and as I have said before, "It is a halfway covenant here," I mean that was the bare minimum that I could hope for, that we could be able to achieve to avert a theological war, and I think that we have, at least for the time being, dodged a bullet here. I am not sure, I mean the truth is tenuous and I hope that we are going to be able to get more clarification, because we didn't have the time to look at all of the issues here, and we all recognized that there was a lot more to be done, and so part of that clarification statement that you have in front of you John, point number five, makes a commitment for those people involved there to continue this discussion, because the discussions aren't over, and there is kind of a moratorium here on "Let's put down the guns in the meantime and not be shooting each other in the back, and still try to get further resolution of this problem." I, again with Jim, I wish that they would just unsign the document and then we could all go home and be happy, but in the meantime we are trying to have as much accommodation as we possibly can without compromising the gospel.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Dr John MacArthur, close us off in this session, "Why is it so important to be so precise and so clear in the statements that we are making about what we believe—what's at stake?"

JOHN MACARTHUR: Because the eternal soul of every person is at stake. Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation and coming to Christ on God's terms and His terms alone is the path of salvation—everything is at stake, absolutely everything. If I can just add one thing to what R. C. said, we are glad to agree on the doctrine of salvation, "sola fide," what we don't agree on is the implications of that. We are saying that has massive implications in terms of our cooperation—they don't seem to see those implications. Therein lies the difficulty. It's implications that concern me, because the implication of taking the right doctrine of salvation is, you preach the truth and people can come to salvation. Confusing that—is a damning doctrine.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Dr Kennedy, close us off again, "How can a person who is listening come into that wonderful relationship that we have been talking about?" Maybe they have been listening to all of this and their curiosity is peaked. You are saying some things that are bringing joy, is it really true? Explain it.

JAMES KENNEDY: Essentially there are only two religions in the whole world, one of them is "I"—"I" live a good life, "I" keep the commandments, "I" pray, "I" go to church, "I" follow the golden rule, "I" love my neighbor, "I" do the best "I" can, "I" don't do this bad thing, "I" don't do the other. That's called "autosoterism," or "self-salvation," where "I" become my own savior—glory be to me! I am in competition with Jesus Christ who claims to be the savior of the world. The only other religion is the "cross." There are over 30,000 religions in the world, but when you take off the ribbon and the wrapping and open the box, you'll either find the "I" or the "cross," essentially. Every one is going to either be saving himself, and be his own savior, or he is going to trust in Christ, and in Christ alone.

I would say to anyone that wants to know the free salvation of God, to get out of the savior business, declare spiritual bankruptcy, turn to Christ, and trust in Him alone for your salvation, and He will freely

give you the gift of everlasting life. He will come into your heart and enable you to trust Him and to repent of your sins and change your life and give you new meaning and new direction and new power to live a godly life, and He will take you to be with Him in paradise for ever and ever.

Part 5

JOHN ANKERBERG: We have questions from the audience and hopefully the very question that some of these folks are going to ask is the one that you [the TV listener] want to ask and have answered. Now I am going to ask the first one and "start the ball rolling here."

There was a very controversial area in the Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) document, that many of the Evangelical lay people picked up on right away, and it was this statement right here, "Those converted, whether understood as having received the new birth for the first time, or as having experienced the reawakening of the new birth, originally bestowed in the sacrament of baptism, must be given full freedom and respect as they discern and decide the community in which they will live their new life in Christ."

Dr. R. C. Sproul, to many people that sounded like the Evangelical Protestants, who were helping frame this, were allowing there to be two equally valid ways of coming into a relationship with Christ, that is the new birth or the sacrament of Baptism. We objected to that statement and wanted it clarified. Tell us what is at stake and what we did.

R. C. SPROUL: First of all John, let me put my theologian's hat on just for a second and you indulgence to get just a little bit technical here with respect to that. That question as you have posed it and as it stated in ECT represents what called the "fallacy of the false dilemma," or the "either or fallacy." So, in the document there was a bullet point list of ongoing points of differences, "Do we believe this or that?" Which in some cases radically missed the historic points that are in dispute.

For example, you are saying, "Are there two ways of conversion, one through regeneration and the other through the sacraments?" That really misses the point of the historic debate between reformed theology (Protestantism) and Rome [Roman Catholicism], because both Rome and historic Evangelicalism maintain that it is necessary for a person to be regenerate. There is no dispute about that, the question is, "How does regeneration come to pass and what does it affect, what does it do, and how is it linked to justification?"

Now in the classical reformed view of Calvin and Luther, the order of salvation went like this: that first, before I can believe and meet the requirement of faith, in order to receive and appropriate the righteousness of Christ for my justification, something has to happen to my heart, because I'm fallen, I'm dead in sin and the Holy Spirit has to change the disposition of my heart, and we call that regeneration or rebirth. As a result of that work of the Holy Spirit, now I am able to and indeed do embrace Christ in faith. So, I am reborn—I have faith. As a consequence of the faith I am justified.

The Roman Catholic Church has taught, that the way a person comes to salvation is, in the first instance, they are baptized, and baptism works—by the working of the works, virtually automatically, infusing the grace of justification in the soul, effecting regeneration and justifying grace, so a person is now justified by baptism, and that is good until or unless that person commits Mortal Sin. Mortal Sin is called "Mortal Sin" because it destroys the grace, this justifying grace that has been implanted and infused into the soul at baptism. That's why you have confession. That is why you have the Sacrament of Penance, which became the center of the controversy in the 16th century.

The Sacrament of Penance, Rome defines and redefines at Trent, as the second plank of justification for those who have made shipwreck of their souls, that is, once you commit Mortal Sin, that sin is called "Mortal" because it kills the grace of justification that you received at Baptism, and so you need to get justified again, and that comes through another sacrament, namely the sacrament of Penance. Now what that provoked in the 16th century was in the second question, not only, "What is the ground and the basis of justification, whether it is the righteousness of Christ imputed to me or infused in me?" The other question was, "What is the instrumental cause of my justification?" Going back to Aristotelian language, the instrumental cause is defined as that cause or means by which an effect is brought to pass, and when the reformers said that, "Justification is by faith alone (sola fide)," the word "by" there meant the instrumental dative: the means by which I appropriate the righteousness of Christ and therefore am justified—is by faith and by faith alone.

Whereas, Rome taught the instrumental cause of justification is not faith—it is the sacraments, in the first instance baptism, in the second instance penance. So that was a major point of difference on the "how" question, of how a person is saved. Does that answer it John?

JOHN ANKERBERG: Yes, talk about that thing of faith then, because obviously, if a Roman Catholic baby is baptized, where does faith come in? They are not even conscious at that point.

R. C. SPROUL: No, the faith would come—they would presume that it would come later as a consequence of their being in a state of justifying grace. It would be for them the same place that it is for us, that faith is a result of regeneration ultimately, although the difference from the reformed perspective, although there are many professing Evangelicals that don't agree with this, they would say that regeneration makes it possible for a person to have faith, but it doesn't necessarily yield the fruit of faith, and that would be the case in the Roman Church, but not in the case of the Reformation Fathers

JOHN ANKERBERG: Why did we want that clarified and why has it been so objectionable to the Evangelical community then?

R. C. SPROUL: Because for the most part the Evangelical community is aghast at any idea that the sacraments, can in any way, automatically confer justifying grace—that a person can be saved through the sacraments without faith. So you have a double-edge sword here. On the one hand you have that view seeming to suggest that a person can be saved without faith, and the other view of Rome that a person can have faith and not be saved! Now that gets confusing, but let me say this, that is only in the case of

infants. When it comes to the adult person who has committed Mortal Sin, according to Rome, they not only must go through sacramental penance, but they must also have faith. So faith is a requirement in the case of adults.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Well let's pick it up right there, with the adult they are not saying that it is faith alone either, because then you will have to go back to the sacraments and the mass.

R. C. SPROUL: If you look at their section in Trent on the sacrament of Penance, as well as Session six of the Council of Trent, on Justification (on the Canons and Decrees of Justification), Rome spells this business of Mortal Sin out and goes on to say, "If a person has true faith and commits Mortal Sin, that Mortal Sin destroys the grace of justification, but does not destroy the faith." So there you have a clear statement by Rome. I should have brought the Canons and Decrees of Trent with me, to read it to you exactly. The thing there John, is that it clearly states that a person can have faith, true faith, not just a profession of faith, but true faith and not be justified, which couldn't be any more clear than a repudiation of the New Testament concept of justification by faith alone.

JOHN ANKERBERG: All right, let's finish it up. Flip the coin, because Catholics do not have assurance that they are in heaven [going to heaven] because they have to get more and more justifying faith through the sacraments, once they have come in via baptism.

R. C. SPROUL: Well, they don't normally have the assurance of salvation, because again, Trent declares, that it is possible to have assurance of salvation in the sense of knowing that you are going to be saved by special revelation, in special circumstances, like in the case of Mary and in some of the Saints. But the normal rank and file believer cannot have the assurance of perseverance or the assurance of salvation, except beyond that of what the church encourages them.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Finish us off here, in the sense that—talk about salvation as a final act that is completed. In the forensic sense that God makes a judgment, an eternal judgment about my status, because of Christ, versus Catholicism—that it is not a completed act all at once—it is a process. Define those two for us.

R. C. SPROUL: For the Protestant, for the Biblical view as I understand it John and embrace it, justification, technically and narrowly considered, and what the word means in the Greek and in the Hebrew, and I believe, originally in the Latin until it got corrupted in the Roman judicial system, and that is where one of our problems came in, with the Latin use "varcari" (sp.) which means "to make just." And that planted the seeds in some of the Latin Fathers of thinking that justification means a "making just," but the Biblical concept clearly teaches that justification narrowly considered is the declaration of God, the legal declaration, what we call "forensic declaration." You hear about the "forensics" in trials, and forensic medicine, and "forensic" pathology, and so on, that what we are talking about there is, that justification specifically, and narrowly refers to God's declaration of a person being righteous in His sight—that, that is what justification means—and that is a once for all thing.

What the New Testament teaches is that at the very moment a person has authentic faith in Jesus Christ, at that instant God the Father declares that person "in Christ" and acceptable in the beloved, He now remits or removes their sins forever—the eternal punishment of sin has been removed and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to that trusting and believing person. They are now pronounced just, and Luther said they are "at the same time just and sinner" while they are still unclean in themselves, they are the seed, and the beginning of their transformation has already taken place. They are still sinners and they remain polluted by sin until they are glorified by God in heaven. The process of sanctification goes until we die and go into heaven. The status that you referring to, our condition of being declared just before God, is a once for all single, instantaneous action the moment faith occurs.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Great. Question?

MEMBER IN THE AUDIENCE: I come from Brazil, the largest Roman Catholic country in the world. I heard you gentlemen say that what is at stake here is the Gospel. Therefore, aren't those who advocate Lordship Salvation views, guilty of the same mistake as Roman Catholics are, by adding works to the Gospel, and therefore denying justification by faith alone?

JOHN ANKERBERG: MacArthur, we knew that question had to come up tonight somewhere! All right, it is time to answer it John.

JOHN MACARTHUR: I have written on that question, haven't I? Look, that is a "straw man." To say that "Lordship Salvation" (whatever that term might mean to people), has the connotation that you must believe in Jesus as Lord, in order to be saved. I don't know how that all of a sudden that became an abhorrent view, but somewhere down the path it has become abhorrent in some circles, to affirm the Lordship of Jesus Christ, in spite of the fact that Paul said that you have "To confess with your mouth `Jesus as Lord,'" in order to be saved. But the implication that people want to read into that, is that if you have to do that—that's a work! That's a pre-salvation work that you have to do. Then they take repentance and they say we don't believe in repentance either. In other words, salvation is purely grace, you don't commit to anything and you don't repent from anything. And you say, "Well, repentance is in the Bible!" Well, those people who are against "Lordship Salvation" they will redefine repentance as changing your mind about who Jesus is, or changing your mind about whether you can save yourself, but it does not mean turning from your sins because if you had to turn from your sin, that would be a pre-salvation human work. Or if you had to submit to Christ, and bow your knee to His Lordship, that would be a pre-salvation work.

The simple answer to that is—that is exactly what R. C. was talking about, when he talked about regeneration. You couldn't repent if it were a pre-salvation human work, and you couldn't submit to Christ if it were a pre-salvation human work. None of it is a pre-salvation human work. It is all encompassed in the redeeming work of God. It is all the work of God. God grants repentance, Paul said that to Timothy. God grants repentance, God grants submission, God breaks the human will. God terrorizes the soul over the results and the implications of sin, and to take any less than that is nothing more than limiting God. Are you saying that God can save, He just can't make people repent? Or God

can save, He just can't make them submissive? I mean, it strikes a blow against the power of God—it doesn't say anything about human works. I would never advocate there is any component of human effort in salvation. It is all of God! Let's just not strip out what God is doing and say that He is not doing it.

JAMES KENNEDY: John, I think, if I could add to that—the person who objects and coins this phrase "Lordship Salvation," which is the view that we are to believe in Jesus Christ both as Savior and Lord, which is to say that we are to "Believe and Repent." This has been the view of the Church down through the centuries, and now it has been made some kind of abhorrent view by some in recent times. Now, the truth of the matter is that these people are guilty of doing the very thing that they are charging those who believe in what they now call "Lordship Salvation," because they do not see that salvation is all of God. They say, "Well, we can't repent—that would be a human work, all we can do is believe, and so therefore, we will believe in Jesus as our Savior, and that is salvation by grace, but we are not able to repent." But they are the ones that are declaring that man has some ability to do something—namely to believe.

The truth of the matter is, the unregenerate man is blind—he has eyes and sees not, he has ears and hears not, his mind is darkened, his heart is a stone—he is at enmity with God and he is dead in trespasses and sins—he can no more believe than he can repent—he can't even understand the gospel, "for the things of the `Spirit of God' of which the gospel is the heart of those things, "are foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know that—it is not possible that he can know that.

The fact of the matter is, that what God requires for salvation is faith and repentance. Faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, and repentance and submission to Him as Lord! And that which God requires for salvation—that God also freely gives by His grace in regeneration—so that the whole thing may be of God. Salvation is by faith, in order that salvation may be of grace. Why? In order that salvation may be of God! That is the essence of Evangelical religion—salvation is of God from eternity to eternity, from Alpha to Omega—man has no part in it, neither his repentance, or his faith, or his good works or anything else. And to God be the Glory—it is all of God! [Great Applause].

R. C. SPROUL: John, I think that it is critical as part of the question that was raised there about "Lordship Salvation," was, does not the "Lordship Salvation" concept undermine "sola fide" (justification by faith alone) because of its insistence on works, and we haven't discussed that. Quickly, the reformers said that "justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone!" The point was this, following James, that true faith, the faith that brings us into a saving relationship to Christ by which we receive His righteousness, that is the alone basis for our salvation, where our works contribute nothing of merit or value, or contributing anything to the basis of our salvation, that is received solely by faith, but if that faith is a true faith—immediately, inevitably, necessarily, that faith begins at the moment of its inception to show forth the fruit of redemption and of justification.

So the question is this, "Is it possible for a person to have faith—be justified, and never have works?" What John is saying, what we are all saying, is that is absolutely impossible. There is no such thing as a Carnal Christian in that sense, that they are utterly carnal and at the same time a Christian. I hope that

helps.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Explain it then, Dr. MacArthur, in terms of, for the person that has listened to "at the same time that he just he is also a sinner." For the people that are the soft-hearted ones that are listening.

O. K.? For the people that say, "O. K., I have made my commitment to Jesus as Lord, but I haven't lived perfect every step, does that mean that I have not really accepted Jesus' Lordship?" Talk to those folks.

JOHN MACARTHUR: I like to say to people like that, "It is not the perfection of your life, it's the direction" Paul said, "Not as though I have attained, but I know the direction that I am going—I am going towards Christ-likeness, and that is my passion." I think the way you get in touch with the reality of your salvation is not by counting up your righteous acts, but it is by listening to your heart longings. The Puritans use to talk about "Holy Aspirations." I think the evidence of a regenerate heart is a hatred of sin, is a love for God, and a longing to obey. I don't think it is perfect obedience, it's not perfect love towards Christ, and it is not a perfect hatred towards sin, but it is animosity towards sin, it is revulsion towards sin, and mostly in me—not in you, or in the culture. It is a love for God that comes forth in a desire to commune with Him, a desire to that which is well pleasing in His sight, a desire to sing His praises. It comes forward in a love of His truth, a hunger to know that truth and to apply that truth in your life. I think it is the cry of the heart. I mean, David said it, "As the hart [male deer] pants after the water brook, so my soul pants after Thee, oh God, when will I come before you?"

Part 6

RONALD KILPATRICK: During the last several Ankerberg shows, there was only one reference to why ECT was written to begin with, and it might be helpful to clarify that, and to point out maybe also that the writing of ECT crippled the goal that they were trying to accomplish.

R. C. SPROUL: I would like to speak to that, because I did mention earlier what the driving force, according to Chuck Colson and others was. Chuck Colson is an international Christian. He has been a spokesman for the cause of Christ cross borders like few people have, particularly in the level of prisons. In Eastern Europe, in the East, all over the place. He has seen the rising specter of increasing hostility of a paganism, a neo-paganism that is radically hostile to historic Christianity. He has been in the White House, he has watched the systematic dismantling and disintegration of anything Christian to our culture and speaks to us against the night. This has been a driving passion for Chuck Colson, to be an activist and an apologist for Christ in the market place, in the prison, in the world, defending Christian truth against secular paganism.

It was that concern that I believe was the overarching concern, along with his concern that there has been bloodshed around the world, in Latin America particularly of conflicts between Catholics and Evangelicals. Also, in Chuck's work, particularly in the prison ministry where I have been with him in his prison ministries, he has encountered many Roman Catholic Chaplains who have welcomed him with

open arms and encouraged him to preach his gospel in these circumstances, and he is saying, "If we can have this kind of cooperative activity at the grass-roots, it's time now to put the old rancor aside and try to find more and more venues of cooperation and acknowledging that we have more unity of faith than anybody dreamed of prior to this time." I think that is the motivating force behind this document. I think that it goes too far as we have been saying all along.

JOHN MACARTHUR: I think that there is one other thing that has come up in the meeting several times, and that is that the both Chuck Colson and J. I. Packer are convinced that effective evangelism is dependent on a pre-theological, sort of moral consensus. In other words, you can't just evangelize a culture in a vacuum. Francis Schaeffer use to talk about "pre-evangelism" and there in that idea that if we can create a context of Christian morality, the gospel becomes much more readily received. They are convinced of that, although personally I am not convinced that, that is an issue, certainly it wasn't an issue for the Apostle Paul throughout the whole Gentile world. But they are convinced that, that is going to have a great impact on the acceptability of the gospel.

JAMES KENNEDY: May I add one other thing to that, because having listened to the excellent exposition of the motives for the ECT Document, for those who have seen none of the other programs, they may wonder what the problem is, because all of that sounded so good and so noble. The problem is, that in creating this document of cobelligerency to face the evils of the secular neo-pagan world, it was the opinion of many, including the three sitting here that presented vague and apparently compromising statements concerning the essence of the Christian Gospel and put the whole heart of Christianity into jeopardy, and that is why we had the meeting here a few weeks ago to try to resolve it, and that's what we been discussing about for the last few weeks.

RONALD KILPATRICK: R.C., and where does it stand right now?

R. C. SPROUL: It stands, that so far, we have a minimal statement of clarification by which some of the framers of the document, Chuck Colson, Jim Packer, and Bill Bright have affirmed their personal belief in the central importance of the historic doctrine of justification by faith alone, among other clarifications that they have gone on record, that they did not intend in any way to imply in ECT, and negotiation of that centrality to the gospel. They are now taking that document to the other Protestant signatories and asking them to sign it, and they have made a commitment to release this statement of clarification to all of the same media agencies that ECT was originally given—to the press, to the New York Times, to the Washington Post, and others. At the same time it stands where there is a commitment to ongoing discussions to try to resolve this problem further.

RONALD KILPATRICK: A stumbling block to many Roman Catholics at the time of the reformation, and today, is James, chapter two, verse 24, in its proper interpretation, you see then how then "By works a man is justified and not by faith alone." Would you please explain that verse.

R. C. SPROUL: Why should I take the time to try explain that to you Ronald Kilpatrick, when you had my course in it? [Laughter] Can you believe this?

JAMES KENNEDY: Well, let me take a crack at it, if Professor Sproul will not do it again for him. I think that the key in that passage is that James is dealing with people who profess to be Christians, and yet they don't evidence the reality of their faith by their works [deeds]. He says, in verse 18, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do" (James 2:18, NIV). And he says in verse 15, "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:15-17, NIV).

Over, and over again, in this he makes clear that people will say they have faith and they don't have works and James is saying that real faith always produces works as a result, and a key in this, I think are the words "say" and "see," they are repeated throughout this whole Second Chapter of James. And the question is, "A man may say that he has faith, but will that faith justify him? If it is just a 'said' faith?" No, it won't!

To give you an illustration: One time, years ago, I talked to a woman and I shared with her the gospel, and she said to me, "Do you mean that all that I have to do is say that I believe in Jesus Christ, and I will be saved?" I said, "No ma'am, I didn't say that." She said, "You didn't, what did you say?" I said, "If you would put your trust in Jesus Christ—you would be saved." She said, "There, you said it again, all I have to do is say that I trust in Jesus Christ and I'll be saved." I said, "No, ma'am, I did not say that—I have never said that in my life!" She said, "You just said it!" I said, "No I didn't."

I wonder if everybody here noticed how she distorted my statement. I said, "If you would trust in Christ, if you would believe in Christ—you would be saved." She said that I said, "If you would say that you trusted in Christ, and say that you believed in Christ—you would be saved." There is a gulf, a vast gulf between saying that you have faith and having faith! That is the difference between salvation and eternal perdition [hell]. What we need to do is to trust in Christ, and if we do that, works will inevitably follow as a result of that.

R. C. SPROUL: I would like to add to that John, even though I was joshing with my student, the former student there—I wouldn't claim him any longer. But that is a critical statement and Trent is virtually filled with quotations and citations of James 2:21 and 2:24, "Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?" (James 2:21, NIV). And then James 2:24, "You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone" (NIV). Now there the Holy Scriptures, what could be a clear, more demonstrative, categorical repudiation of "sola fide" than that? We see then, by conclusion, that a man is justified by "works" and not by "faith alone!" That would seem to put Luther out of business, as clearly as anything possibly could, and the Catholic theologians of the 16th century said, "Read this, read this, read this!" All right, we have to answer that. But Jim, of course, put his finger on it—the issue that James is dealing with there, by citing Abraham, and the thing that the plot thickens, is that both Paul in Romans Three, and James, in James Two, use the word "justification"—they use the same Greek word—they appeal to the same person, it is there exhibit "A" to prove their case—Abraham! "Was not Abraham our father justified when he offered Isaac on the

altar?" Paul labors the point in Romans Four, that Abraham is justified by faith, not in chapter 22 of Genesis, that James quotes, but in chapter 15 of Genesis, when "Abraham believes God and it is counted to him, reckoned to him, imputed to him (there's a great reformed text) for righteousness." So they both appeal to Abraham, but to different points in their life.

How do we reconcile this? I think Jim is right there, the question that James is answering is the question that he starts off this thing is, "If a man says he has faith, and has not works, will that faith save him?" The issue here, under the microscope of the Apostle is, "What constitutes saving faith?" This is where Evangelicals stumble, because we have created a whole milieu (an environment) in the 20th century Evangelical World that tells people, "that all you have to do to be saved is raise your hand, come forward, pray a prayer (you know, say the `sinners prayer"), make these statements! No! Still the requirement is faith. All of those things that we are talking about are outward manifestations, demonstrations, or professions of faith. The Bible does not teach, never did teach that a person is saved by the profession of faith—it's the possession of faith that alone links us to Jesus Christ, and that is what James is laboring in chapter two, it would take another half an hour or hour to follow that all the way. But that the summary.

JAMES KENNEDY: Go through the Second Chapter of James, underline every instance of "say" and "see" and I think that you will understand the difference between a professed faith and a possessed faith, and whether we can see by the evidence of his works the reality of his faith or not.

MEMBER IN THE AUDIENCE: Looking down the road a few years, do any of you gentlemen see the ECT as a preliminary document, which could eventually, and perhaps unwittingly evolved into a synthesis document for a global one-world religion?

JOHN MACARTHUR: Well, I'll take a shot at that. I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet so I don't want to be stoned if I am wrong here. But, I am convinced that this is only the beginning of a rather large movement that is going to continue to escalate. It isn't primarily because of this document—its primarily because of the ringing cry for tolerance! Because of the abysmal lack of discernment in the Church; because of this tremendous impetus that this unity mentality has, and I think that it is going to escalate. I think that you have got powerful media, people who have got this high on their agenda and they are going to pump this thing nationwide all the time. I think it is very conceivable, and we would not all agree on how we interpret the Book of Revelation, but if you take the Futurist view of the Book of Revelation, it would very, very much fit the scenario of moving rapidly towards a one-world false religion, that is described in the 17th chapter of the book of Revelation, which will be bigger than Rome, but obviously is connected to the "city on seven hills" that is called the "Harlot and is drunk with the blood of the martyrs," and all of that kind of thing. So, certainly from my tradition, looking at Revelation in its prophetic implications—I am not going to say this is that, but it certainly could fit that scenario.

MEMBER IN THE AUDIENCE: While you took the Catholic religion to task, why is it that you are not strong against the twenty Evangelicals who signed and produced that pact and did it without doctrinal justification.

And number two, why wasn't this second meeting held first, so you would resolve all the Evangelical issues before any pact was ever produced?

JAMES KENNEDY: Well, I can answer part of that, and that is I never knew that the consultation was under way until after I had heard about the signed document, so consequently I was able to do nothing about it beforehand. If I had known about it, then I perhaps could have done something beforehand.

I think another factor that needs to be considered is the fact that the second meeting that was held here did result in those major players in that, signing a clarifying document that they believe the basic reformation teachings of "sola fide" and the other related doctrines, but I think that there have been some statements here of a number of people that we wish that they had been willing to take a clearer stand and remove their names all together from the document, and we must confess that we all find it very difficult to see how they really can keep their names on both of those documents. They seem to find no problem because they say that's what they meant all along, and now they are clarifying that, but we see that first document as so ambiguous and confusing, and misleading, that we do not see how a person, believing what they signed in the second document, and we do not question that they believe that—we don't see how they can ignore the implications and leave their name on the first document.

R. C. SPROUL: One of the things for which I was grateful, and I expressed my attitude to Chuck Colson, and I wasn't being facetious or cynical about it, was that as soon as this document was released, and I responded to the press about it in a negative way, and Chuck and I talked about it, he said, "R. C. I didn't send you a copy of this and I didn't ask you to sign this document, because I knew that you wouldn't," and I was sincere at that point when I said, "Thank you," because I very much appreciate that he understood, up front, there is no way in the world that I would ever sign a document like that.

MEMBER IN THE AUDIENCE: My question is for Dr. R. C. Sproul, do the drafters of ECT say anything about Papal authority over the church? What is their position on that, if any at all?

R. C. SPROUL: I am trying to recall whether there is even anything said about Papal authority, I mentioned earlier that in one section of ECT there is a list, a bullet point list of those points of continuing, on-going disagreement between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics, and one of them, and not very accurately sets in contradistinction the authority of Scripture, and tradition, or the magisterial authority of the church, and so on, which is a sort of a misunderstanding of the critical issue their in the sixteenth century on "sola scriptura" (sp.) (Latin). "Sola scriptura" had to do with two things, one, that the Scripture and the Scripture alone has the authority to bind our conscience and impose divine obligations upon us—no church council, no church leader can do that, and secondly that's there only one source of written "Special Revelation," namely the Sacred Scriptures, whereas, Trent has a "dual-source theory" of two sources that the Church has of Special Revelation, namely the Scripture and the Tradition of the Church, which is ruled over by a Pontiff, in whom is vested this "ex cathedra infallibility."

There is very little discussion of that in Vatican II, but that really does get to the heart of the historic division, because as Roman Catholic Theologians continue to complain about, within Rome, they are

convinced that they as theologians have very little authority, and very little influence on the church—that it's the magisterium that determines what is to be believed in the church, not the theologians, or the Scriptures, or anything else.

I frankly think, in practical terms the biggest thing that got Luther in trouble, in the 16th century, was not so much he challenged the doctrine of the church, as he challenged the authority of the church. When he challenged the authority of the church councils and of the Pontiff in Rome, that's when Kathechen (sp.), and Ackenson (sp.), and so on linked him with John Huss, and that's when the church moved to excommunicate him.

JOHN ANKERBERG: Guys, I want to say thank you for your willingness to come and to talk about something that has been very troubling to all four of us.

The good news is that we have a clarifying statement. We are waiting to see how many of the Evangelical Protestant signees of the ECT document will sign it—I would assume that all of them will. Then there is the hope for future discussion on some of these other issues that we have discussed tonight. I want to say, thank you for your coming, for being brave enough, courageous enough to speak out on some of these very, very tough issues.

Thank you very much.

Transcribed by Tony Capoccia
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The following is the actual ECT Document:

EVANGELICALS AND CATHOLICS TOGETHER

THE CHRISTIAN MISSION IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

The following statement is a product of consultation, beginning in September 1992, between Evangelical

Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians. Appended to the text is a list of participants in the consultation and of others who have given their support to this declaration.

Introduction

1. We are Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics who have been led through prayer, study, and discussion to common convictions about Christian faith and mission. This statement cannot speak officially for our communities. It does intend to speak responsibly from our communities and to our communities. In this statement we address what we have discovered both about our unity and about our differences. We are aware that our experience reflects the distinctive circumstances and opportunities of Evangelicals and Catholics living together in North America. At the same time, we believe that what we have discovered and resolved is pertinent to the relationship between Evangelicals and Catholics in other parts of the world. We therefore commend this statement to their prayerful consideration.
2. As the Second Millennium draws to a close, the Christian mission in the world history faces a moment of daunting opportunity and responsibility. If in the merciful and mysterious ways of God the Second Coming is delayed, we enter upon a Third Millennium that could be, the words of John Paul II, "a springtime of world missions." (Redemptoris Missio)
3. As Christ is one, so the Christian mission is one. That one mission can be and should be advanced in diverse ways. Legitimate diversity, however, should not be confused with existing divisions between Christians that obscure the one Christ and hinder the one mission. There is a necessary connection between the visible unity of Christians and the mission of the one Christ. We together pray for the fulfillment of the prayer of Our Lord: "May they all be one; as you, Father, are in me and I in you, so also may they be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." (John 17) We together, Evangelicals and Catholics, confess our sins against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples.
4. The one Christ and one mission includes many other Christians, notably the Eastern Orthodox and those Protestants not commonly identified as Evangelical. All Christians are encompassed in the prayer, "May they all be one." Our present statement attends to the specific problems and opportunities in the relationship between Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants.
5. As we near the Third Millennium, there are approximately 1.7 billion Christians in the world. About a billion of these are Catholics and more than 300 million are Evangelical Protestants. The century now drawing to a close has been the greatest century of missionary expansion in Christian history.

We pray and we believe that this expansion has prepared the way for yet greater missionary endeavor in the first century of the Third Millennium.

6. The two communities in world Christianity that are most evangelically assertive and most rapidly growing are Evangelicals and Catholics. In many parts of the world, the relationship between these communities is marked more by conflict than by co-operation, more by animosity than by love, more by

suspicion than by trust, more by propaganda and ignorance than by respect for the truth. This is alarmingly the case in Latin America, increasingly the case in Eastern Europe, and too often the case in our own country.

7. Without ignoring conflicts between and within other Christian communities, we address ourselves to the relationship between Evangelicals and Catholics, who constitute the growing edge of missionary expansion at present and, most likely, in the century ahead. In doing so, we hope that what we have discovered and resolved may be of help in other situations of conflict, such as that among Orthodox, Evangelicals, and Catholics in Eastern Europe. While we are gratefully aware of the ongoing efforts to address tensions among these communities, the shameful reality is that, in many places around the world, the scandal of conflict between Christians obscures the scandal of the cross, thus crippling the one mission of the one Christ.

8. As in the times past, so also today and in the future, the Christian mission, which is directed to the entire human community, must be advanced against formidable opposition. In some cultures, that mission encounters resurgent spiritualities and religions that are explicitly hostile to the claims of the Christ. Islam, which in many instances denies the freedom to witness to the Gospel, must be of increasing concern to those who care about religious freedom and the Christian mission. Mutually respectful conversation between Muslims and Christians should be encouraged in the hope that more of the world will, in the oft-repeated words of John Paul II, "open the door to Christ." At the same time, in our so-called developed societies, a widespread secularization increasingly descends into moral, intellectual, and spiritual nihilism that denies not only the One who is the Truth but the very idea of truth itself.

9. We enter the twenty-first century without illusions. With Paul and the Christians of the first century, we know that "we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6) As Evangelicals and Catholics, we dare not by needless and loveless conflict between ourselves give aid and comfort to the enemies of the cause of Christ.

10. The love of Christ compels us and we are therefore resolved to avoid such conflict between our communities and, where such conflicts exists, to do what we can to reduce and eliminate it. Beyond that, we are called and we are therefore resolved to explore patterns of working and witnessing together in order to advance the one mission of Christ. Our common resolve is not based merely on a desire for harmony. We reject any appearance of harmony that is purchased at the price of truth. Our common resolve is made imperative by obedience to the truth of God revealed in the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, and by the trust in the promise of the Holy Spirit's guidance until Our Lord returns in glory to judge the living and the dead. The mission that we embrace together is the necessary consequence of the faith that we affirm together.

We Affirm Together

11. Jesus Christ is Lord. That is the first and final affirmation that Christians make about all of reality. He is the One sent by God to be Lord and Savior of all: "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4) Christians are people ahead of time, those who proclaim now what will one day be acknowledged by all, that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Philippians 2)

12. We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ. Living faith is active in love that is nothing less than the love of Christ, for we together say with Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2)

13. All who accept Christ as Lord and Savior are brothers and sisters in Christ. Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ. We have not chosen one another, just as we have not chosen Christ. He has chosen us, and he has chosen us to be his together. (John 15) However imperfect our communion with one another, however deep our disagreements with one another, we recognize that there is but one church of Christ. There is one church because there is one Christ and the church is his body. However difficult the way, we recognize that we are called by God to a fuller realization of our unity in the body of Christ. The only unity to which we would give expression is unity in the truth, and the truth is this: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4)

14. We affirm together that Christians are to teach and live in obedience to the divinely inspired Scriptures, which are the infallible Word of God. We further affirm together that Christ has promised to his church the gift of the Holy Spirit who will lead us into all truth in discerning and declaring the teaching of Scripture. (John 16) We recognize together that the Holy Spirit has so guided his church in the past. In, for instance, the formation of the canon of the Scriptures, and in the orthodox response to the great Christological and Trinitarian controversies of the early centuries, we confidently acknowledge the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In faithful response to the Spirit's leading, the church formulated the Apostles' Creed, which we can and hereby do affirm together as an accurate statement of scriptural truth:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

We Hope Together

15. We hope together that all people will come to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This hope makes necessary the church's missionary zeal. "But how are they to call upon him in whom they have not

believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? (Romans 10) The church is by nature, in all places and at all times, in mission. Our missionary hope is inspired by the revealed desire of God that "all should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2)

16. The church lives by and for the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Matthew 28)

17. Unity and love among Christians is an integral part of our missionary witness to the Lord whom we serve. "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13) If we do not love one another, we disobey the command and contradict the Gospel we declare.

18. As Evangelicals and Catholics, we pray that our unity in the love of Christ will become ever more evident as a sign to the world of God's reconciling power. Our communal and ecclesial separations are deep and long standing. We acknowledge that we do not know the schedule nor do we know the way to the greater visible unity for which we hope. We do know that existing patterns of distrustful polemic and conflict are not the way. We do know that God who has brought us into communion with himself through Christ intends that we also be in communion with one another. We do know that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14) and as we are drawn closer to him — walking in that way, obeying that truth, living that life — we are drawn closer to one another.

19. Whatever may be the future form of the relationship between our communities, we can, we must, and we will begin now the work required to remedy what we know to be wrong in that relationship. Such work requires trust and understanding, and trust and understanding require an assiduous attention to the truth. We do not deny but clearly assert that there are disagreements between us. Misunderstandings, misrepresentations, and caricatures of one another, however, are not disagreements. These distortions must be cleared away if we are to search through our honest differences in a manner consistent with what we affirm and hope together on the basis of God's Word.

We Search Together

20. Together we search for a fuller and clearer understanding of God's revelation of Christ and his will for his disciples. Because of the limitations of human reason and language, which limitations are compounded by sin, we cannot understand completely the transcendent reality of God and his ways. Only in the End Time will we see face to face and know as we are known. (1 Corinthians 13) We now search together in confident reliance upon God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, the sure testimony of Holy Scripture, and the promise of the Spirit to his church. In this search to understand the truth more fully and clearly, we need one another. We are both informed and limited by the histories of our communities and by our own experiences. Across the divides of communities and experiences, we need

to challenge one another, always speaking the truth in love, building up the body. (Ephesians 4)

21. We do not presume to suggest that we can resolve the deep and long-standing differences between Evangelicals and Catholics. Indeed these differences may never be resolved short of the Kingdom Come. Nonetheless, we are not permitted simply to resign ourselves to differences that divide us from one another. Not all the differences are authentic disagreements, nor need all disagreements divide. Differences and disagreements must be tested in disciplined and sustained conversation. In this connection we warmly commend and encourage the formal and theological dialogues of recent years between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals.

22. We note some of the differences and disagreements that must be addressed more fully and candidly in order to strengthen between us a relationship of trust in obedience to truth. Among points of difference in doctrine, worship, practice, and piety that are frequently thought to divide us are these:

- The church as an integral part of the Gospel or the church as communal consequence of the Gospel.
- The church as visible communion or invisible fellowship of true believers.
- The sole authority of Scripture (sola scriptura) or Scripture as authoritatively interpreted in the church.
- The "soul freedom" of the individual Christian or the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the community.
- The church as local congregation or universal communion.
- Ministry ordered in apostolic succession or in the priesthood of all believers.
- Sacraments and ordinances as symbols of grace or means of grace.
- The Lord's Supper as Eucharistic sacrifice or memorial meal.
- Remembrance of Mary and the saints or devotion to Mary and the saints.
- Baptism as sacrament of regeneration or testimony to regeneration.

23. This account of differences is by no means complete. Nor is the disparity between positions always so sharp as to warrant the "or" in the above formulations. Moreover, among those recognized as Evangelical Protestants there are significant differences between, for example, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Calvinists on these questions. But the differences mentioned above reflect disputes that are deep and long standing. In at least some instances, they reflect authentic disagreements that have been in the past and are at the present barriers to full communion between Christians.

24. On these questions, and other questions implied by them, Evangelicals hold that the Catholic Church has gone beyond Scripture, adding teachings and practices that detract from or compromise the Gospel of God's saving grace in Christ. Catholics, in turn, hold that such teaching and practices are grounded in Scripture and belong to the fullness of God's revelation. Their rejection, Catholics say, results in a truncated and reduced understanding of the Christian reality.

25. Again, we cannot resolve these disputes here. We can and do affirm together that the entirety of Christian faith, life, and mission finds its source, center, and end in the crucified and risen Lord. We can and do pledge that we will continue to search together — through study, discussion, and prayer — for a better understanding of one another's convictions and a more adequate comprehension of the truth of God in Christ. We can testify now that in our searching together we have discovered what we can affirm together and what we can hope together and, therefore, how we can contend together.

We Contend Together

26. As we are bound together by Christ and his cause, so we are bound together in contending against all that opposes Christ and his cause. We are emboldened not by illusions of easy triumph but by faith in his certain triumph. Our Lord wept over Jerusalem, and now he weeps over a world that does not know the time of its visitation. The raging of the principalities and powers may increase as the End Time nears, but the outcome of the contest is assured.

27. The cause of Christ is the cause and mission of the church, which is, first of all, to proclaim the Good News that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5) To proclaim this Gospel and to sustain the community of faith, worship, and discipleship that is gathered by this Gospel is the first and chief responsibility of the church. All other tasks and responsibilities of the church are derived from and directed toward the mission of the Gospel.

28. Christians individually and the church corporately also have a responsibility for the right ordering of civil society. We embrace this task soberly; knowing the consequences of human sinfulness, we resist the utopian conceit that it is within our powers to build the Kingdom of God on earth. We embrace this task hopefully; knowing that God has called us to love our neighbor, we seek to secure for all a greater measure of civil righteousness and justice, confident that he will crown our efforts when he rightly orders all things in the coming of his Kingdom.

29. In the exercise of these public responsibilities there has been in recent years a growing convergence and cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics. We thank God for the discovery of one another in contending for a common cause. Much more important, we thank God for the discovery of one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Our cooperation as citizens is animated by our convergence as Christians. We promise one another that we will work to deepen, build upon, and expand this pattern of convergence and cooperation.

30. Together we contend for the truth that politics, law, and culture must be secured by moral truth. With the Founders of the American experiment, we declare, "We hold these truths." With them, we hold that this constitutional order is composed not just of rules and procedures but is most essentially a moral experiment. With them, we hold that only a virtuous people can be free and just, and that virtue is secured by religion. To propose that securing civil virtue is the purpose of religion is blasphemous. To deny that securing civil virtue is a benefit of religion is blindness.

31. Americans are drifting away from, are often explicitly defying, the constituting truths of this experiment in ordered liberty. Influential sectors of the culture are laid waste by relativism, anti-intellectualism, and nihilism that deny the very idea of truth. Against such influences in both the elite and popular culture, we appeal to reason and religion in contending for the foundational truths of our constitutional order.

32. More specifically, we contend together for religious freedom. We do so for the sake of religion, but also because religious freedom is the first freedom, the source and shield of all human freedoms. In their relationship to God, persons have a dignity and responsibility that transcends, and thereby limits, the authority of the state and of every other merely human institution.

33. Religious freedom is itself grounded in and is a product of religious faith, as is evident in the history of Baptists and others in this country. Today we rejoice together that the Roman Catholic Church — as affirmed by the Second Vatican Council and boldly exemplified in the ministry of John Paul II — is strongly committed to religious freedom and, consequently, to the defense of all human rights. Where Evangelicals and Catholics are in severe and sometimes violent conflict, such as parts of Latin America, we urge Christians to embrace and act upon the imperative of religious freedom. Religious freedom will not be respected by the state if it is not respected by Christians or, even worse, if Christians attempt to recruit the state in repressing religious freedom.

34. In this country, too, freedom of religion cannot be taken for granted but requires constant attention. We strongly affirm the separation of church and state, and just as strongly protest the distortion of that principle to mean the separation of religion from public life. We are deeply concerned by the court's narrowing of the protections provided by the "free exercise" provision of the First Amendment and by an obsession with "no establishment" that stifles the necessary role of religion in American life. As a consequence of such distortions, it is increasingly the case that wherever government goes religion must retreat, and government increasingly goes almost everywhere. Religion, which was privileged and foundational in our legal order, has in recent years been penalized and made marginal. We contend together for a renewal of the constituting vision of the place of religion in the American experiment.

35. Religion and religiously grounded moral conviction is not an alien or threatening force in our public life. For the great majority of Americans, morality is derived, however variously and confusedly, from religion. The argument, increasingly voiced in sectors of our political culture, that religion should be excluded from the public square must be recognized as an assault upon the most elementary principles of democratic governance. That argument needs to be exposed and countered by leaders, religious and

other, who care about the integrity of our constitutional order.

36. The pattern of convergence and cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics is, in large part, a result of common effort to protect human life, especially the lives of the most vulnerable among us. With the Founders, we hold that all human beings are endowed by their Creator with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The statement that the unborn child is a human life that — barring natural misfortune or lethal intervention — will become what everyone recognizes as a human baby is not a religious assertion. It is a statement of simple biological fact. That the unborn child has a right to protection, including the protection of law, is a moral statement supported by moral reason and biblical truth.

37. We therefore, will persist in contending — we will not be discouraged but will multiply every effort — in order to secure the legal protection of the unborn. Our goals are: to secure due process of law for the unborn, to enact the most protective laws and public policies that are politically possible, and to reduce dramatically the incidence of abortion. We warmly commend those who have established thousands of crisis pregnancy and postnatal care centers across the country, and urge that such efforts be multiplied. As the unborn must be protected, so also must women be protected from their current rampant exploitation by the abortion industry and by fathers who refuse to accept responsibility for mothers and children. Abortion on demand, which is the current rule in America, must be recognized as a massive attack on the dignity, rights, and needs of women.

38. Abortion is the leading edge of an encroaching culture of death. The helpless old, the radically handicapped, and others who cannot effectively assert their rights are increasingly treated as though they have no rights. These are powerless who are exposed to the will and whim of those who have power over them. We will do all in our power to resist proposals for euthanasia, eugenics, and population control that exploit the vulnerable, corrupt the integrity of medicine, deprave our culture, and betray the moral truths of our constitutional order.

39. In public education, we contend together for schools that transmit to coming generations our cultural heritage, which is inseparable from the formative influence of religion, especially Judaism and Christianity. Education for responsible citizenship and social behavior is inescapably moral education. Every effort must be made to cultivate the morality of honesty, law observance, work, caring, chastity, mutual respect between the sexes, and readiness for marriage, parenthood, and family. We reject the claim that, in any or of these areas, "tolerance" requires the promotion of moral equivalence between the normative and the deviant. In a democratic society that recognizes that parents have the primary responsibility for the formation of their children, schools are to assist and support, not oppose and undermine, parents in the exercise of their responsibility.

40. We contend together for a comprehensive policy of parental choice in education. This is a moral question of simple justice. Parents are the primary educators of their children; the state and other institutions should be supportive of their exercise of the responsibility. We affirm policies that enable parents to effectively exercise their right and responsibility to choose the schooling that they consider

best for their children.

41. We contend together against the widespread pornography in our society, along with the celebration of violence, sexual depravity, and antireligious bigotry in the entertainment media. In resisting such cultural and moral debasement, we recognize the legitimacy of boycotts and other consumer actions, and urge the enforcement of existing laws against obscenity. We reject the self-serving claim of the peddlers of depravity that this constitutes illegitimate censorship. We reject the assertion of the unimaginative that artistic creativity is to be measured by the capacity to shock or outrage. A people incapable of defending decency invites the rule of viciousness, both public and personal.

42. We contend for a renewed spirit of acceptance, understanding, and cooperation across the lines of religion, race, ethnicity, sex, and class. We are all created in the image of God and are accountable to him. That truth is the basis of individual responsibility and equality before the law. The abandonment of that truth has resulted in a society at war with itself, pitting citizens against one another in bitter conflicts of group grievances and claims to entitlement. Justice and social amity require a redirection of public attitudes and policies so that rights are joined to duties and people are rewarded according to their character and competence.

43. We contend for a free society, including a vibrant market economy. A free society requires a careful balancing between economics, politics, and culture. Christianity is not an ideology and therefore does not prescribe precisely how that balance is to be achieved in every circumstance. We affirm the importance of a free economy not only because it is more efficient but because it accords with a Christian understanding of human freedom. Economic freedom, while subject to grave abuse, makes possible the patterns of creativity, cooperation, and accountability that contribute to the common good.

44. We contend together for a renewed appreciation of Western culture. In its history and missionary reach, Christianity engages all cultures while being captive to none. We are keenly aware of, and grateful for, the role of Christianity in shaping and sustaining the Western culture of which we are part. As with all of history, that culture is marred by human sinfulness. Alone among the world cultures, however, the West has cultivated an attitude of self-criticism and of eagerness to learn from other cultures. What is called multiculturalism can mean respectful attention to human differences. More commonly today, however, multiculturalism means affirming all cultures but our own. Welcoming the contributions of other cultures and being ever alert to the limitations of our own, we receive Western culture as our legacy and embrace it as our task in order to transmit it as a gift to future generations.

45. We contend for public policies that demonstrate renewed respect for the irreplaceable role of mediating structures in society — notably the family, churches, and myriad voluntary associations. The state is not the society, and many of the most important functions of society are best addressed in independence from the state. The role of churches in responding to a wide variety of human needs, especially among the poor and marginal, needs to be protected and strengthened. Moreover, society is not the aggregate of isolated individuals bearing rights but is composed of communities that inculcate responsibility, sustain shared memory, provide mutual aid, and nurture the habits that contribute to both

personal well-being and the common good. Most basic among such communities is the community of the family. Laws and social policies should be designed with particular care for the stability and flourishing of families. While the crisis of the family in America is by no means limited to the poor or the underclass, heightened attention must be paid those who have become, as a result of well-intended but misguided statist policies, virtual wards of the government.

46. Finally, we contend for a realistic and responsible understanding of America's part in world affairs. Realism and responsibility require that we avoid both the illusions of unlimited power and righteousness, on the one hand, and the timidity and selfishness of isolationism, on the other. U.S. foreign policy should reflect a concern for the defense of democracy and, wherever prudent and possible, the protection and advancement of human rights, including religious freedom.

47. The above is a partial list of public responsibilities on which we believe there is a pattern of convergence and cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics. We reject the notion that this constitutes a partisan "religious agenda" in American politics. Rather, this is a set of directions oriented to the common good and discussable on the basis of public reason. While our sense of civic responsibility is informed and motivated by Christian faith, our intention is to elevate the level of political and moral discourse in a manner that excludes no one and invites the participation of all people of good will. To that end, Evangelicals and Catholics have made an inestimable contribution in the past and, it is our hope, will contribute even more effectively in the future.

48. We are profoundly aware that the American experiment has been, all in all, a blessing to the world and a blessing to us as Evangelical and Catholic Christians. We are determined to assume our full share of responsibility for this "one nation under God," believing it to be a nation under the judgment, mercy, and providential care of the Lord of the nations to whom alone we render unqualified allegiance.

We Witness Together

49. The question of Christian witness unavoidably returns us to points of serious tension between Evangelicals and Catholics. Bearing witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ and his will for our lives is an integral part of Christian discipleship. The achievement of good will and cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics must not be at the price of the urgency and clarity of Christian witness to the Gospel. At the same time, and as noted earlier, Our Lord has made clear that the evidence of love among his disciples is an integral part of the Christian witness.

50. Today, in this country and elsewhere, Evangelicals and Catholics attempt to win "converts" from one another's folds. In some ways, this is perfectly understandable and perhaps inevitable. In many instances, however, such efforts at recruitment undermine the Christian mission by which we are bound by God's Word and to which we have recommitted ourselves in this statement. It should be clearly understood between Catholics and Evangelicals that Christian witness is of necessity aimed at conversion. Authentic conversion is — in its beginning, in its end, and all along the way — conversion to God in Christ by the power of the Spirit. In this connection, we embrace as our own the explanation of the Baptist-Roman

Catholic International Conversation (1988):

Conversion is turning away from all that is opposed to God, contrary to Christ's teaching, and turning to God, to Christ, the Son, through the work of the Holy Spirit. It entails a turning from the self-centeredness of sin to faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. Conversion is a passing from one way of life to another new one, marked with the newness of Christ. It is a continuing process so that the whole life of a Christian should be a passage from death to life, from error to truth, from sin to grace. Our life in Christ demands continual growth in God's grace. Conversion is personal but not private. Individuals respond in faith to God's call but faith comes from hearing the proclamation of the word of God and is to be expressed in the life together in Christ that is the Church.

51. By preaching, teaching, and life example, Christians witness to Christians and non-Christians alike. We seek and pray for the conversion of others, even as we recognize our own continuing need to be fully converted. As we strive to make Christian faith and life — our own and that of others — even more intentional rather than nominal, ever more committed rather than apathetic, we also recognize the different forms that authentic discipleship can take. As is evident in the two thousand year history of the church, and in our contemporary experience, there are different ways of being Christian, and some of these ways are distinctively marked by communal patterns of worship, piety, and catechesis. That we are all to be one does not mean that we are all to be identical in our way of following the one Christ. Such distinctive patterns of discipleship, it should be noted, are amply evident within the communion of the Catholic Church as well as within the many worlds of Evangelical Protestantism.

52. It is understandable that Christians who bear witness to the Gospel try to persuade others that their communities and traditions are more fully in accord with the Gospel. There is a necessary distinction between evangelizing and what is today commonly called proselytizing or "sheep stealing." We condemn the practice of recruiting people from another community for purposes of denominational or institutional aggrandizement. At the same time, our commitment to full religious freedom compels us to defend the legal freedom to proselytize even as we call upon Christians to refrain from such activity.

53. Three observations are in order in connection with proselytizing. First, as much as we might believe one community is more fully in accord with the Gospel than another, we as Evangelicals and Catholics affirm that opportunity and means for growth in Christian discipleship are available in our several communities. Second, the decision of the committed Christian with respect to his communal allegiance and participation must be assiduously respected. Third, in view of the large number of non-Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of our common evangelistic task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian community.

54. Christian witness must always be made in a spirit of love and humility. It must not deny but must readily accord to everyone the full freedom to discern and decide what is God's will for his life. Witness that is in service to the truth is in service to such freedom. Any form of coercion — physical, psychological, legal, economic — corrupts Christian witness and is to be unqualifiedly rejected.

Similarly, bearing false witness against other persons and communities, or casting unjust and uncharitable suspicions upon them, is incompatible with the Gospel. Also to be rejected is the practice of comparing the strengths and ideals of one community with the weakness and failures of another. In describing the teaching and practices of other Christians, we must strive to do so in a way that they would recognize as fair and accurate.

55. In considering the many corruptions of Christian witness, we, Evangelicals and Catholics, confess that we have sinned against one another and against God. We most earnestly ask the forgiveness of God and one another, and pray for the grace to amend our own lives and that of our communities.

56. Repentance and amendment of life do not dissolve remaining differences between us. In the context of evangelization and "reevangelization," we encounter a major difference in our understanding of the relationship between baptism and the new birth in Christ. For Catholics, all who are validly baptized are born again and are truly, however imperfectly, in communion with Christ. That baptismal grace is to be continually reawakened and revived through conversion. For most Evangelicals, but not all, the experience of conversion is to be followed by baptism as a sign of the new birth. For Catholics, all the baptized are already members of the church, however dormant their faith and life; for many Evangelicals, the new birth requires baptismal initiation into the community of the born again. These differing beliefs about the relationship between baptism, new birth, and membership in the church should be honestly presented to the Christian who has undergone conversion. But again, his decision regarding communal allegiance and participation must be assiduously respected.

57. There are, then, differences between us that cannot be resolved here. But on this we are resolved: All authentic witness must be aimed at conversion to God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Those converted — whether understood as having received the new birth for the first time or as having experienced the reawakening of the new birth originally bestowed in the sacrament of baptism — must be given full freedom and respect as they discern and decide the community in which they will live their new life in Christ. In such discernment and decision, they are ultimately responsible to God and we dare not interfere with the exercise of that responsibility. Also in our differences and disagreements, we Evangelicals and Catholics commend one another to God "who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think." (Ephesians 3)

58. In this discussion of witnessing together we have touched on difficult and long standing problems. The difficulties must not be permitted to overshadow the truths on which we are, by the grace of God, in firm agreement. As we grow in mutual understanding and trust, it is our hope that our efforts to evangelize will not jeopardize but will reinforce our devotion to the common tasks to which we have pledged ourselves in this statement.

Conclusion

59. Nearly two thousand years after it began, and nearly five hundred years after the divisions of the Reformation era, the Christian mission to the world is vibrantly alive and assertive. We do not know, we

cannot know, what the Lord of history has in store for the Third Millennium. It may be the springtime of the world missions and great Christian expansion. It may be the way of the cross marked by persecution and apparent marginalization. In different places and times, it will likely be both. Or it may be that Our Lord will return tomorrow.

60. We do know that his promise is sure, that we are enlisted for the duration, and that we are in this together. We do know that we must affirm and hope and search and contend and witness together, for we belong not to ourselves but to him who has purchased us by the blood of the cross. We do know that this is the time of opportunity — and, if of opportunity, then of responsibility — for Evangelicals and Catholics to be Christians together in a way that helps prepare the world for the coming of him to whom belongs the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

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The ECT Accords: A Betrayal of the Gospel in the Name of Unity

Why the Accords are Unacceptable and Are a Fundamental Denial of the Truth of the Gospel

By William Webster

In March of 1994 the [ECT Accord](#), spearheaded by Evangelical, Chuck Colson, and Roman Catholic, Richard John Neuhaus, was released to the public. And in November 1997, this ECT document was reformulated and released under the title, *The Gift of Salvation*, now popularly known as [ECT 2](#). The efforts of those behind the Roman Catholic and Evangelical accords has generated a great deal of debate within both communions. Some have applauded these documents while others have taken a decidedly negative view towards them. In essence the documents call for the setting aside of doctrinal differences for the sake of unity in fighting against the encroaching darkness of secularism and humanism throughout the world. In light of the onslaught of such horrendous and ungodly behavior and activities as abortion, pornography, crime, drugs, immorality etc., it is suggested that it is high time that those who name the name of Christ should unite to bring Christian values to bear in a culture that is self destructing. While this has a certain appeal, the documents themselves and the concepts they endorse are seriously flawed.

The implicit assumption in the overall thrust of the documents is that the Evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches teach and proclaim the same gospel and that the differences that separate them, while not unimportant, are nonetheless of secondary importance in view of the fundamentals of the gospel that they both supposedly affirm and embrace. This is the overall emphasis of articles recently carried by *Christianity Today* by J.I. Packer and Charles Colson defending their endorsement of ECT I. But when one looks to Colson and Packer

for clarification of the essentials of what it means to be a Christian, one cannot but be alarmed at their statements, especially of one the stature of Dr. Packer. In effect, they and the remaining signers of the document define a Christian as one who has embraced the fundamental doctrines as formulated by the major creeds and councils in the early church. As ECT 2 puts it:

We give thanks to God that in recent years many Evangelicals and Catholics, ourselves among them, have been able to express a common faith in Christ and so to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. We confess together one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; we confess Jesus Christ the Incarnate Son of God; we affirm the binding authority of Holy Scripture, God's inspired Word; and we acknowledge the Apostles' and Nicene creeds as faithful witnesses to that word.

Incredibly, there was no mention in the ECT 1 document that addressed the most important issue of all which was the focal point of the Reformation and the foundational truth of the gospel itself: *justification by faith*. This glaring omission was remedied somewhat in the newly released ECT 2 document in that justification by faith is emphasized but the document misrepresents the biblical and Reformation teaching on the subject as well as the true teaching of Rome. For example, the ECT 2 document makes the following statements regarding justification:

Justification is central to the scriptural account of salvation, and its meaning has been much debated between Protestants and Catholics. We agree that justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God's gift, conferred through the Father's sheer graciousness, out of love that He bears us in His Son, who suffered on our behalf and rose from the dead for our justification. Jesus was 'put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification' (Rom 4:25). In justification, God, on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone, declares us to be no longer his rebellious enemies but his forgiven friends, and by virtue of his declaration it is so.

This statement is very misleading. It is misleading from an Evangelical and Roman Catholic point of view. From an Evangelical perspective, this statement is an inaccurate description of justification. Justification is not the declaration that we are no longer God's enemies but his forgiven friends. It is the declaration, based on the imputed righteousness of Christ himself, that we are positively righteous before God and completely set free from the condemnation of the law and from any necessity for works for the attaining of the state of justification. While this declaration certainly leads to reconciliation with God and adoption into God's family, justification itself does not mean this in a biblical sense. But this statement is also misleading from a Roman Catholic point of view. The Roman Catholic Church has officially condemned this teaching. To suggest that Rome agrees with the above statement that justification is not dependent in any way on human works and merit is a complete misrepresentation of its official position. Rome clearly affirms the necessity for the works of sanctification as the basis for justification which merit eternal life. The following canon on Justification from the Council of Trent verifies this:

Canon XXIV. If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof: let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1919 ed.), Decree on Justification, Chapter XVI).

Rome has officially condemned the teaching that an individual is justified by the righteousness of Christ himself, alone imputed to the believer. In Canon X in its Decree on Justification the Council of Trent states:

If any one saith, that men are just without the justice of Christ, whereby he merited for us to be justified; or *that it is by that justice itself that they are formally just*: let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1919 ed.), Decree on Justification, Chapter XVI)..

In Roman Catholic theology works are indeed necessary and meritorious for justification and salvation. Ludwig Ott states:

As God's grace is the presupposition and foundation of (supernatural) good works, by which man merits eternal life, so salutary works are, at the same time gifts of God and meritorious acts of man...By his good works the justified man really acquires a claim to supernatural reward from God...A just man merits for himself through each good work an increase in sanctifying grace, eternal life (if he dies in a state of grace) and an increase of heavenly glory (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), Book IV, Section 2, Chapter 3.23.2, 3.25.1, pp. 264, 267).

This is further reaffirmed by the Roman Catholic theologian John Hardon:

Habitual or sanctifying grace is a supernatural quality that dwells in the human soul, by which a person shares in the divine nature, becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, a friend of God, his adopted child, an heir to the glory of heaven, and *able to perform actions meriting eternal life* (John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981).

While it is true that the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Churches share a common heritage of doctrine in the creeds and the doctrinal formulations of the early Councils, this does not mean that they share the same gospel. In his book, *Evangelical Catholics*, Keith Fournier (a Roman Catholic and promoter of ECT) expresses the theme of the book in this subtitle: *A Call for Christian Cooperation to Penetrate the Darkness with the Light of the Gospel*. This is a call for unity based on the common foundation of the gospel. There is an implicit acknowledgment here that unity must be based on truth. But sadly, it is in the realm of the truth of the gospel that the Roman Catholic Church has erred. The creeds, as true as they are, are not the gospel.

And as one examines the official teachings of the Church of Rome it is clear that it does not teach the biblical gospel and that the Evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches are very divided on this issue. In fact, the Roman Catholic Church has

officially repudiated the definition of a Christian as formulated by Keith Fournier and the signers of the ECT documents.

It is not without significance that men like Fournier and the signers of the ECT Accords studiously avoid clearly stating what the official salvation teachings of the Roman Catholic Church truly are. And sadly this is also true of the article by Packer in *Christianity Today*. But not only is there a purposeful avoidance of an honest and clear statement of Roman Catholic teaching, one finds in the writings of men like Fournier a misrepresentation of the true teachings of the Church of Rome to make the institution appear virtually evangelical. There is a fundamental denial in some of his statements of doctrines dogmatically decreed by the Council of Trent, for example. An examination of those teachings, however, reveals that the Church of Rome has departed from the truth of the gospel. Thus, no unity is possible since we do not share the same basis of truth and therefore the same gospel. The Reformation was fought over issues of supreme importance which have direct bearing on the gospel. It will not do to minimize the doctrinal issues of the Reformation and suggest that they are somehow nothing more than a tragic misunderstanding over semantics. Interestingly, the Roman Catholic Church itself has never embraced that point of view. It is only by repudiating the basic teachings of the Reformation as well as the authoritative teaching of the Roman Catholic Church itself that one can arrive at the attitude of those who have formulated the ECT documents.

While it is true that Western culture is being inundated by humanism, secularism and sin of terrible dimensions, the call of the Scriptures is not simply to bring Christian values to bear in the culture but to proclaim the gospel. To be opposed to pornography and abortion, while certainly admirable and right, is not the defining standard of what it means to be a Christian or the focal point of the biblical mandate to the Church of Jesus Christ. There are undoubtedly many atheists, Jews, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and others who are in genuine opposition to these particular behaviors and would stand with true Christians in fighting against them, but this does not mean that we are going to come together in unity downplaying the issues of theology. In the book of Galatians, Paul anathematized a group of people known as the Judaizers who proclaimed a gospel

that contradicted that which Paul had preached to the Galatians. It is important to note that these people did not deny the person of Christ. They were orthodox in their understanding of who Christ is and faithful in proclaiming this truth. Paul and these teachers shared a common heritage of truth that was fundamental to Christianity. But their error lay in a denial the truth of justification by faith alone. They taught that in addition to the work of Christ one also had to add the works of the ceremonial and moral law as a grounds for salvation. There would not have been in Paul's mind any justification for the idea that in light of the terrible moral corruption of the Roman Empire, and given the common theological foundation that he and the Judaizers shared in that they both professed the person of Christ, that they should come together in a show of unity, laying aside their theological differences to fight the moral evils of the day. Paul would have none of this.

The ultimate issue in fighting the moral issues of the day is the proclamation of the gospel because it the gospel that is 'the power of God to salvation' (Rom. 1:16). We are not called to save the culture from moral decay, we are called to proclaim the gospel. And if we do not agree on the fundamentals of the gospel we cannot come together in unity. As one analyzes the teachings of Roman Catholicism it becomes clear that in principle the gospel that was proclaimed by the Judaizers which was placed under anathema by Paul is the gospel taught by the Roman Catholic Church, a gospel that denies in a fundamental sense justification by faith alone in Christ alone and which introduces human works and merit as an addition to the work of Christ. In effect, if the evangelical Church unites with the Church of Rome it will come together with an institution that proclaims a gospel that has been placed under an anathema by God Himself. It is out of concern to clarify these issues that I feel it is so important to clearly understand what the Roman Catholic Church officially teaches.

The Roman Teaching on Saving Faith

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that justification is by grace through faith on account of Jesus Christ. This sounds quite orthodox, but on closer examination it becomes clear that the meaning of the terms faith, justification and grace are

defined differently by the Roman Catholic Church from that of the Protestant. Though the two churches use the same terms they do not mean the same things by them. This is similar historically to the Pelagian controversy in the early 5th century. Pelagius was a heretic vigorously opposed by Augustine and the Church of his day. But both Pelagius and Augustine would have passed the test for unity as proscribed by the proponents of ECT 1 and 2. Both men affirmed the truth of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and the fourth century Councils. Was Augustine then wrong in opposing him? No, because his salvation teachings were indeed heretical. And yet Pelagius used orthodox theological terms in his teaching. He stated without qualification that he believed in salvation by grace through faith. But the problem is that the way he defined his terms contradicted their biblical and orthodox meaning. If one did not press Pelagius for definitions and was simply satisfied with general statements of belief, then he would appear to be orthodox. Definition of terms is crucial because these words and what we say they mean must conform to their biblical meaning. It is of the utmost importance that we ask the question: What does the Roman Catholic Church mean by faith? What is the content of that faith and what precisely does it mean by justification? The Roman Church has not left us in doubt as to what it teaches about justification or faith and the doctrinal content of faith that is saving. By its dogmatic decrees as promulgated by Popes and ecumenical councils the Roman Catholic Church has clearly defined the meaning of such faith. We need to keep in mind that, in Roman Catholic theology, papal decrees when they are given *ex cathedra* are infallible as are the decrees of Ecumenical and Roman Catholic councils.

Thus, the decrees of the Council of Trent and Vatican I and the papal decrees on Mary form part of the doctrinal content of saving faith. These decrees are defined as being necessary to be believed for salvation and the Roman Church anathematizes all who would disagree with or reject these teachings.

We need to say a word here about the meaning of the term anathema. In the formal sense the term means excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church. However, the essential meaning of the word goes far beyond this. Ultimately to be anathematized by the Church of Rome means to be cut off from the Church

which is the source of salvation. Consequently, the term indirectly involves a condemnation of the individual anathematized to hell unless there is repentance and a return to the Roman Church and an embracing of its teachings.

Thus, it is important to understand that, according to the Church of Rome, apart from an embracing of its doctrines there is no salvation. This is clearly seen from the teaching of Vatican I on the meaning of saving faith and the role of the Church in defining the doctrinal content of such faith. Therefore, the gospel according to Rome consists of justification that is a process and is dependent upon the works and merits of the individual, the Roman Catholic sacraments as a means of salvation, the full embracing of the Roman Catholic teaching of papal infallibility and jurisdiction and the Marian doctrines of the immaculate conception and assumption. Unless one believes these things and submits to them there is no justification or salvation. Is this the biblical gospel delineated in the scriptures and proclaimed by the apostles? Most assuredly not! It is a fundamental denial of the biblical teaching of salvation. As such there is no grounds for the appeal for unity of those involved in the ECT accord, for the Evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches are not unified on the meaning of the gospel. Unity that is not grounded in truth is a false political uniformity that must be vigorously yet graciously opposed by all who love the scriptures and who would stand true to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our ultimate loyalty must be to the person of Christ. The culture and the darkness that is enveloping it is not the overriding issue. The ultimate issue is truth and on that basis the evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches are irreparably divided.

Vatican I

Vatican I states that it is necessary for salvation that men and women not only believe all that is revealed in scripture but also everything which is defined and proposed by the Church as having been divinely revealed. To reject anything taught by the Roman Church is to reject saving faith and to forfeit justification and eternal life:

Further, all those things are to be believed with divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the Word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church, either by a solemn judgment, or by her ordinary and universal magisterium, proposes for belief as having been divinely revealed. And since, without faith, it is impossible to please God, and to attain to the fellowship of his children, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will any one obtain eternal life unless he shall have persevered in faith unto the end

(Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council, On Faith, Chapter III. Found in Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom (New York:Harper, 1877), Volume II, pp. 244-245).

Ludwig Ott explains the relationship of Dogmas defined by the Church and faith in these words:

By dogma in the strict sense is understood a truth immediately (formally) revealed by God which has been proposed by the Teaching Authority of the Church to be believed as such...All those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the Word of God written or handed down and which are proposed for our belief by the Church either in a solemn definition or in its ordinary and universal authoritative teaching. (Vatican I).

Two factors or elements may be distinguished in the concept of dogma:

A) An immediate Divine Revelation of the particular Dogma...i.e., the Dogma must be immediately revealed by God either explicitly (explicite) or inclusively (implicite), and therefore be contained in the sources of Revelation (Holy Writ or Tradition)

B) The Promulgation of the Dogma by the Teaching Authority of the Church (propositio Ecclesiae). This implies, not merely the promulgation of the Truth, but also the obligation on the part of the Faithful of believing the Truth. This promulgation by the Church may be either in an extraordinary manner through a solemn decision of faith made by the Pope or a General Council (Iudicium solemns) or through the ordinary and general teaching power of the Church

(Magisterium ordinarium et universale). The latter may be found easily in the catechisms issued by the Bishops.

Dogma in its strict signification is the object of both Divine Faith (Fides Divina) and Catholic Faith (Fides Catholica); it is the object of the Divine Faith...by reason of its Divine Revelation; it is the object of Catholic Faith...on account of its infallible doctrinal definition by the Church. If a baptised person deliberately denies or doubts a dogma properly so-called, he is guilty of the sin of heresy (Codex Iuris Canonici 1325, Par. 2), and automatically becomes subject to the punishment of excommunication (Codex Iuris Canonici 2314, Par. I). As far as the content of justifying faith is concerned, the so-called fiducial faith does not suffice. What is demanded is theological or dogmatic faith (confessional faith) which consists in the firm acceptance of the Divine truths of Revelation, on the authority of God Revealing...According to the testimony of Holy Writ, faith and indeed dogmatic faith, is the indispensable prerequisite for the achieving of eternal salvation (emphasis added).²

This point is further emphasized by the Roman Catholic theologian John Hardon in his authoritative and popular catechism:

44. What must a Catholic believe with divine faith?

A Catholic must believe with divine faith the whole of revelation, which is contained in the written word of God and in Sacred Tradition.

45. Can a person be a Catholic if he believes most, but not all, the teachings of revelation?

A person cannot be a Catholic if he rejects even a single teaching that he knows has been revealed by God.

46. What will happen to those who lack 'the faith necessary for salvation'?

Those will not be saved who lack the necessary faith because of their own sinful neglect or conduct. As Christ declared, 'He who does not

believe will be condemned' (Mark 16:16).

47. Why is divine faith called catholic?

Divine faith is called catholic or universal because a believer must accept everything God has revealed. He may not be selective about what he chooses to believe (John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981).

From the above citations it is clear that, according to Rome, it is incumbent upon all who would experience salvation that they embrace by faith the doctrinal content of the faith as it is authoritatively defined by Popes and Roman Catholic councils. Vatican I specifically states that one cannot experience justification and eternal life apart from a complete embracing of Dogmatic Faith which is the Faith as it is authoritatively defined by the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, as one analyzes the decrees, teachings and anathemas of the Popes made ex cathedra and those of the Councils such as Trent, Vatican I and Vatican II one can clearly ascertain the content of saving faith as it is defined by the Roman Catholic Church. In so doing it becomes very apparent that there is an inherent contradiction between the teaching of Vatican II and that of the popes and Councils which have preceeded it. Vatican II states that Protestants and Orthodox believers are 'separated brethren,' implying that they are in fact true Christians and can experience salvation outside of the Roman Catholic Church. This is a clear contradiction to the authoritative papal and conciliar teaching of the Roman Catholic Church prior to Vatican II. The popes in defining the Marian Dogmas have anathematized all who would in any way reject or doubt their teachings. And Trent and Vatican I state that they had met specifically to define dogmas of the faith in order to counter heresy, the teachings specifically held by Protestant and Orthodox believers, and both Councils condemn with anathema all who do not submit to their teachings and embrace with a positive faith what they have promulgated. As Trent states:

With this view, in order to destroy the errors and to extirpate the heresies which have appeared in these our days on the subject of the said most holy sacraments, as well as those which have been revived

from the heresies of old by our Fathers, as also those newly invented, and which are exceedingly prejudicial to the purity of the Catholic Church and to the salvation of souls, the sacred and holy, ecumenical and general Synod of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the same legates of the Apostolic See presiding therein, adhering to the doctrine of the holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions, and to the consent of other councils and of the Fathers, has thought it fit that these present canons be established and decreed...(*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Baker Book House (1919 ed.), Seventh Session, *Decree on the Sacraments*, Foreword, pp. 118-119).

And Vatican I states:

And this his salutary providence, which has been constantly displayed by other innumerable benefits, has been most manifestly proved by the abundant good results which Christendom has derived from ecumenical Councils, and particularly from that of Trent, although it was held in evil times. For, as a consequence, the sacred doctrines of the faith have been defined more closely, and set forth more fully, errors have been condemned and restrained...But while we recall with due thankfulness these and other signal benefits which the divine mercy has bestowed on the Church, especially by the last ecumenical Council, we can not restrain our bitter sorrow for the grave evils, which are principally due to the fact that the authority of that sacred Synod has been contemned, or its wise decrees neglected, by many. No one is ignorant of the heresies proscribed by the Fathers of Trent...Considering these things, how can the Church fail to be deeply stirred? For, even as God wills all men to be saved, and to arrive at the knowledge of the truth, even as Christ came to save what has perished, and to gather together the children of God who had been dispersed, so the Church, constituted by God the mother and teacher of nations, knows its own office as debtor to all, and is ever ready and watchful to raise the fallen, to support those who are falling, to embrace those who return, to confirm the good and to carry them on to better things.

Hence, it can never forbear from witnessing to and proclaiming the truth of God. We, therefore, following the footsteps of our predecessors, have never ceased, as becomes our supreme Apostolic office, from teaching and defending Catholic truth, and condemning doctrines of error. And now, with the Bishops of the whole world assembled round us, and judging with us, congregated by our authority, and in the Holy Spirit, in this ecumenical Council, we, supported by the Word of God written and handed down as we received it from the Catholic Church, preserved with sacredness and set forth according to truth, have determined to profess and declare the salutary teaching of Christ from this Chair of Peter, and in the sight of all, proscribing and condemning, by the power given to us of God, all errors contrary thereto (*Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council*, Dogmatic Constitution of the Catholic Faith. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper, 1877), pp. 234-238).

According to Vatican I, all who reject its teachings are declared to be heretics and schismatics. This obviously applies in a direct sense to the Protestant and Orthodox Churches and its decrees are considered to be infallible by the Roman Catholic Church. Vatican I reaffirmed the Council of Trent and its decrees, and itself defined papal infallibility and primacy as doctrines necessary to be believed for salvation. And Vatican I was later reaffirmed by Vatican II:

In order that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, He placed Peter over the other apostles, and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and fellowship (Cf. Vatican Council I, Session 4, the dogmatic constitution ‘*Pastor aeternus*’). And all this teaching about the institution, the perpetuity, the force and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and of his infallible teaching authority, this sacred Synod again proposes to be firmly believed by all the faithful (*The Documents of Vatican II* (Chicago: Follett, 1966), Chapter III.18, p. 38).

Thus, if we ask, what is the content of the Faith defined by the Roman Catholic Church, which all men must embrace to experience salvation, what would the

overall doctrines consist of? The Church affirms first of all the 'Rule of Faith' as defined by the Apostles Creed. This was stated in the opening sessions of the Council of Trent. But in addition to this common body of Doctrine shared by the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Churches there have been other doctrines introduced by the Roman Catholic Church which it says must be believed for salvation. It is these, in addition to the sacramental teachings and the teachings on justification, that we are mainly concerned with which have been promulgated by several popes and the Councils of Trent and Vatican I.

These dogmas can be summarized in the statements that follow. These are not an exhaustive listing but a fair summarization of the teachings defined by the Roman Church by specific popes and these two councils. To deny any of these teachings and to refuse to embrace them with a positive faith is to come under an anathema and to experience loss of saving faith:

- An individual must believe that the popes are infallible when teaching *ex cathedra*.
- One must believe that the Bishops of Rome have been given authority by Christ to rule the Church universal.
- One must be submitted to the Bishop of Rome in all areas of faith, morals, discipline and government of the Church.
- The Roman Catholic Church alone has the right to interpret Scripture and its interpretations are infallible.
- One must accept the Apocrypha as Scripture and as part of the Canon.
- There is no salvation outside of the Roman Catholic Church.
- One must believe that the Roman Catholic sacraments are necessary for salvation and that there specific number is seven.

- An individual must repudiate the teaching that the imputed righteousness of Christ is the basis for justification.
- One must embrace the teaching that justification is not by faith alone but by human works cooperating with grace and by participation in the sacraments.
- One must believe that human works cooperating with grace merit eternal life.
- One must accept the teaching that water baptism is necessary for salvation as it is the instrumental means of regeneration even for infants.
- One must believe that the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice for sin.
- One must believe that in the eucharist the bread and wine is transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ at the words of consecration (Transubstantiation).
- It is necessary to believe that confession of sins to a Roman Catholic priest and receiving his absolution and performing acts of penance is the only way to receive forgiveness of sins after baptism.
- One must embrace the teachings of the immaculate conception and Assumption of Mary.
- One must accept the Roman Catholic teaching on Purgatory.

(A full documentation of these teachings can be found at [Saving Faith and Rome](#))

In light of these facts, it is clear that there is no basis for asserting that the Roman Catholic and Evangelical churches share a common faith. Our differences are

enormous and while we share some common theological emphases, most notably the teaching on the Trinity, we do not believe the same gospel or embrace the same concept of salvation. The Roman Catholic system of salvation is a perversion of the biblical gospel. For Evangelicals to come together with Rome in the name of unity would be a betrayal of the gospel and of the God who gave it (Gal. 1:6-8).

Beloved in the Faith,

Since before our eyes there is an alignment of New Evangelicals with apostasy, there must be a resolution at the local church level. Pastors and church leaders are to contend for the faith, for much has already been suffered in our churches and on the mission field. What is at stake is the very righteousness of Christ Jesus the Lord in His perfect, finished work that is proclaimed in the Gospel. Iain Murray, in his book *Evangelicalism Divided*, has documented stage-by-stage the clouding of the Gospel, the veiling of the very definition of what it is to be a Christian, as Evangelicals have in the last 50 years worked together with ritualistic Anglicans, Roman Catholics and liberals towards a visible unity.

The article below and attached comes to a conclusion on this horrendous embracing of apostasy. I ask that you take it before your church and that you, as a church, come to judgment that is biblical in separation from those who have perverted the Gospel of Christ. We must pray to the All Holy Righteous God that out of all that has happened His Gospel may be even more splendidly clear for the glory of His name and the salvation of souls.

Yours in the truth and love of the Lord,

Richard Bennett

The Alignment of New Evangelicals with Apostasy

by

Richard M. Bennett

Evangelicals throughout the centuries have maintained that justification by faith alone is the way in which sinful human beings are in Christ made right

before the all Holy God. [\[1\]](#) Justification itself is a judicial declarative act on the part of God alone by which He declares that only in Christ is a man perfectly just. His judicial declarative act is not made on the basis of anything within a man, but rather it is made solely and wholly upon the righteous life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ who lived a perfect life and paid the just penalty for sins upon the cross. Historically, Evangelicals have been in agreement with the Apostle Paul, “*to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*” [\[1\]](#)

A person calling himself Evangelical is professing to be committed to the Gospel of Christ as proclaimed in Scripture. The true Gospel demands separation from all who teach another Gospel, as the Apostle declared, “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*” [\[2\]](#) Without such separation the name Evangelical signifies nothing. New Evangelicalism, which willingly compromises with, and accommodates another gospel, has gained ground everywhere since about 1960. Since then the Evangelical world has changed beyond recognition. This is fully documented in *Evangelicalism Divided* by Iain Murray (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000). The first and second National Evangelical Anglican Conferences that met at Keele and Nottingham in the UK in 1967 and 1977 respectively showed a willingness to be united with ritualistic Anglicans, essentially Roman Catholic in belief and practice, and liberals who believed in a fallible Bible. Leading evangelicals, such as J.I. Packer and John Stott, endorsed the statements from these conferences and, in so doing; set aside Gospel truth in favor of accepting fellow Anglicans as true brothers and sisters in Christ. The most drastic departure however from the Biblical Gospel took place some seventeen years after the Nottingham Conference in 1994 in the USA. At the end of March 1994, a group of twenty leading Evangelicals and twenty leading Roman Catholics produced a document entitled *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* (ECT).

Two of the main instigators of this intense ecumenical thrust were Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, a Lutheran pastor turned Roman Catholic priest. The specific task was begun in September 1992. These men were joined in the writing process by Larry Lewis of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Jesse Miranda of Assemblies of God, John White of the Geneva College and National Association of Evangelicals, and others, including two Jesuits, Avery Dulles and Juan Diaz-Vilar. Two more Jesuits had signed the declaration by the time of its presentation. In addition to the Evangelical participants who helped form the document, signers included J. I. Packer, Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ, Mark Noll of Wheaton College, and Pat Robertson of the 700 Club. Roman Catholic signers included such well know figures as Cardinal John O'Connor, now deceased, Archbishop Sevilla, Archbishop Stafford, and Bishop Francis George, now Archbishop of Chicago.

The Gospel according to ECT

The signers of ECT readily admit of “differences that cannot be resolved here”. However motivated by the desire for union on important moral issues, the authors of ECT proclaim that Evangelicals and Catholics are one in Christ, and that all are truly Christians. The primary fallacy of the lengthy document is its declaration on the Gospel. The signers state what they believe comes closest to Gospel of Christ when they declare,

“We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ. Living faith is active in love that is nothing less than the love of Christ, . . .” (p. 5)

To be Biblical, this statement should read, “We affirm together that we are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.” The word “alone” signifies that the perfect righteousness of Christ Jesus^{3/4}and that alone^{3/4}is sufficient before the Holy God to justify unholy sinners. [\[3\]](#) To so define justification, however, would exclude the Catholic sacraments and the priests who control them, both of which are necessary for the Catholic. [\[4\]](#). Thus a

subtraction had to be made from the Gospel of Christ in excluding what is signified by the word alone. In a similar manner an addition had to be made to the gospel in ECT words that qualify faith as, “living faith active in love”. This was to accommodate the inclusion of the Catholic sacraments. This was exactly the same intent of the Council of Trent in its qualification of the meaning of faith. Trent declared,

“For faith, unless hope and charity be added to it, neither unites one perfectly with Christ, nor makes him a living member of his body....This faith, in accordance with apostolic tradition, catechumens beg of the Church before the sacrament of baptism...” [5]

The theology of the Church of Rome always comes back to the concept of “living faith” so as to include works, particularly her sacraments that she defines as necessary for salvation. [6]

The New Evangelical signers of ECT have concurred with the Roman Catholic definition of “living faith active in love”, and thus they have formally agreed to an addition to the Gospel that nullifies its message.

Rome continues to show her understanding of “living faith” in the 1994 *Catechism* when she declares, “the very root of the Church’s living faith [is] principally by means of Baptism.” [7] If the New Evangelicals do in fact believe the Roman Catholic concept of “living faith,” they ought logically to endorse Rome’s curse upon all who have simple faith in God’s grace, as was officially done by Rome at the Council of Trent,

“If anyone shall say that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to understand that nothing else is required to cooperate in the attainment of the grace of justification, and that it is in no way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will: let him be anathema [cursed].” [8]

To endorse Roman Catholic teaching, therefore, is to deny the clear teaching of Scripture, “*But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man*

appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.” [\[9\]](#)

Evangelicals also endorse Baptismal regeneration

In the general heading of “We Witness Together,” and (to use the document’s language) “in the context of evangelization and ‘reevangelization,” the New Evangelicals go so far as to recognize that “for Catholics, all who are validly baptized are born again and are truly, however imperfectly, in communion with Christ.” (p. 23). These New Evangelicals might as well have quoted the Roman Catholic Code of Canon Law that says the same thing,

“Baptism...by which men and women are freed from their sins, are reborn as children of God and, configured to Christ...” [\[10\]](#)

In contrast to the teaching of Rome and the signed statements of J. I. Packer, Chuck Colson, et al., the words of the risen Christ in giving the Gospel are crystal clear. *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* [\[11\]](#) Faith is the key of saving grace, and unbelief is the chief damning sin. Faith is what is absolutely necessary to salvation, baptism is an ordinance that follows faith and simply testifies to it. Proof of this is found in the fact of the omission in the second half of the verse: it is not “he that is not baptized shall be damned,” but rather *“he that believeth not.”* The repentance from this endorsement of the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration, and of an incomplete Gospel, by both subtraction and addition, requested over the years and formally called for at the 1999 Ex Catholics For Christ Conference has not come. Rather a defense of the document has been maintained both in the USA and overseas.

The devastating effect of ECT

The real effect of the New Evangelical compromise with the Gospel is to put a stop to the evangelization of Roman Catholics across the world. If this compromise of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ is accepted, then Bible believing

churches will refrain from evangelizing Catholics. The impact on the true church in third world Catholic countries in Central and South America, in Africa, as well as in Spain, Portugal, and the Philippines, is already apparent. If this anti-Evangelical trend continues unchecked it will become ruinous to the spiritual welfare of millions of souls. But this is exactly the policy the ECT signers promulgate when they state,

“We are aware that our experience reflects the distinctive circumstances and opportunities of Evangelicals and Catholics living together in North America. At the same time, we believe that what we have discovered and resolved is pertinent to the relationship between Evangelicals and Catholics in other parts of the world.”

and

“...it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community [church] to proselytize [evangelize] among active adherents of another Christian community.” Introduction p. 1

Since when has it been theologically illegitimate to expose error and heresy? Because these intelligent and educated men have contradicted the very Gospel of Christ, it is time to state that the biblical mandate of separation from such men must be observed! *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”* [\[12\]](#)

Compounded endorsement of Rome

On November 12, 1997, a document entitled “The Gift of Salvation” was signed and published by Evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders. Its expressed intention was to demonstrate the “common faith” of Evangelicals and Roman Catholics, and to further “acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters in

Christ.” It was published in the December 8, 1997, issue of *Christianity Today*. Explicitly, the Roman Catholic (RC) signatories such as Richard John Neuhaus and Avery Dulles, S.J., state in the document that they are “Catholics who are conscientiously faithful to the teaching of the Catholic Church.” What might be expected then is in fact discovered in the document. The Roman Catholic doctrine of conferred justification is taught as the Gospel. J.I. Packer, Charles Colson, Os Guinness, Richard Land, Bill Bright are now joined together with Timothy George, T.M. Moore, John Woodbridge, and others in not only giving a clouded Gospel-Justification message, but also in a distinctively erudite manner, endorsing Rome’s doctrine of conferred inner righteousness.

A Studied Denial of the Gospel

The document states, “Justification is central to the scriptural account of salvation, and its meaning has been much debated between Protestants and Catholics.” Then it claims that the signers have reached an agreement. Their statement of accord is,

We agree that justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God’s gift, conferred through the Father’s sheer graciousness, out of the love that he bears us in his Son, who suffered on our behalf and rose from the dead for our justification. Jesus was “put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:25). In justification, God, on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone, declares us to be no longer his rebellious enemies but his forgiven friends, and by virtue of his declaration it is so.

The subject under review is stated clearly in the first sentence. “We agree that justification...is conferred through the Father’s sheer graciousness.” Then by careful reading one comes to see that what the two pivotal sentences state grammatically,

...it [justification] is entirely God’s gift, conferred [rather than imputed]...and by virtue of his [God’s] declaration it [justification conferred] is so.”

“This is traditional Roman Catholic doctrine. To employ the Roman Catholic word “conferred” instead of the Biblical word “imputed” is tantamount to putting aside Scriptural authority on the issue of justification. Since medieval times, the RCC has clearly distinguished between the concept of imputation and the concept of God’s grace conferred as a quality of the soul. [\[13\]](#) Since the Council of Trent she has condemned the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. Present day dogma of the RCC not only upholds the teaching of the Council of Trent but also declares that such Councils are infallible. [\[14\]](#) The Council of Trent proclaims the following curse:

If anyone shall say that by the said sacraments of the New Law, grace is not **conferred** from the work which has been worked [*ex opere operato*] **but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices to obtain grace: let him be anathema.** [\[15\]](#)

Rome’s reason for such a curse on those who hold to “justification by faith alone” and to “justification imputed” is logical because of what she refuses to concede. For her, justification is not an immediate one-time act of God, received by faith alone; rather, she teaches that grace is conferred continually through her sacraments. Thus she is able to make a place for herself as a necessary means through which inner righteousness is given. She teaches in her 1994 *Catechism*,

“**Justification is conferred in Baptism**, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy.” [\[16\]](#)

Because inner righteousness, which is claimed to have been conferred, is located in the person, and not located in Christ, it can be lost and may need to be conferred again and again. Thus Rome officially states,

“...the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as

‘the second plank (of salvation) after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace.’” [\[17\]](#)

“Conferred justification” is necessary for Rome because of her claim that the work of her sacraments is the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus she states,

‘Sacramental grace’ is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament.” [\[18\]](#)

Calling “sacramental grace” the “the grace of the Holy Spirit” is pretentious blasphemy against the All Holy God. What is declared in Scripture is the imputation of God’s righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the words of the Apostle *“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”* [\[19\]](#) The Roman Catholic Church’s persistence in using the word “conferred” is an attempt to exchange her sacraments for Jesus Christ, the Lord and giver of life.

In the face of such clarity, both on the part of Scripture and on the part of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), this new Evangelical distortion claims that both sides now agree on what has been the issue of division between Protestants and Roman Catholics for several hundred years. This it does³/₄precisely by using Roman Catholic terminology: The perversion by which the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone is set aside in this document is by the use of the RCC term, “conferred”. Through this accommodation, the Biblical teaching of the righteousness of God imputed to the believer is subsumed under Rome’s traditional concept of inner or infused righteousness. Evangelicals such as J.I. Packer, Timothy George, and Os Guinness, known for their writings on the subject of the Gospel, are accustomed to the Biblical word, “imputed”. For them to agree to the Roman Catholic word “conferred”, in place of the Biblical term “imputed”, is a major betrayal. The Apostle Paul uses the concept of imputation (crediting, reckoning or counting) eleven times in Romans chapter four, a summary of which is verse five, *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”* Now this

pivotal truth of God's righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ imputed to the believer is undermined in the document's most horrifying concept,

"...and by virtue of his [Holy God's] declaration it [justification conferred] is so".

With like subtlety, so Rome has always taught, from the Council of Trent to the present day. Now the New Evangelicals join them. This is pious professional fraud. What response can one make to these new Evangelicals personalities teaching the conferred righteousness of Rome? Can one do other than separate from such men in the words of the Apostle "*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*" [\[20\]](#)

The defense of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together."

The most serious apologetic for the document entitled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium"(ECT) is in the book of the same title *Evangelicals & Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*. [\[21\]](#) The architects of ECT were well aware of the crucial distinctions with regards to the Gospel separating Catholics and Evangelicals, but they chose to by-pass them. Packer writes in *Common Mission*, "Neither evangelicals nor Roman Catholics can stipulate that things they believe, which the other side does not believe, be made foundational to partnership at this point; so ECT lets go Protestant precision on the doctrine of justification and the correlation between conversion and new birth..." [\[22\]](#) That such compromise is heretical is seen from his statements earlier in the same article in *Common Mission*, when he said, "...Roman teaching obscures the gospel and indeed distorts it in a tragically anti-spiritual and unpastoral manner..." [\[23\]](#) and "Rome's official doctrinal disorders, particularly on justification, merit, and the Mass-sacrifice, so obscure the gospel that were I, as a gesture of unity, invited to mass-which of course as a Protestant I am not, nor shall be- I would not feel free to accept the invitation." [\[24\]](#) Packer towards the end of the article speaks of the evils of "humanism", "materialism, hedonism and nihilism". To rebuild a Christian consensus he proposes that,

“...**domestic differences about salvation** and the Church should not hinder us from joint action in seeking to re-Christianize the North American milieu...” [25]

But the orthodox Evangelical Packer of old spoke of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in this way, “like Atlas, it bears a world on its shoulders, the entire evangelical knowledge of saving grace”! Now, the same saving faith is downgraded to the “domestic differences about salvation.” The warning of the Apostle Paul must sound again **now**, “*but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*” [26]

Most serious and bizarre defense

Packer, who leads the New Evangelicals, has taken an unusual explanation for his position. He has given it in different articles. One example of his strange defense is in a 1996 article, in which he states,

“Can conservative Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholics of mainstream type join together in bearing witness to all that I have spoken of? I urge that we can, despite our known and continuing differences about the specifics of the salvation process and the place of the church in that process...To be sure, fundamentalists within our three traditions are unlikely to join us in this, for it is the way of fundamentalists to follow the path of contentious orthodoxy, as if the mercy of God in Christ automatically rests on persons who are notionally correct and is just as automatically withheld from those who fall short of notional correctness on any point of substance. But this concept of, in effect, justification, not of works, but of words^{3/4}words, that is, of notional soundness and precision^{3/4}is near to being a cultic heresy in its own right and need not detain us further now, however much we may regret the fact that some in all our traditions are bogged down in it.” [27]

No orthodox Evangelical has ever maintained that “notional soundness and precision”, that is, doctrinal theory, ever saved anyone. Rather, orthodox

Evangelicals have always held to Romans 10:10, “*For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” It appears that Packer is conducting a little casuistry of his own here. It is an ego defense attempting to preempt his critics by raising an anti-biblical dichotomy between head (religion) and heart (religion). This is an old liberal tactic, i.e., to create an unbiblical dichotomy and then infer and insinuate that any party who refuses to acknowledge it, must in the nature of the case, be unspiritual, opposed to Christian love. None of the historic Evangelical confessions of faith hold out that mere doctrinal “soundness” saves anyone. This is an absurd caricature that Packer has invented. Rather orthodox Evangelicals today, even as they did in the days of the Apostle Paul and at the Reformation, declare that it is the righteousness of Christ Jesus alone that saves a person!

What Packer does in setting aside very point of faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone, is what the Church of Rome continually does. This is the exact point that the Apostle Paul contended for against the Judaisers and the Reformers against the Roman Catholics of their day. This is the exact point on which thousands of Evangelicals gave their lives, such as John Huss, William Tyndale, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, John Rogers, Anne Askew, John Bradford, and John Philpot, to name a few. Now Packer creates the concept of notional correctness and of a charged “justification by words.” The ardent desire of true Evangelicals to “*be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,*” [\[28\]](#) was and is the heart of the Gospel, not “contentious orthodoxy” nor “cultic heresy”. What Packer has done is to deny the importance of the Scriptures on the precise point of Sola Fide. He also denies the Reformation history of those Evangelicals who under the Roman Catholic Inquisition gave their lives, not for any correctness in words, but rather for their faith in Christ Jesus alone. Since the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is involved and these Reformation martyrs loved not their lives unto the death for faith in Him alone, we think this matter is so serious as to demand the judgment of the Lord Himself. “*For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the*

hands of the living God” [\[29\]](#)

“Separation for the sake of the gospel is not necessary”

In his essay in *Common Mission*, Roman Catholic Neuhaus stated emphatically, *“If, at the end of the twentieth century, separation for the sake of the gospel is not necessary, it is not justified”* [\[30\]](#) What Neuhaus declared is that the Gospel is no longer relevant to Christian unity. This seems to be the precise intent of the 1994 ECT document and equally the 1997 “The Gift of Salvation” document. If Evangelicals who would be true to the Gospel do not combat the challenging defenses of ECT I and ECT II made by New Evangelicals and their Roman Catholic counterparts, then Neuhaus’ anti-Scriptural words *“separation for the sake of the gospel is not necessary”* might well fall on them and their children after them. If the lie is swallowed that separation for the sake of the Gospel is not justified, then the logical conclusion is that churches should cave in and submit to the Church of Rome. This has always been the avowed goal of Rome, as her documents verify,

“...little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist [the Mass] into that unity of the one and only Church....This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something we can never lose.” [\[31\]](#)

Neuhaus’ conclusion is similar to Packer’s and still the more frightening since it comes from the Roman Catholic side, known to have legal teeth in what it decides among nations. [\[32\]](#). Neuhaus states, *“But to declare it [justification by faith alone] to be the article by which the Church stands or falls in a manner that excludes other ways of saying the gospel is to turn it into a sectarian doctrine.”* [\[33\]](#) The true Gospel of grace has in this statement not simply been declared unnecessary, but it has been labeled a “sectarian doctrine”. What has already happened and been reported in Europe might one day be the news in the USA.

“The Belgian Chamber of Representatives recently passed a law creating a ‘sect oversight organization’ which will ‘scrutinize’ the 189 religious organizations listed in the Belgian Parliamentary Sect Report published in April 1997...Minority evangelical, Pentecostal and Adventist churches not belonging to the United Protestant Church of Belgium, which is recognized by the state, are targeted in the Belgian Sect Report...” [\[34\]](#)

C. H. Spurgeon’s timely words apply now even more than his own day “Since he was cursed who rebuilt Jericho, much more the man who labors to restore Popery among us. In our fathers’ days the gigantic walls of Popery fell by the power of their faith, the perseverance of their efforts, and the blast of their gospel trumpets...” [\[35\]](#) The Gospel trumpet is the very issue at stake^{3/4}for the Roman Catholic and Evangelical signers of ECT I & II first give the false message of Rome, go on to uphold baptismal regeneration and then in defense of what they have written, declare that the Gospel of Christ is a “domestic matter” or even “a sectarian doctrine”. The Apostle Paul before he concluded his letter to the Romans inserted a final warning against false teachers who cause divisions by perverting doctrine of the Gospel he had delivered. His words were, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*” [\[36\]](#) This is the same as his command in Titus 3:10-11 “*A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*” How serious is the Word of the Lord to true believers in this commandment? How serious is the truth of the Gospel of Christ?

Breaking point in history

We have reached a watershed moment in history. Those who truly adhere to the Gospel of Christ must hold that the Gospel not only is the power of God unto salvation, but that, as such, it cannot be contaminated with any other gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). Therefore, those who truly are ambassadors of the Gospel of Christ must separate themselves, not only from Roman Catholicism and her sacramental claims, but also must separate themselves from so-called

Evangelicals who have proposed this declaration of Evangelical and Catholic unity, or have been party to it. In the Scriptures we are warned continually to separate from brothers who are in error.

We are considering men of our own day, some of whom have done outstanding work for the sake of the Gospel in the past. But now that these men consistently are acting as false teachers, they must be judged according as the Scripture directs us. Separation must take place. *“Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”* [\[37\]](#) In the implementation of ECT I and II, J. I. Packer and Charles Colson, together with Timothy George, have been the prime movers. It is necessary now to apply Biblical principles to these men and to those who support them. Since the Gospel of Christ has been denied in these two documents, it is therefore necessary that they be treated as brothers who are in grievous error.

In our temporal world, infectious diseases are quarantined and contaminated food is discarded, but the danger involved here is not only temporal. Ought not brothers who would deceive the saints of God and draw them away into an ecumenism that is contrary to the Gospel of Christ be separated from the saints of the Lord for their eternal safety? God’s presence demands holiness, separation from evil. Fellowship with evil shuts out God’s gracious favor. *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.”* [\[38\]](#)

False teachers then and now

The testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures expressly forewarns God’s people of principal teachers becoming false teachers, or grievous wolves. So it was in the early days of the Church and right through history. The Church of Rome has been the main apostate system throughout the centuries because above Scripture she has embodied “the wise and learned” and because it has been the religion of kings and rulers. In history, as in our own day, she attracts scholars and philosophers, writers and businessmen. She has a form of godliness, notwithstanding errors, impieties, superstitions, and idolatries. And she has engaged well known teachers and pastors to lend the weight of their fleshly credit

to her soul destroying errors. Even so, the Lord warned of false prophets in sheep's clothing that are really ravening wolves. [\[39\]](#) Leaving off sound doctrine is so serious that we are told, *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."* [\[40\]](#) The infallible Spirit of God testifies to the danger of apostasy. The Apostle Paul cautioned the elders of the church of Ephesus about *"grievous wolves...not sparing the flock."* [\[41\]](#) The same warning is given by the Apostle Peter calling those who would bring in damnable heresies, "false teachers". [\[42\]](#)

There are a number of unequivocal warnings in the New Testament from the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Apostles, that a serious decline from the revealed truths of the Gospel would occur even among professed disciples. It cannot be held that these warnings were only for the first days of the Christian faith! They are directly pertinent to all believers living through New Covenant times. In the present day religious climate it is politically incorrect to say that any man has fallen into error and is acting the part of a false teacher or prophet. It is as though even these clear warnings were only for a certain period of early church history and not for us.

It is for us, however, to fear the All Holy God and obey his commandment to *"earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"* [\[43\]](#), and to *"stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel"* [\[44\]](#). J. I. Packer like a modern Pied Piper is leading many thousands of Evangelicals astray. Charles Colson, Bill Bright, Mark Noll, Pat Robertson, Os Guinness, Timothy George, and T.M. Moore to mention just a few of the more prominent New Evangelicals have publicly denied the Gospel in endorsing the anti-biblical terms and erroneous doctrinal concepts of the Church of Rome. All together, they are falsely identifying Catholics as "our brothers and sisters in Christ", thereby reinforcing the tragic and catastrophic delusions of these poor souls and denying them the substance of saving truth! Unless there is some public repentance, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ must not only separate from these men, but also go on to pray that the Lord would vindicate His Truth!

Since it is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and His glorious Gospel that is at stake here, we are commanded in the words of the Apostle to “*stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*” [45] May the God of all grace who “*worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*” [46] regarding even this present perversion the Gospel, bring forth a clarity of the Gospel in which His name will be glorified and souls will be saved.

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[1] Romans 4:5.

[2] Galatians 1:8-9.

[3] Romans 4:5-8, II Corinthians 5:19-21, Romans 3:22-28, Titus 3:5-7, Ephesians 1:7, Jeremiah 23:6, I Corinthians 1:30-31, Romans 5:17-19.

[4] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994) Para. # 987. Hereafter referred to as *Catechism*.

[5] Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, Tr. by Roy J Deferrari from *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 13th ed. (B. Herder Book Co., 1957), #800. Hereafter referred to as Denzinger.

[6] *Catechism*, Para 1129.

[7] *Catechism*, Para. 249.

[8] Denzinger, #819.

[9] Titus 3:4-5.

[10] *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-English Ed. (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983) Can. 849. All canons are taken from this work unless otherwise stated.

[11] Mark 16:16.

[12] II John 1:9-11

[13] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2 vols., *Great Books of the Western World Series*, Tr. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952) Part I of the Second Part, Question 110, Article 1, Obj. 3 and Article 2, Reply Obj. 1.

[14] *Catechism*, Para. 891.

[15] Denzinger, #851, Canon 8.

[16] *Catechism*, Para. 1992.

[17] *Catechism*, Para. 1446.

[18] *Catechism*, Para 1129.

[19] Philippians 3:9.

[20] Ephesians 5:11.

[21] *Evangelicals & Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, editors. (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995). Hereafter referred to as *Common Mission*.

[22] *Common Mission*, p 167.

[23] [Ibid.](#), p. 153.

[24] [Ibid.](#), pp 162,163.

[25] [Ibid.](#), p. 172.

[26] Galatians 1:7-8.

[27] J. I. Packer, “On from Orr”, *The J. I. Packer Collection*, Selected and Introduced by Alister McGrath (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999) p. 264.

[28] Philippians 3:9.

[29] Hebrews 10:30-31.

[30] Richard John Neuhaus, “The Catholic Difference”, *Common Mission*, p. 199. Italic is in the original document.

[31] Vatican Council II Documents No. 42, “Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue”, S.P.U.C., 15 August 1975, p. 541.

[32] See our article “Vatican Prepares to Control Through Civil Law”, *The Beacon*, No. 6, June, 2001.

[33] *Common Mission*, p. 207.

[34] “Growing religious intolerance in Belgium”, *Evangelical Times*, August 1998.

[35] *Morning and Evening*, on Joshua 6:26

[36] Romans 16:17.

[37] Jeremiah 23:29.

[\[38\]](#) II Corinthians 6:17.

[\[39\]](#) Matthew 7:15.

[\[40\]](#) I Timothy 4:1-2.

[\[41\]](#) Acts 20:29.

[\[42\]](#) 2 Peter 2:1.

[\[43\]](#) Jude 1:3.

[\[44\]](#) Philippians 1:27.

[\[45\]](#) 1 Cor 16:13

[\[46\]](#) Eph 1:11

The Roman Catholic Teaching on Salvation and Justification

by William Webster

Roman Catholic theology does not embrace the interpretation of salvation and justification as that presented by Scripture and the Protestant Reformers. The Roman Church does teach that we are justified by grace through faith on account of Christ. What is missing, however, is the word *alone*. By omitting this word the Roman Church redefines grace, faith and justification in a way that undermines and invalidates the teaching of Scripture. This will become clear as we examine the specific definitions given these terms by the official Magisterium of the Church of Rome.

The Roman View of the Work of Christ

Rome says that Christ made an atonement for sin, meriting the grace by which a person is justified but that the work of Christ is not the exclusive cause of an individual's justification and salvation. Ludwig Ott makes this statement:

Christ's redemptive activity finds its apogee in the death of sacrifice on the cross. On this account it is by excellence but not exclusively the efficient cause of our redemption....No one can be just to whom the merits of Christ's passion have not been communicated. It is a fundamental doctrine of St. Paul that salvation can be acquired only by the grace merited by Christ (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), pp. 185, 190).

According to the Church of Rome, Christ did not accomplish a full, finished and completed salvation in his work of atonement. His death on the cross did not deal with the full penalty of man's sin. It merited grace for man which is then channeled to the individual through the Roman Catholic Church and its sacraments. This grace then enables man to do works of righteousness in order to merit justification and eternal life. Robert Sungenis expresses the Roman Catholic perspective in these words:

What did Christ's suffering and death actually accomplish that allowed the Father to provide the human race with salvation? Did Christ take within himself the sin and guilt of mankind and suffer the specific punishment for that sin and guilt, as Protestants contend? The answer is no...Christ did not take upon himself the entire punishment required of man for sin. Rather, Scripture teaches only that Christ became a 'propitiation,' a 'sin offering,' or a 'sacrifice' for sins...Essentially, this means that Christ, because he was guiltless, sin-free and in favor with God, could offer himself up as a means of persuading God to relent of his angry wrath against the sins of mankind. Sin destroys God's creation. God,

who is a passionate and sensitive being, is angry against man for harming the creation. Anger against sin shows the personal side of God, for sin is a personal offense against him. We must not picture God as an unemotional courtroom judge who is personally unharmed by the sin of the offender brought before him. God is personally offended by sin and thus he needs to be personally appeased in order to offer a personal forgiveness. In keeping with his divine principles, his personal nature, and the magnitude of the sins of man, the only thing that God would allow to appease him was the suffering and death of the sinless representative of mankind, namely, Christ (Robert Sungenis, *Not By Faith Alone* (Santa Barbara: Queenship, 1997), pp. 107-108).

What Sungenis is saying is that Christ's death merely appeased God's anger against man. He persuades God to relent of his anger and to offer a means of forgiveness to man. And that means is through man's own works cooperating with the grace of God. Grace is not the activity of God in Christ purchasing and accomplishing full salvation and eternal life and applying this to man as a gift. And it is not a completed work. Rather, grace is a supernatural quality, infused into the soul of man through the sacraments, enabling him to do works of expiation and righteousness. These works then become the basis of justification. In the Roman theology of justification there is an ongoing need to deal with sin in order to maintain a state of grace, and a need for positive acts of righteousness, which originate from that grace and then become the basis for one's justification. So man's works must be added to the work of Christ, in particular, the work of the sacraments. Consequently, justification is not a once-for-all declaration of righteousness based upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, but a process that is dependent upon the righteousness of man produced through infused grace.

The Sacraments

In Roman Catholic teaching there is no salvation apart from participation in the sacraments mediated through its priesthood. The Roman Church teaches that she is the mediator between Christ and the individual. Saving grace is mediated through these sacraments. John Hardon, author of *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (which carries the official authorization of the Vatican) says this:

Why did Christ establish the Church?

Christ established the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation.

How is the Church the universal sacrament of salvation?

The Church is the universal sacrament of salvation as the divinely instituted means of conferring grace on all the members of the human family.

What does the Catholic Church believe about the forgiveness of sins?

She believes it is God's will that no one is forgiven except through the merits of Jesus Christ and that these merits are uniquely channeled through the Church He founded. Consequently, even as the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation, she is also the universal sacrament of reconciliation.

How does the Church communicate the merits of Christ's mercy to sinners?

The Church communicates the merits of Christ's mercy to sinners through the Mass and the sacraments and all the prayers and good works of the faithful.

Are the sacraments necessary for salvation?

According to the way God has willed that we be saved the sacraments are necessary for salvation

(John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981), Questions # 401, 402, 461, 462, 1119).

These words clearly express the official position of the Church of Rome. There is no salvation apart from participation in the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. There is no other means of obtaining saving grace. Hardon's words echo the teaching of the Council of Trent:

If any one saith that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation...and that without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain from God, through faith alone, the grace of justification...let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1919), Canon IV, p. 119).

According to Rome, there are three main sacraments necessary for justification and ultimate salvation. These sacraments supposedly communicate grace to an individual and help to maintain him in a state of sanctifying grace. They are baptism, penance, and the eucharist/mass. Through baptism, an individual is brought into a state of regeneration and sanctifying grace. The guilt and punishment for original sin and for all sins committed up to the point of baptism are forgiven in the sacrament of baptism. However, sins committed after baptism must be dealt with through the sacraments of penance and the mass. This is especially true for mortal sin which is said to kill the spiritual life in the soul and cause the loss of sanctifying grace and, therefore, of justification. In order to regain the state of grace the individual must participate in the sacraments. As Ott stated, the atonement of Christ is not the exclusive cause of man's redemption. Man must supplement the work of Christ for sins committed after baptism by partially atoning and expiating his own sin through penance. Trent states that no one can be justified apart from the sacrament of penance (the confession of sin to a Roman Catholic priest, receiving his absolution and performing the required penance):

As regards those who, by sin, have fallen from the received grace of Justification, they may again be justified...through the sacrament of Penance...For, on behalf of those who fall into sins after baptism, Christ Jesus instituted the sacrament of Penance...and therein are included not only a cessation from sins, and a detestation thereof, or, a contrite and humble

heart, but also the sacramental confession of said sins...and sacerdotal absolution; and likewise satisfaction by fasts, alms, prayers, and the other pious exercises of the spiritual life...for the temporal punishment, which...is not always wholly remitted.

If any one saith that he who has fallen after baptism...is able to recover the justice which he has lost...by faith alone without the sacrament of Penance...let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), *Decree on Justification*, Chapter XIV. Canon XXIX.

John Hardon also emphasizes the necessity of penance as a work of expiation:

Penance is...necessary because we must expiate and make reparation for the punishment which is due our sins...We make satisfaction for our sins by every good act we perform in the state of grace but especially by prayer, penance and the practice of charity (*John Hardon, The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981), Question #1320).

In addition to Penance the Church teaches the necessity for the mass as an expiation for sins committed after baptism. The mass is the re-sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a propitiation for sin. It is declared by Trent to be a propitiatory sacrifice and necessary for salvation:

In this divine sacrifice...that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner who once offered himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross...This sacrifice is truly propitiatory...If any one saith, that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; or that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory sacrifice...and that it ought not to be offered for the living and dead for sins, pains, satisfactions and other necessities: let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), *Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass*, Chp. II, p. 180, Canon III).

John Hardon says:

The Sacrifice of the altar... is no mere empty commemoration of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, but a true and proper act of sacrifice. Christ, the eternal High Priest, in an unbloody way offers himself a most acceptable Victim to the eternal Father as He did upon the Cross...In the Mass, no less than on Calvary, Jesus really offers His life to His heavenly Father...The Mass, therefore, no less than the Cross, is expiatory for sins (emphasis mine) (*John Hardon, The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981), Questions #1265, 1269, 1277).

Note the assertion here that in the mass Christ offers himself as a Victim for sin in sacrifice just as he did on Calvary. The mass, no less than Calvary, is expiatory for sin because the mass is supposedly the same sacrifice as Calvary. According to Rome, then, the offering of Christ in sacrifice is not finished but continues and is perpetuated through time. But such teaching contradicts Scripture. The word of God teaches that Christ has made a complete propitiation for sin through his once-for-all sacrifice of atonement. It is

finished. **The Greek word translated once-for-all is *ephapax*. It is used in particular with reference to Jesus' death and communicates the thought that Christ's death is a finished work which cannot be repeated or perpetuated:**

Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives He lives to God (Rom. 6:10).

Jesus' death was a unique historic event which is completed and therefore he can never experience death again. In addition to Paul's affirmation of this, Jesus himself states: 'I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore' (Rev. 1:18). The word used to describe the death of Jesus as a finished work—*ephapax*—is the same word used to describe his sacrifice and the offering of his body (Heb. 10:10; 9:25–26). Just as Christ cannot die again, neither can his body be offered again or his sacrifice be continued for sin. This is because apart from his death there is no sacrifice that is propitiatory for sin. What made his sacrifice propitiatory in God's eyes was his death. Hebrews 9:22 makes this point: 'Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.' As a result then of this one sacrifice, the bible teaches that God has accomplished a sufficient and finished atonement. Since Christ cannot die again there is no more sacrifice for sin and therefore the mass cannot be the same sacrifice as Calvary. **On the basis of that finished work God now offers complete and total forgiveness to man. There is no more sacrifice for sin: 'Where there is forgiveness of these things there is no longer any offering for sin' (Heb. 10:18). And since there is no need for further sacrifice, Scripture also teaches that there is no need for a continuing sacerdotal priesthood. Christ has fulfilled the Old Testament ceremonial law and it is now abrogated (Heb. 7:11–19). He has become our Sacrifice and Priest and the only Mediator by which we approach God (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:22–25). Christ's atonement has completely removed the guilt of our sin and its condemnation because he has paid the penalty in full. To suggest that a sacrament is necessary to continue to offer Christ's body and blood to make sacrifice for sin is completely antithetical to the teaching of Scripture, and undermines the sufficiency of Christ's work. This teaching of the mass as a perpetuation of the sacrifice of Christ which is propitiatory for sin was a point of universal opposition by the Reformers. They vigorously objected to this teaching on Scriptural grounds that it made void the cross of Christ. These comments from Scottish Reformer, John Knox, and English Reformer, Nicholas Ridley are representative:**

John Knox: How can you deny the opinion of your Mass to be false and vain? You say it is a sacrifice for sin, but Jesus Christ and Paul say, The only death of Christ was sufficient for sin, and after it resteth none other sacrifice...I know you will say, it is none other sacrifice, but the self same, save that it is iterated (repeated) and renewed. But the words of Paul bind you more straitly than that so you may escape: for in his whole disputation, contendeth he not only that there is no other sacrifice for sin, but also that the self same sacrifice, once offered, is sufficient, and never may be offered again. For otherwise of no greater price, value, nor extenuation, should the death of Christ be, than the death of those beasts which were offered under the Law: which are proved to be of none effect, nor strength, because it behooves them often times to be repeated. The Apostle, by comparing Jesus Christ to the Levitical priests, and his sacrifice unto theirs,

maketh the matter plain that Christ might be offered but once (John Knox, *A Vindication of the Doctrine That the Mass Is Idolatry*. Found in *The Works of John Knox* (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1895), Volume III, p. 56. Language revised by William Webster).

Nicholas Ridley: Concerning the Romish mass which is used at this day or the lively sacrifice thereof, propitiatory and available for the sins of the quick and the dead, the holy Scripture hath not so much as one syllable...Now the falseness of the proposition, after the meaning of the schoolmen and the Roman Church and impiety in that sense which the words seem to import is this, that they, leaning to the foundation of their fond transubstantiation, would make the quick and lively body of Christ's flesh, united and knit to the divinity, to lurk under the accidents and outward shows of bread and wine; which is very false...And they, building upon this foundation, do hold that the same body is offered unto God by the priest in his daily massings to put away the sins of the quick and the dead. Whereas by the Apostle to the Hebrews it is evident that there is but one oblation and one true and lively sacrifice of the church offered upon the altar of the cross, which was, is and ever shall be for ever the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and where there is remission of the same there is (saith the Apostle) no more offering for sin (Nicholas Ridley, *Examinations of the Eucharist*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), Volume XXVI, pp. 314–315).

In addition to expiation through personal penance and the mass, the Roman Catholic Church also teaches that sin can be expiated through the sufferings of purgatory after one dies and through indulgences. Many are acquainted with the fact that the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences were the catalyst for the Reformation but are unaware that they are still part of the official teaching of the Church. While the abuses of the doctrine of indulgences which led to the Reformation have been repudiated, the actual doctrine itself is still in force. The Church of Rome teaches that through indulgences the temporal punishment for sin can be expiated. Indulgences are applied through the authority of the pope from what is known as the Treasury of Satisfaction or Merit. This treasury consists of the merit of Christ in addition to the merit of all the saints and can be applied to individuals as remission for sins thereby mitigating the punishment due them either here or in purgatory. In 1967 Pope Paul VI issued an encyclical on Indulgences entitled *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*. This encyclical reaffirms the medieval teaching:

The doctrine of purgatory clearly demonstrates that even when the guilt of sin has been taken away, punishment for it or the consequences of it may remain to be expiated and cleansed. They often are. In fact, in purgatory the souls of those 'who died in the charity of God and truly repentant, but who had not made satisfaction with adequate penance for their sins and omissions' are cleansed after death with punishments designed to purge away their debt...Following in Christ's steps, those who believe in him have always tried to help one another along the path which leads to the heavenly Father, through prayer, the exchange of spiritual goods and penitential expiation. The more they have been immersed in the fervor of love, the more they have imitated Christ in his sufferings. They have carried their crosses to make expiation for their own sins and the sins of others. They were convinced that they could help their brothers to obtain salvation from God who is the Father of mercies. This is the very ancient dogma called the Communion of Saints...The "treasury of the Church" is the infinite value, which can never be exhausted, which Christ's merits have before God. They were offered

so that the whole of mankind could be set free from sin and attain communion with the Father. In Christ, the Redeemer himself, the satisfactions and merits of his Redemption exist and find their efficacy. This treasury includes as well the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are truly immense, unfathomable and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body...God's only-begotten Son... has won a treasure for the militant Church... he has entrusted it to blessed Peter, the key-bearer of heaven, and to his successors who are Christ's vicars on earth, so that they may distribute it to the faithful for their salvation. They may apply it with mercy for reasonable causes to all who have repented for and have confessed their sins. At times they may remit completely, and at other times only partially, the temporal punishment due to sin in a general as well as in special ways (insofar as they judge it to be fitting in the sight of the Lord). The merits of the Blessed Mother of God and of all the elect ... are known to add further to this treasure (Paul VI, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, January 1, 1967).

Through its doctrines of confession and penance, the mass, purgatory, indulgences the Church of Rome adds sacramental and moral works to the work of Christ. Justification and salvation are not through Christ alone but are instead a cooperative effort between Christ and man. Rome claims that it teaches justification by grace alone through the merits of Christ alone. The problem is that her interpretation is not the Scriptural teaching of grace alone and Christ alone. Just using the word does not mean that one is using it in a scriptural way. After all, Pelagius did not deny the need for grace. He used the term and affirmed it. The problem was not in the use of the word but in the interpretation he applied to it. Though he used the word his interpretation undermined its biblical meaning. This is precisely what the Roman Catholic Church has done with respect to its interpretation of grace and the work of Christ. While affirming these biblical doctrines, its interpretation of what they mean actually undermines their biblical meaning. When scripture says that justification is by grace on account of Christ it means on account of Christ exclusively, completely apart from the works of man or sacraments.

The Roman Teaching of Grace and Justification

When Rome states that an individual is justified by grace she means that grace has been infused into the soul of man. This makes him righteous before God and enables him to perform acts of righteousness. These then become the basis of justification and the means whereby he merits heaven. Justification is a process then by which the individual is made righteous in a moral sense. The Roman Catholic Church interprets the phrase *the righteousness of God* to mean a human righteousness which has its source in the grace of God, channeled through sacraments. But the righteousness itself is the work of man cooperating with that grace. The righteousness of God then is not the righteousness of Christ but rather the righteousness of man which results from the gift of grace, the source of which is God. The Roman Catholic theologian William Marshner explains the Roman Catholic position in these

words:

Now, if what Paul means by *dikaiosune theou* (righteousness of God) is not something to remain in God but something to be conferred on us, then we must reckon with that mysterious possibility: a quality of man which is the property of God! Does St. Paul say anything to indicate a knowledge of this possibility? Indeed he does: ‘God has made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we in him might become justice of God’ (II Cor. 5:21)...It is not a question of replacement but of participation, and the participation is real in both directions. First in Jesus: just as really as the Word took our humanity, just that really his humanity became God. And then in us: just as really as Christ–God took our sins (so really that even the Father forsook Him—Mark 15:34), just that really we receive God’s justice. For if we dare to believe that in the Incarnation our nature, without ceasing to be a human nature, received God’s subsistence, then we may easily believe that we, in Christ, receive God’s justice as our quality. In fact, St. Paul even has a name for this quality. In the very next verse (II Cor. 6:1) he says: ‘As God’s co–workers, we beg you once again not to have received God’s grace in vain.’ What we should not ‘receive in vain’ is exactly what Paul has just said we have ‘become’ in Christ. God’s justice is His grace, a gift given to men. That is why the justice of God is identically ‘the justice which comes from God through faith’ (Philippians 3:9). What emerges from these texts then, is the existence in man of a justice conferred by God (William Marshner, *Justification by Faith*. Taken from *Reasons for Hope: Catholic Apologetics* (Front Royal: Christendom College, 1978), pp. 232-233).

Marshner equates the righteousness of God in justification with the righteousness of man in sanctification. This view is a fundamental contradiction of the biblical teaching that the righteousness of God in justification is the righteousness of Christ in his work of atonement. Marshner is correct in stating that just as our sins were imputed to Christ, so a real righteousness is given to the believer. However, it is a righteousness that is already complete and not something that must be worked out by man. We can agree with him when he says that ‘God’s justice is His grace, a gift given to men.’ This is the point the Reformers made in their controversy with Rome. God’s grace in justification is the provision of a completed, finished righteousness given as a gift which eternally justifies us in the eyes of God. But Marshner misinterprets the Scriptures when he refers to this righteousness as the process of sanctification in the life of the believer, rather than the righteousness of Christ himself. By defining justifying grace as God’s gift of the righteousness of sanctification, Marshner, and Roman Catholicism as a whole, misinterprets the biblical meaning of grace with respect to justification.

The Council of Trent explicitly condemned the biblical teaching of the imputed righteousness of Christ himself for justification:

If any one saith, that men are just without the justice of Christ, whereby he merited for us to be justified; or that it is by that justice itself that they are formally just, let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), *Decree on Justification*, Chapter VII, Canons X, XXXII).

Trent teaches that men are justified by the righteousness of Christ only in the sense that in his atonement he has merited the grace which is infused into man for salvation. Trent denied that men are justified by the righteousness of Christ alone imputed to the believer. Trent taught that the righteousness which justifies is the work of the regenerated believer cooperating with the grace that Christ merited. So justification is equated with regeneration and sanctification. Rome does not acknowledge sanctification and justification as separate works of God in salvation. It makes human works the basis for justification which merit eternal life:

Justification...is not the remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man.

If any one saith, that the good works of the one that is justified are in such manner the gifts of God, that they are not also the good merits of him that is justified, by the good works which he performs through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, and does not truly merit increase in grace, eternal life, and the attainment of eternal life, if so be, that he depart in grace, and an increase in glory, let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), *Decree on Justification*, Chapter VII, Canons X, XXXII).

Ludwig Ott emphasizes this in these words:

Justification is the declaration of the righteousness of the believer before the judgment seat of Christ...The Council of Trent teaches that for the justified eternal life is both a gift or grace promised by God and a reward for his own good works and merits... According to Holy Writ, eternal blessedness in heaven is the reward...for good works performed on this earth, and rewards and merit are correlative concepts (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), pp.254, 264).

John Hardon likewise confirms this point of view when he writes:

Habitual or sanctifying grace is a supernatural quality that dwells in the human soul, by which a person shares in the divine nature, becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, a friend of God, his adopted child, and able to perform actions meriting eternal life (emphasis mine) (John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981), Question #1074).

So Roman Catholic theology teaches that justification is obtained by receiving grace through baptism, and is maintained through the sacrament of penance, the mass and the works of sanctification which in turn merit eternal life. It is important to point out that sanctification in Roman Catholic theology is not only the righteous acts of individuals cooperating with the grace of God but participation in the sacraments of the Church. A state of sanctifying grace, by which a person is justified, cannot be maintained apart from the sacraments. Justification then is not by grace alone (in the biblical sense) or on account of Christ alone (in the biblical sense). Therefore it is not by faith alone (in the biblical sense). In fact, the Council of Trent condemned the teaching of justification by faith alone stating:

If anyone saith that by faith alone the impious is justified in such wise as to mean that nothing else is required to

cooperate in order to obtaining the grace of Justification...let him be anathema...After this Catholic doctrine on justification which whosoever does not faithfully and firmly accept cannot be justified...(The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), *Decree on Justification*, Chapter XVI, Canon IX).

John Gerstner gives a clear and concise summation of the Roman Catholic view of justification in contrast to the Protestant view in these words:

Some Romanists will say that they too teach justification by grace—by Christ’s righteousness, in fact. But the righteousness of Christ which they claim justifies is not Christ’s own personal righteousness reckoned or credited or given or imputed to believers. Romanists refer to the righteousness which Christ works into the life of the believer or infuses into him in his own living and behavior. It is not Christ’s personal righteousness but the believer’s personal righteousness, which he performs by the grace of God. It is Christ’s righteousness versus the believer’s own righteousness. It is Christ’s achievement versus the Christian’s achievement. It is an imputed righteousness not an infused righteousness. It is a gift of God versus an accomplishment of man. These two righteousnesses are as different as righteousnesses could conceivable be. It does come down to the way it has been popularly stated for the last four and a half centuries: Protestantism’s salvation by faith versus Rome’s salvation by works...The Protestant trusts Christ to save him and the Catholic trusts Christ to help him save himself. It is faith versus works. Or, as the Spirit of God puts it in Romans 4:16 (NIV), ‘Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace, and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring.’ It is ‘by faith so that it may be by grace...’ If a Romanist wants to be saved by grace alone, it will have to be by faith alone. ‘The promise comes by faith so that it may be by grace.’ You can’t be saved ‘sola gratia’ except ‘sola fide.’...We agree with Roman friends—salvation is by grace. That is the reason it must be by faith. If it is a salvation based on works that come from grace, it is not based on grace but on the Christian’s works that come from grace. The works that come from grace must prove grace but they cannot be grace. They may come from, be derivative of, a consequence of, but they cannot be identified with it. Faith is merely union with Christ who is our righteousness, our grace, our salvation. 1 Corinthians 1:30, ‘It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus who has become for us wisdom from God,’ that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Christ is our righteousness. Our righteousness does not result from His righteousness, it is His righteousness (*Justification by Faith Alone*, Don Kistler, Ed. (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), John Gerstner, *The Nature of Justifying Faith*, pp. 111–113).

We need to be clear about the fact that justification is only one aspect of the overall work of salvation. Scripture teaches that salvation means more than justification and also involves election, regeneration, adoption, conversion, sanctification and glorification, all applied as a result of union with Christ. Each of these is a separate and complete work in its own right. That is, justification is not the same as sanctification. They are completely independent works though they cannot be separated because they both come from union with Christ. The error of Roman Catholicism is that it equates sanctification with justification stating that the two are interchangeable terms resulting in a perversion of the biblical teaching of justification. This is equivalent to the error of some

in the early Church regarding the person of Christ. They failed to maintain the integrity of Christ's person because they did not retain the biblical balance of the truth of his humanity and deity. They subsumed either his deity into his humanity thereby denying his true deity, or his humanity into his deity thereby denying his humanity. The biblical and orthodox teaching is that Christ is both God and man, two truths which must be held in conjunction with one another. Similarly, the biblical teaching of salvation is that justification and sanctification are different aspects of the overall work of salvation which also must be held in conjunction with one another. If we subsume sanctification into justification we will deny the biblical teaching on the necessity for the works of sanctification. On the other hand, if we subsume justification into sanctification we will pervert the biblical teaching on justification. To fail to maintain a proper balance between justification and sanctification leads to the perversion of the biblical teaching on salvation, just as failure to maintain the biblical teaching on the humanity and deity of Christ leads to perversion of the biblical teaching of the person of Christ. The Protestant Reformers emphasized the Scriptural truth that in salvation an individual not only possesses an imputed righteousness which eternally and completely justifies but also the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which results in the works of sanctification. It is a misrepresentation of the teaching of the Reformers to imply that their concept of salvation was limited to justification only and that faith alone meant the denial of works. Please refer to the article on the teaching of the Reformers on works and sanctification.

Faith

Roman Catholicism teaches that saving faith is not trust in Christ alone for justification and salvation. While the Church of Rome affirms the necessity for faith in the justification of adults, her definition is different from that of the scriptures and the teaching of the Protestant Church. To a Roman Catholic, justifying faith is called dogmatic faith. This has to do with the doctrinal content of the faith necessary to be believed for salvation. Essentially it means intellectual assent to everything the Church teaches. In order to be saved an individual must believe and hold to every doctrine dogmatically defined by the Roman Catholic Church. This entails not only the teaching of the Creed, the sacraments and justification but also the doctrines related to the Papacy (papal rule and infallibility), Mary (immaculate conception and assumption), the canon of scripture and purgatory. Vatican I states that it is necessary for salvation that an individual believe not only all that is revealed in Scripture but also everything defined and proposed by the Church. To reject anything officially taught by the Roman Church is to reject saving faith and to forfeit both justification and eternal life:

Further, all those things are to be believed with divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the Word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church, either by a solemn judgment, or by her ordinary and universal magisterium, proposes for belief as having been divinely revealed. And since, without faith, it is impossible to please God, and to attain to the fellowship of his children, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will any one obtain eternal life unless he shall have persevered in faith unto the end (*Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council, On Faith, Chapter III*. Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York:Harper, 1877), Volume II, pp. 244-245).

Ludwig Ott explains the relationship of Dogmas defined by the Church and faith in these words:

By dogma in the strict sense is understood a truth immediately (formally) revealed by God which has been proposed by the Teaching Authority of the Church to be believed as such. Two factors or elements may be distinguished in the concept of dogma:

A) An immediate Divine Revelation of the particular Dogma...i.e., the Dogma must be immediately revealed by God either explicitly (explicite) or inclusively (implicite), and therefore be contained in the sources of Revelation (Holy Writ or Tradition).

B) The Promulgation of the Dogma by the Teaching Authority of the Church (propositio Ecclesiae). This implies, not merely the promulgation of the Truth, but also the obligation on the part of the Faithful of believing the Truth. This promulgation by the Church may be either in an extraordinary manner through a solemn decision of faith made by the Pope or a General Council (Iudicium solemns) or through the ordinary and general teaching power of the Church (Magisterium ordinarium et universale). The latter may be found easily in the catechisms issued by the Bishops.

Dogma in its strict signification is the object of both Divine Faith (Fides Divina) and Catholic Faith (Fides Catholica); it is the object of the Divine Faith...by reason of its Divine Revelation; it is the object of Catholic Faith...on account of its infallible doctrinal definition by the Church. ***If a baptised person deliberately denies or doubts a dogma properly so-called, he is guilty of the sin of heresy (Codex Iuris Canonici 1325, Par. 2), and automatically becomes subject to the punishment of excommunication (Codex Iuris Canonici 2314, Par. I).***

As far as the content of justifying faith is concerned, the so-called fiducial faith does not suffice. What is demanded is theological or dogmatic faith (confessional faith) which consists in the firm acceptance of the Divine truths of Revelation, on the authority of God Revealing...According to the testimony of Holy Writ, faith and indeed dogmatic faith, is the indispensable prerequisite for the achieving of eternal salvation (emphasis added) (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), pp. 4-5, 253).

And John Hardon says:

What must a Catholic believe with divine faith?

A Catholic must believe with divine faith the whole of revelation, which is contained in the written word of God and in Sacred Tradition.

Can a person be a Catholic if he believes most, but not all, the teachings of revelation?

A person cannot be a Catholic if he rejects even a single teaching that he knows has been revealed by God.

What will happen to those who lack ‘the faith necessary for salvation’?

Those will not be saved who lack the necessary faith because of their own sinful neglect or conduct. As Christ declared, 'He who does not believe will be condemned' (Mark 16:16).

Why is divine faith called catholic?

Divine faith is called catholic or universal because a believer must accept everything God has revealed. He may not be selective about what he chooses to believe.

(John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981), Questions #44, 45, 46, 47).

The dogmatic teachings of Vatican I are a perfect example of this point of view. After giving extensive teaching on the need to be submitted to the bishop of Rome for salvation the Council makes this statement:

This is the teaching of Catholic truth from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and salvation (*Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council*. Found in *The Creeds of Christendom* by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1910), Chapter III, On the Power and Nature of the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff).

There are similar statements made by the Bishops of Rome in their decrees on Mary, as well as numerous anathemas which have accompanied the doctrinal promulgations of Trent and Vatican I on the sacraments and the papacy on papal rule and infallibility. According to Rome, all these dogmas must be believed and embraced for salvation. But where are these teachings found in scripture? Where are we told that it is necessary to believe in the assumption of Mary or papal infallibility in order to experience salvation? Such teachings not only are absent from scripture, but from the teaching of the Church historically. Not one of these doctrines was taught in the early Church.

From a Roman Catholic perspective, the concept of saving faith is far removed from the biblical teaching of commitment to and simple trust in Christ alone for salvation. The Roman Catholic Church has distorted the gospel of grace. It has fallen into the same Galatian error of legalism (a sacerdotal/sacramental/works salvation) addressed by Paul in his letter to the Galatian Churches. In that letter Paul dealt with the heresy of the Judaizers, who attempted to add the Jewish ceremonial law to faith in Christ as a basis for salvation. Temple worship and the ceremonial law included circumcision, an altar, daily sacrifices, a laver of water, priests, a high priest, special priestly and high priestly vestments and robes, candles, incense and shewbread. In the routine religious life of the average Jew there were feast days, prayers, fasts, adherence to the tradition of the elders and certain dietary restrictions. All of these things were included in the Judaizers' teaching on salvation. So it was Jesus plus the Jewish system. How does this relate to Roman Catholicism? The doctrines of salvation embraced by Rome are, in principle, identical to the Judaizers. The Roman Church teaches that salvation is achieved by believing that Jesus is the Son of God who died for sin, by being baptized, by being a part of the Roman Catholic Church, by striving to keep the Ten Commandments and partaking of the sacramental system (which involves ongoing sacrifices, altars, priests, a high priest, along with the exercises of prayers, fasts, almsgiving, penances and until recently adherence to certain dietary regulations). The following lists demonstrate the parallels between Roman Catholicism and the Judaizers:

Judaizers

1. Belief in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God
2. Circumcision
3. Become a Jew
4. Sacrificial System
5. Priests
6. High Priests
7. Altars
8. Feast Days
9. Laver of Water
10. Dietary Regulations
11. Candles
12. Incense
13. Shew Bread
14. Keep the Ten Commandments
15. Tradition of the Elders

Roman Catholicism

1. Belief in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God
2. Baptism
3. Become a Roman Catholic
4. Sacrificial System
5. Priests
6. High Priests
7. Altars
8. Feast Days
9. Font of Holy Water
10. Dietary Regulations (Until recently)
11. Candles
12. Incense
13. The Eucharist Wafer
14. Keep the Ten Commandments
15. Tradition of the Church Fathers

The parallels are obvious. The Roman Catholic teaching on salvation is essentially the same as that preached by the Judaizers. Paul warned the Galatian believers that if they embraced this false gospel they would actually desert Christ (Gal. 1:6). Those

evangelicals who would promote spiritual cohabitation with the Church of Rome need to heed to the warning of Paul. He saw no basis for unity with the Judaizers even though they professed faith in Christ. Likewise, there is no basis for unity with the Church of Rome today. If evangelicals jettison the Reformation gospel distinctives for so called unity with Rome they will deny Christ.

Justification and the Sacraments

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that justification is a cooperative work between God and man. It explicitly condemns the truth of the imputed righteousness of Christ himself as the basis for justification. But scripture teaches that man is justified by the righteousness of God (Rom. 3-5; 10:1-4; Phil 3:8-10). This righteousness is specifically described as being the righteousness of Christ himself in his perfect life and work of atonement (Rom. 5:9, 16-19). It further teaches that just as man's sin was imputed to Christ so his righteousness (the righteousness of God) is imputed as a gift to those who come to Christ in faith (Rom. 4:1-6) which secures an eternal justification for that individual. Scripture teaches therefore that justification is not based upon any works of man but solely upon the work and merit of Christ (Rom. 3:28; 4:1-6; Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 2:16; Tit. 3:5-6). The Church of Rome, however, teaches that justification is the result of grace infused in the soul of man which enables an individual to do works of righteousness which then become the basis of one's justification. The biblical phrase, the righteousness of God, is interpreted by Rome to mean, not the righteousness of Christ himself, but what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls the rectitude of Divine love (Paragraph 1992). The righteousness of God is love infused into the soul of man with faith by which a man lives a life pleasing to God which then justifies him before God. In Roman Catholic theology, what Christ merited on the cross was not a full and complete salvation but grace which is given as a gift by which a person cooperates with God to achieve and merit justification by personal works. Justification is not a declaration of righteousness based upon the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ but a declaration of the believer's righteousness before the judgment seat of God based on an infusion of grace in a believer's life. This means that justification is not grounded exclusively in the work of Christ but also in the works and merits of the individual. The Reformation and biblical teaching of grace alone, by Christ alone, by faith alone is explicitly condemned by the Church of Rome and it states that apart from the repudiation of the Reformation gospel and adherence to its teachings on justification and salvation that one does not possess saving faith or justification. These thoughts are clearly expressed by Roman Catholic theologian Ludwig Ott and the Council of Trent in the following statements:

Ludwig Ott

According to the teaching of the Council of Trent, sanctifying grace is the sole formal cause of justification...This means that the infusion of sanctifying grace effects the eradication of sin as well as inner sanctification. With this the Council rejects the doctrine of double justice which was expounded by some Reformers (Calvin, Martin Butzer), and

also by individual Catholic theologians (Girolamo Seripando, Gasparo Contrarini, Albert Pighius, Johannes Gropper), which taught that the forgiveness of sins was accomplished by the imputed justice of Christ, positive sanctification, however, by a righteousness inhering in the soul.

According to the teaching of the Council of Trent, faith is ‘the beginning of human salvation, the basis and the root of all justice...As far as the content of justifying faith is concerned, the so-called fiducial faith does not suffice. What is demanded is theological or dogmatic faith...which consists in the firm acceptance of the Divine truths of Revelation, on the authority of God Revealing...According to the testimony of Holy Writ, faith and indeed dogmatic faith, is the indispensable prerequisite for the achieving of eternal salvation.

When St. Paul teaches that we are saved by faith without the works of the Law (Rom. 3:28)...he understands by faith, living faith, active through love (Gal. 5:6); by works of the law he means the works of the law of the Old Testament, for example, circumcision; by justification, the inner purification and sanctification of the non-Christian sinner by the acceptance of the Christian Faith. When St. James, in apparent contradiction to this, teaches that we are justified by works, not merely by faith (James 2:24)...he understands by faith, dead faith (James 2:17; Mt. 7:21); by works, the good works proceeding from Christian Faith; by justification, the declaration of the righteousness of the Christian before the judgment seat of God.

The Council of Trent teaches that for the justified eternal life is both a gift or grace promised by God and a reward for his works and merits (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), Book Four, Section 2, Chapter I.17, p. 251; Chapter I.18.2-3, p.252-254; Chapter 3.2, p. 264).

The Council of Trent

Chapter IV: By which words a description of the Justification of the impious is indicated—as being a translation, from that state wherein man is born a child of Adam, to the state of grace, and of the adoption of the sons of God, through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. And this translation, since the promulgation of the the Gospel, can not be effected, without the laver of regeneration, or the desire thereof, as it is written: unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he can not enter into the Kingdom of God.

Chapter V: The Synod furthermore declares, that, in adults, the beginning of the said Justification is to be derived from the prevenient grace of God, through Jesus Christ, that is to say, from his vocation, whereby, without any merits existing on their parts, they are called; that so they, who by sins were alienated from God, may be disposed through his quickening and assisting grace, to convert themselves to their own justification, by freely assenting to and co-operating with that said grace: in such sort that, while God touches the

heart of man by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, neither is man himself utterly inactive while he receives that inspiration, forasmuch as he is also able to reject it; yet is he not able, by his own free will, without the grace of God, to move himself unto justice in his sight.

Chapter VI: Now they (adults) are disposed unto the said justice, when, excited and assisted by divine grace, conceiving faith by hearing, they are freely moved towards God, believing those things to be true which God has revealed and promised—and this especially, that God justifies the impious by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and when, understanding themselves to be sinners, they, by turning themselves, from the fear of divine justice whereby they are profitably agitated, to consider the mercy of God, are raised unto hope, confiding that God will be propitious to them for Christ's sake; and they begin to love him as the fountain of all justice; and are therefore moved against sins by a certain hatred and detestation, to wit, by that penitence which must be performed before baptism: lastly, when they purpose to receive baptism, to begin a new life, and to keep the commandments of God. Concerning this disposition it is written: He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him; and, Be of good faith, son, thy sins are forgiven thee; and, The fear of the Lord driveth out sin; and, Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; and, Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; finally, Prepare your hearts unto the Lord.

Chapter VII: This disposition, or preparation, is followed by Justification itself, which is not the remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace, and of the gifts, whereby man of unjust becomes just, and of an enemy a friend, so that he may be an heir according to the hope of life everlasting. Of this Justification the causes are these: the final cause indeed is the glory of God and of Jesus Christ, and life everlasting; while the efficient cause is a merciful God who washes and sanctifies gratuitously, signing, and anointing with the holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance; but the meritorious cause is his most beloved only-begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when we were enemies, for the exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, merited Justification for us by his most holy Passion on the wood of the cross, and made satisfaction for us unto God the Father; the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which (faith) no man was ever justified; lastly, the alone formal cause is the justice of God, not that whereby he himself is just, but that whereby he maketh us just, that, to wit, with which we, being endowed by him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and we are not only reputed, but are truly called, and are just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to everyone as he wills, and according to each one's proper disposition and co-operation. For, although no one can be just, but he to whom the merits of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated, yet is this done in the said justification of the impious, when by the merit

of that same most holy Passion, the charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of those that are justified, and is inherent therein: whence, man, through Jesus Christ, in whom he is ingrafted, receives, in the said justification, together with the remission of sins, all these (gifts) infused at once, faith, hope, and charity.

For faith, unless hope and charity be added thereto, neither unites man perfectly with Christ, nor makes him a living member of his body. For which reason it is most truly said, that faith without works is dead and profitless; and, In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by charity. This faith, Catechumens beg of the Church—agreeably to a tradition of the apostles—previously to the sacrament of Baptism; when they beg for the faith which bestows life everlasting, which, without hope and charity, faith can not bestow: whence also do they immediately hear that word of Christ: If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. Wherefore, when receiving true and Christian justice, they are bidden, immediately on being born again, to preserve it pure and spotless, as the first robe given them through Jesus Christ in lieu of that which Adam, by his disobedience, lost for himself and for us, that so they may bear it before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, and may have life eternal.

Chapter X: Having, therefore, been thus justified, and made the friends and domestics of God, advancing from virtue to virtue, they are renewed, as the apostle says, day by day; that is, by mortifying the members of their own flesh, and by presenting them as instruments of justice unto sanctification, they, through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, faith co-operating with good works, increase in that justice which they have received through the grace of Christ, and are still further justified, as it is written: He that is just, let him be justified still; and again, Be not afraid to be justified even to death; and also, Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. And this increase of justification holy Church begs, when she prays, ‘Give unto us, O Lord, increase of faith, hope, and charity.

Chapter XIV: As regards those who, by sin, have fallen from the received grace of Justification, they may be again justified, when, God exciting them, through the sacrament of Penance they shall have attained to the recovery, by the merit of Christ, of the grace lost: for this manner of Justification is of the fallen the reparation: which the holy Fathers have aptly called a second plank after the shipwreck of grace lost. For, on behalf of those who fall into sins after baptism, Christ Jesus instituted the sacrament of Penance, when he said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. Whence it is to be taught, that the penitence of a Christian, after his fall, is very different from that at (his) baptism; and that therein are included not obnly a cessation from sins, and a detestation thereof, or, a contrite and humble heart, but also the sacramental confession of the said sins, - at least in desire, and to made in its season, - and sacerdotal absolution; and likewise satisfaction by fasts, alms, prayers, and the other pious exercises of the spiritual life; not indeed for the eternal punishment—which is, together with the guilt, remitted, either by the sacrament, or by desire of the sacrament—but for the temporal punishment, which, as the sacred writings

teach, is not always wholly remitted, as is done in baptism, to those who, ungrateful to the grace of God which they have received, have grieved the Holy Spirit, and have not feared to violate the temple of God. Concerning which penitence is written: Be mindful whence thou art fallen; do penance, and do the first works. And again: The sorrow that is according to God worketh penance steadfast unto salvation. And again: Do penance, and bring forth fruits worthy of penance.

Chapter XV: In opposition also to the subtle wits of certain men, who, by pleasing speeches and good words, seduce the hearts of the innocent, it is to be maintained, that the received grace of Justification is lost, not only by infidelity whereby even faith itself is lost, but also by any other mortal sin whatever, though faith be not lost; thus defending the doctrine of the divine law, which excludes from the kingdom of God not only the unbelieving, but the faithful also (who are) fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, liars with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, railers, extortioners, and all others who commit deadly sins; from which, with the help of divine grace, they can refrain, and on account of which they are separated from the grace of Christ.

Chapter XVI: And, for this cause, life eternal is to be proposed to those working well unto the end, and hoping in God through Jesus Christ, and as a reward which is according to the promise of God himself, to be faithfully rendered to their good works and merits. For this is that crown of justice which the apostle declared was, after his fight and course, laid up for him, to be rendered to him by the just Judge, and not only to him, but alas to all that love his coming. For, whereas Jesus Christ himself continually infuses his virtue into the said justified—as the head into the members, and the vine into the branches—and this virtue always precedes and accompanies and follows their good works, which without it could not in any wise be pleasing and meritorious before God—we must believe that nothing further is wanting to the justified, to prevent their being accounted to have, by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life, and to have truly merited eternal life, to be obtained also in its (due) time, if so be, however, that they depart in grace: seeing that Christ, our Saviour, saith: If any one shall drink of the water that I will give him, he shall not thirst forever; but it shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting.

After this Catholic doctrine on justification, which whosoever does not faithfully and firmly accept cannot be justified, it seemed good to the holy council to add these canons, that all may know not only what they must hold and follow, but what to avoid and shun:

Canon I: If any one saith, that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the teaching of human nature, or that of the law, without the grace of God through Jesus Christ: let him be anathema.

Canon III: If any one saith, that without the prevenient inspiritaion of the Holy Ghost, and without his help, man can believe, hope, love, or be penitent as he ought, so that the grace

of Justification may be bestowed upon him: let him be anathema.

Canon VII. If any one saith, that all works done before Justification, in whatsoever way they be done, are truly sins, or merit the hatred of God; that the more earnestly one strives to dispose himself for grace, the more grievously he sins, let him be anathema.

Canon IX. If any one saith that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will, let him be anathema.

Canon X. If any one saith, that men are just without the justice of Christ, whereby he merited for us to be justified; or that it is by that justice itself that they are formally just: let him be anathema.

Canon XI. If any one saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherent in them; or even that the grace, whereby we are justified is only the favor of God: let him be anathema.

Canon XXIV. If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof: let him be anathema.

Canon XXVI. If anyone saith that the just ought not for the good works done in God, to expect and hope for an eternal reward from God through His mercy and the merit of Jesus Christ, if by doing well and keeping the commandments they persevere to the end, let him be anathema.

Canon XXIX. If any one saith, that he who has fallen after baptism is not able by the grace of God to rise again; or, that he is able indeed to recover the justice which he has lost, but by faith alone without the sacrament of Penance, contrary to what the holy Roman and universal Church—instructed by Christ and his Apostles—has hitherto professed, observed, and taught: let him be anathema.

Canon XXX. If any one saith, that, after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance into the kingdom of heaven can be opened (to him): let him be anathema

Canon XXXI. If anyone says that the one justified sins when he performs good works with a view to an eternal reward, let him be anathema.

Canon XXXII. If any one saith, that the good works of one that is justified are in such manner the gifts of God, that they are not also the good merits of him that is justified, by the good works which he performs through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, does not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life, and the attainment of that eternal life— if so be, however, that he depart in grace,—and also an increase of glory: let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1919 ed.), Decree on Justification, Chapters V, VI, VII, X, XIV, XV, XVI).

The Sacraments And Justification:

For the completion of the salutary doctrine on Justification...it hath seemed suitable to treat of the most holy Sacraments of the Church, through which all true justice either begins, or being begun is increased, or being lost is repaired. With this view, in order to destroy the errors and to extirpate the heresies which have appeared in these our days on the subject of the said most holy sacraments, as well as those which have been revived from the heresies of old by our Fathers, as also those newly invented, and which are exceedingly prejudicial to the purity of the Catholic Church and to the salvation of souls, the sacred and holy, ecumenical and general Synod of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the same legates of the Apostolic See presiding therein, adhering to the doctrine of the holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions, and to the consent of other councils and of the Fathers, has thought it fit that these present canons be established and decreed...

Canon I. If any one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord; or, that there are more, or less, than seven, to wit, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Order and Matrimony; or even that any of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament, let him be anathema.

Canon IV. If any one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain from God, through faith alone, the grace of justification, though all [the sacraments] are not indeed necessary for each individual, let him be anathema.

Canon VI. If any one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify; or, that they do not confer that grace on those who do not place an obstacles thereunto; as though they were merely outward signs of grace or justice received through faith, and certain marks of the Christian profession, whereby believers are distinguished amongst men from unbelievers, let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1919 ed.), Seventh Session, Decree on the Sacraments, Foreword, pp. 118-119).

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is conversion, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. 'Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.'

Justification is at the same time the acceptance of God's righteousness through faith in Christ. Righteousness (or 'justice') here means the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will is granted us...Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New Hope: Urbi et Orbi, 1994), Paragraphs 1989, 1991-1992, p. 482).

The Roman Catholic Teaching on Grace And Merit

Ludwig Ott

The God–Man Jesus Christ, by His vicarious atonement and His merit in the Redemption, achieved the reconciliation of humanity with God in principle and objectively. The Objective Redemption must be accepted by each man so that thereby he may bring to fruition in himself the subjective Redemption. The act of the application of the fruits of the Redemption to the individual man is called Justification...or Sanctification...The fruit of the Redemption is called grace...In the working-out of man's Subjective Redemption, God supports man, not merely by an inner principle, grace, but also by an outward principle, the efficacy of the Church in its doctrine, its guidance of men and its work of dispensing the grace of Christ through the Sacraments.

Habitual grace is a constant supernatural quality of the soul which sanctifies man intrinsically and makes him just and pleasing to God. According to the teaching of the Council of Trent, 'no one can be just to whom the merits of Christ's Passion have not been communicated.' ...It is a fundamental doctrine of St. Paul that salvation can be acquired only by the grace merited by Christ.

As God's grace is the presupposition and foundation of (supernatural) good works, by which man merits eternal life, so salutary works are, at the same time gifts of God and meritorious acts of man...By his good works the justified man really acquires a claim to supernatural reward from God...A just man merits for himself through each good work an increase in sanctifying grace, eternal life (if he dies in a state of grace) and an increase of heavenly glory (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), Book Four, Part I, p.219; 3.5, p. 222; Book III, Part 2, Chapter 2.III.11.3, p. 190; Book IV, Section 2, Chapter 3.23.2, 3.25.1, pp. 264, 267).

The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism

1074. What is habitual or sanctifying grace?

Habitual or sanctifying grace is a supernatural quality that dwells in the human soul, by which a person shares in the divine nature, becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, a friend of God, his adopted child, an heir to the glory of heaven, and *able to perform actions meriting eternal life* (John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981).

The Council Of Trent

Canon XXIV. If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof: let him be anathema.

Canon XXXII. If any one saith, that the good works of one that is justified...does not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life, and the attainment of that eternal life— if so be, however, that he depart in grace,—and also an increase of glory: let him be anathema (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1919 ed.), Decree on Justification, Chapters V, VI, VII, X, XIV, XV, XVI).

Observation:

The above statements leave no room for doubt as to the official position of the Church of Rome on the issue of works and merit. Man's works are necessary as an addendum to the work of Christ for maintaining a state of justification before God and for meriting eternal life. Such teaching is clearly antithetical to the biblical meaning of grace and justification and is a distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ. While the Roman Catholic Church teaches that in the initial experience of justification at baptism there are no works of the individual involved (what is termed initial justification), this is not true in the ongoing experience of the person. This is because justification is not a finished work in Roman Catholic theology but an ongoing process equated with the works of sanctification. Therefore Rome teaches that works are necessary for salvation and are meritorious for the attaining of eternal life. In the Introduction, mention was made of the misrepresentation of Roman Catholic teaching in the ECT documents to make the Church of Rome appear virtually evangelical in its teaching. Those comments bear repeating here. In the ECT 2 document, the signers make the following statements regarding justification:

Justification is central to the scriptural account of salvation, and its meaning has been much debated between Protestants and Catholics. We agree that justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God's gift, conferred through the Father's sheer graciousness, out of love that He bears us in His Son, who suffered on our behalf and rose from the dead for our justification. Jesus was 'put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification' (Rom 4:25). In justification, God, on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone, declares us to be no longer his rebellious enemies but his forgiven friends, and by virtue of his declaration it is so.

Such a statement is a complete contradiction to the official teaching of Rome on justification. Rome would agree with this statement with respect to initial justification but certainly not for an understanding of its overall concept. Rome has officially condemned the statement as it stands in the ECT 2 document. But the signers of the document would lead us to believe that Roman Catholicism agrees with this statement. It does not. Its position has been clearly defined in its councils and catechisms. To state that justification is based solely on the righteousness of Christ is a misrepresentation of the teaching of Rome. The Evangelical Church affirms this statement in the sense that it is Christ's righteousness alone imputed

to the individual which justifies him eternally before God and which eliminates the necessity for any works whatsoever for the attaining of justification. The Church of Rome has officially condemned this teaching. While it teaches that Christ's righteousness alone merited the grace which is imparted to a believing sinner, it is not the righteousness of Christ himself alone, imputed to the believer, that justifies but the works of the individual in cooperation with that grace. The signers of the ECT Documents are misleading people by carefully avoiding a full disclosure of what the Roman Catholic Church actually means by the terms it uses.

Saving Faith: How does Rome Define It?

Is There a Basis for Unity Between Roman Catholicism and Evangelical Protestantism?

by William Webster

The Roman Teaching on Saving Faith

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that justification is by grace through faith on account of Jesus Christ. This sounds quite orthodox, but on closer examination it becomes clear that the meaning of the terms faith, justification and grace are defined differently by the Roman Catholic Church from that of the Protestant. Though the two churches use the same terms they do not mean the same things by them. This is similar historically to the Pelagian controversy in the early 5th century. Pelagius was a heretic vigorously opposed by Augustine and the orthodox Church of his day. But both Pelagius and Augustine would have passed the test for unity as proscribed by the proponents of ECT 1 and 2. Both men affirmed the truth of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and the fourth century Councils. Was Augustine then wrong in opposing him? No, because his salvation teachings were indeed heretical. And yet Pelagius used orthodox theological terms in his teaching. He stated without qualification that he believed in salvation by grace through faith. But the problem is that the way he defined his terms contradicted their biblical and orthodox meaning. If one did not press Pelagius for definitions and was simply satisfied with general statements of belief, then he would appear to be orthodox. Definition of terms is crucial because these words and what we say they mean must conform to their biblical meaning. It is of the utmost importance that we ask the question: What does the Roman Catholic Church mean by faith? What is the content of that faith and what precisely does it mean by justification? The Roman Church has not left us in doubt as to what it

teaches about justification or faith and the doctrinal content of faith that is saving. By its dogmatic decrees as promulgated by Popes and Councils the Roman Catholic Church has clearly defined the meaning of such faith. We need to keep in mind that, in Roman Catholic theology, papal decrees when they are given *ex cathedra* are infallible as are the decrees of Ecumenical and Roman Catholic councils.

Thus, the decrees of the Council of Trent and Vatican I and the papal decrees on Mary form part of the doctrinal content of saving faith. These decrees are defined as being necessary to be believed for salvation and the Roman Church anathematizes all who would disagree with or reject these teachings. We need to say a word here about the meaning of the term anathema. In the formal sense the term means excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church. However, the essential meaning of the word goes far beyond this. Ultimately to be anathematized by the Church of Rome means to be cut off from the Church which is the source of salvation. Consequently, the term indirectly involves a condemnation of the individual anathematized to hell unless there is repentance and a return to the Roman Church and an embracing of its teachings.

Therefore, it is important to understand that, according to the Church of Rome, apart from an embracing of its doctrines there is no salvation. This is clearly seen from the teaching of Vatican I on the meaning of saving faith and the role of the Church in defining the doctrinal content of such faith. Therefore, the gospel according to Rome consists of justification that is a process and is dependent upon the works and merits of the individual, the Roman Catholic sacraments as a means of salvation, the full embracing of the Roman Catholic teaching of papal infallibility and jurisdiction and the Marian doctrines of the immaculate conception and assumption. Unless one believes these things and submits to them there is no justification or salvation. Is this the biblical gospel delineated in the scriptures and proclaimed by the apostles? Most assuredly not! It is a fundamental denial of the biblical teaching of salvation. As such there is no grounds for the appeal for unity of those involved in the ECT accord, for the Evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches are not unified on the meaning of the gospel. Unity that is not grounded in truth is a false political uniformity that must be vigorously

yet graciously opposed by all who love the scriptures and who would stand true to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our ultimate loyalty must be to the person of Christ. The culture and the darkness that is enveloping it is not the overriding issue. The ultimate issue is truth and on that basis the evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches are irreparably divided.

Vatican I

Vatican I states that it is necessary for salvation that men and women not only believe all that is revealed in scripture but also everything which is defined and proposed by the Church as having been divinely revealed. To reject anything taught by the Roman Church is to reject saving faith and to forfeit justification and eternal life:

Further, all those things are to be believed with divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the Word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church, either by a solemn judgment, or by her ordinary and universal magisterium, proposes for belief as having been divinely revealed. And since, without faith, it is impossible to please God, and to attain to the fellowship of his children, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will any one obtain eternal life unless he shall have persevered in faith unto the end

(Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council, On Faith, Chapter III. Found in Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom (New York:Harper, 1877), Volume II, pp. 244-245).

Ludwig Ott explains the relationship of Dogmas defined by the Church and faith in these words:

By dogma in the strict sense is understood a truth immediately (formally) revealed by God which has been proposed by the Teaching Authority of the Church to be believed as such...All those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the Word of God written or handed down and which are proposed for our belief by the Church either in a solemn definition or in its ordinary and

universal authoritative teaching. (Vatican I).

Two factors or elements may be distinguished in the concept of dogma:

A) An immediate Divine Revelation of the particular Dogma...i.e., the Dogma must be immediately revealed by God either explicitly (explicite) or inclusively (implicite), and therefore be contained in the sources of Revelation (Holy Writ or Tradition)

B) The Promulgation of the Dogma by the Teaching Authority of the Church (propositio Ecclesiae). This implies, not merely the promulgation of the Truth, but also the obligation on the part of the Faithful of believing the Truth. This promulgation by the Church may be either in an extraordinary manner through a solemn decision of faith made by the Pope or a General Council (Iudicium solemns) or through the ordinary and general teaching power of the Church (Magisterium ordinarium et universale). The latter may be found easily in the catechisms issued by the Bishops.

Dogma in its strict signification is the object of both Divine Faith (Fides Divina) and Catholic Faith (Fides Catholica); it is the object of the Divine Faith...by reason of its Divine Revelation; it is the object of Catholic Faith...on account of its infallible doctrinal definition by the Church. If a baptised person deliberately denies or doubts a dogma properly so-called, he is guilty of the sin of heresy (Codex Iuris Canonici 1325, Par. 2), and automatically becomes subject to the punishment of excommunication (Codex Iuris Canonici 2314, Par. I). As far as the content of justifying faith is concerned, the so-called fiducial faith does not suffice. What is demanded is theological or dogmatic faith (confessional faith) which consists in the firm acceptance of the Divine truths of Revelation, on the authority of God Revealing...According to the testimony of Holy Writ, faith and indeed dogmatic faith, is the indispensable prerequisite for the achieving of eternal salvation (emphasis added) (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), pp. 4-5, 253).

This point is further emphasized by the Roman Catholic theologian John Hardon

in his authoritative and popular catechism:

44. What must a Catholic believe with divine faith?

A Catholic must believe with divine faith the whole of revelation, which is contained in the written word of God and in Sacred Tradition.

45. Can a person be a Catholic if he believes most, but not all, the teachings of revelation?

A person cannot be a Catholic if he rejects even a single teaching that he knows has been revealed by God.

46. What will happen to those who lack 'the faith necessary for salvation'?

Those will not be saved who lack the necessary faith because of their own sinful neglect or conduct. As Christ declared, 'He who does not believe will be condemned' (Mark 16:16).

47. Why is divine faith called catholic?

Divine faith is called catholic or universal because a believer must accept everything God has revealed. He may not be selective about what he chooses to believe (John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* (Garden City: Image, 1981).

From the above citations it is clear that, according to Rome, it is incumbent upon all who would experience salvation that they embrace by faith the doctrinal content of the faith as it is authoritatively defined by Popes and Roman Catholic councils. Vatican I specifically states that one cannot experience justification and eternal life apart from a complete embracing of Dogmatic Faith which is the Faith as it is authoritatively defined by the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, as one analyzes the decrees, teachings and anathemas of the Popes made ex cathedra and those of the Councils such as Trent, Vatican I and Vatican II one can clearly ascertain the content of saving faith as it is defined by the Roman Catholic Church. In so doing it becomes very apparent that there is an inherent contradiction between the teaching of Vatican II and that of the popes and

Councils which have preceeded it. Vatican II states that Protestants and Orthodox believers are ‘separated brethren,’ implying that they are in fact true Christians and can experience salvation outside of the Roman Catholic Church. This is a clear contradiction to the authoritative papal and conciliar teaching of the Roman Catholic Church prior to Vatican II. The popes in defining the Marian Dogmas have anathematized all who would in any way reject or doubt their teachings. And Trent and Vatican I state that they had met specifically to define dogmas of the faith in order to counter heresy, the teachings specifically held by Protestant and Orthodox believers, and both Councils condemn with anathema all who do not submit to their teachings and embrace with a positive faith what they have promulgated. As Trent states:

With this view, in order to destroy the errors and to extirpate the heresies which have appeared in these our days on the subject of the said most holy sacraments, as well as those which have been revived from the heresies of old by our Fathers, as also those newly invented, and which are exceedingly prejudicial to the purity of the Catholic Church and to the salvation of souls, the sacred and holy, ecumenical and general Synod of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the same legates of the Apostolic See presiding therein, adhering to the doctrine of the holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions, and to the consent of other councils and of the Fathers, has thought it fit that these present canons be established and decreed...(*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Baker Book House (1919 ed.), Seventh Session, Decree on the Sacraments, Foreword, pp. 118-119).

And Vatican I states:

And this his salutary providence, which has been constantly displayed by other innumerable benefits, has been most manifestly proved by the abundant good results which Christendom has derived from ecumenical Councils, and particularly from that of Trent, although it was held in evil times. For, as a consequence, the sacred doctrines of the faith have been defined more closely, and set forth more fully,

errors have been condemned and restrained...But while we recall with due thankfulness these and other signal benefits which the divine mercy has bestowed on the Church, especially by the last ecumenical Council, we can not restrain our bitter sorrow for the grave evils, which are principally due to the fact that the authority of that sacred Synod has been contemned, or its wise decrees neglected, by many. No one is ignorant of the heresies proscribed by the Fathers of Trent...Considering these things, how can the Church fail to be deeply stirred? For, even as God wills all men to be saved, and to arrive at the knowledge of the truth, even as Christ came to save what has perished, and to gather together the children of God who had been dispersed, so the Church, constituted by God the mother and teacher of nations, knows its own office as debtor to all, and is ever ready and watchful to raise the fallen, to support those who are falling, to embrace those who return, to confirm the good and to carry them on to better things. Hence, it can never forbear from witnessing to and proclaiming the truth of God. We, therefore, following the footsteps of our predecessors, have never ceased, as becomes our supreme Apostolic office, from teaching and defending Catholic truth, and condemning doctrines of error. And now, with the Bishops of the whole world assembled round us, and judging with us, congregated by our authority, and in the Holy Spirit, in this ecumenical Council, we, supported by the Word of God written and handed down as we received it from the Catholic Church, preserved with sacredness and set forth according to truth, have determined to profess and declare the salutary teaching of Christ from this Chair of Peter, and in the sight of all, proscribing and condemning, by the power given to us of God, all errors contrary thereto (*Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution of the Catholic Faith. Found in Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom (New York: Harper, 1877), pp. 234-238*)).

According to Vatican I, all who reject its teachings are declared to be heretics and schismatics. This obviously applies in a direct sense to the Protestant and Orthodox Churches and its decrees are considered to be infallible by the Roman

Catholic Church. Vatican I reaffirmed the Council of Trent and its decrees, and itself defined papal infallibility and primacy as doctrines necessary to be believed for salvation. And Vatican I was later reaffirmed by Vatican II:

In order that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, He placed Peter over the other apostles, and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and fellowship (Cf. Vatican Council I, Session 4, the dogmatic constitution 'Pastor aeternus'). And all this teaching about the institution, the perpetuity, the force and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and of his infallible teaching authority, this sacred Synod again proposes to be firmly believed by all the faithful (*The Documents of Vatican II* (Chicago: Follett, 1966), Chapter III.18, p. 38).

Thus, if we ask, what is the content of the Faith defined by the Roman Catholic Church, which all men must embrace to experience salvation, what would the overall doctrines consist of? In addition to the teachings of the major Councils and the Creed, there are additional doctrines which comprise the faith of Roman Catholicism that relate to Mary, the Papacy, the Church, the Sacraments, Justification, Purgatory and the Canon. Those teachings and their documentation are listed below. To deny any of these teachings and to refuse to embrace them with a positive faith is to come under an anathema and to experience loss of saving faith:

[The Papacy](#)

[Mary](#)

[Justification and the Sacraments](#)

[Grace and Merit](#)

[Baptism](#)

[The Mass](#)

[The Priesthood](#)

[Confession and Penance](#)

[The Eucharist](#)

[The Roman Church and Salvation](#)

[The Canon](#)

[Purgatory](#)

Rome's New and Novel Concept of Tradition

*Living Tradition (Viva Voce - Whatever We
Say)*

**A Repudiation of the Patristic Concept of
Tradition**

by William Webster

In the history of Roman Catholic dogma, one can trace an evolution in the theory of tradition. There were two fundamental patristic principles which governed the early Church's approach to dogma. The first was *sola Scriptura* in which the fathers viewed Scripture as both materially and formally sufficient. It was materially sufficient in that it was the only source of doctrine and truth and the ultimate authority in all doctrinal controversies. It was necessary that every teaching of the Church as it related to doctrine be proven from Scripture. Thomas Aquinas articulated this

patristic view when he stated that canonical Scripture alone is the rule of faith (*sola canonica scriptura est regula fidei*). (1) Additionally, they taught that the essential truths of Scripture were perspicuous, that is, that they were clearly revealed in Scripture, so that, by the enablement of the Holy Spirit alone an individual could come to an understanding of the fundamental truths of salvation.

The second is a principle enunciated by the Roman Catholic Councils of Trent (1546-1562) and Vatican I (1870) embodied in the phrase 'the unanimous consent of the fathers.' This is a principle that purportedly looks to the past for validation of its present teachings particularly as they relate to the interpretation of Scripture. Trent initially promulgated this principle as a means of countering the Reformation teachings to make it appear that the Reformers' doctrines were novel and heretical while those of Rome were rooted in historical continuity. It is significant to note that Trent merely affirmed the existence of the principle without providing documentary proof for its validity. Vatican I merely reaffirmed the principle as decreed by Trent. Its historical roots harken back to Vincent of Lerins in the fifth century who was the first to give it formal definition when he stated that apostolic and catholic doctrine could be identified by a three fold criteria: It was a teaching that had been

believed everywhere, always and by all (*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*). (2) In other words, the principle of unanimous agreement encompassing universality (believed everywhere), antiquity (believed always) and consent (believed by all). Vincent readily agreed with the principle of *sola Scriptura*, that is, that Scripture was sufficient as the source of truth. But he was concerned about how one determined what was truly apostolic and catholic doctrine. This was the official position of the Church immediately subsequent to Vincent throughout the Middle Ages and for centuries immediately following Trent. But this principle, while fully embraced by Trent and Vatican I, has all been but abandoned by Rome today in a practical and formal sense. This is due to the fact that so much of Rome's teachings, upon historical examination, fail the test of unanimous consent. Some Roman Catholic historians are refreshingly honest in this assessment. Patrologist Boniface Ramsey, for example, candidly admits that the current Roman Catholic teachings on Mary and the papacy were not taught in the early Church:

Sometimes, then, the Fathers speak and write in a way that would eventually be seen as unorthodox. But this is not the only difficulty with respect to the criterion of orthodoxy. The other great one is that we

look in vain in many of the Fathers for references to things that many Christians might believe in today. We do not find, for instance, some teachings on Mary or the papacy that were developed in medieval and modern times.(3)

At first, this clear lack of patristic consensus led Rome to embrace a new theory in the late nineteenth century to explain its teachings—the theory initiated by John Henry Newman known as the development of doctrine. In light of the historical reality, Newman had come to the conclusion that the Vincentian principle of unanimous consent was unworkable, because, for all practical purposes, it was nonexistent. To quote Newman:

It does not seem possible, then, to avoid the conclusion that, whatever be the proper key for harmonizing the records and documents of the early and later Church, and true as the dictum of Vincentius must be considered in the abstract, and possible as its application might be in his own age, when he might almost ask the primitive centuries for their testimony, it is hardly available now, or effective of any satisfactory result. The solution it offers is as difficult as the original problem.(4)

The obvious problem with Newman's analysis and conclusion is that it flies in the face of the decrees of Trent and Vatican I, both of which decreed that the unanimous consent of the fathers does exist. But to circumvent the lack of patristic witness for the distinctive Roman Catholic dogmas, Newman set forth his theory of development, which was embraced by the Roman Catholic Church. Ironically, this is a theory which, like unanimous consent, has its roots in the teaching of Vincent of Lerins, who also promulgated a concept of development. While rejecting Vincent's rule of universality, antiquity and consent, Rome, through Newman, once again turned to Vincent for validation of its new theory of tradition and history. But while Rome and Vincent both use the term development, they are miles apart in their understanding of the meaning of the principle because Rome's definition of development and Vincent's are diametrically opposed to one another. In his teaching, Vincent delineates the following parameters for true development of doctrine:

But some one will say. perhaps, Shall there, then, be no progress in Christ's Church? Certainly; all possible progress. For what being is there, so envious of men, so full of hatred to God, who would seek to forbid it? Yet on condition that it be real

progress, not alteration of the faith. For progress requires that the subject be enlarged in itself, alteration, that it be transformed into something else. The intelligence, then, the knowledge, the wisdom, as well of individuals as of all, as well of one man as of the whole Church, ought, in the course of ages and centuries, to increase and make much and vigorous progress; but yet only in its own kind; that is to say, in the same doctrine, in the same sense, and in the same meaning.(5)

First of all, Vincent is saying that doctrinal development must be rooted in the principle of unanimous consent. That is, it must be related to doctrines that have been clearly taught throughout the ages of the Church. In other words, true development must demonstrate historical roots. Any teaching which could not demonstrate its authority from Scripture and the universal teaching of the Church was to be repudiated as novel and therefore not truly catholic. It was to be considered heretical. This is the whole point of Vincent's criticism of such heretics as Coelestius and Pelagius. He says, 'Who ever before his (Pelagius) monstrous disciple Coelestius ever denied that the whole human race is involved in the guilt of Adam's sin?'(6) Their teaching, which was a denial of original sin, was novel. It could not demonstrate

historical continuity and therefore it was heretical.

But, with Newman, Rome redefined the theory of development and promoted a new concept of tradition. One that was truly novel. Truly novel in the sense that it was completely foreign to the perspective of Vincent and the theologians of Trent and Vatican I who speak of the unanimous consent of the fathers. These two Councils claim that there is a clear continuity between their teaching and the history of the ancient Church which preceded them (whether this is actually true is another thing altogether). A continuity which they claimed could be documented by the explicit teaching of the Church fathers in their interpretation of Scripture and in their practice. Vatican I, for example, teaches that the papacy was full blown from the very beginning and was, therefore, not subject to development over time.

In this new theory Rome moved beyond the historical principle of development as articulated by Vincent and, for all practical purposes, eliminated any need for historical validation. She now claimed that it was not necessary that a particular doctrine be taught explicitly by the early Church. In fact, Roman Catholic historians readily admit that doctrines such as the assumption of Mary and papal infallibility were completely unknown in the teaching of the

early Church. If Rome now teaches the doctrine we are told that the early Church actually believed and taught it implicitly and only later, after many centuries, did it become explicit.

From this principle it was only a small step in the evolution of Rome's teaching on Tradition to her present position. Rome today has replaced the concept of tradition as development to what is known as 'living tradition.' This is a concept that promotes the Church as an infallible authority, which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who protects her from error. Therefore, whatever Rome's magisterium teaches at any point in time must be true even if it lacks historical or biblical support. The following statement by Roman Catholic apologist Karl Keating regarding the teaching of the Assumption of Mary is an illustration of this very point. He says it does not matter that there is no teaching on the Assumption in Scripture, the mere fact that the Roman Church teaches it is proof that it is true. Thus, teachings do not need to be documented from Scripture:

Still, fundamentalists ask, where is the proof from Scripture? Strictly, there is none. It was the Catholic Church that was commissioned by Christ to teach all nations and to teach them infallibly. The mere fact that the Church teaches the doctrine of the

Assumption as definitely true is a guarantee that it is true.(7)

This assertion is a complete repudiation of the patristic principle of proving every doctrine by the criterion of Scripture. Tradition means handing down from the past. Rome has changed the meaning of tradition from demonstrating by patristic consent that a doctrine is truly part of tradition, to the concept of living tradition—whatever I say today is truth, irrespective of the witness of history. This goes back to the claims of Gnosticism to having received the tradition by living voice, *viva voce*. Only now Rome has reinterpreted *viva voce*, the living voice as receiving from the past by way of oral tradition, to be a creative and therefore entirely novel aspect of tradition. It creates tradition in its present teaching without appeal to the past. To paraphrase the Gnostic line, it is *viva voce*-whatever we say. Another illustration of this reality relates to the teaching of the Assumption of Mary from the French Roman Catholic historian, Joussard:

In these conditions we shall not ask patristic thought—as some theologians still do today under one form or another—to transmit to us, with respect to the Assumption, a truth received as such in the beginning and faithfully communicated to

subsequent ages. Such an attitude would not fit the facts...Patristic thought has not, in this instance, played the role of a sheer instrument of transmission.(8)

The editors of the book which references these statements from Joussard offer the following editorial comments:

A word of caution is not impertinent here. The investigation of patristic documents might well lead the historian to the conclusion: In the first seven or eight centuries no trustworthy historical tradition on Mary's corporeal Assumption is extant, especially in the West. The conclusion is legitimate; if the historian stops there, few theological nerves will be touched. The historian's mistake would come in adding: therefore no proof from tradition can be adduced. The historical method is not the theological method, nor is historical tradition synonymous with dogmatic tradition.(9)

The historical method is not the theological method, nor is historical tradition synonymous with dogmatic tradition? Such a view is the complete antithesis of the teaching of Vincent of Lerins and the Councils of Trent and Vatican I. This is an apt illustration of the concept of living tradition.

This new perspective on tradition is also well expressed by Roman Catholic theologian and cardinal, Yves Congar. In light of the lack of historical support for a number of the Roman Catholic dogmas, Congar sets forth this new approach of living tradition:

In every age the consensus of the faithful, still more the agreement of those who are commissioned to teach them, has been regarded as a guarantee of truth: not because of some mystique of universal suffrage, but because of the Gospel principle that unanimity and fellowship in Christian matters requires, and also indicates, the intervention of the Holy Spirit. From the time when the patristic argument first began to be used in dogmatic controversies-it first appeared in the second century and gained general currency in the fourth-theologians have tried to establish agreement among qualified witnesses of the faith, and have tried to prove from this agreement that such was in fact the Church's belief... Unanimous patristic consent as a reliable locus theologicus is classical in Catholic theology; it has often been declared such by the magisterium and its value in scriptural interpretation has been especially stressed. Application of the

principle is difficult, at least at a certain level. In regard to individual texts of Scripture total patristic consensus is rare. In fact, a complete consensus is unnecessary: quite often, that which is appealed to as sufficient for dogmatic points does not go beyond what is encountered in the interpretation of many texts. But it does sometimes happen that some Fathers understood a passage in a way which does not agree with later Church teaching. One example: the interpretation of Peter's confession in Matthew 16.16-18. Except at Rome, this passage was not applied by the Fathers to the papal primacy; they worked out an exegesis at the level of their own ecclesiological thought, more anthropological and spiritual than juridical. This instance, selected from a number of similar ones, shows first that the Fathers cannot be isolated from the Church and its life. They are great, but the Church surpasses them in age, as also by the breadth and richness of its experience. It is the Church, not the Fathers, the consensus of the Church in submission to its Saviour which is the sufficient rule of our Christianity.(10)

Congar affirms that unanimous consent is the classical position in Roman theology. But he honestly admits that for

all practical purposes it is nonexistent. It is a claim that has been asserted for centuries but lacking in actual documentary validation. As Congar says: 'In regard to individual texts of Scripture total patristic consensus is rare.' And he uses the fundamental passage for all of Rome's authority as an example, that being the rock passage of Matthew 16 in which he candidly admits that the present day Roman/papal interpretation of that passage contradicts that of the patristic age. But, according to Congar, the problem is really not a problem because it can be circumvented by a different understanding of consensus. The Fathers must be interpreted in light of present day teaching. Congar says: 'The Fathers cannot be isolated from the Church and its life.' And by the Church and its life, he means the Church as it is today. He says: 'It is the Church, not the Fathers, the consensus of the Church in submission to its Saviour which is the sufficient rule of our Christianity.' In other words, what matters is what the Church teaches now. That is the criterion of truth and Tradition because the Church is living and Tradition is living. He continues:

This instance shows too that we may not, at the doctrinal as distinct from the purely historical level, take the witnesses of Tradition in a purely material sense: they are to be weighed and valued. The plain

material fact of agreement or disagreement, however extensive, does not allow us to speak of a consensus Patrum at the properly dogmatic level, for the authors studied in theology are only "Fathers" in the theological sense if they have in some way begotten the Church which follows them. Now, it may be, that the seed which will be most fruitful in the future is not the most clearly so at present, and that the lifelines of faith may not pass through the great doctors in a given instance. Historical documentation is at the factual level; it must leave room for a judgment made not in the light of the documentary evidence alone, but of the Church's faith.(11)

Note carefully the last two sentences of that paragraph. Congar postulates that in the future the Church could be teaching doctrines which are completely unheard of today and which will therefore not be able to be documented historically. As he puts it: 'The lifelines of faith may not pass through the great doctors in a given instance.' Historical documentation must leave room for judgment that is not restricted to documentary evidence alone but transcends the historical record in light of the present day Church's faith. In other words, the truth of ecclesiastical history must be viewed through the lens of whatever the faith of the Church

is at the present moment.

This in effect cuts the Church off from any kind of continuity as far as real documentation is concerned or accountability. It allows the Church to conveniently disregard the witness of history and Scripture in favor of a dynamic evolving teaching authority. History in effect becomes irrelevant and all talk of the unanimous consent of the fathers merely a relic of history. This brings us to the place where one's faith is placed blindly in the institution of the Church. Again, in reality Rome has abandoned the argument from history is arguing for the *viva voce* (living voice) of the contemporary teaching office of the Church (magisterium), which amounts to the essence of a *carte blanche* for whatever proves to be the current, prevailing sentiments of Rome. Never was this more blatantly admitted and expressed than it was by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Henry Edward Manning (1808-1892) who was one of the leading proponents for the definition of papal rule and infallibility at Vatican I. His words are the expression of *sola ecclesia* with a vengeance:

But the appeal to antiquity is both a treason and a heresy. It is a treason because it rejects the Divine voice of the Church *at this hour*, and a heresy because it denies that voice to be Divine. How can we know what antiquity was except through the

Church?...I may say in strict truth that the Church has no antiquity. It rests upon its own supernatural and perpetual consciousness. . . . *The only Divine evidence to us of what was primitive is the witness and voice of the Church at this hour* (emphasis mine). (12)

So, in effect, the new teaching of tradition in Rome is no longer that of continuity with the past but living tradition, or *viva voce* - whatever we say. Instead of sola Scriptura, the unanimous principle of authority enunciated by both Scripture and the Church fathers, we now have sola Ecclesia, blind submission to an institution which is unaccountable to either Scripture or history. That blind submission is not too strong an allegation is seen from the official Roman teaching on saving faith. What Rome requires is what is technically referred to a dogmatic faith. This is faith which submits completely to whatever the Church of Rome officially defines as dogma and to refuse such submission results in anathema and the loss of salvation, for unless a Roman Catholic has dogmatic faith, he or she does not have saving faith. Rome's view is based on the presupposition that the Church is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and is therefore infallible. She cannot err. But the presupposition is faulty. Historically, the Roman Church has clearly proven that she

can and has erred and is therefore quite fallible. Her gospel is a repudiation of the biblical gospel.

This is where we ultimately arrive when the patristic and Reformation principle of sola Scriptura is repudiated for the concept of living tradition and an infallible magisterium—the embracing of teachings which are not only not found in Scripture or the teaching of the early Church, but which are actually contradictory to Scripture and in many cases to the teaching of the Church fathers.

(1) It should be noted that though many might write concerning Catholic truth, there is this difference that those who wrote the canonical Scripture, the Evangelists and Apostles, and others of this kind, so constantly assert it that they leave no room for doubt. That is his meaning when he says 'we know his testimony is true.' Galatians 1:9, "If anyone preach a gospel to you other than that which you have received, let him be anathema!" The reason is that only canonical Scripture is a measure of faith. Others however so wrote of the truth that they should not be believed save insofar as they say true things." Thomas's commentary on John's Gospel, *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis Lectura*, ed. P. Raphaelis Cai, O.P., Editio V revisa (Romae: Marietti E ditori Ltd., 1952) n. 2656, p. 488.

Latin Text: Notandum autem, quod cum multi scriberent de catholica veritate, haec est differentia, quia illi, qui scripserunt canonicam Scripturam, sicut Evangelistic et Apostoli, et alii huiusmodi, ita constanter eam asserunt quod nihil dubitandum relinquunt. Et ideo dicit Et scimus quia verum est testimonium eius; Gal. I, 9: Si quis vobis evangelizaverit praeter id quod accepistis, anathema sit. Cuius ratio est, quia sola canonica scriptura est regula fidei. Alii autem sic edisserunt de veritate, quod nolunt sibi credi nisi in his quae ver dicunt.

(2) Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicece and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), Series II, Volume XI, Vincent of Lerins, A Commonitory 2.4-6.

(3) Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986), p. 6.

(4) John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., reprinted 1927), p. 27.

(5) *Nicece and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), Series II, Volume XI, Vincent of Lerins, A Commonitory 23.54.

(6) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), Volume XI, Vincent of Lerins, A Commonitory,

Chapter XXIV.62.

- (7) Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), p. 275.
- (8) Jousard, *L'Assomption coropelle*, pp. 115-116. Cited by Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., ed., *Mariology*, Vol. I (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1955), p. 154. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., ed., *Mariology*, Vol. I (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1955), p. 154.
- (9) Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., ed., *Mariology*, Vol. I (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1955), p. 154.
- (10) Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 397-400.
- (11) Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 397-400.
- (12) Henry Edward Manning, *The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost: Or Reason and Revelation* (New York: J.P. Kenedy & Sons, originally written 1865, reprinted with no date), pp. 227-228.

Justification

The Contrast Between the Biblical Teaching and Roman Catholicism

By William Webster

The Biblical Teaching of Justification

The Roman Catholic Teaching on Salvation and Justification

Does Purgatory Deny the Sufficiency of Christ's Sacrifice?

According to the Handbook for Today's Catholic, page 47, "If you die in the love of God but possess any 'stains of sin,' such stains are cleansed away in a purifying process called purgatory. These stains of sin are primarily the temporal punishment due to venial or mortal sins already forgiven but for which sufficient penance was not done during your lifetime."

The Catholic Catechism, paragraph 1030, says that purgatory is for "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation, but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven."

Among the many doctrines that Catholicism claims to be derived through Sacred Tradition, purgatory is one of the most interesting and puzzling, particularly to a Protestant. In light of the Pauline doctrine of justification by grace through faith, how is it possible that an afterlife cleansing through punishment is necessary for a Christian who has trusted in Jesus to cleanse him from all His sins? Wasn't Jesus' punishment for our transgressions sufficient? Didn't He take our place in that He suffered our death? It would seem that the words of Christ, "*It is finished,*" ([John 19:30](#)) do not mean that the cleansing of our souls was completed on the cross.

Of course, Roman Catholic doctrine states that eternal life is bestowed upon the one who receives baptism (Catechism, par. 1265 - 1266, 1992). It is the stains of the sins committed after baptism and not removed through penance, good works, prayers, the Mass, etc., that are removed in the fires of purgatory (Handbook for Today's Catholic, page 47).

In light of the doctrine of justification by faith ([Rom. 5:1](#)), where Jesus bore all of our sins, purgatory would seem to have no theologically justifiable right to exist. But the Bible alone is not appealed to by Catholic theologians in support of Purgatory. By far, the main support for Purgatory is found in the Catholic doctrine of Sacred Tradition. Nevertheless, what does the Bible say about justification, punishment, and our sins?

What is justification by faith?

To 'justify' means 'acquit', 'declare righteous', the opposite of 'condemn'. It means to not be guilty of breaking the Law and to be deemed as righteous by the standard of the Law.

God gave the Law, i.e, the 10 commandments. The Law is a reflection of God's character and it is a perfect standard of righteousness which no one can keep. Since no one is able to keep God's Law, no one can be justified by the Law ([Rom. 3:20](#)). There is, therefore, none righteous ([Rom. 3:10-12](#)). This is the problem of all people. We have all broken God's Law and are in need of justification, of being declared righteous in God's sight. This can only be done through the Messiah, our sin bearer.

Jesus is the one who took our place on the cross ([1 Pet. 2:24](#)), became sin on our behalf ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)), and turned away the wrath of God from us ([Rom. 5:9](#)) by being a propitiation ([1 John 2:2](#)) that turned away the wrath of God. He was punished in our place. Therefore, Jesus was our substitution. The righteous work of Christ is imputed to the believer by grace ([Titus 3:7](#)) and through faith ([Rom. 5:1](#)). This justification is a legal action on the part of God 'reckoning' the believer as having satisfied the Law — all of the Law.

It necessarily follows that to be justified in God's eyes, is to be fully justified. It is not 'part' of the Law that must be satisfied, but all of it. Perfection is the standard. Likewise, it is not 'part' of our sins that were born by Christ, but all of them. This justification includes all of the sins of the believer (past, present, and future) or else we could not be justified.

What does the Catholic Catechism Say?

The Catholic Catechism (paragraphs 1990-1992) says, "Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God's merciful initiative of offering forgiveness. It reconciles man with God. It frees from the enslavement to sin, and it heals".... "Justification is at the same time the acceptance of God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ..." and "...justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy."

Of particular interest is the reference that "justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith." There are many verses in the Bible that deal with baptism and 'putting on Christ' ([Gal. 3:27](#); [Rom. 6:1-11](#)). This paper is not intended to discuss the nature of baptism. Nevertheless, I strongly affirm that baptism is a covenant sign for the believer who is already justified by faith and for the children of believers who are under the covenant headship of the family. Baptism is not what justifies a person. Rather,

- Justification is a gift by His grace through Jesus ([Rom. 3:24](#))
- Justification is by grace ([Titus 3:7](#))
- Justification is by faith ([Rom. 3:28](#); [5:1](#); [Gal. 3:24](#))
- Justification is by Jesus' blood ([Rom. 5:9](#)).
- Justification is in the name of the Lord Jesus ([1 Cor. 6:11](#)).
- Justification is not equated with baptism, but with grace, faith, and the blood of Jesus.

Jesus said, "It is finished," ([John 19:30](#))

Jesus bore our sins in His body, paid the penalty for them, and died. He said, "*It is finished.*" In Greek, the phrase, "*It is finished*" is one word, *tetelestai*. In ancient Greek papyri texts that were receipts for taxes, when a debt was paid in full, the word *tetelestai*, was written on the document. This meant that the debt had been paid in full. In other words, Jesus had finished the work of atonement. But not only atonement (to make amends, to make right), but also of propitiation (turning away God's wrath). He had fully paid the debt invoked by the sinner. There was nothing more to be done... It was finished.

Yet, the doctrine of Purgatory, in effect, is saying that we must suffer in purgatory for sins not 'covered by baptism' and not covered by the cross. It is to say that the work of Christ is not finished and that there are things we must do to complete the sacrificial, cleansing work of Christ. This amounts to earning heaven by our good works, albeit, a work of suffering. Additionally, the doctrine of Purgatory implies that a person must atone for his own sins. It implies that the person must do more than what the Law of God requires of him. This is called supererogation.

When Jesus said, "*It is finished,*" all that was necessary in the atonement was concluded and all in Christ were justified. We cannot complete or add to Christ's work through our suffering. Purgatory is not only unnecessary, but it contradicts God's word.

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Council of Trent: Canons on Justification.

Lutheranism was growing strong in the 1500's. In response to this, the Roman Catholic church convened a council in November of 1544 in an attempt to counter the doctrines raised and supported by the Reformers. The official opening of the council was on Dec. 13, 1545 and was closed on Dec. 14, 1563. The council delivered many statements on various subjects. These Canons have never been denied by the Roman Catholic Church.

Following are several of the doctrinal statements made on Justification at the council of Trent. After each Canon are scriptures that contradict that Canon. These scriptures are linked to the KJV on CARM so you can click on them and read them in context.

Finally, you will see the word "anathema" used many times by the Council. This means that those who disagree with the doctrines of this Council are cursed. In Gal. 1:8-9, the word "anathema" is used. The curse must come from God. Therefore, we conclude that according to Roman Catholicism, anyone who disagrees with the following Canons are cursed of God. The Roman Catholic church excommunicates those under anathema. In other words, excommunication means being outside the Christian church. Being outside the church means you are not saved.

In spite of what Catholicism states, the Bible speaks differently. Following each Canon is a list of appropriate scriptures countering the Catholic position.

1. **CANON 9:** "If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema."
 - A. *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin,"* ([Rom. 3:20](#)).
 - B. *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"* ([Rom. 3:24](#)).
 - C. *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,"* ([Rom. 3:28](#)).
 - D. *"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,"* ([Rom. 4:3](#)).
 - E. *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* ([Rom. 5:1](#)).
 - F. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God,"* ([Eph. 2:8](#)).
 - G. *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,"* ([Titus 3:5](#)).
2. **CANON 12:** "If any one shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy pardoning sins for Christ's sake, or that it is that confidence alone by which we are justified ... let him be accursed"
 - A. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name," ([John 1:12](#)).
 - B. *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,"* ([Rom. 3:28](#)).
 - C. *"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,"* ([Rom. 4:3](#)).

- D. *"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; ²⁷Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself,"* ([Heb. 7:25-27](#)).
- E. *For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,"* ([2 Tim. 1:12](#)).
3. **Canon 14:** "If any one saith, that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified, because that he assuredly believed himself absolved and justified; or, that no one is truly justified but he who believes himself justified; and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected; let him be anathema."
- A. *"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,"* ([Rom. 4:3](#)).
- B. *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* ([Rom. 5:1](#)).
4. **Canon 23:** "If any one saith, that a man once justified can sin no more, nor lose grace, and that therefore he that falls and sins was never truly justified; or, on the other hand, that he is able, during his whole life, to avoid all sins, even those that are venial, - except by a special privilege from God, as the Church holds in regard of the Blessed Virgin; let him be anathema."
- A. *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,"* ([John 3:36](#)).
- B. *"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day,"* ([John 6:40](#)).
- C. *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand,"* ([John 10:28](#)).
- D. *"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord,"* ([Rom. 5:21](#)).
- E. *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us,"* ([1 John 2:19](#)).
- F. *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God,"* ([1 John 5:13](#)).
5. **Canon 24:** "If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof; let him be anathema."
- A. *"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? ²This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"* ([Gal. 3:1-3](#)).
- B. *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. ²Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. ³For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law,"* ([Gal. 5:1-3](#)).
6. **Canon 30:** "If any one saith, that, after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such

wise, that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened (to him); let him be anathema."

- A. *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* ([Rom. 5:1](#)).
- B. *"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; ¹⁴Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross,"* ([Col. 2:13-14](#)).

7. **Canon 33:** "If any one saith, that, by the Catholic doctrine touching Justification, by this holy Synod inset forth in this present decree, the glory of God, or the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ are in any way derogated from, and not rather that the truth of our faith, and the glory in fine of God and of Jesus Christ are rendered (more) illustrious; let him be anathema.

- A. This council declares that if anyone disagrees with it, they are damned.

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The Roman Catholic view on justification

Justification is a divine act where God declares the sinner to be innocent of his sins. It is a legal action in that God declares the sinner righteous -- as though he has satisfied the Law of God. This [justification](#) is based entirely on the sacrifice of Christ by His shed blood: "...*having now been justified by His blood...*" ([Rom. 5:9](#)).¹ Justification is a gift of grace ([Rom. 3:24](#); [Titus 3:7](#)) that comes through faith ([Rom. 3:28](#); [5:1](#)). Christians receive Jesus ([John 1:12](#)) and put their faith-filled trust in what Jesus did on the cross ([Isaiah 53:12](#); [1 Pet. 2:24](#)) and in so doing are justified by God. The Bible states that justification is not by works ([Rom. 3:20, 28](#); [4:5](#); [Eph. 2:8-9](#)) because our righteous deeds are filthy rags before God ([Isaiah 64:6](#)). Therefore, we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Those who are justified are saved and salvation is a free gift ([Rom. 6:23](#)), something we cannot earn ([Eph. 2:1-10](#)). However, Roman Catholic doctrine denies justification by faith alone and says:

- "If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema" (Council of Trent, Canons on Justification, Canon 9).
- "If any one saith, that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified, because he assuredly believed himself absolved and justified; or, that no one is truly justified but he who believes himself justified; and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected; let him be anathema." (Canon 14).

Anathema, according to Catholic theology means excommunication, "the exclusion of a sinner from the society of the faithful." The Greek word anathema is also translated as "accursed" ([Rom. 9:3](#); [Gal. 1:8-9](#), NASB & KJV), "*eternally condemned*" ([Gal. 1:8-9](#), NIV), and "cursed" ([Rom. 9:3](#), NIV). We can see that Roman Catholic theology pronounces a curse of excommunication, of being outside the camp of Christ if you believe that you are saved by grace through faith alone in Jesus.

Does the Roman Catholic Church specifically state that we are "saved by grace **and** works"? Not that I am aware of and neither do the above Catholic Canons state such a thing. But, when the Roman Catholic Church negates justification by faith alone, it necessarily implies that we must do something for justification, for if it is not by faith alone, then it must be by faith and something.

At this point many Catholics appeal to [James 2:24](#) which says, "*You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.*" But the context of James is speaking of dead faith as opposed to living, saving faith. James states that if you "say" you have faith but have no works ([James 2:14](#)), that faith cannot save you because it is a dead faith (v. [17](#)). In other words, mere intellectual acknowledgement of Christ is a dead faith that produces no regeneration and no change in a person's life. This faith does not justify. Rather, it is only that real and believing faith in Christ that results in justification. When someone is truly justified, he is truly saved and regenerate. Therefore, we see the results of true saving faith as they are manifested in the changed life of the one justified by faith alone. Real faith produces good works but it isn't these works that save you. Good works are the effect of salvation, not the cause of it in any way and they certainly do not help anyone keep their salvation. For more on this, please see "[Are you justified by Faith \(Romans\) or works \(James\)?](#)"

Protestant theology, as a whole, appeals to the Bible alone for spiritual truth and maintains that justification is not by works in any way but is by grace through faith in Christ and His sacrifice alone.

After all, the Bible says *"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace"* ([Rom. 11:6](#)). Furthermore, the Bible says:

- *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin,"* ([Rom. 3:20](#)).
- *"being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,"* ([Rom. 3:24](#)).
- *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,"* ([Rom. 3:28](#)).
- *"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,"* ([Rom. 4:3](#)).
- *"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness,"* ([Rom. 4:5](#)).
- *"For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith,"* ([Rom. 4:13](#)).
- *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* ([Rom. 5:1](#)).
- *"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him,"* ([Rom. 5:9](#)).
- *"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved,"* ([Rom. 10:9](#)).
- *"so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith,"* ([Gal. 3:14](#)).
- *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God,"* ([Eph. 2:8](#)).

I am bewildered when I read Catholic theology that denies justification by faith alone and requires human effort in addition to God's grace to be saved. Of course, Catholicism denies that it is works that save us -- and rightly so. But, it contradicts itself when it teaches that certain things must be done by people in order to be justified and to keep that justification. Whether or not Catholicism calls these works acts of faith or not is immaterial. The label doesn't change the substance. We are either saved by grace through faith alone or we are not.

Of the acts to be performed by Catholics for justification, baptism is the first requirement. Please consider these quotes:

- ". . . Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification, so that 'we too might walk in newness of life,'"
(Catechism of the Catholic Church par. 977).
- "Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ. It is granted us through Baptism. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who justifies us. It has for its goal the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life. It is the most excellent work of God's mercy," (CCC, par. 2020).

I do not see the Bible saying anywhere that we are justified by baptism. Yes, there are verses that can be interpreted that way, but if they were then they would contradict the clear teaching of [Rom. 3:20, 28; 4:3; 5:1; Eph. 2:8](#) which says salvation by grace through faith, not grace through faith and baptism. For a discussion of this subject please see [Is Baptism necessary for salvation?](#)

However, according to Roman Catholicism even faith and baptism aren't sufficient in themselves for you to be saved. It says that baptism is only the first sacrament of forgiveness. Good works, according to Roman Catholicism, are also required and are rewarded with going to heaven:

- "We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere 'to the end' and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ," (CCC, par. 1821).

The above quote clearly states that heaven is the "eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ." Catholic theology asserts that works are a predecessor to justification in direct contradiction to God's word which states ". . .*that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,*" ([Rom. 3:28](#)). What are the deeds of the Law? Anything we do in hopes of getting or maintaining our righteousness before God.

In the CCC, par. 2010 it says,

- "Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification."

How does anyone merit for himself the underserved kindness of God's grace? Grace is by definition **unmerited** favor. To me this is an utterly false teaching that you can earn grace from God through works or rituals. So how does the Catholic church get around this apparent dilemma that grace is unmerited but it is obtained through our merits? It states that...

- "Sanctifying grace is the gratuitous gift of his life that God makes to us; it is infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it" (CCC, par. 2023).

This is the crux of the problem. Roman Catholic theology asserts that God's grace is granted through baptism and infused into a person by the Holy Spirit. This then enables him or her to do good works which then are rewarded with heaven. Basically, this is no different than the theology of the cults which maintain that justification is by grace through faith **and** your works whether it be baptism, going to "the true church," keeping certain laws, receiving the sacraments, or anything else you are required to do. In response, I turn to God's word at [Gal.3:1-3](#):

"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? ²This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

Does not the above scripture clearly state that receiving God's Spirit is by faith and not by what we do? Does it not teach us that we cannot perfect our salvation by the works we do in the flesh? To receive Jesus ([John 1:12](#)) means to become the temple of the Holy Spirit ([1 Cor. 6:19](#)) which means a person is saved, justified. Is this salvation something we attained through our effort? Of course not! Is it something we maintain through our effort? Not at all. It is given to Christians by God and assured by God because it rests in what God has done and not in anything we have done -- that is why salvation is by faith and not works. If it did rest in anyway in our works, then our salvation could not be secure and we would end up trying to be good enough to get to heaven. That only leads to bondage to the Law and the result is a lack of assurance of salvation, a constant worry that you are not good enough, and a repeated subjection to the Church's teachings and requirements about what you must do to be saved. The only natural effect of such a teaching would be that you can lose your salvation over and over again and that you must perform the necessary requirements of the Catholic church to stay saved.

Catholic Theology teaches you maintain your justification

Because the Catholic view of justification is a cooperative effort between God and man, this justification can be lost and regained by man's failure to maintain sufficient grace through meritorious works. Now I must admit that within Protestant churches there are different opinions on this very matter of eternal security. Some believe salvation can be lost while others do not. I am not here attempting to address this issue. Rather, I seek to point out that Roman Catholicism teaches that works are necessary for this "re-attainment" of justification. This is how...

According to Catholic theology, penance is a sacrament where a person, through a Catholic priest (CCC, par. 987), receives forgiveness of the sins committed after baptism. The penitent person must confess his sins to a priest. The priest pronounces absolution and imposes acts of Penance to be performed.

- "Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as 'the second plank (of salvation) after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace,' (CCC, par. 1446).

The Council of Trent (Sess. XIV, c. i) declared regarding Penance:

- "As a means of regaining grace and justice, penance was at all times necessary for those who had defiled their souls with any mortal sin. . . .

Acts of penance vary, but some of them are prayer, saying the rosary, reading the scripture, saying a number of "Our Father's" or "Hail Mary's" prayers, doing good works, fasting, and other such things. Is it by doing these acts of penance that the Catholic is able to regain his justified state before God? I am astounded to think that they are taught to believe that by their works of penance justification is regained. In essence it is earning one's salvation. Think about it. If you do not have it and you get it by saying prayers, fasting, and/or doing good works, then you are guilty of "works righteousness" salvation which is condemned by the Bible. "Works Righteousness" means that a person is trying to attain or keep his position with God based upon his works. It is a false teaching.

I confess my sins to God. He forgives me ([1 John 1:9](#)). I do not need a Catholic priest to be my mediator of forgiveness. I need the true mediator and High Priest, Jesus. He alone is my mediator ([1 Tim. 2:5](#)). He has all authority in heaven and earth ([Matt. 28:18](#)) to forgive my sins and intercede for me. He finished the work on the cross ([John 19:30](#)) so that I do not need to perform any work in order to gain, maintain, or even regain my salvation. That is why the Bible teaches that we are justified by faith ([Rom. 5:1](#)) apart from works ([Rom. 3:28](#)).

To say that we can add to the finished work of Christ on the cross is to say that what He did was not sufficient to save us. May this never be! We are saved by grace through faith, not grace through faith and our works. If it were, then grace would not be grace.

"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace," ([Rom. 11:6](#)).

Relationship, not Ritual

Salvation is a free gift from God given to us by His awesome Grace and is based upon the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Christians receive this by faith because faith is all we have left since my works are excluded, by God, as having anything to do with attaining salvation.

God desires fellowship with His people ([1 Cor. 1:9](#)), not rituals and works righteousness that cannot save us.

May God receive all the glory due Him because of His grace.

1. The phrase "having now been" is in the perfect tense in the Greek. This signifies a past action that continues in the present. In other words, Paul is saying that the Christians have been justified and still are.

All Bible quotes are from the NASB.

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New Confusions for Old: Rome and Justification

Roger Wagner

Recent defenders of Rome's doctrine of justification are making the same mistaken accusations today as did their predecessors in the sixteenth century. Rome is still not listening to the Scripture.

I. Introduction

In his recent book, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, Karl Keating begins the preface by saying,

Few orthodox Catholics can imagine themselves leaving their religion for another. If, in the disorientation that comes between sleep and wakefulness, they imagine changing their spiritual allegiance, they see themselves waving fond farewell to Rome...and walking but a short distance to something Romelike.[\[1\]](#)

Later on the same page, Keating continues,

What few practicing Catholics can imagine is that they might chuck Catholicism for something like fundamentalism, to which they are not drawn at all. Still, they know that people of their acquaintance, people from their own parishes, have made the transition, and are seemingly none the worse for wear.[\[2\]](#)

He presses his concern on the next page, warning,

This lack of sympathy with the bare possibility of conversion to fundamentalism may be one reason the fundamentalism problem is misunderstood by Catholics. After all, it is hard to understand something that is not taken seriously. But the allure of fundamentalism should be taken seriously...[\[3\]](#)

If one were to simply switch the places of the two parties mentioned in the discussion above, one might

well express a growing concern among fundamentalist, evangelical, and Reformed Protestants today in the same terms. While it might seem unthinkable, there has been a growing interest in Catholicism within evangelical and Reformed circles in recent years. This interest has led to some notable "conversions" among the evangelical leadership -- one can remember the "bombshell" that hit the *Christianity Today* world several years ago with the news of the "conversion" to Rome of noted author and teacher, Thomas Howard. This growing interest in Catholicism has added new vitality and credibility to efforts toward a rapprochement between Protestants and the Vatican. And, what is of more concern to the present writer, is that in this resurgence of Catholicism we have even seen some Reformed and Presbyterian ministers and laymen embrace the doctrine and life of Romanism.[\[4\]](#)

Keating's warning, then, is equally appropriate if addressed to evangelical and Reformed Protestants -- the attractiveness of Rome, however unimaginable to 20th century Protestants, remains very strong, and the threat of a "return to Rome" movement needs to be taken as seriously in our day as it was in the days of the Reformation.

One serious problem facing evangelicals and Reformed Christians today is that many of them have become ill-equipped to face the challenge of "converted Protestants" seeking to win other evangelicals over to their new way of thinking. For many Protestants, Romanism seems a dead issue. The Protestant Reformation finished the controversy once and for all as far as they are concerned. Many have become uninformed regarding the theology and piety, as well as the ecclesiastical structures and practices, of the Roman Catholic Church.[\[5\]](#) Consequently, they may fall easy prey to the often winsome and even "evangelical-sounding" Romanist who is seeking to persuade them to "return to the fold of the true church." Recent confrontations between formerly-evangelical or -Reformed spokesmen for Rome, on the one hand, and proponents of traditional Protestantism, on the other, have pointed up the problem in fairly graphic ways.[\[6\]](#)

Nor are these aggressive Catholics with (allegedly) new answers gaining a hearing by presenting an expurgated version of Romanist theology and piety. They are more than willing to believe and defend all the major tenants of traditional Roman Catholic doctrine and practice -- including papal infallibility, justification by faith and works, the special reverence of Mary and the saints, and traditional Roman sacerdotalism -- all of which historically have been serious stumbling-blocks to thoughtful Protestants.

II. The Debate Over Justification

The eagerness on the part of the new defenders of Rome to address evangelical Protestants has led to a renewed debate over the Romanist doctrine of justification as formulated by the Council of Trent (Sixth Session, 1547) and explained by Roman Catholic theologians before and since. The purpose of this present article is to examine recent defenses of the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification, especially those put forth by way of appeal to evangelical Protestants, in the light of the Scripture and the historical Protestant formulations of the doctrine. This, of course, is not a new debate, and many defenders of the evangelical and Reformed Protestant doctrine of justification who have been far more able than the present writer have repeatedly addressed the question in great detail.[\[7\]](#)

Indeed, one wonders what can be contributed at this stage in the debate that will be insightful and helpful, when the ground has been covered so well many times before. One is spurred on to make the effort, however, in part by the fact that some of these contemporary proponents of the Romanist doctrine of justification by faith and works have come to it against the background of what we must presume was an understanding from the inside of the Protestant doctrine.

Some of these defenders claim the special right to be heard by other evangelicals on that basis. They claim that they have asked the leading lights among the heirs of Calvin and Luther (in print and in person) for answers to their questions and concerns about justification (and other doctrines) and that they have not been given satisfactory answers.^[8] This, of course, raises the question of whether the past discussions of the Reformation/Rome debate over justification have in fact been inadequate as answers to these men's concerns, or if it is rather the case that the "converts" have simply been *unteachable* in light of cogent Biblical argumentation. The only effective way to evaluate that is to review the evangelical and Reformed Protestant understanding of justification in light of the recent discussions by converts to Rome from the ranks of evangelicalism.

III. Features of Recent "Evangelical" Defenses of the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification

In reading and listening to the recent advocates of the traditional Romanist view of justification, one is struck by several features, and it is worth noting them before we proceed to re-examine the Biblical doctrine of justification.

A. The Tempting Evangelical Ring

First, there is a decided evangelical "ring" to the defenses made by former Protestants. Listen to Scott Hahn, for example:

The Catholic Church does not teach legalism. If individual Catholics you meet believe that through their own legalistic works-righteousness they can buy their way into heaven, or merit everything on their own, you tell them to go back to their church, back to the Scripture, back to their councils, and change their minds. It isn't works righteousness, it isn't striking a bargain or a deal with God at all. It's God having His way in us by filling us with His life, His love, His power. So God transforms children of the devil into children of God -- not just by mere legal decree, but by giving us Christ in His Sonship. Therefore, according to the Roman Catholic Church, each and every deed I do that is pleasing to God is nothing other than the work of Christ active in me through the power of the Holy Spirit.^[9]

Certainly much of this language sounds pleasing to evangelical Protestant ears. Indeed, some of these statements could well be made by "card-carrying" evangelicals.

In terms of the debate, this evangelical flavor makes the appeal of these Catholics so potentially winning to Protestant audiences. Efforts to remove the language of "works," "self-righteousness," and "merit" [10] goes a long way to putting evangelical listeners at ease. But, leaving the rhetoric to one side, the more telling question is whether or not their understanding of the nature of justification actually removes the *reality* of merit and works leading to self-righteous justification. This question remains to be evaluated Biblically. On the surface level, however, the contemporary defenses of the doctrine of justification by adherents of Rome certainly *sound* much better than older formulations of the defense of the same doctrine. [11]

B. Missing the Antithesis

A *second* notable feature of recent defenses of Roman Catholic justification is the almost exclusive concentration on the question of the role of good works in justification. [12] As we will see below, debate on this question, as important as it is, *does not adequately focus the antithesis* between the Roman and Protestant doctrines of justification. Much of what is said about the necessity of good works to justification can be, and has been, endorsed by Protestants. Marshner appears to admit as much.

A second stage is the very transition from death to life, which is the first stage of justification proper. Here the parties are at one in saying "*sola fide*," though they seem to mean different things by it. Protestants tend to mean that, at this stage, by the grace of God, man's act of faith is the sole act required of him; Catholics mean that faith is the beginning, foundation and root of all justification, since only faith makes possible the acts of hope and charity (i.e. love-for-God) which are also required. However, since most Protestants have a broad notion of the act of faith, whereby it includes elements of hope and love, it is often hard to tell how far the difference on this point is real and how far it is a matter of words. [13]

Without examining Marshner's comments in detail, we simply note at this point that he at least is willing to grant that "most Protestants have a broad notion of the act of faith, whereby it includes elements of hope and love." This "love" includes the "good works" of grateful obedience to God which contemporary defenders of justification by faith *and* works are eager to emphasize.

If both Protestants and Roman Catholics can speak of the "necessity" of good works, one is left with the conclusion, either that the whole debate has, in fact, been a misunderstanding (as some have said), or that the real issue lies elsewhere. We will argue the latter in our discussion below. The exact character of that "necessity" must be precisely understood in Biblical terms.

Before we leave this point, something more needs to be said about the way in which the Romanist doctrine of justification is currently being defended by former evangelicals. Not all are willing, as Marshner is, to grant that the Protestant position does allow for, indeed requires, good works in the life of the justified believer. In several of the discussions under consideration, there is an all too frequent *caricature* of the Protestant doctrine, suggesting that, since the Protestant rejects good works as

meritorious (or quasi-meritorious), he is thereby denying *any* importance (or "necessity") of good works to justification. Having set up such a straw man, proponents of Rome's doctrine of justification have an easy time pointing out Scriptures that clearly teach the necessity of subjective renewal and transformation, grateful obedience, and personal holiness as part and parcel of justification. Most notably they draw attention to Mt. 7:21-23 and James 2:20-24.

That such a portrayal of Protestant doctrine is a caricature is evident from John Murray's comments (which are now 35 years old!):

It is an old and time-worn objection that this doctrine ministers to license and looseness. Only those who know not the power of the gospel will plead such misconception. Justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Justification is not all that is embraced in the gospel of redeeming grace. Christ is a complete Saviour and it is not justification alone that the believing sinner possesses in him. And faith is not the only response in the heart of him who has entrusted himself to Christ for salvation. Faith alone justifies but a justified person with faith alone would be a monstrosity which never exists in the kingdom of grace. Faith works itself out through love (cf. Gal. 5:6). And faith without works is dead (cf. James 2:17-20). It is living faith that justifies and living faith unites to Christ both in the virtue of his death and in the power of his resurrection. No one has entrusted himself to Christ for deliverance from the guilt of sin who has not also entrusted himself to him for deliverance from the power of sin. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1,2).[\[14\]](#)

Roman Catholic arguments which overlook the vital role of obedient holiness embraced by Protestants in the application of redemption are, at best, misleading. At worst, they are dishonest and deceitful. Protestants do, and have always, acknowledged the necessity of good works to salvation. Some have even been willing to speak of the necessity of good works *to justification* (in light of the emphasis of James 2),[\[15\]](#) though that has made other Protestants somewhat nervous. Be that as it may, *none* have suggested that good works are *irrelevant* to the salvation of men. What they have not been willing to do is identify good works, and the supposed merit arising therefrom, as the *ground* (or supplement to the ground) of justification, as Rome has always contended. To do so would compromise the uniqueness and sufficiency of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.[\[16\]](#)

Further, Protestants have emphasized that the salvation of men involves *both* the objective (judicial) pardon and acceptance of the sinner as righteous in Christ, on the one hand, and the subjective transformation of the sinner in holiness -- a renewal in the image of Christ (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; cf. Eph. 2:10; etc.). These two dimensions (corresponding in evangelical parlance to "justification" and "regeneration"/"sanctification") while *distinguished* from one another have never been *separated* from one another, as if one could take place without the other.[\[17\]](#)

Some of the contemporary advocates of Roman Catholic justification fail to acknowledge these important

distinctions. What makes such failure unforgivable in the present context of debate is that, as former evangelical Protestants, *these men know better*. It is not a matter of ignorance but of the willful (and deceitful?) suppression of the knowledge of important elements in the doctrinal position they are opposing. This makes for more than an argumentative weakness. It is a demonstration of spiritual blindness which is culpable (Rom. 1:18,21,28).

C. The Absence of Exegesis

In addition to the problem of these argumentative red herrings, there is a third, more substantial, characteristic weakness with recent Roman Catholic defenses of justification. This substantial weakness is the absence of any careful exegesis of the relevant passages on justification. These defenders, with their almost exclusive focus on the place of good works in salvation, fail to exegete the great passages that deal specifically with the doctrine of justification, particularly those passages in Romans and in Galatians. While these texts have been treated in the past by some of the exponents of the Romanist position, they are passed over by many of the more recent defenders.

For example, Hahn, in his debate with Knudsen does not mention, much less exegete, a single one of the classical New Testament texts on justification.^[18] Neither does Peter Kreeft.^[19] Karl Keating spends his time discussing the matter of assurance and its relationship to faith and justification.^[20] William Marshner does a little better.^[21] He at least wants to attempt to "break down that lively conviction by which the Protestant feels that St. Paul is his home turf," and wants to try to demonstrate "that St. Paul's real position is far closer to that of Trent than to that of Luther."^[22] He therefore addresses himself to some of the Pauline material, but his exegesis is partial and superficial at best.

Certainly it is not necessary that every theologian or polemicist deal with all the questions or arguments relevant to the subject under discussion. But for contemporary Roman apologists to fail to mention or refute the substantial exegetical considerations which appear to contradict the Romanist view of justification is much more than a significant oversight. It amounts to a total failure of the Romanist position. Unanswered, the exegetical case expounded by the classical defenders of the Protestant view stands in all its clarity and Biblical authority.

This failure is especially telling in that these defenders, some of whom are themselves former evangelicals, are (no doubt) keenly aware of the massive exegetical and theological evidence that has been put forth by the Protestant side in defending their understanding of justification by faith. Therefore, the decision by the current popular defenders of Romanism to pass over this corpus of Biblical argumentation suggests that they find it safer to *ignore* it than confront it head-on, and refute it.

In this same connection, we also note the absence of any serious attempt on the part of these (and other earlier) Romanist defenders of justification by faith and works to conform their theological formulations to either Biblical language or thought-forms. Reading the arguments put forward since Trent (and before), one is aware that an alien theological system is being *imposed* upon Scripture and that exegesis and theological argument are being pressed to fit the system, rather than letting the words and ideas of

Scripture itself give rise to the theological system.

D. Downplaying Sacerdotalism

A fourth characteristic of these recent defenses is a failure to face up to the ecclesiastical and sacramental dimensions of Roman Catholic dogma. Though it is never denied, the central and indispensable role of the Roman Church and its sacraments -- particularly the sacraments of baptism and penance -- is not explained forthrightly in connection with the discussions of justification. It is easy enough to see why Catholic apologists address such issues in discussions designed to appeal to Protestants. The strong sacerdotal dimensions of Roman Catholic justification would certainly be a stumbling-block to many would-be converts from Protestantism. It is more appealing to talk in generalities about God's grace, the adoption of sinners so that they become part of God's family, and the glories of partaking in the unique sonship of Christ, than to clutter up these mystical wonders with talk of a regeneration which cannot be accomplished apart from Roman baptism. Defenders of Rome are somewhat coy about acknowledging the fact (in their discussions of justification) that without auricular confession and the reception of priestly absolution in connection with acts of satisfaction (vital elements of the Roman "sacrament" of penance or reconciliation), one cannot participate in the grace of justification.[\[23\]](#)

Today, just as during the debates of the Reformation, Roman Catholic theology maintains that without the mediatorial office of the Roman Church the sinner is *distanced from* divine grace and remains lost in sin and subject to the condemnation of God. Those who are attracted to the new "evangelical" sounds of the "gospel" according to Rome set forth by Keating, Kreeft, Hahn, and others, had better realize that they need to get connected with a duly-consecrated priest and the sacraments of the Roman Church, or else they will be left under condemnation, grasping for an ephemeral grace that remains out of reach. There is *still* something that stands between the sinner and the Savior. Rome has always claimed for itself that unique role. It continues to do so.

E. Trivializing Judicial Pardon

One fifth, and final, observation about the characteristic flavor of recent discussions of justification by ex-Protestants and others will prepare us to examine the Biblical teaching itself. That characteristic is the consistent downplaying of the reality and importance of judicial pardon. While some defenders pay lip-service in passing to the judicial pardon of sinners as an aspect (or precondition) of justification, they repeatedly describe judicial pardon with minimizing epithets like, "mere," "only," "simply," etc. Karl Keating says, "the Reformers saw justification as a mere legal act by which God declares the sinner to be meriting heaven even though he remains in fact unjust and sinful"[\[24\]](#) It is "only an external application of Christ's justice."[\[25\]](#) The Romanist doctrine, by way of contrast, sees justification as a "true eradication of sin and a true sanctification and renewal." Sinners become "actually good," thereby "meriting" heaven.[\[26\]](#) Similarly, Scott Hahn alleges that the Protestant view makes justification "just simply a legal exchange."[\[27\]](#) According to Marshner, the view of the Protestant Reformers means,

...our "justification" can no longer be conceived as a real change in us; it will have to

become a sheer declaration on God's part, e.g. a declaration that, thanks to the work of Christ, He will henceforth consider us as just, even though we remain inwardly the sinners we always were. Hence, the Protestant doctrine of "forensic" or "extrinsic" justification. Now watch what happens to our own act of faith: it ceases to be the foundational act of an interior renewal and becomes a mere requirement, devoid of any salvific power in its own right, which God arbitrarily sets as the condition on which He will declare us just. Whereupon watch what happens to our good works: they cease to be the vital acts wherein an ontologically real "new life" consists and manifests itself; they become mere human responses to divine mercy -- nice, but totally irrelevant to our justification -- or else they become zombie-like motions produced in us by irresistible divine impulses, whereby God exhibits His glory in His elect.[\[28\]](#)

Notice in these quotations the sustained contrast between the concepts of "legal," on the one hand, and "real," on the other. Forensic justification, according to Rome, is "sheer declaration." It is a legal fiction -- God "will henceforth consider us as just," though we are not really just, for we "remain inwardly the sinners we always were." God acts "arbitrarily" with respect to the satisfaction of His justice.

This kind of language, used in the interest of emphasizing the importance of the inner transformation which results from the infusion of divine grace, in fact serves to trivialize divine pardon. This is somewhat ironic in view of the fact that Rome has always tried to get as much mileage as possible out of the spiritual terrorism afforded by graphic visions and thoughts of Final Judgment. One need only think of the visual horrors of Michelangelo's fresco of the *Last Judgment* on the wall of the Sistine Chapel. The second section of the traditional Romanist "Requiem" (a mass for the dead), the *Dies irae* ("day of wrath"), is another portrait of the fearful realities of judgment facing the sinner. It begins,

*The day of wrath, that day shall
dissolve the world in ash, as
David prophesied with the Sibyl.*

*What trembling shall there be
when the judge shall come
Who shall thresh out all thoroughly...*

*Death and Nature shall be astounded
when creation rises again
to answer to the Judge...*

*And therefore when the Judge shall sit,
whatsoever is hidden shall be manifest;
and naught shall remain unavenged...*

Soon follows the desperate cry of the guilty sinner,

*And what shall I say in my misery?
Whom shall I ask to be my advocate,
when scarcely the just may be without fear?*

The horror of divine judgment is almost palpable (especially when conveyed, for example, by Berlioz' or Verdi's musical language!). Such fear, according to traditional Roman Catholicism, may move the sinner to the beginnings of faith. For that reason fear ought to be, and is, cultivated. But then the Roman apologist for justification by faith and works enters to declare to this terrified sinner facing the reality of the eternal wrath of the holy God that the pardon and forgiveness which they seek is "only an external application of Christ's justice," it is "just simply a legal exchange." The quaking sinner looking for a sure resting-place for his faith is told to *look away* from the pardon of God, and the sacrifice of Christ which satisfied divine justice. They are *only* legal; they are *insufficient*.^[29] The sinner is told to look elsewhere -- *he is told to look to himself!!*

Is this "gospel?" Is this "good news" to the sinner's ear. Is it not rather blasphemy?^[30] By thus trivializing God's forgiveness (a legal category), the Romanist dogma has the effect of minimizing with it the *divine justice* that demands such pardon, and, most importantly, the Savior who *satisfied* the holy demands of *that* divine justice to secure for sinners *that* full and free pardon.

VI. Toward a Biblical Appreciation of Justification

We turn at last to a brief review of the Biblical doctrine of justification as articulated repeatedly by the greatest scholars of the Reformation and their heirs for nearly 500 years. As already mentioned, it is not my intention to rehearse the Protestant doctrine in detail. There is no need to -- it has been proclaimed and explained faithfully and ably by many right down to the present day. The contemporary advocates of the Roman view have raised no new or telling objections to the view of the Reformers. They have simply restated the traditional position of Rome (before and after Trent).

Having examined some of the characteristics of their defenses above, we will now conclude this article with an overview of the main lines of argument in favor of the Protestant understanding of justification. For this summary review, I will be relying on the work of John Murray, because he is both a recent and one of the most able defenders of the doctrine of justification by faith. He has imbibed the rich Protestant tradition of exposition and his book, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, is readily available to the interested reader.

A. Justification is Forensic

Justification is forensic in character. In order to properly understand the Biblical teaching on justification, one must grasp it in the *ethical categories* in which Scripture sets it forth. Rome has made a prolonged effort to deny -- or at least minimize -- the legal (forensic) terms with which the Reformation understood the doctrine of justification. Instead they have stressed that justification must be understood in *metaphysical* terms. This confusion of the metaphysical with the ethical has been characteristic of Rome's

interpretation of both the fall of man and his redemption. Recent defenders of the Roman view continue to press the same point. Marshner admits that the controversy between Rome and the Reformation over the nature of divine grace was (in part) a "metaphysical quarrel."[\[31\]](#) He speaks of grace as an "elevation of our nature" which was also the case before the Fall.[\[32\]](#) Grace is "a quality of man which is a property of God," and "in order to cope with such an entity, one needs a sophisticated metaphysics of participation."[\[33\]](#)

When we see clearly this preference for the metaphysical over the ethical, we can better understand the previously-mentioned antithesis between the "legal" and the "real" in Romanist defenses. "Ontic grace" is "a *real* entity in man."[\[34\]](#) If one fails to understand this, Marshner declares, "the whole Catholic understanding of justification makes no sense."[\[35\]](#) He is right. For that reason he charges the Reformers with denying the existence of this metaphysical "sanctifying grace." He alleges that, because of their nominalistic assumptions, "they found that course "simpler."[\[36\]](#)

Here Marshner misses the point. Luther and Calvin did not choose the "simpler" way. Rather, they determined to explicate the doctrine of justification *in the ethical terms in which Scripture reveals it*. They understood clearly that redemption, as revealed in Scripture, is not a metaphysical transformation, but an ethical one. The "Creator-creature distinction" which is foundational to Biblical metaphysics and revelation remains firmly in place throughout God's plan of salvation. The Romanist is still quite confused on this matter, and until he will allow himself to think God's thoughts after Him -- i.e., let the Bible itself shape his categories of understanding -- he will remain confused.[\[37\]](#)

If the Biblical terminology of justification is examined -- in both the Old and New Testaments -- one sees forensic, juridical language. With very few exceptions the legal concept of "a declaration or vindication of righteousness" is the meaning of the Biblical terms for justification.[\[38\]](#) It is only by wresting the Scriptures that these terms can be forced into consistency with the metaphysical description of justification demanded by Romanist dogma. Many of the contemporary defenders of that dogma have not even attempted to deal with the texts specifically related to justification. Can anyone seriously wonder why?

Protestants have repeatedly pointed out that even if one grants that justification is based on the inherent righteousness (or on the "infused-grace"-produced righteousness) of the person justified, the act of justification can, nevertheless, be nothing other than declarative. Just as "condemn" cannot mean "to make sinful or criminal" so "justify" (its consistent Biblical antithesis) cannot mean "to make just or righteous."[\[39\]](#) The categories are inescapably ethical and legal, not metaphysical.

B. Justification is Grounded in Christ, Not Faith or Works

The central point at issue between the Roman and Reformation views of justification concerns its ground. It has already been noted that recent discussions have not succeeded in sharply focusing the *central antithesis* between the Protestant and Roman Catholic positions on justification. The basic question in

dispute is *not* the necessity of good works, though that question is important and must be addressed in the broader discussion of justification. Rather it is the question of what constitutes the *ground of justification* -- the foundation upon which God accepts the sinner as righteous in His sight.

Romanists argue that the ground of justification is faith in Christ^[40] *plus* a person's own good works (wrought in the power of God's grace infused into the person who receives baptism). As Keating says, "[God] did his part, and now we have to cooperate by doing ours."^[41] Some Protestants, particularly of the Arminian stripe, substitute faith alone for faith and works as the ground of justification. Faith, on this construction, is seen as accepted by God in lieu of obedience to the Law as the ground of justification. But we must argue, with Luther and Calvin, that *neither* faith nor good works are the *ground* of justification.

Contra Rome we must say that the basis of one's justification cannot be one's own righteousness, even if it were produced in cooperation with the grace of God (and is thus in some sense a "gift" of God). As John Murray argues,

A righteousness wrought in us, even though it were perfect and eliminated all future sin, would not measure up to the requirements of the full and irrevocable justification which the Scripture represents justification to be. Such a righteousness would not obliterate the sin and unrighteousness of the *past* and the condemnation resting upon us for our past sin. But justification includes the remission of *all* sin and condemnation. Consequently the righteousness which is the basis of such justification must be one that will take care of past sin as well as provide for the future. *Inwrought righteousness does not measure up to this need.*^[42]

This truth is further borne out by the fact that the gospel reveals the grace and mercy of God specifically in the justification of the *ungodly* (Rom. 4:5; cf. 3:21-26). "The justification with which we are now concerned, however, is God's justification of the ungodly. It is not the justification of persons who are righteous but of persons who are wicked and, therefore, of persons who are under God's condemnation and curse."^[43] Thus, Biblical justification cannot be based -- in whole or in part -- on the righteousness of the one justified. Those who are justified are said to be sinners and must be declared just on the basis of the righteousness of another.

On the other hand, contra Arminianism, we must point out that human faith is just as tainted as human works, and is therefore unsatisfactory as a ground for full and free justification. Even if it were argued -- along the lines of Rome -- that faith was the product of the prior workings of God's grace in a person's heart, it would still not answer to God's demand for a perfect, indeed a divine righteousness as the only basis upon which a sinner can be reckoned just before God.^[44] The sinner must *look away from himself* -- his faith and his good works -- and look to Christ as the only sure foundation for his hope of justification before God.

The ground of justification, according to Scripture's consistent testimony is nothing less than *the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ* -- expressed in His "active obedience" (whereby He perfectly kept

the commandments of the Father in exhaustive detail from the heart) and His "passive obedience" (whereby He fully satisfied the penal liability for broken law which justly stands against His peoples). According to the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone" (Q/A#33). "*Only for the righteousness of Christ.*" Here we discover the only true resting-place for saving faith. Here alone is there a righteousness sufficient to our need for justification. "The righteousness of Christ is the righteousness of his perfect obedience, a righteousness undefiled and undefilable, a righteousness which not only warrants the justification of the ungodly but one that necessarily elicits and constrains such justification. God cannot but accept into his favor those who are invested with the righteousness of his own Son. [\[45\]](#)

C. Justification is Declarative and Constitutive

Justification is not merely a legal fiction, but a judgment in truth. If the ground of justification is the righteousness of another, of Jesus Christ, then are the Romanists right in charging that in the Protestant view justification is nothing more than a "legal fiction." [\[46\]](#) Does God simply call "righteous" those who are *not* righteous, even though to do so would be to violate His own holy law for judges (e.g., Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15)? Not at all. Here we must recognize the way in which the Protestant doctrine draws attention to the reality of imputation, and to the fact that justification is both (to use Murray's words) "declarative" and "constitutive."

"Imputation," in the Biblical sense, refers to the legal accounting of one person's righteousness or sin to another. It presupposes a relationship of covenantal representation between those who are parties to the imputation. [\[47\]](#) By virtue of this representation, sin and guilt or righteousness and justification can be imputed from one to the other. In Scripture, imputation is involved in three particular situations: (1) the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity in the so-called "covenant of works," (2) the imputation of the sins of His people to Christ as their representative Savior, and (3) the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to His people as the ground of justification. [\[48\]](#) The classic text concerning imputation is Rom. 5:12-21.

Rome has traditionally sought to suppress the teaching of Scripture on imputation in favor of its emphasis upon *infused grace* and the resulting *subjective transformation* in an individual's life. Only this will bring about "a true eradication of sin and a true sanctification and renewal" so that the soul becomes objectively pleasing to God and so merits heaven." [\[49\]](#) This alone will suffice for *real* justification. While there may appear some minimal initial plausibility to this notion when applied to the imputation of Christ's righteousness to His people, it will never fit the other side of the imputation transaction. Are we to understand that the imputation of our sin and guilt to our Savior involved the *infusion of some "sin-principle"* (the negation of grace) into Him, with the result that He was *subjectively transformed into a sinner* for us? The notion is as preposterous as it is blasphemous! Even Rome has to admit as much.

Rome's zeal for its metaphysical categories cannot be applied in the several ways demanded by the Biblical revelation concerning justification. Those categories must therefore be *rejected*. Instead, we must

understand that, by virtue of our relationship to Christ as the "last Adam," and as the covenantal "head" of His people, we legally, but nevertheless most *truly*, receive His righteousness as our own through imputation. In the same way, through the reality of imputation, Jesus Christ Himself bore our sins and guilt in His body on the cross of Calvary (I Pet. 2:24). As a result of His death for us, the indictment from the bench of the heavenly Judge of all the earth, that justly stood against us, has been taken away (Col. 2:14). These are wonderful, gracious *realities*. They are legal and covenantal realities. They are -- praise God! -- realities that will stand the test of the great *Dies irae*, when all flesh will stand before God for the Final Judgment. "*Then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how much I owe.*"

John Murray was concerned to point out that there was a potential danger in the Protestant emphasis on justification as a *declarative* act. The danger he saw was that the church would overlook the fact that justification is also revealed in Scripture as a *constitutive* act. "For as through the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous" (Rom. 5:19). Herein is to be seen the *unique* glory and grace of God's act of justification.

The peculiarity of God's action consists in this that he causes to be the righteous state or relation which is declared to be. We must remember that justification is always forensic or judicial. Therefore what God does in this case is that he constitutes the new and righteous judicial relation as well as declares this new relation to be. He constitutes the ungodly righteous, and consequently can declare them to be righteous. In the justification of sinners there is a constitutive act as well as a declarative. Or, if we will, we may say that the declarative act of God in the justification of the ungodly is constitutive. In this consists its incomparable character.[\[50\]](#)

Justification is both a declarative and a constitutive act of God's free grace. It is constitutive in order that it may be truly declarative. God must constitute the new relationship as well as declare it to be. The constitutive act consists in the imputation to us of the obedience and righteousness of Christ. The obedience of Christ must therefore be regarded as the ground of justification; it is the righteousness which God not only takes into account but reckons to our account when he justifies the ungodly.[\[51\]](#)

Such is the reality of justification. Such an understanding of the Biblical doctrine should have silenced the charges of "mere legalities" long ago, but as we have seen, it has not. The same accusations are being made against the forensic character of justification today as in the sixteenth century.[\[52\]](#) Rome is still not listening to the Scripture.

D. Justification is Direct Union With Christ

Justification is enjoyed by the believer in union with Christ. The Roman Catholic Church claims a unique mediatorial role in the justification of sinners -- it is the exclusive channel of divine grace through its priesthood and sacraments. Justifying (or sanctifying) grace is received through baptism, and is

"improved" by means of the sacrament of penance, the post-baptismal sacrament of reconciliation. Through penance -- with its confessions and works of satisfaction -- the sinner receives grace and forgiveness for sins committed after baptism. Without penance, even the baptized soul remains unforgiven for whatever mortal sins it may have committed, and, thus unshriven, cannot stand in the Day of Judgment. Such a person is not justified.

As we have already noticed, recent defenders of the Romanist view of justification do not make much of this indispensable sacerdotal element, at least in their public declarations and writings on justification aimed at Protestant audiences. Nevertheless, it is an indispensable element in their understanding of justification. In their polemic against the Protestant view, they give the impression -- by drawing attention to the "merely" legal, external, objective emphasis of the Reformational view of justification -- that the Protestant system is impersonal, a system in which the grace of God cannot be brought effectually into the life of the sinner. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

It is true that the Reformation denied the mediatorial role of the church claimed by Rome. But they did not do this so as to leave the sinner at a distance from God and His saving grace. On the contrary, they rejected the mediatorial work of the church in favor of a renewed emphasis upon the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ. They claimed that the Roman system of priestly intermediaries and sacramentalism in fact *distanced* sinners from Christ rather than bringing them closer to Him. The Pope and his priestly minions, the saints, and Mary *obscured* the sinner's sense of the presence of Christ. For all of this ecclesiolatry, they substituted the Biblical emphasis on the *nearness* of God through Christ. The sinner did not need an earthly intermediary. He already had the perfect, indeed the only, true mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (I Tim. 2:5). As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Reformers lifted up Jesus the Savior -- through the preaching of "Christ crucified" -- and men and women who looked unto Him in faith lived (John 3:14-15).

The Protestant doctrine of full and free justification -- with its proper Biblical emphasis on the forensic and covenantal character of that justification -- cannot be properly appreciated apart from the further Biblical teachings (also emphasized in a new way by the Reformers) concerning union with Christ and the internal work of the Holy Spirit in the application of redemption to the life and experience of the redeemed sinner. While further discussion of the latter would carry us too far beyond the scope of our concern in this essay, I do want to close our review of the Protestant doctrine of justification with a word or two about the former -- union with Christ.

The Bible teaches us that Christ is our great substitute. He has acted in our stead to secure the blessings of the covenant forfeited by Adam in his sin. Jesus has come to bring forgiveness and new, eternal life in fellowship with God to sinners who put their trust in Him. This is the "good news." But the greatest glory of salvation is that we do not enjoy those covenant blessings in abstraction from the beloved Person who gives them to us. On the contrary, these mercies are experienced by the believer "in union with Christ." Jesus came into the world not simply to give us blessings, but to give us Himself. He came to bring to its eschatological realization -- in all its depth and fullness -- the ancient promise of the covenant -- "I will be their God, and they will be my people, and I will dwell with them." Jesus does this in His own person, and through the relationship He graciously creates with those who love and trust Him. Who would have ever

guessed that the mystery of that central covenant blessing, when finally revealed, would be nothing less than "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27)?

It is this union with Christ that Calvin (and others in the Reformation) brought into sharp focus in connection with the Biblical reality of justification. He declared,

We deny that good works have any share in justification, but claim full authority for them in the lives of the righteous. For if he who has obtained justification possesses Christ, and, at the same time, Christ never is where his Spirit is not, it is obvious that gratuitous righteousness is necessarily connected with regeneration. Therefore, if you would duly understand how inseparable faith and works are, look to Christ, who, as the apostle teaches (I Cor. 1:30), has been given to us for justification and for sanctification.[\[53\]](#)

Quotations such as this from Calvin and others could be multiplied, but this one shows the way in which Calvin saw union with Christ, not as the logical foundation or starting-point of God's redemptive work for sinners, but as the living, personal center. Regeneration, justification, sanctification, adoption, etc. are not just so many entrees on the "smorgasbord-table" of redemption. They are rather personally bound up with Christ Himself. As Calvin points out, it is *Jesus* who is made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption (I Cor. 1:30). These spiritual blessings are thus received and enjoyed by the believer *in union with the Savior*. The fear of Rome that the Protestant doctrine of justification would lead to an undervaluation of obedience and purity in the Christian life, to whatever extent it was sincere and legitimate, arose from a failure to understand the Protestant teaching as a whole. That is why the Reformers were zealous to emphasize it over and over again. Their words have still gone largely unheeded by the advocates of Romanism.

V. Conclusion

We must draw our study to a close. We have examined the ongoing debate over justification between advocates of the Roman position ("justification by faith and works") and the Protestant position ("justification by faith alone"). In particular we have tried to focus our attention on defenses of the Roman position made by recent apologists and ex-evangelicals. Our concern has been to evaluate their arguments in light of the teaching of the Word of God and the best theological arguments produced by the church. We've seen that these recent advocates, like their predecessors, have failed to sharply set forth the real antithesis between the two positions. They have rather resorted to caricatures of their opponents' positions -- even though as former evangelicals they know full well that what they are attributing to Protestantism is untrue -- and have introduced argumentative red-herrings into the discussion that simply serve to obscure the debate.

Nevertheless, for all that, they are commanding a hearing in some circles. They are presenting a winsome appeal to Protestants. Their appeals are therefore dangerous and must be opposed with the best we have to offer in the way of a contemporary defense of the Biblical faith of our Reformation forefathers. Such a threat has endangered the church in the past. We close with the eloquent and challenging words of J.C.

Ryle, bishop of Liverpool, England, written at a time when John Henry Newman and others were leading a pilgrimage "back to Rome" that was threatening the Church of England. His words are as appropriate today as they were one-hundred years ago.

Men may call me an alarmist, if they like, for using such language. But I reply, there is a cause. The upper classes in this land are widely infected with a taste for a sensuous, histrionic, formal religion. -- The lower orders are becoming sadly familiarized with all the ceremonialism which is the stepping-stone to Popery. -- The middle classes are becoming disgusted with the Church of England, and asking what is the use of it. -- The intellectual classes are finding out that all religions are either equally good or equally bad. -- The House of Commons will do nothing unless pressed by public opinion. We have no Pymys or Hampdens there now. -- And all this time Ritualism grows and spreads. The ship is among breakers, -- breakers ahead and breakers astern, -- breakers on the right hand and breakers on the left. Something needs to be done, if we are to escape shipwreck.

The very life of the Church of England is at stake, and nothing less. Take away the Gospel from a Church and that Church is not worth preserving. A well without water, a scabbard without a sword, a steam-engine without a fire, a ship without compass and rudder, a watch without a mainspring, a stuffed carcass without life, -- all these are useless things. But there is nothing so useless as a Church without the Gospel. And this is the very question that stares us in the face. -- Is the Church of England to retain the Gospel or not? Without it in vain shall we turn to our archbishops and bishops, in vain shall we glory in our cathedrals and parish churches. Ichabod will soon be written on our walls. The ark of God will not be with us. Surely something ought to be done.[\[54\]](#)

Indeed something should be done. Let us continue to resist the threat to the gospel represented by the doctrines of Romanism -- with thoughtfulness and compassion, and with our strongest arguments and persuasions. And let us pray for these young men who have sadly taken a wrong turn, one which endangers their souls eternally. Let us pray that God would graciously grant them, and others in the Roman Catholic Church, a *new* Reformation. May the distracting splendors and earthly reassurances of Rome be eclipsed once again by "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (II Cor. 4:6)

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Notes

[1] Keating, Karl, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), p. 9.

[2] *Ibid.* []

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[4] I realize that use of terms like "Romanist" is not going to be appreciated by some of the new ex-evangelical defenders of Roman Catholicism. Karl Keating, for example, contrasts those who use such terms as "papist," or "Romish," or "jesuitical" with those who "act irenically, making common cause with Catholics on social and political matters and never using [such] terms." Terms like those mentioned above, he says, "are dead giveaways for active anti-Catholics" (Keating, *Catholicism*, p. 11). It is true that such terms can be and have been used in a gratuitously defamatory way by defenders of Protestantism. But it is also true that they can be used thoughtfully and advisedly. I hope to use them in that latter fashion. I believe it is possible to be "actively anti-Catholic," in the sense of opposing (what I take to be) the very serious errors of Rome, and seeking to persuade men to reject those teachings in favor of (what I take to be) the Biblical gospel, without being mean-spirited and abusive. At the same time the issues over which we are contending are not peripheral or trivial -- they are vitally important to the eternal destinies of men and women. As such they call for strong language and strenuous debate.

Furthermore, I will resist with all my heart the kind of spiritual indifference that parades as "irenicism" or academic "distance" and (supposed) "objectivity." Some who have written against Roman doctrine have used very strong language out of just such a deep spiritual concern (e.g., the quotations from Bishop J.C. Ryle that conclude this article). I hope to stand in that line of opposition to Rome. I will leave it to the reader, unprejudiced by the dichotomy suggested by Keating, to pass judgment on the spirit and tone of the present article.

[5] One common argumentative tactic used to disarm one's opponent in debate is to claim that one's position has not been properly understood. That charge has been made in the current discussions of justification, sometimes (perhaps) with good reason. On other occasions such a charge can be nothing less than a ploy, or itself an expression of serious misunderstanding of the issues involved. Peter Kreeft, for example, declares that "the split between Protestant and Catholic originated in a misunderstanding" (*Fundamentals of the Faith*, [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988], p. 277). He goes on to suggest (p. 279) that both Protestants and Catholics agreed that faith was necessary for salvation, and that the Bible requires good works of believers, and therefore that the problem arose in connection with the ambiguity of the terms used in the debate. He misses the fact, or at least does not mention it, that the real issue at stake was not the "necessity" of faith and works but the role of either in relationship to God's justification of the ungodly that was the heart of the disagreement.

[6] If you listen to the recent debate between Scott Hahn and Robert Knudsen on the issues of (1) the authority of church tradition and (2) the nature of justification, I think you will come away with the impression that the issues in the debate were not well-focused, and that much of the time the two advocates were "talking past each other." A tape-recording of this debate is available from Catholic Answers, P.O. Box 17181, San Diego, CA 92117 (under the title "The Authority/Justification Debate," by Scott Hahn and Robert Knudsen).

[7] I would refer the reader to the discussions of justification by John Calvin, Charles Hodge, Robert Dabney, B.B. Warfield, John Murray, and Norman Shepherd (to name only those in the Reformed theological tradition). A brief consultation of the standard works on systematic theology, and a look through the card catalog at your nearest theological library should give you more than enough to read. I am convinced from my research that there truly is *nothing new* being said in the present round of the debate (which, in my judgment, capitalizes on the *ignorance* of the hearer/reader more than on the inadequacy of the previous discussions of the subject of justification).

[8] Scott Hahn makes this point in connection with his discussion of the question of the authority of tradition (in the debate with Knudsen mentioned in n.6 above). While a student, according to Hahn, he asked his professors and other leading evangelical theologians about this issue, and (he claims) they were not able to answer his questions/objections to the traditional Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* (cf. the taped transcript of Hahn/Knudsen, "The Authority/Justification Debate").

[9] Hahn, "The Authority/Justification Debate."

[10] William Marshner refers to "a Protestant allergy to the word `merit'" (Marshner, William, *Reasons for Hope*, [Front Royal: Christendom College Press, 1978/1982], p.220). It is more than the word "merit" to which the Reformers objected -- it is the very idea that any human quality or action could be added to the righteousness and satisfaction of Jesus Christ as part of the ground of justification.

The Reformers recognized that the Bible includes the language of "merit" and "reward," and so it was not simply the idea of merit, abstractly considered, to which they objected. Rather, it was because "merit," as understood in the Romanist doctrine of justification, compromised the sufficiency of the work of Christ that they wanted to exclude the concept of human merit from their teaching on justification. Even Norman Shepherd, who in recent years has been willing to discuss the question of good works in connection with justification, has repeatedly and unequivocally affirmed that such good works, while necessary to salvation, should not be understood as part of the *ground* of justification. Their "necessity" is to be understood along other lines. This is a point that Rome has never appreciated or acknowledged, and contemporary exponents of the doctrine of justification by faith and works show no signs of having grasped the significance of it either.

[11] Herein lies the special danger of these contemporary, ex-evangelical advocates of Rome. The uninformed Protestant listening, for example, to a debate sponsored by *Catholic Answers* may be easily taken in by the appealing rhetoric which sweetly coats the dangerous spiritual poison being taught by the Roman Catholic Church.

[12] Scott Hahn confines his discussion of justification almost exclusively to the question of the necessity of good works (Hahn/Knudsen, "The Authority/Justification Debate"). So does William Marshner, though he broadens his discussion of the question more than Hahn (*Reasons*, pp. 219-238). Karl Keating has some things to say about the question of assurance, but the focus of his concern is again with the necessity of good works to salvation/justification (Keating, *Catholicism* pp. 164-176).

[13] Marshner, *Reasons*, p. 220.

[14] Murray, John, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), pp. 160-161.

[15] Shepherd, Norman, "The Grace of Justification," (mimeographed paper, 1979).

[16] I realize that not all Protestant defenders of the doctrine of "justification by faith alone" are clear on these issues. There has always been a broad range of opinion between Lutherans, Reformed, and Anabaptists on questions related to justification, particularly on the relationship of good works to saving faith.

The recent emergence of controversy within the evangelical camp over so-called "Lordship Salvation" only serves as a contemporary reminder that anyone who finally claims "to speak for Protestantism" on this vital question is presumptuous. Some of what I have already styled "caricatures" of the Protestant view are, in fact, held by some Protestants. Some of the "straw men" are *real* men. That is why recent defenders of Romanist view of justification have been able so easily to find Protestants to quote and refute.

A striking case in point is Karl Keating in his book, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*. Because of Keating's choice to limit his interaction with Protestants to actively anti-Catholic Fundamentalists -- "what follows will be no thorough review of fundamentalism as a whole and still less of Protestantism" (p. 10) -- he can confine his discussion on salvation (pp. 164-176) to a refutation of such men as Kenneth E. Hagin and Wilson Ewin, whose credentials and argumentation are more than a little suspect. Meanwhile, he has nothing to say Luther or Calvin, or even to a more recent champion of justification by faith alone like John Murray. These recent Romanist apologists have been very successful so far in defining the field of discourse to their advantage, i.e., in such a way as to place their position in the best possible light.

[17] "No doctrine in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* stands alone. Each is a part of the whole. This is especially true of the doctrine of the Christian life or, more specifically, of regeneration. Calvin continually reminds his readers that the gift of the gospel is twofold: forgiveness of sin and renewal of life. These two gifts are the reverse sides of the one experience: salvation. Thus it is essential for each gift to be understood in the context of the other. There is no true knowledge of regeneration apart from a knowledge of justification by faith alone" (Leith, John, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989], p. 87). This inseparable relationship between the various elements of the application of redemption, especially between justification and sanctification, is reflected in formulations of the *Westminster Larger Catechism*. Question #77 asks, "Wherein do justification and sanctification differ?" The answer given is, "Although sanctification be *inseparably joined* with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification his Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued: the one doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of

God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection" (emphasis added).

Note also that these English Reformation divines had no problem using the language of "infused grace" and of the Spirit's enabling of the believer to the exercise of such grace unto good works -- language so zealously regarded by Rome. But they had a Biblically-informed understanding of the application of redemption to the life of the believer, and from that standpoint they recognized that this language properly referred to sanctification.

[18] Hahn, "Authority/Justification Debate."

[19] Kreeft, *Fundamentals*, pp. 277-281.

[20] Keating, *Catholicism*, pp. 164-176.

[21] Marshner, *Reasons*, pp. 219-238.

[22] *Ibid.*, p.223.

[23] As Kenan B. Osborne observes, "When the relationship between reality and sign is of such a nature that the reality cannot be made manifest except in and through a sign, then we have a dynamism which is at work in the sacraments." (*Sacramental Theology: A General Introduction*, [New York: Paulist Press, 1988], p. 26). In so saying, Osborne reaffirms (though in more contemporary, post-Heideggerian garb) the traditional view of the necessity of the sacraments, i.e., without the mediatorial church and its sacraments, the reality of God's saving grace cannot be conveyed to men. He goes on to point out that this "necessity" is not absolute, but arises from the revealed ordinance of God. "I do not want to give the impression that this situation could not have been otherwise; God could have worked out our salvation without baptism and Eucharist. To use a Scotistic dictum, *de potentia Dei absoluta*, this is quite possible. However, on the basis of revelation, as we find it in the New Testament, baptism and Eucharist, *de potentia Dei ordinata*, are the ways in which God has chosen to bring about our salvation" (pp. 26-27). Thus Rome preserves its unique role of sole dispenser of grace through the sacraments. Its doctrine of justification presupposes at every point this mediatorial office for the Roman Church.

[24] Keating, *Catholicism* p. 167.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 167-168.

[27] Hahn, "Authority/Justification Debate."

[28] Marshner, *Reasons*, p. 222.

[29] "For Catholics, salvation depends on the state of the soul at death. Christ has already redeemed us, unlocked the gates of heaven, as it were. (*Note that redemption is not the same as salvation but is a necessary prelude.*) He did his part, and now *we have to cooperate by doing ours.* If we are to pass through those gates, we have to be in the right spiritual state. We have to be spiritually alive. If a soul is merely in a natural state, without sanctifying grace, which is the grace that gives it supernatural life, then it is dead supernaturally and incapable of enjoying heaven. It will not be allowed through the gates. But if it has sanctifying grace, then heaven is guaranteed *even if a detour through purgatorial purification is required first.* The Church teaches that only souls that are objectively good and objectively pleasing to God *merit* heaven, and such souls are ones willed with sanctifying grace. (Keating, *Catholicism*, p.166, emphasis added). All this is to say that the death of Christ is *insufficient* for salvation, and must be *supplemented* by human effort. All the talk of grace (as in "sanctifying grace") - and the Romanist is careful to emphasize that human effort must be begun and continue by the grace of God - is irrelevant to this foundational question of the sufficiency of Christ and His redemptive accomplishment. Having faith in the finished work of Christ on the Day of Judgment is simply *not enough*, and no amount of Romanist rhetoric can negate that basic, tragic reality.

[30] It appears that the anonymous poet of the "Requiem" may have been more in touch with the heart of the gospel than these theologians, for he goes on to put these words in the mouth of the trembling sinner: "*King of awful majesty / who freely savest the redeemed, / save me, O fount of mercy... / Seeking me...thou didst redeem me, suffering the cross, / let not such labor be frustrated. / O just Judge of vengeance, / give the gift of remission / before the day of reckoning.*" No demeaning here of the hope for full and free remission as the legal deliverance from the liability of punishment. No word here of self-effort or of self-righteousness. No pleas here for the recognition by God of one's own merits. Only the cry for mercy and a looking to Christ alone for pardon!

[31] Marshner, *Reasons*, p.220.

[32] *Ibid.*, p.221.

[33] *Ibid.*, p.222.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Ibid.* [36] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

[37] There is a dramatic example of this confusion in Scott Hahn's debate with Knudsen on the subject of justification. In setting forth his concern to emphasize the believer's participation in divine sonship, Hahn presents a quotation from John Murray's *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* on the subject of adoption (p. 167). His citation of Murray is so edited as to give a completely different sense from Murray's original comment, which has reference to the dangerous "confusion and error" of understanding adoption to involve participating (metaphysically) in Christ's unique "Sonship" and in the divine life of the trinity. The irony is that is precisely what Hahn is claiming. According to Hahn, only by participating

in Jesus' "own divine sonship and nothing less than His own divine sonship" (Hahn's words) can the believer *really* become a child of God (i.e., as opposed to being *simply* "declared to be" a child of God by adoption). Hahn's confusion of the metaphysical and the ethical leads him into dangerous error claiming that *the believer is absorbed into deity* by virtue of his adoption. He falls into the very thing Murray warns against, and does so while criticizing Murray for the warning! Indeed, this is not uninformed ignorance, but deliberate and willful blindness.

[38] For a detailed and thorough exegetical treatment of the relevant Biblical texts, cf. Murray, John, *New International Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959/1968), vol. I, Appendix A: "Justification," pp. 167-168.

[39] "There are passages in which the thought of giving judgment provides us with the sense in which we are to understand the word justification...Rom. 8:33,34 conclusively shows that the meaning is that which is contrasted with the word "condemn" and that which is related to the rebuttal of a judicial charge. The meaning of the word "justify," therefore, in the epistle to the Romans, and therefore in the epistle which more than any other book in Scripture unfolds the doctrine, is to declare to be righteous. Its meaning is entirely removed from the thought of making upright or holy or good or righteous" (Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, pp. 150-151).

[40] It is not clear if, in the Roman Catholic construction, it is *faith* which forms part of the ground of justification (along with good works), or the righteousness of Christ *in whom faith is placed*. Since Romanism has such an aversion to the idea of imputation, it seems more likely that Christ, by his death, merits the grace which is then infused in the sinner producing faith and good works. Thus Christ's work is acknowledged as the source of divine grace in the sinner's life, but His righteousness and satisfaction of divine justice do not themselves constitute the ground of justification. Rather, faith and good works (the fruit of grace) do.

[41] Keating, *Catholicism*, p.166.

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156 (emphasis added). Murray adds, "And we must also bear in mind that the righteousness wrought in us by regeneration and sanctification is never in this life perfect. Hence it cannot in any sense measure up to the kind of righteousness required. Only a perfect righteousness can provide the basis for a complete, perfect, and irreversible justification. Furthermore, justification gives a title to and secures eternal life (Rom. 5:17,18,21). A righteousness wrought in us equips for the enjoyment of eternal life but it cannot be the ground of such a reward" (p. 156).

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 152.

[44] Murray discusses, and finally rejects, the notion that faith itself is the righteousness contemplated in justification. The reader is referred to that careful discussion (Murray, *Commentary on Romans*, pp.354-359). As to the phrase regarding Abraham's believing in God, "it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6), Murray concludes that the righteousness contemplated in justification

"is the righteousness of God brought to bear upon us because it is by faith, and it is by faith that we become the beneficiaries of this righteousness because it is a God-righteousness. So indispensable is this complementation in the justification of the ungodly that the righteousness may be called 'the righteousness of God' or 'the righteousness of faith' without in the least implying that faith sustains the same relations to this righteousness as God does....The righteousness is a God-righteousness and it is a faith-righteousness. But it is a God-righteousness because it is of divine property; it is a faith-righteousness because it is brought to bear upon us *by faith*" (*Ibid.*, pp.358-359).

[45] Murray, *Redemption*, p. 154.

[46] If one subscribed to a "governmental theory" of the atonement, this charge might have some foundation, but *not* if one holds (as most conservative Protestants do) to the view that the atonement of Christ was a *real substitutionary satisfaction* of the demands of divine justice on behalf of His people (cf. John Murray, *Ibid.*, ch. II, "The Nature of the Atonement," pp.25-56).

[47] Cf. Murray, John, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), pp.36-41. Consider also B.B.Warfield's evaluation of the historic significance of the growing emphasis on the "covenant" in the seventeenth century: "The idea [the 'covenant' or 'federal' method of exhibiting the plan of the Lord's dealings with men] was present to the minds of the Church Fathers and the Schoolmen; and it underlay Protestant thought, both Lutheran and Reformed, from the beginning, and in the latter had come to clear expression, first in Ursinus. But now it quickly became dominant as the preferable manner of conceiving the method of the divine dealing with men. The effect was to throw into the highest relief the threefold doctrine of imputation, and to make manifest as never before the dependency of the great doctrines of sin, satisfaction, and justification upon it" (Warfield, Benjamin *Studies in Theology*, [New York: Oxford University Press, 1932], p.306).

[48] "Thus it came about that in the hands of the great Protestant leaders of the sixteenth century, and of their successors, the Protestant systematizers of the seventeenth century, the three-fold doctrine of imputation - of Adam's sin to his posterity, of the sins of His people to the Redeemer, and of the righteousness of Christ to His people - at last came into its rights as the core of the three constitutive doctrines of Christianity - the sinfulness of the human race, the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, and justification by faith. The importance of the doctrine of imputation is that it is the hinge on which these three great doctrines turn, and the guardian of their purity" (*Ibid.*, p.305).

[49] Keating, *Catholicism*, pp.167-168.

[50] Murray, *Redemption*, p.153.

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

[52] There is a price to pay for this continued willful blindness, not the least element of which is an ongoing *lack of assurance* in the piety of Rome. How could it be otherwise? If Christ has not done all the

sinner needs, and if the work of Christ might prove to be in vain, then where can the soul rest for comfort and encouragement? Modern advocates of Rome (e.g., Hahn and Keating) are somewhat defensive on the subject of assurance, charging that no one can have *absolute* certainty with regard to their salvation. But that misses the point. Does the heart have a resting-place in a fully-sufficient Savior, or is it left to languish in the doubts and fears that must necessarily come as the Christian struggles with the ongoing reality of temptation and sin?

[53] Calvin, John, "Reply to Sadoleto," quoted in Leith, *Calvin*, p. 95, n. 48.

[54] Ryle, J.C., *Light from Old Times*, (London: Chas J. Thyne & Jarvis, 1924), pp. 52-53.

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Are We Justified By Faith Alone?

By **Michael Horton**

From "What Still Divides Us: A Protestant & Roman Catholic Debate"

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Referring to the schism of the 14th and 15th centuries, one scholar observes,

"For nearly half a century, the Church was split into two or three obediences that excommunicated one another, so that every Catholic lived under excommunication by one pope or another, and, in the last analysis, no one could say with certainty which of the contenders had right on his side. The Church no longer offered certainty of salvation; she had become questionable in her whole objective form--the true Church, the true pledge of salvation, had to be sought outside the institution. It is against this background of a profoundly shaken ecclesial consciousness that we are to understand that Luther, in the conflict between his search for salvation and the tradition of the Church, ultimately came to experience the Church, not as the guarantor, but as the adversary of salvation."

I hope that the credibility of this historical assessment will not be called into question, as it comes to us from the pen of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, current head of the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith for the Church of Rome. (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, trans. by Sister Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989) p.196).

As the gavel came down to close the final session of the Council of Trent in 1563, Rome had officially and, according to her own commitment down to the present moment, irreversibly, declared that the Gospel announced by the prophets, revealed in and by Christ, and proclaimed by the apostles, was actually heretical. The most relevant Canons are the following:

Canon 9. If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone..., let him be anathema.

Canon 11. If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins,... let him be anathema.

Canon 12. If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy (supra, chapter 9), which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this

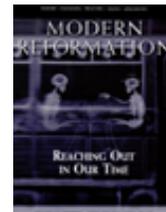
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confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema.
Canon 24. If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of the increase, let him be anathema.

Canon 30. If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema.

Canon 32. If anyone says that the good works of the one justified are in such manner the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits of him justified; or that the one justified by the good works that he performs by the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ...does not truly merit an increase of grace and eternal life... let him be anathema.

It was, therefore, not the evangelicals who were condemned in 1564, but the evangel itself. The "good news," which alone is "the power of God unto salvation" was judged by Rome to be so erroneous that anyone who embraced it was to be regarded as condemned. Let us now consider the key questions and passages relating to this doctrine.

What Is Justification? Infusion or Imputation, Process or Declaration?

In the Roman system, as we have seen, justification is sanctification. Through baptism, we are renewed and by cooperating with grace infused we merit final justification.

The long and short of this was that on the eve of the Reformation itself, there were many different interpretations of this doctrine, but the decisive moment occurred not with Luther, but with the Roman Catholic humanist, Erasmus, to whose criticism of the Latin text of Scripture we have already briefly alluded.

The Latin Vulgate, Jerome's 4th century translation of the Scriptures, had been the official translation throughout the middle ages, and its integrity was generally assumed. But then came the Renaissance, a recovery of classical learning that included a return to the original Greek text of Scripture. As Oxford theologian Alister McGrath observes, the best example of the errors in the Latin Vulgate, corrected in tail end of the Renaissance, concerns its translation of the Greek word "dikaiosune," which means "to declare righteous." It is a legal term, a verdict. But the Latin Vulgate had translated "dikaiosune" with the Latin word *iustificare*, which means "to make righteous." Erasmus and a host of classical scholars recognized that the Greek text required an understanding of justification that referred to a change in status rather than to a change in behavior or mode of being. Again, Erasmus had no doctrinal stake in this matter. He was not only a loyal son of the Roman church; he had engaged in heated polemics with Luther over free will. Nevertheless, he was Europe's leading authority on the classical languages and could not overlook the glaring mistranslations. For this reason it has been said that Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched.

It is quite remarkable that the Roman Church would continue to

embrace its erroneous view of justification, given the advances in scholarship by their own best minds.

This is true not only of the 16th century; many Roman Catholic biblical scholars of our own day recognize that the Roman position is untenable in the light of the biblical text. I am not only referring to such controversial theologians as Hans Kung, but to the accepted interpretations of Roman doctrine.

Bearing the nihil obstat and Imprimatur of the Roman Church, *Sacramentum Mundi* is a modern encyclopedia of Roman doctrine. In its article on Justification we read that justification "implies a relation with a judgment rather than a mode of being." The term for Paul,

"always has a certain forensic flavour which prevents its becoming a mere synonym of regeneration or re-creation. In later theology, however, this sense is often lost, and justification comes to mean nothing more than the infusion of grace (D 799). Now when St. Paul applies the juridical terminology to the new Christian reality, it acquires an entirely new meaning. It refers now not to the future but to the past (Rom.5:9), not to the just man but the sinner (Rom.4:5). And so the basis of justification must also be different. It can no longer be observance of the law. It must be Christ, whom God has made our righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1 Cor.1:30), which is the same thing as saying that we are justified by faith in Christ (Rom.3:28)." [by Ricardo Franco, pp. 239-240]

Furthermore, arguably the two most widely respected Roman Catholic biblical scholars, J. A. Fitzmyer and Raymond Brown, have recognized that justification is understood in the biblical text to mean legal acquittal and not a process of growth in inherent righteousness. "Justification in the Old Testament," writes Fitzmyer, "denotes one who stood acquitted or vindicated before a judge's tribunal...This uprightness (righteousness) does not belong to human beings (Rom. 10:3), and is not something that they produced or merited; it is an alien uprightness, one belonging to another (Christ) and attributed to them because of what that other had done for them...This justification comes about by grace and through faith" (Romans, AB 33, pp.116-19).

But we can even go a step beyond *Sacramentum Mundi* and Fitzmyer, citing an article that our opponents will no doubt respect, since it is published in their magazine, *This Rock* (April 1995). After attacking the Protestant doctrine of "faith alone," Leslie Rumble concedes, "Now it is quite true that Paul made use of a word which in the Greek language had the technical meaning of legal acquittal. And if the word can have no other meaning than that, one could scarcely dispute the interpretation of justification as implying no more than to be accounted as righteous or not guilty in the sight of God." But alas, "Luther had not the advantages of modern scholarship." "He belonged to an age when it was thought that the real meaning of the New Testament could be best ascertained by discovering the exact sense of the Greek language in which its books were originally written." Rumble evidently thinks that the meaning of the biblical text cannot be discerned in the same manner as Homer or Aristotle.

Having conceded that the New Testament Greek text agrees with Luther, Rumble nevertheless rejects this view on the basis that "the whole religious outlook" takes precedence over the fine print. Although he admits that this interpretation is at odds with the Scriptures in their

original language, we are supposed to take Rumble's word for it that "the whole religious outlook" of the Bible endorses the Roman position, even though its actual words contradict it.

The verbal ending of *dikaiow* is declarative; if the biblical writers intended by "justification" a process of moral transformation, there is a perfectly good verbal ending for that sort of thing in Greek: *adzo* rather than *ow*. For instance, "to make holy" is translated from the Greek verb, "*hagiodzo*," and this word is never rendered "to justify." When the biblical writers refer to justification, they use the declarative ending; when they refer to sanctification, they use the progressive ending. If it is good enough of a distinction for the biblical writers themselves, surely we should have not trouble with the Bible's own language.

Furthermore, it is an imputation of an "alien righteousness" rather than an infusion of righteous into the soul. It is not, as it has been caricatured, a "legal fiction," as if God could judge contrary to the facts. We maintain that God's judgment is strictly according to the facts, but that it is Christ's righteousness imputed to our account that allows God to be both "just and the justifier of those who believe." It is not a legal fiction because Christ's righteousness is real and perfect and it has been truly credited to the account of the believing sinner. Let me illustrate the point: 11 yrs. ago now, I went to Europe with a group of college friends. It will come as no surprise to parents everywhere that by the last week, I had run out of money and had to phone home. My parents graciously transferred funds from their account to mine and I was saved from disaster. Was that my money? In the sense that it was in my account, surely it was my money. But had I earned it? Certainly not. The only reason that my account showed a full credit instead of a deficit was because my parents, who had earned that money, had transferred it to my account. Was this a "banking fiction"?

In the same way, God's judgment that we are righteous before him even though we are not inherently righteous in ourselves is not a "legal fiction." The perfect righteousness of Christ is credited to the believer's account as though the believer had never sinned and had perfectly loved God and his neighbor with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength. The account not only lacks any debt; it shows a balance of perfect righteousness. Luther's phrase was "*simul iustus et peccator*," "simultaneously justified and sinful." God judges a believing sinner righteous not because the individual is actually righteous, but because Christ is actually righteous and the believer is covered in his righteousness. That is not to say that the believer is not being made righteous, but it is to say that this process is sanctification rather than justification; it is the effect of justification rather than its cause.

How Is One Justified? Faith Alone or Faith And Works?

Our opponents will argue that there is no single text that explicitly bears the words, justification by faith alone. They are correct, but I am certain that they would regard as simplistic the suggestion that the Scriptures do not teach the doctrine of the Trinity simply because the term is not used. The Scriptures are hardly ambiguous in excluding all human activity from being the instrument of justification with the exception of faith. This is the same as saying "faith alone." Or, to put it another way, if the Scriptures teach that we are justified by faith and not by works, then they teach "faith alone."

The Gospel is announced first in Genesis, after the Fall, where God finds Adam and Eve in their guilt and self-righteousness. Their fig leaves cannot hide their shame from God, but the Redeemer God

sacrifices an animal and clothes them in its skins, anticipating "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Already the Gospel is announced not as divine assistance in producing an inherent righteousness, but as God's covering of the believer with the righteousness of another. It is external to the believing sinner.

In God's covenant with Abraham (Gen.15), we learn again that sinners can only be justified through faith in God's gracious promise: "Abram believed the LORD, and he credit it to him as righteousness." In Habakuk 2:4, we read that while the unbelievers are "puffed up" with their own righteousness, the believer "by his faith shall live." The impossibility of being justified by an inherent righteousness--that is, by works, runs throughout Scripture. As the writer to the Hebrews insists (Hebrews 11), all of the great Old Testament saints were justified by faith, not by their own deeds. But why is it impossible for works to play any part in justification? The Scriptures declare that it is because even our best works are sinful--in fact "as filthy rags" (Is. 64:6), and the Psalmist declares, "no one living is righteous before you" (Ps.143:2). Thus, our only hope is the good news that we find in Psalm 103:10: "He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities." Isaiah foretold the day when the Messiah would "justify many and he shall bear their iniquities" (53:11).

In his earthly ministry, therefore, our Lord was regularly confronting the religious leaders with their confidence in their own works. While he offered the Gospel to the prostitutes who knew their sinfulness, he first offered the Law to those who did not. He came not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it and he held up to the self-righteous Pharisees the standard of divine perfection: "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." Now imagine the force of that. The Pharisees were so concerned to follow God's Law in every detail that they even set up elaborate rules to avoid the slightest transgression. Were Jesus to have said that our righteousness must surpass that of the prostitutes, we could have understood his point, but how could the common and rather vulgar fisherman like Peter attain a purity that exceeded that of the most righteous men in Israel? The Apostle Paul answered that question in Philippians 3. He says that if anyone had any reason to boast about his own inherent righteousness, it was he: circumcised on the 8th day, an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; "as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness of the Law, blameless." And what is Paul's response? "Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ...I regard these as dung, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith" (Phil.3:5-9). Notice the Apostle's placement of "the righteousness from God based on faith" and the "righteousness of my own" in opposition. Justification by an inherent, internal righteousness is deemed absolutely contrary to a justification that comes through faith.

This is why Jesus threatened the religious leaders with the Law itself. Although they thought that their inherent righteousness--their obedience to God's commands, was justifying them before God, they could only maintain this charade so long as they did not really know what the Law required. Therefore, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells them what it really means to fulfill the Law, that is, to love God and neighbor perfectly. Anyone who hates his neighbor is a murderer; adultery is committed not only in the physical act, but in lust. The young Pharisee who thought he had fulfilled the Law since he was a child was told by Jesus to sell everything he had and to give it to the

poor, but the man went away sad. He had not truly loved his neighbor as himself after all. When Jesus told his disciples how perfect their righteousness had to be in order to merit eternal life, they replied, "Who then can be saved?" "Jesus replied, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'" (Mt.19:24).

Echoing these words, St. Anselm in the 11th century wisely counseled, "You have not yet considered how great your sin is," and to those who trust in their own inherent righteousness, the realization of God's purity sends them away sad, angry, or more determined to try even harder to attain righteousness by their own works. Some, however, like the disciples, will relinquish their own works and, like Paul, place them in the "debit" rather than "credit" column and their despair will turn to joy in the all-sufficient merit of Christ.

Jesus taught justification by faith alone throughout his earthly ministry. First he would preach the Law so powerfully that his hearers despaired of being able to be saved by their own obedience. But then he offered the Gospel of free justification. When he healed the paralytic, for instance, forgiveness stand out as even greater than the healing itself. "When Jesus saw their faith," we read--not when he saw their love or their works or the direction of the hearts, but "when Jesus saw their faith, he said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven.'" The Pharisees were incensed at Jesus for presuming to have the right to forgive sins. In the presence of the Pharisees, Jesus forgave a prostitute, telling her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Lk.7:50).

In Luke 18:9, we find another one of those situations in which Jesus antagonized the religious leaders: "To some who were confident in their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax-collector. I fast twice a day and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.''"

Notice the contrast Jesus makes here between these two people. First, the parable is told, says Luke, to "some who were confident in their own righteousness." To the extent that Rome even speaks of meriting justification, there is a one-to-one correspondence between the Pharisee in this parable and our friends in this debate. "But," our friends will protest, "we attribute our inherent righteousness to God. It is his work in us." But the Pharisee, too, thanked God for this inherent righteousness. He pointed to his own spiritual disciplines--fasting, tithing, and so on, but he thanked God for it all. This, however, seems to have meant nothing, as Jesus sets his example beside that of a notorious sinner. Even before this tax-collector could have begun to fast, tithe, or engage in spiritual duties, he was already declared righteous. And how? He simply acknowledged his own helplessness and cried out for God's mercy. Mercy, not merit, was this man's plea. And what is the point of Jesus' story? He concludes, "I tell you that his man [the tax-collector] rather than the other, went home justified before God."

Jesus even insisted that the faith itself with which we claim the righteousness of Christ is a gift of God, since "no one can even come to Me unless it is given by the Father" (Jn.6:44). He declared repeatedly that he did not come to save the righteous, but sinners. In his High Priestly Prayer, with the Crucifixion just over the horizon, Jesus prayed concerning his people, "For them I sanctify myself, that

they too may be truly sanctified." He fulfilled all righteousness, not in order to save himself--for he was sinless, but in order to merit for us salvation by his obedience to the Law. He sanctified himself--he perfectly obeyed the Law and satisfied God's righteous requirements, so that we too may be acceptable to God in him.

This is why, especially in John's writings, we are told, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 Jn.5:13). And Jesus stated, "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jn. 5:24). It is just this confidence that is denied by the Roman system and by all gospels of works-righteousness. Ask our friends today if they can know that they have eternal life, and they will answer that they can only know that they are now in a state of grace, but cannot be certain about whether they will be condemned in the end. Jesus declared, speaking of himself in the third person, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." It is Jesus himself who employs the legal language of justification and condemnation, acquittal and judgment. In fact, he adds, "This is the verdict." From our Lord's own mouth, we are repeatedly told that everyone who believes is justified and everyone who does not believe is condemned. Works flow from faith, but it is faith alone that leads to acquittal.

In Acts 13:39, we read, "Through Christ everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses." In Acts 15:9, we are told that "he purified their hearts by faith."

But we have not even yet given our attention to the teaching of St. Paul, whose letters were written especially to oppose false gospels and confirm believers in the Gospel of free grace. Where is the addition of "alone" necessary when Paul so clearly declares, "For in the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The just by faith shall live'?" If it is by faith "from first to last," it is by faith alone. Like Jesus, Paul first confronts his readers with the Law's demands and concludes that Jew and Gentile alike are unrighteous and helpless. "No one is righteous, no not even one," he declares, not even the person who is attempting to obey God. This is especially interesting in the light of Vatican II's pronouncement that all who seek to obey God, even apart from Christ, will be saved. Furthermore, like Jesus, Paul contrasts a righteousness that is by faith and a righteousness that is by works: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from Law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. The righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Rom.3:21). Notice what Paul says: It is a righteousness that comes to us as a gift, not as an infused disposition; further, it is a righteousness that is received by faith, apart from Law. The two ideas are diametrically opposed.

In Romans 4, Paul reaches the heart of his argument, appealing to the example of Abraham. "What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'" In other words, a salary isn't a gift; the company owes it to you. Rome actually argues that we merit (*de congruo*) justification by cooperating with grace. But merit is precisely what Paul is excluding here. "However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness." In one fell swoop, Paul destroys every plank in the

Roman doctrine of justification. Rome says that justification is merited; Paul says it is a gift. Rome says that it is given to those who work for it; Paul says it is given to those who do not work for it. Rome says that God only justifies those who are truly holy inherently; Paul says that God only justifies those who are truly wicked inherently. Rome says that justification is a process of attaining righteousness; Paul says that justification is a declaration of imputed or "credited" righteousness.

Furthermore, Paul cites David's example. "Blessed is the man to whom God will not impute sin." Justification for Paul therefore has nothing whatever to do with a process of moral improvement; it is concerned with imputation. Then he goes back to Abraham: "Under what circumstances was [righteousness] credited [to Abraham]?" Paul asks. "Was it after he was circumcised or before?" This is the heart of our question today. "Under what circumstances does God justify?" Is it before or after we begin in holiness? Rome answers that this justification is declared on the basis that the sinner is no longer a sinner, but has already begun in holiness. But Paul answers that it is before the new obedience begins. Abraham, Paul observes, was justified before he obeyed God in offering Isaac. "So then he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them...It was not through the Law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise..., but through the righteousness that comes by faith." And why is the righteousness that comes by Law opposed to the righteousness that comes by faith? Paul says it is "because the law brings wrath," since it can only render a "guilty" verdict in our case.

If we are justified by a process of cooperating with grace, we can only have peace with God when we no longer sin. But Paul writes, "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand" (Rom.5:1-2). Paul drives this point home further in verse 9: "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"

In the latter half of Romans 5, Paul unpacks the legal, forensic character of justification he has defended. Adam's sin was imputed to the entire human race. We were made guilty before God not by a process of sin being infused into us, but by a declaration of our solidarity with Adam as our representative head. In exactly the same way, Paul says, Christ's righteousness is imputed to all believers by virtue of their union with him. The imputation of righteousness is just as forensic or legal as the imputation of sin: "The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification." Are our opponents really willing to argue that condemnation is a moral process? Jesus said that he who does not believe stands condemned already, just as the one who believes "has passed from death unto life." Where is the process that leads to acquittal? From the mouth of our Lord and his apostles, the justification is as declarative as the condemnation. As a result, Paul confidently announces, "Therefore, there is now"--not at the end, if one cooperates with grace, but "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom.8:1).

In 1 Corinthians, Paul tells us that the Gospel, though foolishness to those who are perishing, is the wisdom and power of God. For Christ has been made "our righteousness, holiness, and redemption." Here, Paul is simply picking up a recurring Old Testament Gospel announcement. For instance, we read in Is.61:10: "I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness."

Jeremiah prophesied of Christ, "In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness." Christ does not merely infuse me with righteousness; he is my righteousness. This is the meaning of the animal skins with which God clothes Adam and Eve and the robe that the father places over the prodigal son. And yet, this is precisely what Rome denies: God cannot, we are told, judge me to be righteous while I am unrighteous simply by transferring Christ's righteousness to me. But this is precisely what Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul are arguing.

But it is in Paul's letter to the Galatians where one finds the apostle's magisterial defense of the Gospel in the crucible of controversy. It is especially relevant in view of the fact that the church fathers themselves offered contradictory views on the way of salvation. In his epistle to the Corinthians, Clement, Bishop of Rome just a few decades after Paul's letters to the same church, wrote, "So we too who by his will have been called in Christ Jesus are justified not of ourselves nor through our own wisdom or understanding or piety, nor yet through anything that we have done in purity of heart, but through that faith through which almighty God has justified all men from the beginning, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Justin Martyr, John Chrysostom, and other Fathers concur. The Fathers said some good things and some bad things, but always sent us directly and finally back to Scripture.

If a prominent church founded by the Apostle Paul could fall so quickly into a false gospel of works-righteousness, we should not be surprised at the confusion of the early church. "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"

Paul describes his public controversy with Peter, which would have been a rather remarkable thing had Peter been the first infallible pope. But Peter did, in the end, come around and in his own letters acknowledged Paul's writings as Scripture. If Peter could be corrected by Scripture, one would have hoped that those who claimed to be his successors might have imitated him. In fact, Peter himself declared that there is a heavenly inheritance reserved in heaven for those "who through faith are shielded by God's power" and assures his readers, "you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. 1:5). Peter opens his second epistle with the greeting, "To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours." In Galatians, Paul declares that "by observing the Law no one will be justified...for if righteousness could be gained through the Law, Christ died for nothing." The apostle could not have been more aggravated: "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?...All who rely on observing the Law are under a curse...Clearly no one is justified before God by the Law, because 'The righteous will live by faith.' The Law is not based on faith; on the contrary." In Rome, one is justified by faith and obedience, but for Paul, justification by faith is contrary to justification by obedience. For the next several chapters, Paul labors this contradiction. "So that Law was put in charge to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith," he declares in 3:24. After having been freed from the bondage of legalism, "How is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?" he wonders in astonishment. "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from

Christ; you have fallen from grace."

The famous passage in Ephesians 2:8, 9 could not be clearer: "For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and none of this is of yourselves; it is all the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." It is by grace through faith, not of works! This parallels Paul's statement in Romans 11: "For if it is by grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."

To Timothy, the Apostle writes, "God has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace" (2 Tim.1:9). God has called us to a holy life, to be sure, but this is the goal, not the cause, of our justification. Our opponents will say that whenever Paul refers to "works" or "law" as contrary to faith, he is referring to the ceremonial law of the Old Testament, but here we have one of many obvious examples that Paul intends to exclude all works by saying that it is "not because of anything we have done." Surely that includes all works, ceremonial or moral. It is by faith alone.

In the Scriptures and throughout church history, proponents of this view have been charged with opening the door to loose-living. It was the Apostle Paul himself who realized the full impact of this Gospel when, after announcing that "where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more," he anticipated his readers' shock: "What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?" His answer, and ours, is "Heaven forbid! How shall we who have died to sin live any longer in it." We do not deny regeneration and sanctification, we simply do not regard this as the basis for our acceptance before a holy God. While the Apostle Paul knew that the Gospel he preached would raise the objection that this would lead to loose-living, Rome has never had to worry about this accusation concerning the gospel she proclaims.

Why would we "hunger and thirst after righteousness" if it is already imputed?, one may ask. It is precisely because it is already imputed that we hunger and thirst after obedience to God in gratitude for our redemption. It is similar to asking why a foster child would want to obey if he is already adopted. We are sons, not slaves; we serve God out of gratitude, not fear of judgment or hope of rewards. Tell me that I have to sufficiently love God and my neighbor before I can enjoy God's favor and the last thing I will want to do is love God. What I must hear if I am to end my war against God is that he forgives the wicked. He makes sons out of his enemies. He declares those to be righteous who in themselves cannot love God and their neighbor. Then I will lay down my weapons and accept the truce.

In Protestant theology, "salvation" is a broad word, encompassing not only justification, but election, atonement, regeneration, sanctification, adoption, and final glorification. In these debates, a recurring error on the Roman Catholic side is to assume a false antithesis: Either the Bible teaches that justification and sanctification are identical or the Bible teaches that there is no such thing as sanctification. This debate, therefore, is not over the question of whether God renews us and initiates a process of gradual growth in holiness throughout the course of our lives. "We are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone," Luther stated, and this recurring affirmation of the new birth and sanctification as necessarily linked to justification leads one to wonder how the caricatures continue to be perpetuated without foundation. For instance, in the magazine published by Catholic Answers, This Rock, Leslie Rumble (April, 1993) makes the astounding claim concerning Luther that the German Reformer denied that a change takes place in the person who is justified. "He remains exactly as he was before" and

the believer is never transformed. This demonstrates a remarkable lack of familiarity with the Protestant position. We affirm conversion and the life-long process of growing in sanctifying grace.

This is why we do not find a problem with James, although Roman Catholics find great problems with the rest of Scripture on this subject. For Paul, speaking to new converts who have been steeped in legalism and paganism, the content of the Gospel is uppermost. For James, addressing believers who gloried in what they called "faith," but did not seem to think that works were a necessary consequence of saving faith, justification was a matter of making your claim to being justified stand up in a court of law. For Paul, the court of law is God's and it is heavenly; for James, it is man's and it is earthly. For Paul, the fact of justification is in view; for James, the proof of justification is the concern. Therefore, when James declares that faith is dead if it is alone, how could one object? Luther himself said that we were justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. This is James' point: Anything that you call faith that does not love or serve is not really justifying faith, but is "dead." Of course, this faith-- "dead" faith, cannot save anybody. Only living, active, working faith is the genuine article. However, it is not the fruit of faith that justifies. It does not justify in acting, working, loving, or serving, but in believing and receiving Christ's gift of righteousness. The faith that Paul described is not the faith the James sees in those antinomians who thought that faith was nothing more than an assent to certain facts.

But is this doctrine fundamental to our faith? Isn't it simply a matter of fine-tuning things? In our day zeal is more important than knowledge. As long as people "love the Lord" and seek to live the Christian life, such doctrinal debates as these can only serve to distract us from our common mission in the world. And yet, Paul tells us that his fellow-Israelites were zealous indeed. "For I can bear witness of them that they have a great zeal for God, but it is not according to knowledge." Knowledge of certain things is essential for salvation, and the particular piece of knowledge Paul has in mind is the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone: "Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not accept God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:1-4).

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Why Does Rome Teach What It Does About Justification and Salvation?

Robert L. Reymond

After informing my Sunday School class at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Fort Lauderdale, Florida (9/19/99) about the teachings of the Council of Trent on justification, one of the members of the class asked me: "Since its teachings are so obviously non-Pauline, why does Rome teach what it does about justification and salvation?" My answer that morning was somewhat sparse: *Rome has followed its Tradition, and that Tradition has been bad Tradition.* But thinking that many Protestant Christians might have the same question, I have expanded upon my answer here.

From the vantage point of the great sixteenth-century magisterial Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church's problems in the area of soteriology (and there are many) begin in the arena of authority. Protestantism has one authority—the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Rome has two authorities—Scripture and Tradition—and Protestantism disagrees with Rome's understanding of and teaching on both.

Scripture and Canon

With respect to its Scripture authority, Rome places twelve additional Apocryphal ("hidden," then "obscure," then "spurious") books within the Old Testament, namely, *Tobit*, *Judith*, the (six) Additions to the *Book of Esther*, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the *Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach* (known also as *Ecclesiasticus*), *Baruch*, the *Letter of Jeremiah*, the *Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men* (considered one work), *Susanna*, *Bel and the Dragon*, and *1 and 2 Maccabees*. Bruce M. Metzger, in his editorial "Introduction to the Apocrypha," in *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, explains how these books came to be included by Rome in its Old Testament canon: "At the end of the fourth century Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome, the most learned biblical scholar of his day, to prepare a standard Latin version of the Scriptures (the Latin Vulgate). In the Old Testament Jerome followed the Hebrew canon

and by means of prefaces called the reader's attention to *the separate category of the apocryphal books* [In the preface to his Latin Version of the Bible Jerome, after translating the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, says: "Anything outside of these must be placed within the Apocrypha," that is, within the non-canonical books--RLR]. Subsequent copyists of the Latin Bible, however, were not always careful to transmit Jerome's prefaces, and during the medieval period the Western Church generally regarded these books as part of the holy Scriptures. [At one of its prolonged sessions which occurred on April 8, 1546, with only fifty-three prelates present, not one of whom was a scholar distinguished for historical learning—RLR]...the Council of Trent decreed [in its "Sacrosancta"] that the canon of the Old Testament includes them (except the *Prayer of Manasseh* and *1* and *2 Esdras*). [And, I may add, Trent went on to anathematize anyone who "does not accept these entire books, with all their parts, as they have customarily been read in the Catholic Church and are found in the ancient editions of the Latin Vulgate, as sacred and canonical." This decree was confirmed by Vatican I (1870).—RLR]. Subsequent editions of the Latin Vulgate text, officially approved by the Roman Catholic Church, contain these books incorporated within the sequence of the Old Testament books. Thus *Tobit* and *Judith* stand after *Nehemiah*; the *Wisdom of Solomon* and *Ecclesiasticus* stand after the *Song of Solomon*; *Baruch* (with the *Letter of Jeremiah* as chapter 6) stands after *Lamentations*; and *1* and *2 Maccabees* conclude the books of the Old Testament. [Metzger could have also noted that the *Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men* is placed between *Daniel* 3:23 and 3:24; *Susanna* is placed either at the beginning of *Daniel* as an introduction to chapter 1 (this placement is that of the Greek text of Theodotian and the Old Latin, Coptic, and Arabic versions) or at the end of *Daniel* as chapter 13 (this placement is that of the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate); and *Bel and the Dragon* is placed either at the close of *Daniel* 12 in the Greek manuscripts of *Daniel* or at the end of *Daniel* as chapter 14 in the Latin Vulgate, *Susanna* being chapter 13.—RLR] An appendix after the New Testament contains the *Prayer of Manasseh* and *1* and *2 Esdras*, without implying canonical status. ...Thus Roman Catholics accept as fully canonical those books and parts of books which Protestants call the Apocrypha (except the *Prayer of Manasseh* and *1* and *2 Esdras*, which both groups regard as apocryphal)." (Emphasis supplied)

How shall we respond to all this? To begin, these Apocryphal books were written predominantly in Greek (*Tobit*, *Judith*, *Ecclesiasticus*, part of *Baruch*, and *1 Maccabees* are the exceptions here, having been written in Hebrew or, in part at least, in Aramaic) during the last two centuries before Christ

and the first century of the Christian era, *long after the Hebrew Old Testament canon was completed*. Interestingly, these books themselves, from first to last, bear testimony to the assertion of the Jewish historian Josephus (*Against Apion*, 1.8) that "the exact succession of the prophets" had been broken after the close of the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament. Nowhere in them is found the phrase, "Thus saith the Lord," which occurs so frequently in the Old Testament. Accordingly, the Palestinian Jews never accepted these Apocryphal books as canonical, their canon being essentially the same as what the Protestant Old Testament is today (see Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1.41; *Babylonian Talmud*, Yomah 9b, Sota 48b, Sanhedrin 11a). Nor did Jesus or the New Testament writers ever cite from these books. When Paul declared then that the Jews possessed "the oracles of God" (*Romans* 3:2), he was implicitly excluding the Apocrypha from those "oracles."

According to Gleason L. Archer, Jr., the Septuagint—the pre-Christian Alexandrian Jewish translation of

the Hebrew Old Testament—was the only ancient version which included in one manuscript tradition or another the books of the Apocrypha. This has led some scholars to speak of an "Alexandrian Canon" which held equal authority among Jews along with the "Palestinian Canon." But, writes Archer, while Philo of Alexandria "quotes frequently from the canonical books of the 'Palestinian Canon,' he never once quotes from any of the apocryphal books." Furthermore, Aquila's Greek version, even though it did not contain the Apocrypha, was accepted by Alexandrian Jews in the second century a.d. Jerome explained the presence of the Apocrypha in the Alexandrian version by saying that the Alexandrian Jews included in their edition of the Old Testament both the canonical books and the books which were "ecclesiastical" (that is, considered valuable though not inspired). While it is true that the Septuagint served as the Greek "Bible" of the early church and of the apostles in their mission to the Gentiles, there is no evidence, as I just said, that a New Testament writer cites from any of the Apocryphal books.

These books abound in historical, geographical, and chronological inaccuracies and anachronism. Consider just two of the more apparent inaccuracies:

1. It is said in *Tobit* 1:4-5 that the division of the kingdom under Jereboam I, which occurred in 931 b.c., occurred when Tobit was a "young man." But Tobit is also said to be a young Israelite captive living in Nineveh under Shalmaneser in the late eight century b.c. This would make him a "young man" almost 200 years old at the time of the Assyrian Captivity and he lived into the reign of Esarhaddon (680-668 b.c.). But according to *Tobit* 14:11 he died when he was 158 years old (according to the Latin text, he died when he was 102).
2. *Judith* 1:1 declares Nebuchadnezzar reigned over the Assyrians at Nineveh at the time that Arphaxad reigned over the Medes in Ecbatana. But Nebuchadnezzar did not reign over the Assyrians at Nineveh; he was the second king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire reigning at Babylon. Arphaxad is unknown.

They also teach doctrines which are at variance with the inspired Scriptures. For example, *2 Maccabees* 12:43-45 teaches the efficacy of prayers and offerings for the dead. *Ecclesiasticus* 3:30 teaches that almsgiving makes atonement for sin and justifies cruelty to slaves (33:26, 28). The *Wisdom*

of Solomon teaches the doctrine of emanation (7:25) and the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of souls (8:18-20).

Accordingly, the Dutch Bible published by Jacob von Liesveldt at Antwerp (1526) placed the Apocryphal books after Malachi and identified the section as "the books which are not in the canon, that is to say, which one does not find among the Jews in the Hebrew." The six-volume Swiss-German Bible (1527-1529) placed the Apocryphal books in the fifth volume, the title page of which volume reads: "These are the books which are not reckoned as biblical by the ancients, nor are found among the Hebrews." Concerned to return to the sole authority of inspired, inerrant Scripture, Martin Luther in his German translation of the Bible (1534) placed the Apocryphal books once again between the Old and New

Testaments with the title: "Apocrypha, that is, books which are not held equal to the sacred Scriptures and nevertheless are useful and good to read." Miles Coverdale's English translation of the Bible (1535) put them in the same position with the title: "Apocrypha. The books and treatises which among the fathers of old are not reckoned to be of like authority with the other books of the Bible, neither are they found in the Canon of the Old Testament." The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England (1562) state concerning the Apocrypha: "And the other books (as Jerome saith) the Church doth read for example of life, and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine." And the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1648) declares: "The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings" (I.3).

Then, because of its views on Tradition Rome also rejects most of the great attributes of Scripture that Protestantism holds in high esteem, namely, Scripture's canonicity, its necessity, its self-attestation, its sufficiency, its perspicuity, and its finality. So historic Protestantism and Roman Catholicism do not share the same Bible, either extensively or intensively. For Protestantism the Bible alone (*sola Scriptura*) is self-validating and absolutely authoritative in all matters of faith and practice; for Roman Catholicism its enlarged Bible (and this applies to any given statement in it) has only the authority and meaning the Roman Church has determined to give to it.

Tradition

With respect to its Tradition, which Protestantism rejects outright as its authority, Rome insists that its Tradition possesses an authority equal to that of Scripture itself and that the church should receive and venerate its Tradition with the same feeling of piety and reverence that it feels for the Old and New Testaments. Very cleverly, the *Catechism of the Catholic*

Church (1994) blurs the distinction between canonical revelation (which is indisputably authoritative) and Rome's own later traditions (which are non-canonical and therefore not authoritative) when it declares in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus' teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit. The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament, and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition" (paragraph 83).

It is true, of course, that the first Christians did not have a written New Testament, but they did have the Old Testament and inspired apostles living among them to give them authoritative *revelational* instruction which is referred to as "the traditions" (*tas paradoseis*, literally, "the things passed on") in 2 *Thessalonians* 2:15. But it is a giant leap in logic and theological reaching and equivocation of the worst kind simply to assert, because there was such a thing as "*apostolic* tradition" coming *directly* from the apostles in the New Testament age, that the fact of *that* "tradition" justifies Rome's claim to an ongoing, perpetual "process of living Tradition" within its communion throughout the present age whose authority is on a par with Scripture's authority.

The problem with this dual authority of Scripture and Tradition, of course, is that the Scriptures cannot

(and in fact do not) really govern the content of Tradition, not to mention the fact that with this view of Tradition, given Rome's view of itself as a *living* organism in its capacity as the "depository of Tradition," there can never be a codification of or limitation placed upon the content of this Tradition, not even by Scripture. As Charles Elliot stated: "...so far as we are aware, there is no publication which contains a summary of what the Church believes under the head of tradition." As a result, because Rome's Tradition is ever free to include doctrines which are the very antithesis of Scripture teaching while yet claiming divine authority—becoming thereby bad tradition as recent history will verify (consider the papal dogmas of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, papal infallibility in 1870, and the Assumption of Mary in 1950)—the Church is left vulnerable to every kind of innovation. Moreover, Rome's teaching on Tradition impiously implies, since Protestantism self-consciously rejects one of the two "indispensable media of divine revelation," that Protestantism cannot possibly be the church of Christ, when in fact it is Rome with its dogmatic deliverances from the Council of Trent to the present day that is perverting Christian truth by its "traditions of men."

Papal Infallibility

Before we say anything more I must discuss Rome's doctrine of papal infallibility, which is a major aspect of its Tradition and thus contributes in a major way, for Roman Catholic belief, to the authority of Church Tradition. The Roman Catholic Church since the early Middle Ages has contended that in *Matthew* 16:18 Jesus declared that Peter was to be the first Pope (of Rome, of course) and as such the supreme leader of Christendom, and that his supremacy would be transmitted to each Bishop of Rome who would succeed him. This contention is dramatically captured by the Latin inscription around the entablature just below the great dome of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome: *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc*

petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam. Accordingly, the Roman Catholic *Baltimore Catechism* states: "Christ gave special powers in His Church to St. Peter by making him the head of the Apostles and the chief teacher and ruler of the entire Church. Christ did not intend that the special power of chief teacher and ruler of the entire Church should be exercised by St. Peter alone, but intended that this power should be passed down to his successor, the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, who is the Vicar of Christ on earth and the visible head of the Church."

The Roman Catholic Church has employed this dogma to claim for itself the authority to bind men's consciences by its interpretation of Scripture, to add new doctrines not taught in the Scripture, and to reinterpret the plain teaching of Scripture. It has done so, as we have suggested, by first distinguishing Peter from the other apostles and then by claiming that his apostolic authority is continued in the single line of Bishops of Rome.

Now it is true that in the early years of the New Testament era Peter was a leader among the apostles. A case can even be made that he was the "first among equals" (*primus inter pares*) in some sense. Consider

the following data. There are approximately 140 references to Peter in the four *Gospels*, some 30 more than all the references to the other disciples combined. He stands at the head of the list of the twelve apostles in each of the lists given in the New Testament (*Matthew* 10:2 [note Matthew's "first" here]; *Mark* 3:16; *Luke* 6:14; *Acts* 1:13), and he is included among that "inner circle" of disciples (Peter, James, and John), which alone witnessed certain miraculous events such as Jesus' transfiguration; he is the spokesman for the disciples on several occasions (*Matthew* 15:15; 17:24-25; 19:27; *John* 6:68-69); it is he who walked with Jesus on the sea (*Matthew* 14:28-29); it is he whom Jesus specifically charged to "strengthen your brothers" (*Luke* 22:32). He was in charge in the selection of the one to take Judas' place in *Acts* 1; it was he who preached the first "Christian sermon" on the Day of Pentecost in *Acts* 2,

converting many Jews to the Way; it was his activities (along with John's) which Luke recounts in the first half of *Acts*; it was he whom God chose to be the missionary who would take the special action with regard to Cornelius' household in behalf of Gentile salvation in *Acts* 10; his was the first testimony to be recounted by Luke at the assembly in Jerusalem in *Acts* 15; his name appears first in Paul's "official list" of those to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection (*1 Corinthians* 15:5); and Paul even refers to him (along with James and John) as a "pillar" (*stulos*) in the church at Jerusalem (*Galatians* 2:9). All this is beyond dispute. But to derive Rome's understanding of Peter's priority, which goes beyond what the New Testament actually teaches about it, from *Matthew* 16:18 (Rome bolsters its position with a few related verses such as *Luke* 22:31-32 and *John* 21:16) forces the verse to say something which it does not say. For the verse to bear such heavy doctrinal weight, the Roman Catholic apologist must demonstrate the following things *exegetically* and not simply assert them dogmatically:

Proposition 1. That by his reference to "this rock" in his explanation Jesus referred to Peter personally and exclusively in his office as an apostle to the total exclusion of the other apostles;

Proposition 2. That the uniqueness that belongs to the apostolic office in the New Testament and in this case to Peter in particular *could* be transmitted, that is, was *transmissible*, to his "papal successors," and was *in fact* transmitted to his successors; and that the unique apostolic authority which the other apostles also possessed *could not* be and in fact *was not* transmitted, that is to say, was *non-transmissible*, to their successors;

Proposition 3. That Jesus intended his promise to Peter *in fact* to extend in a repetitive way to Peter's "papal successors" throughout the entire period of the church to the end of the age; and

Proposition 4. That Jesus' promise to Peter, while it could and should be *chronologically* extended to his "papal successors," cannot be *geographically* extended but must rather be restricted in its transmissibility to only one (at a time) Bishop who ministers in only *one* particular city among the many cities in which Peter doubtless ministered, namely, to the Bishop of Rome. Calvin made this point this way: "By what right do [the Roman apologists] bind to a [specific] place this dignity which has been given without mention of place?" (*Institutes*, IV. vi. 11).

The Roman Catholic apologist must also be able to demonstrate *historically* that Peter in fact became the first Bishop of Rome and not simply assert it dogmatically. But what are the facts? Irenaeus and Eusebius

of Caesarea both make Linus, mentioned in *2 Timothy* 4:21, the first Bishop of Rome. That Peter may have died, as ancient tradition has it, in Rome is a distinct possibility (see *1 Peter* 5:13 where "Babylon" has been rather uniformly understood by commentators as a metaphor for Rome), but that he ever actually pastored the church there is a blatant fiction which the more candid scholars in the Roman communion will acknowledge. Jerome's Latin

translation of Eusebius (but not Eusebius' Greek copy) records that Peter ministered in Rome for twenty-five years, but if Philip

Schaff (as well as many other church historians) is to be believed, this is "a colossal chronological mistake."

Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome in early a.d. 57, but he did not address the letter to Peter or refer to him anywhere in it as its pastor. And in the last chapter he extended greetings to no less than twenty-six specific friends in the Imperial city but he makes no mention of Peter which would have been a major oversight, indeed an affront to Peter, if in fact Peter were "ruling" the Roman church at that time. Then later when Paul was himself in Rome, from which city he wrote both his four prison letters during his first imprisonment in a.d. 60-62 when he "was welcoming all who came to him" (*Acts* 28:30), and his last pastoral letter during his second imprisonment around a.d. 64, in which letters he extended greetings to his letters' recipients from ten specific people in Rome, again he makes no mention of Peter being there. Here is a period of time spanning about seven years (a.d. 57-64) during which time Paul related himself to the Roman church both as correspondent and as resident, but he says not a word which would suggest that he believed Peter was in Rome. What are we to make of Paul's silence? And if Peter was at Rome and was simply not mentioned by Paul in any of these letters, what are we to conclude about him when Paul declares to the Philippians: "I have no one else [besides Timothy] of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus" (*Philippians* 2:20-21); or when he writes to Timothy later and says: "Only Luke is with me.... At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me" (*2 Timothy* 4:11, 16)? And what are we to make of an alleged extended ministry on Peter's part *in Rome* in light of Paul's statement in *Galatians* 2:7-8 that the apostolate had entrusted Peter with missionary efforts to Jews? Are we to conclude that Peter had been disobedient to that trust? I think not. For just as Paul wrote several of his letters to churches he had founded, so it would appear that Peter also, writing from Babylon to dispersed Jewish Christians (see his use of *diaspora* in *1 Peter* 1:1) in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, was writing to people he had evangelized in those places. The one glimpse we have from Paul's writings concerning Peter's whereabouts and ministry is found in *1 Corinthians* 9:5 where he suggests that Cephas, his wife with him (see *Matthew* 8:14), was an itinerant evangelist carrying out the trust which the other apostles had given him. From this data we must conclude, if Peter did in fact reach Rome as tradition says, that his purpose more than likely would have been only to pay the church there not much more than a casual visit, and that he would have arrived there only shortly before his death which, according to tradition, occurred during the Neronian persecution.

The Roman Catholic apologist must also be able to address, to the satisfaction of reasonable men, the following questions:

Question 1. Why do Mark (8:27-30) and Luke (9:18-21), while they also recount the Caesarea Philippi conversation between Jesus and Peter, omit all reference to that part of Jesus' conversation which grants to Peter his alleged priority over the other apostles, the point which for Rome is the very heart and central point of our Lord's teaching ministry?

Question 2. Why does the New Testament record more of Peter's errors after the Caesarea Philippi confession than of any of the other apostles? I am referring to

- a. his "satanic" and "man-minding" rejection of Jesus' announcement that he would die, *Matthew* 16:22-23;
- b. his "leveling" or "Arian" comparison of Jesus with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, *Matthew* 17:4-5;
- c. his ignorant and impetuous refusal to let Jesus wash his feet and then his self-willed dictating of the terms according to which Jesus would wash him, *John* 13:8-9;
- d. his sleepiness while Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, *Matthew* 26:36-45;
- e. his precipitous use of the sword, *Matthew* 26:51-54;
- f. his prideful protestation of unfailing faithfulness and then his three denials of Jesus, recorded in all four *Gospels*;
- g. his impulsive curiosity about John's future, expressed no sooner than Jesus had restored him to fellowship, which netted him Christ's stern "That's none of your business," *John* 21:21-22; and
- h. even after Christ's resurrection, the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost, and the role he played in the Cornelius incident, his betrayal of the truth of the Gospel of pure grace at Antioch by his compromising actions which called for Paul's public rebuke, *Galatians* 2:11-14.

Where is the infallibility and the guarantee of the purity and continuity of the Gospel in this man's actions? It will not do to respond, as Roman apologists do, that Peter was only infallible in what he taught *ex cathedra* and that these errors on his part only highlight the real oneness of the man with sinful humanity at large. For "actions speak louder than words," and surely in the last cited instance Peter's action, which more than likely was accompanied by some word of explanation from him to the church at Antioch about his action, betrayed the purity of the Gospel of grace, which action warranted Paul's public rebuke.

Question 3. Why can the disciples after the Caesarea Philippi incident still dispute among themselves concerning who was the greatest (*Matthew* 18:1; 20:20-28; *Luke* 22:24)? Apparently *they* did not understand that Jesus' statement had given Peter any priority over them. And if Christ had in fact intended by his Caesarea Philippi pronouncement that Peter was to be his vicar and the leader of all Christendom, why did he not clear up the disciples' confusion once and for all by telling them so straightforwardly?

Question 4. Why was Peter, if he was the head of the church, dispatched by the leaders of the Jerusalem church to investigate what was going on in Samaria (*Acts* 8:14) instead of sending other apostles to investigate the Samaritan revival?

Question 5. Why did the other apostles and the brotherhood in general feel they could challenge Peter's involvement in the Cornelius incident if he was in fact the undisputed and infallible head of the church (*Acts* 11:1-18)?

Question 6. Why does Paul list Peter as only one of the "pillars" in the mother church of Jerusalem, and second after James at that (*Galatians* 2:9)?

Question 7. Why at the Jerusalem Council in *Acts* 15, over which James quite obviously presided, is Peter merely the first speaker, assuming no special prerogatives in the debate that ensued, and not the president of that Council? Why was the entire matter not simply submitted to Peter rather than to the Council, and why did not the decision go forth as a "Petrine" deliverance rather than an "apostolic" decree?

Question 8. Why can Paul say of the Jerusalem leadership (James, Peter and John) who "seemed to be something": "What they were makes no difference to me; *God shows no partiality*" (2:6)?

Question 9. Why, if Peter was the Bishop and Pastor of Rome, as the Roman Catholic Church maintains, and if it was Paul's established missionary practice "to preach the Gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation" (*Romans* 15:20; see *2 Corinthians* 10:16)—why, I ask, does Paul declare that he had longed to come to Rome and had purposed many times to come there (but had been prevented before from doing so) "so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong" and "in

order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles" (*Romans* 1:11-13)? Would not such activity at Rome on Paul's part have been both a denial of his own missionary policy and an affront to Peter, whom Rome alleges was pastor there at that time?

Question 10. Why does Peter describe himself as simply "*an* apostle of Jesus Christ," as one among many "living stones" (*lithoi zontes*), and "the fellow elder" (*ho sumpresbuteros*) with other elders (*1 Peter* 1:1; 5:1)?

Question 11. Why, if Peter was the living, earthly head of the church at that time, does he disappear completely from Luke's *Acts* after *Acts* 15, with very few references to him, apart from his own two

letters, in the rest of the New Testament?

Question 12. Why does Peter, if he was the first pope, contradict Roman Catholic teaching that the purchase of indulgences will bring forgiveness of sin for oneself and will deliver one's loved ones from Purgatory when he declares that "it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed...but with the precious blood of Christ" (*1 Peter* 1:18-19)?

Question 13. Why does Peter, if he was the first pope, contradict Roman Catholic teaching that the laity needs a priestly clergy to mediate between them and God when he teaches that in Christ all his readers are "a holy priesthood" (*1 Peter* 2:5, *hierateuma hagion*) and "a royal priesthood" (*1 Peter* 2:9, *basileion hierateuma*) who have direct access to God through Christ?

Question 14. Why does Peter teach, *contra* Rome's teaching, in *1 Peter* 2:13 that the authority of the emperor, not his, is "supreme" (*huperechonti*) in secular matters?

Question 15. Why does Peter teach, in *1 Peter* 3:12, *contra* Rome's teaching, that Christians do not need to go to God through the mediation of Mary or any other saint, for God gladly hears the prayers of his true children when they pray: "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayers"?

Question 16. Why does Peter teach, *contra* Rome's teaching concerning the Mass as a necessary and essential *re-sacrifice* of Christ, in *1 Peter* 3:18 that Christ "died for sins *once for all* [*hapax*], the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God"?

Question 17. Why in the earliest Patristic literature is Paul venerated as often as Peter, a fact admitted by Roman Catholic scholars?

Question 18. Would John the "beloved disciple" and one of the original apostles, who apparently outlived Peter, have been subject to the Bishop of Rome (Linus or Clement?) who allegedly succeeded to Peter's "throne"?

Question 19. Why did no Roman Bishop before Callistus I (died *c.* a.d. 223), who by the way countenanced the heresy of modalism, use the *Matthew* 16 passage to support the primacy of the Roman bishopric; and when he did, why was he rebuked by such notable contemporaries as Tertullian who totally rejected the notion that Jesus' saying applied to later bishops at all, and Firmilian, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, who opposed the notion that the Roman bishopric is entitled by succession to the "throne" of Peter?

Question 20. This raises the larger question, namely, while the church at Rome was no doubt influential, why is there no

indication in the first two centuries of the Christian era that the rest of the church recognized the Roman

church as supreme or that the rest of the church acceded to Rome any claimed or recognized sovereignty over Christendom?

Question 21. Why did the first four ecumenical councils, which were held—two in the fourth, and two in the fifth century (whose doctrinal decisions are generally admitted by Christians everywhere, including Protestants, to have been orthodox)—neither say nor do anything which affords the slightest endorsement of the claim of the Roman Bishop's supremacy but to the contrary in several instances actually passed decrees or canons which the Bishop of Rome (or his agents) opposed and protested against, with the first such council which explicitly asserts the Roman Bishop's supremacy being the Fourth Lateran Council held under Pope Innocent III in a.d. 1215?

Question 22. How does Roman Catholic theology in this entire matter avoid the charge of "asserting the consequent" or of "begging the question" (*petitio principii*) when it makes a highly questionable dogma (based as it is upon exegesis which has been approved by only a small minority of fathers in the church), namely, its self-serving dogma of the primacy of the Roman Bishop, the basis for its claim that it alone is justified in proclaiming any dogma whatsoever, including the Roman bishop's primacy over the entire church?

Needless to say, in my opinion Rome's exegesis of *Matthew* 16 and its historically developed dogmatic claim to authoritative primacy in the Christian world simply cannot be exegetically demonstrated and sustained from Scripture itself. Rome's claim of papal infallibility is surely one of the great hoaxes foisted upon professing Christendom, which claim all the rest of Christendom—Orthodox and Protestant—has formally and officially rejected, upon which false base rests Rome's entire sacerdotal system of salvation which is its chief engine of revenue.

Rome's claim of papal infallibility is also a blatant rejection of the many significant opposing testimonies in church history. While Jesus, true enough, said that upon "this rock" (*taute te petra*) he was going to build his "assembly," whether this phrase has for its antecedent Peter personally and exclusively and in what sense Jesus was going to build his "assembly" on Peter have been matters of considerable controversy in the church virtually from the beginning. Roman Catholic Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick prepared a paper to be delivered at Vatican I (1870), in which he noted that five interpretations of the word "rock" were held in antiquity:

1. The first declared that the church was built on Peter, endorsed by seventeen fathers.
2. The second understood the words as referring to all the apostles, Peter being simply the Primate, the opinion of eight fathers.
3. The third asserted that the words applied to the faith that Peter professed, espoused by forty-four fathers, some of whom are the most important and representative.
4. The fourth declared that the words were to be understood of Jesus Christ, the church being built upon him, the view of sixteen fathers.

5. The fifth understood the term "rock" to apply to the faithful themselves who, by believing in Christ, were made the living stones in the temple of his body, an opinion held by only very few (107-108).

These statistics show that the view that eventually became normative for Rome was a minority view in the ancient church, being held by about 20 percent of the fathers consulted, and thus far from certain. Where is Rome's allegiance to *this* ancient tradition? It obviously does not suit Rome to follow its Tradition at this point.

As samplings of this divergence of ancient opinion, Origen, making his usual distinction between the letter and the spiritual intention of the text, urged that according to the letter the rock in Jesus' explanation referred to Peter while the Spirit had in mind everyone who becomes such as Peter was. Tertullian explicitly declared that the power to bind and to loose was given to Peter *personally* then and there and was not passed on to the Roman Bishop. Cyprian held that Jesus was addressing the whole body of bishops in speaking of Peter since, he says, he later endowed all the apostles "with a like partnership both of honour and power." He also contends that Jesus spoke specifically of Peter only to highlight the necessity of the *unity* of the church. Chrysostom, followed by Gregory of Nyssa, Isidore of Pelusium, the Latin father Hilary, and the later Greek fathers Theodoret, Theophanes, Theophylact, and John of Damascus, held that the "rock" in Jesus' explanation was the faith of Peter's confession. The later Augustine believed the rock was not Peter but Christ.

During the Middle Ages the Roman Bishop regularly employed *Matthew* 16 to ground Rome's claim to ecclesiastical primacy as though no other understanding were possible. But at the time of the Reformation Luther returned to Augustine at this point ("The rock is the Son of God, Jesus Christ himself

and no one else"), and urged that Peter's "rock-like" characteristic applied not to his person but only to his faith in Jesus who was the Rock. Calvin also held that the Rock was Christ and that in addressing Peter as "Rock" Christ was addressing both Peter and all other believers as well in the sense that the bond of faith in Christ is the basis on which the church grows. Zwingli taught that Peter is only the type of him who believes in Christ as the sole Rock. It can be safely said, I think, that all of the Reformers believed that the true Rock of the church is Jesus Christ, with Peter being the "Rock" not in respect to his person but in respect to his being the type of all who trust in Jesus as Messiah and God.

Given this divergence of opinion, what did Jesus mean then by his statement? I have argued in my *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness* for the authenticity of the pericope. I argued in the same work that by his confession Peter declared his conviction that Jesus was both the long-promised Old Testament Messiah and the divine Son of God. I pointed out there that it was in response to Peter's exclamatory declaration, "You are [*su ei*] the Messiah, the Son of the living God!" that Jesus responded to Peter as he did: "And I am saying to you that you are [*su ei*] a "peter" [literally, 'a rock']!" I think it important to note that in his exclamation Peter did not employ a proper name to designate Jesus; rather, he ascribed to him two titles, the first functional (Messiah), the second ontological (Son of the living God). I would suggest from the parallelism in the two *su ei* clauses that Jesus may have intended to

respond in kind. That is to say, he may not have employed *petros* as a proper name. Rather, he may have likewise ascribed to him only a title: "You are a rock!" And by capitalizing the Greek word *petros* as it does, the Greek rendering of the Aramaic *kepha*, which latter word Jesus almost certainly used, the editors of our critical editions of the Greek New Testament may have misled us. Jesus may have intended to say, in other words, not "You are Peter," but "You are a rock!" by which exclamation I suggest he would have meant, "You are [truly] a rock [by describing me as you just did]!" If so, when Jesus continued by saying, "and upon *this rock* [note: he does not say "upon you"] I will build my 'assembly,'" I would suggest that he may have intended to say that it was upon Peter's "rock-like" *description* of him as the Messiah and the Son of the living God, *which understanding the Father had just graciously revealed to Peter*, and not upon Peter *personally* that he would ground his church. This would mean, in sum, that the "bed-rock" itself of the church is the fact of Christ's own messianic investiture and his ontological existence as the Second Person of the Godhead, just as Paul would later write: "No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (*1 Corinthians* 3:11; see also *1 Corinthians* 10:4: "...and the rock was Christ [*he petra de en ho Christos*]"). In confessing the same Peter was himself "a rock."

It is entirely possible, of course, that Jesus did intend to say that upon Peter he would build his church in some sense (I think sometimes that our "Protestant" reluctance to admit this possibility plays into the hands of the Roman apologist), a possibility that certainly receives support from the next verse where Jesus declared to Peter: "I will give to *you* [singular] the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever *you* [singular] bind upon Earth shall have been bound in Heaven, and whatever *you* [singular] loose upon Earth shall have been loosed in Heaven" (16:19). But in what sense?

Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah and Son of the living God, just revealed to him by the Father, cannot be excluded from Christ's reference to Peter as "a rock." Not Peter personally as the man but Peter as the *confessing apostle*—confessing specifically what he did, namely, the revealed truth about Jesus being the Messiah and the Son of the living God—is the foundation rock of the church: "This interpretation is demanded by the sequel in the passage which follows (*Mt.* 16:22-23). There Jesus calls Peter by another name: Satan. Just as Peter had spoken by revelation from the Father, he now becomes the mouthpiece of the devil. In confessing Jesus to be the Christ he was the rock, in tempting Jesus to refuse the cross he is Satan. He is called Satan only in direct reference to his word of seduction. Apart from that expression the designation does not apply. Jesus is not declaring that Peter the man is a Satan in terms of all his personal qualities, nor is satanicity a *character indelibilis*. Peter is Satan as he speaks for Satan. [This would require by analogy that] Peter is a rock as he speaks for God."

This shows then that Peter was a "rock" *only* in his office as a confessing apostle speaking the Word of God. When he (or any pope) spoke something authoritatively other than the Word of God, he became not a rock but a "Satan" (may we also say an "Antichrist"?).

Furthermore, it must be noted in this connection that to the rest of the disciples (*Matthew* 18:1) several days later Jesus gave the same kingdom authority that he had given to Peter when he said, "Truly I say to *you* [plural], whatever *you* [plural] bind upon Earth shall have been bound in Heaven, and whatever *you* [plural] loose upon Earth shall have been loosed in Heaven" (18:18). He did the same thing on the night

of his resurrection when he "breathed on [the ten disciples] and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whoever's sins *you* [plural] forgive, they have been forgiven; whoever's *you* [plural] retain, they have been retained'" (*John* 20:22-23). What should we make of this similar promise of the keys to the other disciples? I suggest that Jesus was implying on these two latter occasions what Paul would later state explicitly, namely, that Christ's church would be "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (*Ephesians* 2:20; see *1 Corinthians* 10:4), and what John would later symbolically depict in *Revelation* as one aspect of the church as the "bride" of Christ: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (*Rev* 21:14).

In sum, the New Testament teaching grants a certain priority to Peter among the original Twelve, but this priority, to use Jack Dean Kingsbury's phrase, seems to have been "salvation- [or redemptive-] historical" in nature, that is, Peter occupied a *primus inter pares* position only during the specific time frame of the "salvation history" in which he lived. The New Testament does not restrict the church's foundation to him alone but founds the church on the entire apostolate, not in regard to their persons as such but in regard to their office in the church as authoritative teachers of doctrine who confess the truth about Jesus. I must conclude from all of the Scripture data that there is no warrant whatever for Rome's dogma of the exclusive primacy of "Peter's chair" in these words of Jesus.

What then can we safely say about Jesus' "assembly" or "church" on the basis of his words in *Matthew* 16:18? First, the disciples did not appear to have any difficulty comprehending Jesus' talk about building his *ekklesia*. They rather obviously did not find it a totally new or strange concept. This is surely to be traced to the fact that the concept had its roots in the Old Testament's recurring depiction of Israel as God's "congregation" or "assembly." Second, it is ultimately Jesus, not men, who "will build" his church. Like a wise master-builder who builds a house, so Jesus will build his church. Third, his "building," more specifically his "temple" (*Ephesians* 2:20-21), will be unconquerable: The very gates of Hades (the power of death?) will not prevail against it. Fourth, he would build it upon the "bed-rock" of his own person as the Messiah and divine Son of God as this "bedrock" comes to expression in both his and his apostles' authoritative teaching. Fifth, his *ekklesia*, made up of those who like Peter confess his

messianic role and divine Sonship, would be "the assembly [or "congregation"] of the Messiah." Sixth, his *ekklesia* would become the vehicle of authority (see "the keys of the kingdom of Heaven") throughout this age for carrying out the predetermining will of Heaven (see the "shall have been's") by "binding" (that is, "retaining") the non-elect man's sins through the "smell of death" character for him (2 *Corinthians* 2:16) of the Gospel proclamation and/or of church discipline, and "loosing" (that is, "forgiving") the elect man's sins through the "fragrance of life" character for him (2 *Corinthians* 2:16) of the same Gospel proclamation and/or of church discipline. These two activities on the church's part ("binding" and "loosing" in accordance with the predetermining will of Heaven) would become then the means through the centuries by which Jesus would "build" his, the divine Messiah's, "assembly." Seventh, Jesus' statement suggests that his "assembly" would be a *world-wide* entity for this appears to be the connotation of the word here. Finally, the fact that the "foundation stones" of his "assembly" were given the keys of the *kingdom of Heaven* indicates that there is a direct connection between his church and the kingdom of God. In other words, by entrusting oneself in saving faith to the Christ espoused in

the apostles' doctrine, one enters Messiah's church which is also the present redemptive expression of the kingdom of God among men. As Paul will write later: "[The Father] delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son of his love" (*Colossians* 1:13).

The Apostate Fathers

The upshot of all this—and this is the first half of my response to the original question—is that Rome bases its soteriological teaching not primarily on Scripture but primarily on its own "infallible, unamendable" Tradition that virtually from the beginning began to exhibit great error.

With this last observation we come to the second half of my response to the class member's original question, for it is one of the saddest facts of church history that, with regard to its tradition, from the post-apostolic age onward the church fell more and more into serious soteriological error, with grace and faith giving way to legalism and the doing of good works as the pronounced way of salvation. An unevangelical nomism runs virtually unabated through the writings of the church fathers. Only upon rare occasion, and not even fully in Augustine, was the voice of Paul clearly heard again before the sixteenth-century magisterial Reformation where it was heard in the preaching and writing of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin. Kenneth Escott Kirk writes: "St. Paul's indignant wonder was evoked by the reversion of a small province of the Christian Church [Galatia] to the legalistic spirit of the Jewish religion. Had he lived half a century or a century later, his cause for amazement would have been increased a hundredfold. The example of the Galatians might be thought to have infected the entire Christian Church; writer after writer seems to have little other interest than to express the genius of Christianity wholly in terms of law and obedience, reward and punishment."

J. L. Neve carefully documents in the apostolic fathers how quickly after the age of Paul—doubtless due to Jewish and Hellenistic influences without and the tug of the Pelagian heart within—the emphasis in their preaching and writings on soteriology fell more and more upon human works and their merit and upon moralism. J. N. D. Kelly reaches similar conclusions. Richard Lovelace affirms: "By the early second century it is clear that Christians had come to think of themselves *as being justified through being sanctified*, accepted as righteous according to their actual obedience to the new Law of Christ." And Thomas F. Torrance, in his *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers*—whose entire work is an inquiry into the literature of the apostolic fathers, that is to say, into the *Didache of the Twelve Apostles*, the *First Epistle of Clement*, the *Epistles of Ignatius*, the *Epistle of Polycarp*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and the *Second Epistle of Clement*, in order to discern how and why such a great divergence away from the teaching of the New Testament occurred in their understanding of salvation—concludes his research by saying: "In the Apostolic Fathers grace did not have [the] radical character [that it had in the New Testament]. The great presupposition of the Christian life, for them, was not a deed of decisive significance that cut across human life and set it on a wholly new basis grounded upon the self-giving of God. What took absolute precedence was God's call to a new life in obedience to revealed truth. Grace, as far as it was grasped, was subsidiary to that. And so religion was thought of primarily in terms of man's acts toward God, *in the striving toward justification*, much less in terms of God's acts for man which put him in the right with God once and for all."

"...Salvation is wrought, they thought, certainly by divine pardon but on the ground of repentance, not apparently on the ground of the death of Christ alone.... It was not seen that the whole of salvation is centred in the person and death of Christ, for there God has Himself come into the world and wrought a final act of redemption which undercuts all our own endeavours at self-justification, and places us in an entirely new situation in which faith alone saves a man, and through which alone is a man free to do righteousness spontaneously under the

constraining love of Christ. That was not understood by the apostolic fathers, and it is the primary reason for the degeneration of their Christian faith into something so different from the New Testament."

Thus the early post-apostolic church's sub-Christian soteriological deliverances launched the church on a doctrinal trajectory that moved virtually the entire church (there was always a "remnant" that put up resistance) away from the pristine Pauline teaching on salvation by pure grace and justification by faith alone, a trajectory that eventually came to expression in Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, and Semi-Semi-Pelagianism, that then found formal expression in the system of Thomas Aquinas, and finally became the hardened official position of the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent.

This naturalistic soteriological vision (for that is what it is) in its purest expression, which Benjamin B. Warfield designated "autosoterism" ("self-salvation"), the church has called "Pelagianism" named for Pelagius, the late-fourth/early-fifth-century British monk who formally taught it. This vision contends that men can save themselves, that is to say, that *their native powers are such that men are capable of doing everything that God requires of them for salvation.*

Over against this soteric plan, the supernaturalistic vision, designated "Augustinianism" after Augustine (354-430), Bishop of Hippo, who vigorously resisted Pelagius' teachings, insists that *men are incapable of saving themselves and that all the powers essential to the saving of the soul must come from God.* Augustinianism triumphed formally, if not actually, over Pelagianism in a.d. 418 when Pelagianism was condemned at the Sixteenth Council of Carthage. In this conciliar triumph, Warfield notes, "...it was once for all settled that Christianity was to remain a religion, and a religion for sinful men, and not rot down into a mere ethical system, fitted only for the righteous who need no salvation." In other words, the church of Jesus Christ, alone among all the religions of the world in this regard, in its best creedal moments is "supernaturalistic" or "Augustinian" in its soteric conception that God must save men, and every Christian *should be* in this sense "Augustinian" in his soteric beliefs.

As I just intimated, Pelagianism did not die with its conciliar condemnation in a.d. 418, men being born as they are with Pelagian hearts, which fact makes it necessary to fight this battle in every generation. Rather, it only went underground, "meanwhile vexing the Church with modified forms of itself, modified just enough to escape the letter of the Church's condemnation." For example, it reappeared at once in the Semi-Pelagian denial of the necessity of *prevenient* grace for salvation. This was opposed by the Second Council of Orange—not an ecumenical council—in a.d. 529. Alister E. McGrath, after noting in his study, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, that the earlier pronouncements of the Sixteenth Council of Carthage were "vague at several points which were to prove of significance, and these were revised at what is generally regarded as being the most important council of the early church to deal with the

doctrine of justification—the Second Council of Orange, convened in 529," then observes: "No other council was convened to discuss the doctrine of justification between [529] and 1545, when the Council of Trent assembled to debate that doctrine, among many other things. There was thus a period of over a millennium during which the teaching office of the church remained silent on the issue of justification. This silence serves to further enhance the importance of the pronouncements of Orange II on the matter, as these thus come to represent the definitive teaching of the Christian church on the doctrine of justification during the medieval period, before the Council of Trent was convened. Recent scholarship has established that no theologian of the Middle Ages ever cites the decisions of Orange II, or shows the slightest awareness of the existence of such decisions. For reasons that we simply do not understand, from the tenth century until the assembly of the Council of Trent in 1545, the theologians of the western church appear to be unaware of the existence of such a council, let alone its pronouncements. The theologians of the Middle Ages were thus obliged to base their teaching on justification on the canons of the Council of Carthage, which were simply incapable of bearing the strain which came to be placed upon them. The increasing precision of the technical terms employed within the theological schools inevitably led to the somewhat loose terms used by the Council of Carthage being interpreted in a manner quite alien to that intended by those who originally employed them."

So while the Second Council of Orange in a.d. 529 saved the church from Semi-Pelagianism, regrettably that same council betrayed the church into the Semi-Semi-Pelagian denial of the *irresistibility* of prevenient grace by human free will, which theological vision eventually came to expression in the popular medieval slogan: "God will not deny his grace to those who do what lies within their power" (see William of Occam's *facere quod in se est*, "doing what in you is"). In spite of recurring protests through the centuries by such men as Gottschalk, Bradwardine, Wycliffe, and Hus, eventually Thomas Aquinas, as we have already noted, systematized this theological vision and the Council of Trent (1545) was to declare it the official position of those churches in communion

with Counter-Reformation Rome. In doing so, the Council of Trent rejected the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone even though their own great humanist scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam and other of Rome's brightest philologists by this time had uncovered the fact that Jerome's Latin Vulgate had mistranslated the Greek word *metanoeo* ("repent") as "do penance" and the Greek word *dikaioo* ("declare righteous") as "*make* righteous."

The Reformers of the sixteenth century, being Biblical scholars, rejected Rome's soteriology with all of its concomitant errors and returned to the earlier best insights of the later Augustine and before him to the inspired insights, in particular, of Paul's letters to the Galatians and to the Romans. But sadly where

Protestantism placed its "either-or" or *solus* ("alone") (see its *sola Scriptura, sola gratia, solus Christus, sola fide, soli Deo gloria*), Roman Catholic theology has continued to place its "both-and" or *et* ("and") (see its doctrines of Scripture *and* tradition, Christ *and* Mary, grace *and* nature, faith in Christ *and* works, faith in Christ *and* indulgences, the

sacred *and* the secular). All of these "ands" are outworkings of Rome's theologico-philosophical commitment to Aquinas' vision of the "analogy of being" (*analogia entis*) between God and creation, the latter of which Rome regards, over against Reformation theology, as being still fundamentally good in spite of the *Genesis* Fall. For myself, standing with the Reformers who contended that the first principle of all true theology is the fact that "God is there and he has spoken with finality in Holy Scripture," while I often disagree with the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, I do agree with him completely when he wrote: "I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of Antichrist, and think that because of it one cannot become Catholic." For it is indeed the invention of Antichrist when one adds anything to the great *sola's* of the Reformation. The "and" in "grace and...", "Christ and...", or "faith and..." brings the apostolic curse and damnation (*Galatians* 1:6-9; 5:2-6; *Romans* 11:6). For they who would trust in the work of Christ *plus* their own "good works" *plus* the righteousness and intercessory work of Mary and the saints *plus* their pilgrimages and their purchases of indulgences are, according to Paul, making Christ's cross-work of no value (*Galatians* 5:2), alienating themselves from Christ (5:4a), falling away from grace (5:4b) abolishing the offence of the cross (5:11), trusting in a "different gospel which is no gospel at all" (1:6-7) at the peril of their souls and showing thereby that they have never been truly regenerated by the Holy Spirit (or they would submit to the teaching of the Holy Scripture) but are still lost in their sin.

Because Pelagianism, including all the modified forms it takes today (Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Arminianism), is always an attack on the *sola gratia, solus Christus, sola fide* soteric principle, claiming as it does that man deserves at least some measure of credit for effecting his salvation, if not in its initiation, at least in his cooperation with initiating grace, the true church of Jesus Christ must ever be on guard to ensure that the *sola gratia, solus Christus, sola fide* soteric principle of Holy Scripture and of Paul specifically continues to be proclaimed as the sole way of salvation.

Dr. Robert L. Reymond, Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Knox Theological Seminary, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, holds the B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from Bob Jones University. A prolific author, Dr. Reymond recently published *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson, 1998), which *The Trinity Review* reviewed earlier this year.

Announcement

One of our readers has asked us to make the following announcement:

The Christian Theological Society

The Christian Theological Society, "devoted to the pursuit of truth through carefully reading and applying rigorous argumentation to the Scriptures," discusses the books of Gordon Clark and the Trinity Foundation. Three years in existence, the Society currently meets on Friday evenings in the town of

Methuen, Massachusetts. Anyone interested in joining the Society may contact Patrick Sciacca. Telephone: 978.685.2062; email: Psci679117@aol.com.

Publishing News from The Trinity Foundation

Two new books are now available: *The Scripturalism of Gordon H. Clark* by Dr. W. Gary Crampton, and *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church* by Dr. John W. Robbins.

The Scripturalism of Gordon H. Clark is an introduction to the fundamental principles of Dr. Clark's theological philosophy useful to both beginning and advanced students of Dr. Clark's thought. It is available in trade paperback for \$9.95 plus shipping.

Ecclesiastical Megalomania is a detailed examination of the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church from a Biblical point of view. *EM* relies on the official pronouncements of the Vatican and Roman Church councils to discuss such topics as the Church-State's view of private property, business, and the proper role of government, and the role the Church-State has played in fostering modern collectivism and totalitarianism. *EM* is available in both hardback (\$29.95 plus shipping) and paperback (\$19.95 plus shipping)

In the works is a new book, *The Church Effeminate and Other Essays*, which includes essays by Charles Hodge, J. Gresham Machen, J. C. Ryle, Gordon Clark, and others on the definition, purpose, structure, and function of the church. *The Church Effeminate* should be available in spring 2000.

In summer 2000 *A Different Gospel: The Theology of the Roman Catholic Church* should be released. Based in part on the proceedings of the 1998 Trinity Foundation Conference on Christianity and Roman Catholicism, *A Different Gospel* will examine the false religious message of the Roman Church-State.

There are many other works in progress at The Foundation, and we intend to keep you informed as they near publication. As always, please keep us in your prayers that our publications and conferences might accurately teach the Word of God, and that we might be clear and bold in our presentation.

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"Roman Catholicism: Justification by Faith Alone"

Galatians 1:1-9

January 25, 1998

In our series of sermons on the contemporary challenge of Roman Catholicism we considered first the place of the church, especially the established, mainstream church in the history of salvation, reminding ourselves of how often and how regularly the church became an enemy of the gospel rather than its defender, how God had to send reformers to her and how badly those reformers were usually treated, and how this history of the church in the world undermines the Roman Catholic claim that its antiquity and its stability as an ecclesiastical institution are somehow evidence that it is the true church and its teaching most faithful to the truth. We then considered the fundamental issue of authority for faith and life and the Roman Catholic claim that that authority lies in two places, not one: not the Bible alone, but the Bible and the Church and its tradition. We pointed out why neither the Bible nor the history of Roman Catholic tradition supports the Roman Catholic claim that the church has authority from God to generate new doctrines and laws for the people of God.

But the real issue, the central issue dividing Roman Catholicism from evangelical Protestantism is and has always been the question of the justification of a sinner before God, or what we might call "the way of salvation." It was this issue, before all others, that led to the original division between what we now know as Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity. It was this issue that created the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century and it has been ever since the first thing that Protestants always raise in objecting to Roman Catholicism. Protestants charge Roman Catholicism with a subversion of the gospel, a betrayal of the principle of salvation by grace, or salvation as a free gift, **because they reintroduce human works and human righteousness into the matter of the justification of sinners before God. Roman Catholics speak of human beings meriting justification, of increasing their righteousness before God by their good works, and even, as in the Canons of the Council of Trent, of penitent Christians "redeeming their sins" through Christ.** All of this sounds to Protestant ears as a denial of what Paul so emphatically teaches, that justification -- a sinner's acceptance with God -- depends upon God's grace and not our works and upon Christ's righteousness received by faith and not upon our righteousness, our doing of good, in any respect.

Now, Roman Catholics in turn protest that Protestants caricature and misrepresent their view and, further, that Protestants are not themselves faithful to the teaching of the Bible. It will probably not surprise you to learn that the question is more complicated than either many Protestants or many Roman Catholics suppose. Protestants can often speak as if Roman Catholics believe simply in salvation by works and not by grace and it is easy for Catholic apologists to disprove that charge. Roman Catholics will often themselves admit that too many Roman Catholics have too often spoken in ways as to confirm Protestants' worst suspicions. Cardinal Ratzinger, presently the chief doctrinal officer of the Roman Catholic church, has admitted that Martin Luther encountered the church in his day as the adversary of salvation.

I've listened to two very lengthy debates between the advocates of the Protestant view of justification and the advocates of the Roman Catholic view. In each case there have been complicated discussions about the meaning of Greek words and arcane arguments about the opinions of church fathers. If I attempted to summarize these discussions and evaluate them in a single sermon, I am sure I would leave the most of you totally confused and entirely unedified. You will not be surprised of course to hear that I do believe that Protestant biblical and historical scholarship gets the best of these arguments. Even prominent Roman Catholic biblical scholars have admitted as much.

But, what you might not have expected to hear was the passion with which the advocates of the Roman view of justification argue their case **from the Bible**. They make their stand on many texts in which Christians are described as righteous **in connection with their behavior**, many texts that teach that an obedient life is a

necessary part of our salvation, that faith without works is dead, that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body, that is, that the final judgment will consider our good works or the absence of good works in our lives as Christians.

Without a doubt the Bible says all of this. So the question comes to this: who has accurately and faithfully related all of this teaching to what the Bible says about the justification, the pardon and the acceptance of sinners before God? I want to answer that question in a way that is clearest and most helpful, and I think the best way to do that is to answer it in respect to two questions that arise from Paul's teaching about justification, especially in Galatians and Romans where his clearest, his most emphatic, substantial, systematic and polemic teaching about justification is found.

I. The first question then is: which view of justification best satisfies the tremendous polemic of the Apostle Paul, especially in Galatians, against the notion of human works contributing to a sinner's justification? And my answer is that Protestant doctrine is a much more faithful representation of Paul's mind, teaching, and spirit, than is Roman Catholic doctrine on justification.

In the debates that I listened to about justification, the defenders of the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification all were at pains to defend their doctrine against the charge of works-righteousness or justification by works. (There clearly was a sensitivity on this point. They have felt the force of the Protestant charge that they preach and teach a justification by works.) One Catholic theologian began his presentation by pointing out what the Roman Catholic doctrine had in common with the Protestant doctrine. He listed four respects in which they were the same. These were:

1. That the faith by which a sinner is justified is a gift of God's grace;
2. This gift is given us on no other basis than the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection for our salvation, so that all good works that follow from faith likewise have no other basis than the work of Christ;
3. That the faith that justifies works through love and so is necessarily connected to sanctification and good works;
4. And, since sanctification -- or the renewal of our lives in holiness and love -- is part of our salvation, good works are a necessary part of our salvation, but they are not the ground or the basis on which or the reason for which we are saved. (Whether that last statement is an entirely accurate summation of RC teaching is a question. The former evangelicals, of which this theologian was one, seem to me driven to place the most evangelical interpretation possible on the Catholic position.)

Then he went on to describe the difference that remains between the two views. Roman Catholicism, he said, saw justification and sanctification as two ways of looking at the same thing, whereas Protestantism separated them. Justification in Catholic thought is a process of making the sinner righteous, not a matter of declaring the sinner righteous and it is based on Christ's righteousness **in** us, making us righteous, rather than Christ's righteousness **imputed or reckoned to us** as our righteousness. Our justification **is** then suspended on this righteousness which is now also **our** righteousness, these good works that we perform through faith and which, without God's grace, we could not perform. We are not right with God because Christ's righteousness is counted as ours, is reckoned to our account, as if we had died his death and lived his life. We are right with God because we have become righteous through Christ and are now declared righteous because we are in fact righteous. Indeed, our justification, in the Roman system, waxes and wanes. We can have more or less of it depending upon how righteous we are at any point, we can even lose our justification entirely by the

commission of mortal sin. (Conc. Trid. Sess. VI, c.7)

Now, someone might very well think -- and through the centuries some have thought: It seems to me that this dispute is overblown; we are making too much of it. The Roman Catholics say that justification is by grace and by faith and so do the Protestants. The Roman Catholics say that there must be works for justification, but the Protestants say that faith must lead to works. What is the big difference? Why can't we just accept the measure of our agreement and leave the theologians to argue about the details?

Well, Galatians is the reason. Paul in Galatians 1:6-9 is the reason! It may seem to someone unfamiliar with the debate that the difference between the two positions is too small to matter. But, in matters of doctrine and faith the difference between the opposing systems -- both of which are competing for the loyalty of folk who profess to believe the same faith, to give their loyalty to the teaching of the same book, and to look back for their hope of eternal life to the same historical events -- I say, the difference between the views is often reduced to a line as sharp as a razor's edge, yet on one side of that line there is God's truth and on the other a departure from it. [Buchanan, *Justification*, p. 136] So it was in Galatia when Paul wrote to the churches there.

Think back to that situation for a moment. The judaizers against whose teaching Paul wrote that fiery letter to the Galatians were Christians by their own profession. They believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the Messiah, and the Savior of the world. They believed that his death was for our sins and the basis of our salvation. Without the slightest doubt they believed that he had risen from the dead. They preached faith in Christ! They believed that, as Christians, they should serve the Lord with their lives and proclaim his name to those who were not yet his followers. There is nothing whatever to suggest that they would not have argued that a believer's obedience and good works were possible only by the grace of God. Without a doubt, that is what they would have said. The Jewish rabbis of their day said that! **The only difference was that in the matter of justification** they held that what Christ had done had to be "pieced out" by the believer's own keeping of the law.

I can very easily hear one of those judaizers putting the difference in terms that seemed to suggest that on almost all points they were in complete agreement with Paul. And we can easily imagine certain Christians arguing that with the whole world to be won Paul should apply to them the great principle of Christian unity and not allow this technical theological debate to interfere with their common cause. But Paul in fact did nothing of the kind. He replied furiously to the doctrinal position of the judaizers and claimed that the entire gospel was at stake in this codicil the judaizers were seeking to add to the gospel of justification by faith alone.

[By the way, let me mention as an aside, the apologists for Rome all make a major point of saying that the Bible doesn't ever say that justification is by faith **alone** and that James, in fact, in James 2:24 says that a believer is justified by his works and **not** by faith alone. But Paul makes a mighty point of saying that justification is by faith **"from first to last"** and that is by faith and **not by works** which is all that Luther meant by saying that it was by faith alone. Further, it is not hard to show that James and Paul are talking about justification and its relationship to works from two different vantagepoints. Paul is talking about the ground, the basis for a sinner's acceptance with God and how sinners receive that acceptance through faith in Christ and not through their works; James is talking about the nature of that justifying faith as a faith that works through love.]

In Galatians, at any rate, Paul said that the difference that divided him from the judaizers was no mere theological subtlety, but the very heart and soul of the religion of Jesus Christ. [This and some of the above from Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, pp. 23-25] But, and here is the point, the doctrine he so mightily contends against in Galatians seems to be substantially the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification.

The Roman Catholic reply to this charge was, in both of the debates I listened to, spectacularly unconvincing. They argued that Paul in Galatians is not talking about the question of the relationship between works and justification **in general**, but only specifically about the question of the Jewish ceremonial law. He's not talking about any law, or all law, but only Jewish ceremonial law. He's not arguing that all works are excluded from our gaining acceptance with God but only Jewish ceremonial works! **Hardly!** Paul's point in Galatians, Romans, and Philippians is not that certain works of the law, Jewish ceremonial works, are excluded from justification, but that **any and all works** are excluded. He poses justification by faith **over against** justification by works because they represent contradictory principles of salvation. He says this often and emphatically, as in Galatians 3:10ff. where he points out that obedience to the law cannot be the ground of justification both **because we are incapable of an adequate obedience and the Bible has said from the beginning that justification comes not by works but by faith, not on the basis of our works but on the basis of Christ's work for us.** In Romans 2-3 the impossibility of justification by works of love is based on our comprehensive sinfulness and inability to keep the law of God -- any and all of it! No one can be justified by keeping the works of the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin!

The NIV's translation of Galatians 3:2-3 is not strictly literal, but it perfectly captures Paul's meaning: the contrast is between what God does and what you do, and Paul's point is that justification is in no respect based on what you do, even what you do **as a Christian!** The point is still more striking in 5:4 where he speaks of those attempting to be justified by law having fallen away from grace. The problem is not the Jewish ceremonies per se. He speaks of circumcision in v. 3, but Paul had no problem with circumcision. Many of his converts were circumcised. The Jewish Christians continued to be circumcised. The problem was a principle of works righteousness that lurked beneath the demand that Gentile converts be circumcised. On what ground could that demand be made except that law keeping, that such a good work as circumcision was somehow connected with a sinner's justification. No, says Paul. The believer's law keeping and justification are not connected. He or she will have laws to keep, to be sure, but not for his acceptance with God.

Fact is, none of the Roman Catholic works I have read or defenses of Roman Catholic teaching on justification I have heard have at all convinced me that their doctrine is not virtually identical in spirit and in principle with that doctrine that Paul so categorically condemns as a false gospel in Galatians. Human achievement -- good works -- on whatever ground, in whatever spirit, by whatever means, **contribute nothing to a sinner's acceptance with God.** Deny that and you have denied the gospel. But Roman Catholicism does, in fact, deny that. And so I say that Roman Catholicism has no answer and cannot evade the tremendous polemic of the Apostle Paul in Galatians.

II. The second question is: which view of justification best satisfies the flow of Paul's argument, especially in Romans where Paul gives the most systematic presentation of the doctrine of justification that we have in the Bible? And my conclusion is that the Roman Catholic teaching does not faithfully reproduce Paul's argument about justification. Only the Lutheran/Reformed or Protestant doctrine does.

Now, it is a complex and lengthy presentation of justification that we have in Romans 1-5 and so I want to reduce the issue to but one point, the point I think that is easiest to make and, in my judgment, most devastating for the Roman Catholic idea that the believer's works of righteousness contribute to, even merit his justification even if, as Catholic apologists insist, those works of righteousness are made possible by grace, performed by faith, and offered to God through Christ.

Here is the problem. Paul, when he has completed his exposition of justification, anticipates in the opening verse of chapter 6, an objection that he is sure people will have to his teaching. The objection is that people will say that his doctrine -- his teaching about the way sinners are made right with God -- undermines moral living.

"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" That is, if I am made right with God by what Christ did for me and not by what I do; if I am justified by faith in Christ and not by my own good works; if my standing with God rests not on my moral accomplishments to any degree but solely on Christ's for me and in my place; if the good works I do before or after I become a Christian have nothing to do with my being a child of God and do not make me a child of God, then what is to keep me from kicking up my heels and enjoying my sins. In a way, the more I sin I only make Christ's righteousness and God's grace seem the greater, for there is more sin for Christ to cover, more guilt for him to remove. Paul says, you will think that my view of justification cuts the legs out from under the demand to live a holy life, because you have just heard me say that how you live has nothing to do with your acceptance with God. You will think that I am left with no motive for a life of holiness and love.

Now, Paul has an answer for that. He is going to say that sanctification and justification are inseparable in the salvation God gives to man. God works not only to justify but to renew and restore, not only to change a person's status before God (justification) but to transform his heart and life (sanctification). But that is not my point. My point is that Paul thought that folk would naturally object to his doctrine of justification because it seems to undermine moral living. **And here is the point: No one objects to the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification for that reason. And the reason is that the Roman Catholic teaching is not subject to that objection. Precisely the reverse.**

Take another example. Paul in Romans 9 argues that people are going to object to his doctrine of sovereign grace on the two grounds that it seems to make God unfair and it seems to nullify human responsibility. That leads us to conclude that if our doctrine of divine grace does not seem to be subject to those objections, our doctrine is not what Paul taught! One of the reasons we object to Arminianism is that it is not subject to those objections, no one has ever objected to it on those grounds, and, indeed, it is a theological system developed precisely to avoid those objections. That leads us to conclude that Paul was not an Arminian, because he knew people would take offense at **his** doctrine on those grounds: that it seemed to make God unfair and seemed to nullify human freedom and responsibility. In a similar way we can argue about justification from Romans 6:1.

The Roman Catholic doctrine is that your justification absolutely depends upon your continued good works. Without them you lose the justification you received at your baptism and only with them can you keep it. Your justification is based on those works you perform -- from whatever source they come -- and so your acceptance with God is a matter of your continuation in good works. No one would say that that doctrine of justification undermines moral living. Quite the contrary, it **requires** moral living as its basis. That leads me to conclude that Paul was not a Roman Catholic. His doctrine he said was subject to the objection that justification was so much of grace, so much of faith alone, so much of Christ's own righteousness imputed or reckoned to us as if it were ours, that people might well wonder if a believer then had to care at all about living morally. No one thinks that about the Roman Catholic doctrine.

Why, in one of the debates I listened to, one of the Protestants had pointed out that in Romans 5:1 and 8:1 Paul characterized justification not as a continuing process but as a once-for-all action that forever alters a sinner's status before God: "there is therefore now no condemnation to the man who is in Christ Jesus." One of the Roman Catholic spokesmen, responding to that argument said simply, "Well, 'now' there is no condemnation, but that doesn't mean there won't be tomorrow!" In other words, unless you keep up your works your justification withers and may disappear. But, not only is that a horrible misinterpretation of Paul in Romans, once again it fails the test of Romans 6:1. That doctrine -- that you keep up your justification by your good works -- is not subject to the objection that it seems to make good works unnecessary. And if it doesn't seem to make good works unnecessary, it is not Paul's doctrine of justification which he knew would be objected to on precisely the grounds Roman Catholics object to the Protestant doctrine today -- that it undermines morality.

You see, I can as a Reformed Protestant, find a place in my view of salvation for all the texts the Roman Catholics cite concerning the necessity of obedience, the last judgment evaluating our works, the necessity of faith working through love. But they cannot find a place in their system for the texts we cite from Paul about a finished justification, about justification in no way suspended upon human works, even believing works, and about justification being so free as to seem to suggest that obedience and holiness of life are unnecessary.

In Thomas Howard's new book, *On Being Catholic* [p. 138], Howard attempts to minimize the difference between the evangelical and Protestant conceptions of salvation.

"At the time I was received into the Catholic Church, I came to know an old woman named Sarah who came to daily Mass. At that same time, my octogenarian mother was living at our house. My mother, being a Protestant Evangelical who spent many hours with her Bible open in her lap, might have wondered about the sense in which it could be urged that Sarah was saved, not that my mother would have doubted Sarah's humility and sincerity... But Sarah would have done poorly with a certain set of questions my mother might have put to her. 'Are you saved?' Blank. 'Well-are you born again?' Confusion. 'Right. Have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?' Consternation. Just as my mother is concluding that her long-held fears about Catholics seem indeed to be well grounded, I interfere. I lead the two ladies over to a crucifix on the wall, and in my mother's hearing, I ask Sarah who that is. Jesus. Who is he? The Son of God. What is he doing? Suffering death. Why? For our sins. And suddenly my mother has heard Sarah make a confession that qualifies Sarah for the category 'saved.' Sarah has believed all of this all along, and her trust is in this gospel, just as is my mother's. But left to themselves, the two ladies might have gone off deeply perplexed about each other's Christian credentials."

Well, not quite so fast. Quite apart from the fact that Sarah, as a faithful member of a supposedly Christian church, should easily be able to answer the questions Howard imagines his mother putting to her, for, after all, they are fundamentally important questions raised in the Bible itself, fact is, the judaizers in Galatia could have said with the truest sincerity all that Howard imagines Sarah saying in front of the crucifix. None of that was in dispute -- who Christ is or what he did on the cross or why. But despite all of that, they were bringing and believing a different gospel that was no gospel at all. How one understands the relation between Christ's righteousness and my own: that is the key Paul says. Is Christ's righteousness the only righteousness by which I am justified, or is it Christ's righteousness **and** my own, even my own Christian righteousness which comes into my life by faith and grace? Those are two positions so different that one is good news and the other is death! So said Paul himself.

Are there Catholics who are saved despite this unbiblical doctrine of justification? Of course there are. There are many, no doubt, and have been through the ages that have not been distracted by the church's bad theology from relying wholly for their righteousness with God on the finished work of Christ. And are their evangelicals who turn their doctrine of justification into an excuse for sinning and who thus prove that their faith, because it does not produce good works, is dead. Of course there are.

But those facts do not set aside the terrible emphasis that Paul, the apostle of the Lord, lays on the life and death importance of understanding that a sinner is and can be justified or made right with God on no other basis than the righteousness of Jesus Christ himself received by faith alone; that justification comes to us by means of another's righteousness, so perfect, so complete, so sufficient to cover all our sins, that it can seem, at first glance, that anyone who has received this righteousness by faith would be free to sin all he or she wanted and still be right with God!

The
Highway



Article of the Month

The Alignment of New Evangelicals with Apostasy

Richard M. Bennett

Evangelicals throughout the centuries have maintained that justification by faith alone is the way in which sinful human beings are in Christ made right before the all Holy God. Justification itself is a judicial declarative act on the part of God alone by which He declares that only in Christ is a man perfectly just. His judicial declarative act is not made on the basis of anything within a man, but rather it is made solely and wholly upon the righteous life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ who lived a perfect life and paid the just penalty for sins upon the cross. Historically, Evangelicals have been in agreement with the Apostle Paul, “*to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*”

A person calling himself Evangelical is professing to be committed to the Gospel of Christ as proclaimed in Scripture. The true Gospel demands separation from all who teach another Gospel, as the Apostle declared, “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*” Without such separation the name Evangelical signifies nothing. New Evangelicalism, which willingly compromises with, and accommodates another gospel, has gained ground everywhere since about 1960. Since then the Evangelical world has changed beyond recognition. This is fully documented in *Evangelicalism Divided* by Iain Murray (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000). The first and second National Evangelical Anglican Conferences that met at Keele and Nottingham in the UK in 1967 and 1977 respectively showed a willingness to be united with ritualistic Anglicans, essentially Roman Catholic in belief and practice, and liberals who believed in a fallible Bible. Leading evangelicals, such as J.I. Packer and John Stott, endorsed the statements from these conferences and, in so doing; set aside Gospel truth in favor of accepting fellow Anglicans as true brothers and sisters in Christ. The most drastic departure however from the Biblical Gospel took place some seventeen years after the Nottingham Conference in 1994 in the USA. At the end of March 1994, a group of twenty leading Evangelicals and twenty leading Roman Catholics produced a document entitled *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* (ECT).

Two of the main instigators of this intense ecumenical thrust were Charles Colson and Richard John

Neuhaus, a Lutheran pastor turned Roman Catholic priest. The specific task was begun in September 1992. These men were joined in the writing process by Larry Lewis of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Jesse Miranda of Assemblies of God, John White of the Geneva College and National Association of Evangelicals, and others, including two Jesuits, Avery Dulles and Juan Diaz-Vilar. Two more Jesuits had signed the declaration by the time of its presentation. In addition to the Evangelical participants who helped form the document, signers included J. I. Packer, Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ, Mark Noll of Wheaton College, and Pat Robertson of the 700 Club. Roman Catholic signers included such well know figures as Cardinal John O’Connor, now deceased, Archbishop Sevilla, Archbishop Stafford, and Bishop Francis George, now Archbishop of Chicago.

The Gospel According to ECT

The signers of ECT readily admit of “differences that cannot be resolved here”. However motivated by the desire for union on important moral issues, the authors of ECT proclaim that Evangelicals and Catholics are one in Christ, and that all are truly Christians. The primary fallacy of the lengthy document is its declaration on the Gospel. The signers state what they believe comes closest to Gospel of Christ when they declare,

We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ. Living faith is active in love that is nothing less than the love of Christ, . . . (p. 5)

To be Biblical, this statement should read, “We affirm together that we are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.” The word “alone” signifies that the perfect righteousness of Christ Jesus_and that alone_is sufficient before the Holy God to justify unholy sinners. To so define justification, however, would exclude the Catholic sacraments and the priests who control them, both of which are necessary for the Catholic.. Thus a subtraction had to be made from the Gospel of Christ in excluding what is signified by the word alone. In a similar manner an addition had to made to the gospel in ECT words that qualify faith as, “living faith active in love”. This was to accommodate the inclusion of the Catholic sacraments. This was exactly the same intent of the Council of Trent in its qualification of the meaning of faith. Trent declared,

For faith, unless hope and charity be added to it, neither unites one perfectly with Christ, nor makes him a living member of his body. . . . This faith, in accordance with apostolic tradition, catechumens beg of the Church before the sacrament of baptism. . . .

The theology of the Church of Rome always comes back to the concept of “living faith” so as to include works, particularly her sacraments that she defines as necessary for salvation. The New Evangelical signers of ECT have concurred with the Roman Catholic definition of “living faith active in love”, and thus they have formally agreed to an addition to the Gospel that nullifies its message. Rome continues to show her understanding of “living faith” in the 1994 *Catechism* when she declares, “the very root of the Church’s living faith [is] principally by means of Baptism.” If the New Evangelicals do in fact believe the Roman Catholic concept of “living faith,” they ought logically to endorse Rome’s curse upon all who have simple faith in God’s grace, as was officially done by Rome at the Council of Trent,

If anyone shall say that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to understand that nothing else is required to cooperate in the attainment of the grace of justification, and that it is in no way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will: let him be anathema [cursed].

To endorse Roman Catholic teaching, therefore, is to deny the clear teaching of Scripture, “But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.”

Evangelicals also Endorse Baptismal Regeneration

In the general heading of “We Witness Together,” and (to use the document’s language) “in the context of evangelization and ‘reevangelization,’” the New Evangelicals go so far as to recognize that “for Catholics, all who are validly baptized are born again and are truly, however imperfectly, in communion with Christ.” (p. 23). These New Evangelicals might as well have quoted the Roman Catholic Code of Canon Law that says the same thing,

Baptism...by which men and women are freed from their sins, are reborn as children of God and, configured to Christ . . .

In contrast to the teaching of Rome and the signed statements of J. I. Packer, Chuck Colson, et al., the words of the risen Christ in giving the Gospel are crystal clear. “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” Faith is the key of saving grace, and unbelief is the chief damning sin. Faith is what is absolutely necessary to salvation, baptism is an ordinance that follows faith and simply testifies to it. Proof of this is found in the fact of the omission in the second half of the verse: it is not “he that is not baptized shall be damned,” but rather “*he that believeth not.*” The repentance from this endorsement of the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration, and of an incomplete Gospel, by both subtraction and addition, requested over the years and formally called for at the 1999 Ex Catholics For Christ Conference has not come. Rather a defense of the document has been maintained both in the USA and overseas.

The Devastating Effect of ECT

The real effect of the New Evangelical compromise with the Gospel is to put a stop to the evangelization of Roman Catholics across the world. If this compromise of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ is accepted, then Bible believing churches will refrain from evangelizing Catholics. The impact on the true church in third world Catholic countries in Central and South America, in Africa, as well as in Spain, Portugal, and the Philippines, is already apparent. If this anti-Evangelical trend continues unchecked it will become ruinous to the spiritual welfare of millions of souls. But this is exactly the policy the ECT signers promulgate when they state,

We are aware that our experience reflects the distinctive circumstances and opportunities

of Evangelicals and Catholics living together in North America. At the same time, we believe that what we have discovered and resolved is pertinent to the relationship between Evangelicals and Catholics in other parts of the world.

and

. . . it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community [church] to proselytize [evangelize] among active adherents of another Christian community.” Introduction p. 1

Since when has it been theologically illegitimate to expose error and heresy? Because these intelligent and educated men have contradicted the very Gospel of Christ, it is time to state that the biblical mandate of separation from such men must be observed! *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”*

Compounded Endorsement of Rome

On November 12, 1997, a document entitled “The Gift of Salvation” was signed and published by Evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders. Its expressed intention was to demonstrate the “common faith” of Evangelicals and Roman Catholics, and to further “acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.” It was published in the December 8, 1997, issue of *Christianity Today*. Explicitly, the Roman Catholic (RC) signatories such as Richard John Neuhaus and Avery Dulles, S.J., state in the document that they are “Catholics who are conscientiously faithful to the teaching of the Catholic Church.” What might be expected then is in fact discovered in the document. The Roman Catholic doctrine of conferred justification is taught as the Gospel. J.I. Packer, Charles Colson, Os Guinness, Richard Land, Bill Bright are now joined together with Timothy George, T.M. Moore, John Woodbridge, and others in not only giving a clouded Gospel-Justification message, but also in a distinctively erudite manner, endorsing Rome’s doctrine of conferred inner righteousness.

A Studied Denial of the Gospel

The document states, “Justification is central to the scriptural account of salvation, and its meaning has been much debated between Protestants and Catholics.” Then it claims that the signers have reached an agreement. Their statement of accord is,

We agree that justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God’s gift, conferred through the Father’s sheer graciousness, out of the love that he bears us in his Son, who suffered on our behalf and rose from the dead for our justification. Jesus was “put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:25). In justification, God, on the basis of Christ’s righteousness alone, declares us to be no longer his rebellious enemies but his forgiven friends, and by virtue of his

declaration it is so.

The subject under review is stated clearly in the first sentence. “We agree that justification . . . is conferred through the Father’s sheer graciousness.” Then by careful reading one comes to see that what the two pivotal sentences state grammatically,

. . . it [justification] is entirely God’s gift, conferred [rather than imputed] . . . and by virtue of his [God’s] declaration it [justification conferred] is so.

This is traditional Roman Catholic doctrine. To employ the Roman Catholic word “conferred” instead of the Biblical word “imputed” is tantamount to putting aside Scriptural authority on the issue of justification. Since medieval times, the RCC has clearly distinguished between the concept of imputation and the concept of God’s grace conferred as a quality of the soul. Since the Council of Trent she has condemned the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. Present day dogma of the RCC not only upholds the teaching of the Council of Trent but also declares that such Councils are infallible. The Council of Trent proclaims the following curse:

If anyone shall say that by the said sacraments of the New Law, grace is not **conferred** from the work which has been worked [*ex opere operato*] **but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices to obtain grace: let him be anathema.**

Rome’s reason for such a curse on those who hold to “justification by faith alone” and to “justification imputed” is logical because of what she refuses to concede. For her, justification is not an immediate one-time act of God, received by faith alone; rather, she teaches that grace is conferred continually through her sacraments. Thus she is able to make a place for herself as a necessary means through which inner righteousness is given. She teaches in her 1994 *Catechism*,

Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy.

Because inner righteousness, which is claimed to have been conferred, is located in the person, and not located in Christ, it can be lost and may need to be conferred again and again. Thus Rome officially states,

. . . the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as ‘the second plank (of salvation) after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace.’

“Conferred justification” is necessary for Rome because of her claim that the work of her sacraments is the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus she states,

‘Sacramental grace’ is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament.

Calling “sacramental grace” the “the grace of the Holy Spirit” is pretentious blasphemy against the All Holy God. What is declared in Scripture is the imputation of God’s righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the words of the Apostle “*And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*” The Roman Catholic Church’s persistence in using the word “conferred” is an attempt to exchange her sacraments for Jesus Christ, the Lord and giver of life.

In the face of such clarity, both on the part of Scripture and on the part of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), this new Evangelical distortion claims that both sides now agree on what has been the issue of division between Protestants and Roman Catholics for several hundred years. This it does precisely by using Roman Catholic terminology: The perversion by which the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone is set aside in this document is by the use of the RCC term, “conferred”. Through this accommodation, the Biblical teaching of the righteousness of God imputed to the believer is subsumed under Rome’s traditional concept of inner or infused righteousness. Evangelicals such as J.I. Packer, Timothy George, and Os Guinness, known for their writings on the subject of the Gospel, are accustomed to the Biblical word, “imputed”. For them to agree to the Roman Catholic word “conferred”, in place of the Biblical term “imputed”, is a major betrayal. The Apostle Paul uses the concept of imputation (crediting, reckoning or counting) eleven times in Romans chapter four, a summary of which is verse five, “*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*” Now this pivotal truth of God’s righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ imputed to the believer is undermined in the document’s most horrifying concept,

. . . and by virtue of his [Holy God’s] declaration it [justification conferred] is so”.

With like subtlety, so Rome has always taught, from the Council of Trent to the present day. Now the New Evangelicals join them. This is pious professional fraud. What response can one make to these new Evangelicals personalities teaching the conferred righteousness of Rome? Can one do other than separate from such men in the words of the Apostle “*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*”

The Defense of “Evangelicals and Catholics Together.”

The most serious apologetic for the document entitled “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium”(ECT) is in the book of the same title *Evangelicals & Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*. The architects of ECT were well aware of the crucial distinctions with regards to the Gospel separating Catholics and Evangelicals, but they chose to by-pass them. Packer writes in *Common Mission*, “Neither evangelicals nor Roman Catholics can stipulate that things they believe, which the other side does not believe, be made foundational to partnership at this point; so ECT lets go Protestant precision on the doctrine of justification and the correlation between conversion and new birth. . . .” That such compromise is heretical is seen from his statements earlier in the same article in *Common Mission*, when he said, “. . . Roman teaching obscures the gospel and indeed distorts it in a tragically anti-spiritual and unpastoral manner . . .” and “Rome’s official doctrinal disorders, particularly on justification, merit, and the Mass-sacrifice, so obscure the gospel that were I, as

a gesture of unity, invited to mass_which of course as a Protestant I am not, nor shall be_I would not feel free to accept the invitation.” Packer towards the end of the article speaks of the evils of “humanism”, “materialism, hedonism and nihilism”. To rebuild a Christian consensus he proposes that, “. . . **domestic differences about salvation** and the Church should not hinder us from joint action in seeking to re-Christianize the North American milieu. . .” But the orthodox Evangelical Packer of old spoke of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in this way, “like Atlas, it bears a world on its shoulders, the entire evangelical knowledge of saving grace”! Now, the same saving faith is downgraded to the “domestic differences about salvation.” The warning of the Apostle Paul must sound again **now**, “*but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*”

Most Serious and Bizarre Defense

Packer, who leads the New Evangelicals, has taken an unusual explanation for his position. He has given it in different articles. One example of his strange defense is in a 1996 article, in which he states,

Can conservative Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholics of mainstream type join together in bearing witness to all that I have spoken of? I urge that we can, despite our known and continuing differences about the specifics of the salvation process and the place of the church in that process. . . . To be sure, fundamentalists within our three traditions are unlikely to join us in this, for it is the way of fundamentalists to follow the path of contentious orthodoxy, as if the mercy of God in Christ automatically rests on persons who are notionally correct and is just as automatically withheld from those who fall short of notional correctness on any point of substance. But this concept of, in effect, justification, not of works, but of words_words, that is, of notional soundness and precision_is near to being a cultic heresy in its own right and need not detain us further now, however much we may regret the fact that some in all our traditions are bogged down in it.

No orthodox Evangelical has ever maintained that “notional soundness and precision”, that is, doctrinal theory, ever saved anyone. Rather, orthodox Evangelicals have always held to Romans 10:10, “*For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” It appears that Packer is conducting a little casuistry of his own here. It is an ego defense attempting to preempt his critics by raising an anti-biblical dichotomy between head (religion) and heart (religion). This is an old liberal tactic, i.e., to create an unbiblical dichotomy and then infer and insinuate that any party who refuses to acknowledge it, must in the nature of the case, be unspiritual, opposed to Christian love. None of the historic Evangelical confessions of faith hold out that mere doctrinal “soundness” saves anyone. This is an absurd caricature that Packer has invented. Rather orthodox Evangelicals today, even as they did in the days of the Apostle Paul and at the Reformation, declare that it is the righteousness of Christ Jesus alone that saves a person!

What Packer does in setting aside very point of faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone, is what the Church of Rome continually does. This is the exact point that the Apostle Paul contended for against the Judaisers

and the Reformers against the Roman Catholics of their day. This is the exact point on which thousands of Evangelicals gave their lives, such as John Huss, William Tyndale, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, John Rogers, Anne Askew, John Bradford, and John Philpot, to name a few. Now Packer creates the concept of notional correctness and of a charged “justification by words.” The ardent desire of true Evangelicals to *be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,*” was and is the heart of the Gospel, not “contentious orthodoxy” nor “cultic heresy”. What Packer has done is to deny the importance of the Scriptures on the precise point of Sola Fide. He also denies the Reformation history of those Evangelicals who under the Roman Catholic Inquisition gave their lives, not for any correctness in words, but rather for their faith in Christ Jesus alone. Since the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is involved and these Reformation martyrs loved not their lives unto the death for faith in Him alone, we think this matter is so serious as to demand the judgment of the Lord Himself. *“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”*

“Separation for the Sake of the Gospel is not Necessary”

In his essay in *Common Mission*, Roman Catholic Neuhaus stated emphatically, *“If, at the end of the twentieth century, separation for the sake of the gospel is not necessary, it is not justified”* What Neuhaus declared is that the Gospel is no longer relevant to Christian unity. This seems to be the precise intent of the 1994 ECT document and equally the 1997 “The Gift of Salvation” document. If Evangelicals who would be true to the Gospel do not combat the challenging defenses of ECT I and ECT II made by New Evangelicals and their Roman Catholic counterparts, then Neuhaus’ anti-Scriptural words *“separation for the sake of the gospel is not necessary”* might well fall on them and their children after them. If the lie is swallowed that separation for the sake of the Gospel is not justified, then the logical conclusion is that churches should cave in and submit to the Church of Rome. This has always been the avowed goal of Rome, as her documents verify,

. . . little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist [the Mass] into that unity of the one and only Church. . . . This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something we can never lose.”

Neuhaus’ conclusion is similar to Packer’s and still the more frightening since it comes from the Roman Catholic side, known to have legal teeth in what it decides among nations. Neuhaus states, “But to declare it [justification by faith alone] to be the article by which the Church stands or falls in a manner that excludes other ways of saying the gospel is to turn it into a sectarian doctrine.” The true Gospel of grace has in this statement not simply been declared unnecessary, but it has been labeled a “sectarian doctrine”. What has already happened and been reported in Europe might one day be the news in the USA.

The Belgian Chamber of Representatives recently passed a law creating a ‘sect oversight organization’ which will ‘scrutinize’ the 189 religious organizations listed in the Belgian

Parliamentary Sect Report published in April 1997 . . . Minority evangelical, Pentecostal and Adventist churches not belonging to the United Protestant Church of Belgium, which is recognized by the state, are targeted in the Belgian Sect Report . . .”

C. H. Spurgeon’s timely words apply now even more than his own day “Since he was cursed who rebuilt Jericho, much more the man who labors to restore Popery among us. In our fathers’ days the gigantic walls of Popery fell by the power of their faith, the perseverance of their efforts, and the blast of their gospel trumpets. . . .” The Gospel trumpet is the very issue at stake_for the Roman Catholic and Evangelical signers of ECT I & II first give the false message of Rome, go on to uphold baptismal regeneration and then in defense of what they have written, declare that the Gospel of Christ is a “domestic matter” or even “a sectarian doctrine”. The Apostle Paul before he concluded his letter to the Romans inserted a final warning against false teachers who cause divisions by perverting doctrine of the Gospel he had delivered. His words were, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*” This is the same as his command in Titus 3:10-11 “*A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*” How serious is the Word of the Lord to true believers in this commandment? How serious is the truth of the Gospel of Christ?

Breaking Point in History

We have reached a watershed moment in history. Those who truly adhere to the Gospel of Christ must hold that the Gospel not only is the power of God unto salvation, but that, as such, it cannot be contaminated with any other gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). Therefore, those who truly are ambassadors of the Gospel of Christ must separate themselves, not only from Roman Catholicism and her sacramental claims, but also must separate themselves from so-called Evangelicals who have proposed this declaration of Evangelical and Catholic unity, or have been party to it. In the Scriptures we are warned continually to separate from brothers who are in error.

We are considering men of our own day, some of whom have done outstanding work for the sake of the Gospel in the past. But now that these men consistently are acting as false teachers, they must be judged according as the Scripture directs us. Separation must take place. “*Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*” In the implementation of ECT I and II, J. I. Packer and Charles Colson, together with Timothy George, have been the prime movers. It is necessary now to apply Biblical principles to these men and to those who support them. Since the Gospel of Christ has been denied in these two documents, it is therefore necessary that they be treated as brothers who are in grievous error.

In our temporal world, infectious diseases are quarantined and contaminated food is discarded, but the danger involved here is not only temporal. Ought not brothers who would deceive the saints of God and draw them away into an ecumenism that is contrary to the Gospel of Christ be separated from the saints of the Lord for their eternal safety? God’s presence demands holiness, separation from evil. Fellowship with evil shuts out God’s gracious favor. “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate,*

saith the Lord.”

False Teachers Then and Now

The testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures expressly forewarns God’s people of principal teachers becoming false teachers, or grievous wolves. So it was in the early days of the Church and right through history. The Church of Rome has been the main apostate system throughout the centuries because above Scripture she has embodied “the wise and learned” and because it has been the religion of kings and rulers. In history, as in our own day, she attracts scholars and philosophers, writers and businessmen. She has a form of godliness, notwithstanding errors, impieties, superstitions, and idolatries. And she has engaged well-known teachers and pastors to lend the weight of their fleshly credit to her soul-destroying errors. Even so, the Lord warned of false prophets in sheep’s clothing that are really ravening wolves. Leaving off sound doctrine is so serious that we are told, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.*” The infallible Spirit of God testifies to the danger of apostasy. The Apostle Paul cautioned the elders of the church of Ephesus about “*grievous wolves . . . not sparing the flock.*” The same warning is given by the Apostle Peter calling those who would bring in damnable heresies, “false teachers”.

There are a number of unequivocal warnings in the New Testament from the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Apostles, that a serious decline from the revealed truths of the Gospel would occur even among professed disciples. It cannot be held that these warnings were only for the first days of the Christian faith! They are directly pertinent to all believers living through New Covenant times. In the present day religious climate it is politically incorrect to say that any man has fallen into error and is acting the part of a false teacher or prophet. It is as though even these clear warnings were only for a certain period of early church history and not for us.

It is for us, however, to fear the All Holy God and obey his commandment to “*earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*”, and to “*stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*”. J. I. Packer like a modern Pied Piper is leading many thousands of Evangelicals astray. Charles Colson, Bill Bright, Mark Noll, Pat Robertson, Os Guinness, Timothy George, and T.M. Moore to mention just a few of the more prominent New Evangelicals have publicly denied the Gospel in endorsing the anti-biblical terms and erroneous doctrinal concepts of the Church of Rome. All together, they are falsely identifying Catholics as “our brothers and sisters in Christ”, thereby reinforcing the tragic and catastrophic delusions of these poor souls and denying them the substance of saving truth! Unless there is some public repentance, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ must not only separate from these men, but also go on to pray that the Lord would vindicate His Truth!

Since it is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and His glorious Gospel that is at stake here, we are commanded in the words of the Apostle to “*stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*” May the God of all grace who “*worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*” regarding even this present perversion the Gospel, bring forth a clarity of the Gospel in which His name will be glorified and souls will be saved.

Permission is given by the author to copy this article if it is done in its entirety without any changes. Richard Bennett, Berean Beacon.

The ministry's Internet web page is: www.bereanbeacon.org

Notes

1. Romans 4:5.
2. Galatians 1:8-9.
3. Romans 4:5-8, II Corinthians 5:19-21, Romans 3:22-28, Titus 3:5-7, Ephesians 1:7, Jeremiah 23:6, I Corinthians 1:30-31, Romans 5:17-19.
4. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994) Para. # 987. Hereafter referred to as *Catechism*.
5. Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, Tr. by Roy J Deferrari from *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 13th ed. (B. Herder Book Co., 1957), #800. Hereafter referred to as Denzinger.
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7. *Catechism*, Para. 249.
8. Denzinger, #819.
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10. *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-English Ed. (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983) Can. 849. All canons are taken from this work unless otherwise stated.
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12. II John 1:9-11
13. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2 vols., *Great Books of the Western World Series*, Tr. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952) Part I of the Second Part, Question 110, Article 1, Obj. 3 and Article 2, Reply Obj. 1.
14. *Catechism*, Para. 891.
15. Denzinger, #851, Canon 8.
16. *Catechism*, Para. 1992.
17. *Catechism*, Para. 1446.
18. *Catechism*, Para 1129.
19. Philippians 3:9.
20. Ephesians 5:11.
21. *Evangelicals & Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, editors. (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995). Hereafter referred to as *Common Mission*.
22. *Common Mission*, p 167.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
24. *Ibid.*, pp 162,163.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
26. Galatians 1:7-8.
27. J. I. Packer, “On from Orr”, *The J. I. Packer Collection*, Selected and Introduced by Alister McGrath (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999) p. 264.
28. Philippians 3:9.
29. Hebrews 10:30-31.
30. Richard John Neuhaus, “The Catholic Difference”, *Common Mission*, p. 199. Italic is in the original document.
31. Vatican Council II Documents No. 42, “Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue”, S.P.U.C., 15 August 1975, p. 541.
32. See our article “Vatican Prepares to Control Through Civil Law”, *The Beacon*, No. 6, June, 2001.
33. *Common Mission*, p. 207.
34. “Growing religious intolerance in Belgium”, *Evangelical Times*, August 1998.
35. *Morning and Evening*, on Joshua 6:26
36. Romans 16:17.
37. Jeremiah 23:29.
38. II Corinthians 6:17.
39. Matthew 7:15.
40. I Timothy 4:1-2.
41. Acts 20:29.
42. 2 Peter 2:1.
43. Jude 1:3.
44. Philippians 1:27.
45. 1 Cor 16:13
46. Eph 1:11

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 **Calvinism and the Reformed Faith Index**



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A Place for Truth **Studies**

The Doctrine of Justification in the Reformation of the 16th Century

Part II: Roman Catholicism: Infused Righteousness- justification by Faith Alone or Work?

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC INFUSION OF GRACE THAT BRINGS JUSTIFICATION

"Let it therefore remain settled...that we are justified in no other way than by faith, or, which comes to this same thing, that we are justified by faith alone."- John Calvin

SCRIPTURE ALONE, NOT SCRIPTURE PLUS TRADITION:

"Rome professes to hold that the Bible is the Word of God...she also nullifies or destroys the Word. She maintains that alongside of the written Word there is also an unwritten Word, an oral tradition, which was taught by Christ and the apostles but which is not in the Bible, which was handed down generation after generation by word of mouth. This unwritten Word of God, it is said, comes to expression in the pronouncements of the church councils and in papal decrees. It takes precedence over the written Word and interprets it. The pope, as God's personal representative on the earth, can legislate for things additional to the Bible as new situations arise. The Council of Trent, the most authoritative of all Roman councils and the one of greatest historical importance, in the year 1546, declared that the Word of God is contained both in the Bible and in tradition, that the two are equal authority, and that it is the duty of every Christian to accord them equal veneration and respect."- Loraine

Boettner

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT 1546-1564

Because of Rome's doctrine of *Semper Idem*, Rome cannot repudiate or correct Trent. The council's sixth session teaches Rome's view of Justification, set forth in response to the Protestant teaching. Rome set forth the importance and necessity of

grace by salvation. Also the necessity of faith:

"We are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification." {Council of Trent: VI Session; Chapter VIII}

1) Justification is by faith (*per fidem*), 2) Faith is the "beginning" (*initium*) of salvation, 3) Faith is the "foundation" (*fundamentum*) of all justification, and 4) Faith is the "root" (*radix*) of all justification.

There is an agreement on "faith" with the Reformers, but an exclusion of "alone" from Rome's teaching. Rome believes in "justification by faith", but not "justification by faith alone." According to the reformers, faith is the instrumental cause ("by"), or the means by which Christ's work is appropriated.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTS

Reformers contend for two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper- the Roman Catholic Church celebrates seven: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Order, and Matrimony. Roman Theology, contrasted to Reformed Theology, teaches that the Sacraments remove sins: "...supernatural life is generated by Baptism; brought to growth by Confirmation; nourished by the Eucharist; cured from diseases of sins and from the weakness arising from these by Penance and Extreme Unction."- Ludwig Ott, Roman Catholic Theologian. The sacraments work *ex opere operato*, by the power of the completed act, and their validity does not depend on the orthodoxy of the minister or his state of grace. Grace is infused into the sinner, through the Sacraments making the sinner righteous, thereby God will then justify the sinner.

Reformed: The Reformers taught that the Righteousness of Christ (or merit of Christ) is the sole ground of our justification, and Christ's Righteousness is imputed to the believer by faith (instrumental, not meritorious cause). **Rome:** The Roman Church teaches that the sacrament of Baptism is the instrumental cause of justification. Baptism is the primary instrumental cause of justification in that it is the 1st or initial cause of justification. This grace of justification received in Baptism may be lost, the secondary instrumental cause of justification is the sacrament of Penance. {Council of Trent: VI Session; Chapter XIV}

New Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Justification is conferred in Baptism, the

Sacrament of faith. It conforms to the Righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of His mercy."

The Roman Catholic Church teaches clearly that the infusion, rather than the imputation of Christ's Righteousness, makes justification possible if the believe assents to and cooperates with this grace:

"...Jesus Christ himself continually infuses his virtue into the said justified...this virtue always precedes and accompanies and follows their good works, which without it could not in any wise be pleasing and meritorious before God- we must believe that nothing further is wanting to the justified, to prevent their being accounted to have, by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life, and to have truly merited eternal life, to be obtained also in its due time, if so be, however, that they depart in grace...neither is our own justice established as our own as from ourselves; nor is the justice of God ignored or repudiated: for that justice which is called ours, because that we are justified from its being inherent in us, that same is (the justice) of God, because that it is infused into us of God, through the merit of Christ...after this Catholic doctrine on Justification, which whoso receives not faithfully and firmly can not be justified..." {Council of Trent: VI Session; Chapter XVI} The Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is itself a necessary condition for justification. At this point Rome affirms that the doctrine of justification is an essential article of the faith, essential to salvation itself.

What if Roman Catholics and Evangelicals agreed to unite and affirm: "We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ," would there be true unity based on Scriptural teaching? **Rome:** "because of Christ" means infusion...**Evangelical Reformed:** "because of Christ" means Imputation.

Next Class: [**Roman Catholicism: The Sacraments**](#)

Read: The Book of Galatians, Chapters 4-6

For Further reading: ; [Roman Catholicism](#)- ed. John Armstrong / [Justification by Faith Alone](#)- John Gerstner, R.C. Sproul, Joel Beeke, John Armstrong / [Faith Alone](#)- R.C. Sproul

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A Place for Truth Studies

The Doctrine of Justification in the Reformation of the 16th Century

Part I: Roman Catholicism / Justification by Faith Alone: Introduction

**2 Types of Theology in the History of the Church:
"CONSISTENT AND INCONSISTENT EVANGELICALISM"- B.B. WARFIELD**

Early Church	- Augustinianism Semi-Pelagianism
The Reformation:	- Calvinism Arminianism
Modern Church:	- Reformed (Calvinistic) Evangelicalism (Arminian)

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

What is the definition of "Catholic"? Catholic means "universal" therefore, "Roman Catholicism" as a name or term is a contradiction. Roman Catholicism as we know it, came

into existence at the Council of Trent: 1564. They condemned Justification by Faith Alone and ceased to be a Christian Church. .

Council of Trent, Chapters 7-8, Canon 9: "If anyone says that a sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification...let him be anathema." **Canon 11:** "If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema." **Canon 24:** "If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of the increase, let him be anathema."

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

MARTIN LUTHER: "Justification by Faith Alone is the doctrine on which the Church or individual stands or falls." **JOHN CALVIN:** "Justification by Faith Alone is the hinge of the Reformation."

The Roman Catholic Church denied this essential doctrine and fell ecclesiastically at the Council of Trent (1564) (see *Calvin the Man* Outline Notes).

REFORMED TEACHING: (Not meritorious, but working) Faith => Justification + Works

True faith is in Christ, gaining His merits (John 15:5).

ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHING: Faith + Works => Justification

Faith plus meritorious works justify a person.

ANTINOMIAN TEACHING: Faith => Justification - Works

Works are recommended but not necessary in the Christian life.

Contrast Roman Catholic teaching of *Semper Idem*: "Always the same," "irreformable," or "infallible" with Reformed teaching of *Semper Reformanda*: "Reformed and always Reforming."

BIBLICAL ORDO SALUTIS (ORDER OF SALVATION):

ELECTION - REGENERATION - FAITH - JUSTIFICATION

Election precedes Regeneration; Regeneration (new birth) precedes faith. When God regenerates you, faith is born in your soul. You are enabled to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and you are justified (declared righteous forensically based on the merits of Christ on your behalf). (Eph. 1:4-13; Gal. 3:24;

Romans 4; John 3:3-8; John 10; John 17; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

SYNOD OF DORT- 1618-1619: Calvinistic Response to the teachings of a Dutch teacher named James Arminius. The doctrines that were exegeted as Biblical were (in the order of grace): Total Depravity, Irresistible Grace, Unconditional Election, Limited (Definite) Atonement, and Perseverance (Preservation) of the Saints.

The Bible teaches that the Father elects from eternity to save some. The Son gives himself to redeem His people and the Spirit regenerates and indwells the believers, sanctifying them and conforming them to the image of the Son.

CHOSEN IN CHRIST- Ephesians 1:11-14: In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory.

HE IS OUR HOLINESS- I Corinthians 1:30: It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. / All the benefits of Christ's perfect life: living 33 years in perfect conformity to God's Law, loving God with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength are given to the believer. All the benefits of Christ's perfect death: dying on behalf of sinners as a ransom, taking the wrath of God as punishment. God credits this "active" and "passive" obedience of Christ to his Elect.

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST IMPUTED- *Iustia Alienum* Romans 4:5-8: However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." / Justification is forensic. We are declared, counted or reckoned to be righteous when God imputes the righteousness of Christ (an "alien righteousness") to our account.

SOLA FIDE- "BY FAITH ALONE" (not "because of" faith)- Ephesians 2:8-10: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. / Faith is the instrumental cause of justification in that faith is the means by which the merits of Christ are appropriated to us.

"THEOLOGICAL ARTICLE UPON WHICH THE CHURCH OR INDIVIDUAL STANDS OR FALLS": "ARTICULUS STANTIS ET CADENTIS ECCLESIAE" - MARTIN LUTHER- Galatians 1:6-12: "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another (gospel) only there are some

that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you,

The Roman Catholic-Lutheran

" Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification":

A Denial of the Gospel and the Righteousness of Christ

by

Richard M. Bennett



There have been numerous, alarming attempts over the past five years to declare Roman Catholics as "brothers and sisters in Christ" during the dialogue between Evangelicals and the Roman Catholic Church. Now something more sinister and authoritative has taken place. "The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" (JD), an official doctrinal statement jointly authored by representatives of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), has been signed on October 31st, 1999, as a joint confessional agreement. On the 482nd anniversary of Martin Luther's pivotal posting of the yet unanswered "95 theses" that ignited the Protestant Reformation, the RCC and LWF vividly confirmed their position of the serious apostasy-to which ecumenism with Rome inevitably leads. The Lutherans of LWF have now embraced the doctrine of the Council of Trent, and in so doing have officially and formally denied the Gospel and the righteousness of Christ.

Elite untouchable JD?

JD is the result of thirty years of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. This fact alone might dissuade many from daring to challenge it. The document itself is about nineteen pages in length depending on which printing one reads. Arrayed with many footnotes, a sizable appendix, the official response of the Lutheran World Federation, the Roman Catholic response, the clarifications to the document, and the added accouterment of John Paul II's comment on JD, the document appears very much like the robes of those

who devised it: all very "haut couture" meant to stun anyone who might dare to analyze it.

In addition to the first rate showmanship with which JD has been presented, it appears that there is neither grub nor gnat that has not been strained out of this cleverly worded document and addenda. Dare anyone be so bold as to ask if a camel has been swallowed? Daunting circumstances notwithstanding, the Christian, committed to Scripture as his sole authority, and in the same Holy Spirit that gave the Scripture, is able to sift error from truth, discerning that which is in accord with Scripture in the Official Common Statement in which JD is ratified and approved by both parties.

Heretical Landmines

There are presuppositions upheld in JD itself, which are not stated as such in the Official Common Statement. Some of these presuppositions totally negate Biblical justification as, for example, the idea that justification is by means of the sacrament of baptism. Such a tradition of men is accepted by both parties to the agreement which in JD states,

4.4 The Justified as Sinner

28. We confess together that in Baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person.

This heresy is in line with the teaching of the Council of Trent,

Can. 8 "If any shall say that by the said sacraments of the New Law, grace is not **conferred** from the work which has been worked [*ex opere operato*] but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices to obtain grace: let him be anathema."

Biblical truth, however, is that the believer's faith cannot be based on any physical works of men whatsoever, as true faith is in God's work alone. To attempt to claim causative effects, therefore, for that which was given to testify to the Lord's grace and His finished work is "to preach another gospel".

While such deadly landmines as this permeates JD, this analysis is limited mainly to examining the Official Common Statement ratified by both parties. To examine adequately the superabundance of heresies and half truths in the full JD document is far beyond the scope of this paper, but certainly it is hoped that Evangelical men will undertake to address these.

JD and the Judgement of Sovereign God

Because God is All Holy and man is dead in trespasses and sins, an immense gulf exists between the Creator and the human creature. Because of Adam's sin, mankind is born spiritually dead. God justifies His own Holiness in graciously providing the believer's rectitude by imputing to the sinner the perfect righteousness of Christ and His perfect propitiation-sacrifice. The Scriptures proclaim the Holiness and Righteousness of God in the flawless life and death of the God-man the Lord Christ Jesus. Justification in the first place has to do with God Himself, to show that He is just in justifying the sinner in Christ.

The Gospel has to do with who God is in His Holy and Righteous nature. The Gospel demonstrates that because of who God is, He alone justifies. Thus Romans 3:26 states, "*To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*" The final cause of justification is the glory of the Divine Holiness, Justice and Goodness. Thus the one who preaches any other gospel is accursed by God (Galatians 1:8-9).

Perversion of the Gospel is an enormous crime. It debases the perfect righteousness and sacrifice of Christ, and in so doing stands against the very nature of God's Holiness. Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord warns, "*But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.*"

It must be carefully observed that it is not possible for those who pervert the Gospel to continue unaccused than for God to permit His glory to be set aside. The time frame is not known; however, the certainty is inevitable. God that is Holy "*shall be sanctified in righteousness.*" God is God, and those who teach a false gospel may not, by a false fancy, assure themselves of uninterrupted tranquillity. God is Holy by nature. He must be sanctified in judgement, for God cannot deny Himself.

JD's Claim

The document alleges, "...that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics..." and "...that the mutual condemnations of former times do not apply to the Catholic and Lutheran Doctrines of justification as they are presented in the joint declaration." These statements notwithstanding, the relevant "condemnations" by the Church of Rome on those who hold to the biblical Gospel have never been revoked or recanted. The present day dogma of the RCC upholds the teaching of the Council of Trent and declares that it is infallible. From Sixth Session of the Council of Trent, the following curses still stand,

Canon 9. If anyone shall say that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to understand that nothing else is required to cooperate in the

attainment of the grace of justification, and that it is in no way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will: let him be anathema.

Canon 11. If anyone shall say that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity, which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Spirit and remains in them, or even that the grace by which we are justified is only the favor of God: let him be anathema.

From a Roman Catholic perspective, as will be seen, these condemnations do in fact stand because JD does not contradict either. From a Biblical and historical Lutheran viewpoint, however, these anathemas of Trent fall under the wrath of God.

The Contents of JD

JD consists of five main divisions with the entirety subdivided into forty-four numbered paragraphs. The fourth main division, the lengthiest of the five, is broken down into seven sections, an overview being as follows:

Preamble (7 paragraphs JD 1-7)

1. Biblical Message of Justification (JD 8-12)

2. The Doctrine of Justification as Ecumenical Problem (JD 13)

3. The Common Understanding of Justification (JD 14-18)

4. Explicating the Common Understanding of Justification (JD 19-39)

This 20-paragraph section has seven subheadings.

1. Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification
(JD 19-21)

2. Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making
Righteous (JD 22-24)

3. Justification by Faith and through Grace (JD 25-27)

4. The Justified as Sinner (JD 28-30)

5. Law and Gospel (JD 31-33)

6. Assurance of Salvation (JD 34-36)

7. The Good Works of the Justified (JD 37-39)

5. The Significance and Scope of the Consensus Reached (JD 40-44)

The Official Common Statement ratifies JD. This begins with three paragraphs (OCS 1-3) followed by the words, "By this act of signing The Catholic Church and The Lutheran World Federation Confirm the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in its entirety." The Official Common Statement has an Annex with four sections. Finally, Section 2 has five subsections, A-E.

Stumbling at the Rock of Offence

JD must be analyzed in the light of Biblical truth. What was true for Israel in the Apostle Paul's analysis applies in this instance.

But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed...For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

The Biblical "rock of offence" is Christ Jesus Himself, the Rock on which one believes for extrinsic justification, that is, imputed righteousness. One must remember from the outset that the issue at hand is "Justification". Error always cloaks itself in reasonable sounding phrases and often makes use of the scheme of the evil one to twist the Scriptures. JD is replete with "Reformation-like" language and Scripture quotations. A characteristic vagueness and impreciseness permeates the document. Certain sentences can be read and assented to by a Biblical Christian, but when the slant of meaning is examined each is seen to be the opposite of what it first seemed to say. The conclusions arrived at are similar to the deception of Jacob in Genesis Ch. 27, "*The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.*" "The voice" of JD is distinctly that of the Scriptures; "the hands", however, are the hairy hands of Rome. The document is excelsior of doublespeak. It claims to explain a common understanding of the doctrine

of justification, and then adds encumbrance upon impediment to the purely Scriptural, wholly objective, wholly juridical nature of the doctrine. There is no better way to assess the guile of JD in its attendant Official Common Statement than by comparing it to what the Scripture, the Word of God, declares to be truth.

Trent in New Garments

In JD, imputed righteousness is cleverly sidestepped for the old lie of establishing one's own righteousness. The central point that separated the Reformation from Rome was the Biblical doctrine of extrinsic justification. A person is accepted by the All Holy God only "*in the beloved*" "*to the praise of the glory of his grace.*" The doctrine of imputed righteousness struck at the very heart of the Roman Catholic insistence on one being made inherently just, i.e., just within oneself. In JD, the doctrine of extrinsic or imputed righteousness has been wiped out in favor of the RCC doctrine of inherent righteousness. Clearly, JD is an attempt to do away with the biblical Gospel. Thus the Official Common Statement 2. A) reads,

We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power " (JD 22). "Justification is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous, through which God "imparts the gift of new life in Christ" (JD 22). "Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Rom 5:1). We are "called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 Jn 3:1). We are truly and inwardly renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit, remaining always dependent on his work in us. "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor 5:17). The justified do not remain sinners in this sense.

This is a convoluted mixture of the doctrines of justification and sanctification rather than merely a problem of semantics. Justification nowhere in Scripture ever means inherent righteousness (i.e. "being made righteous"). The believer's justification is not based on a single iota of anything in him: it is based wholly in his standing in Christ. This is the crux of the matter in JD. One goes the way of all flesh to the judgement of hell if he adds anything to the pure and perfect righteousness of Christ. One needs to be "afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of Christ" (II Cor. 11:3). Justification is not "being made righteous", but JD follows such statements as these with numerous Scriptural quotations and phrases cloaking its errors in the semblance of truth. It is quite like Rebekah's word to Jacob, "*Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.*" Thus "*Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son.*" In JD, the voice of some of the best Scripture texts on justification is heard. The conclusion, however, is similar to what Isaac discerned, "*The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.*" The

hands of JD are distinctly those of Rome; the material that is manipulated, however, is that of Scripture.

"Being Made Righteous"

In the justifying act of God, He imputes Christ's perfect righteousness to the individual. It is a legal and one time, finished, irrevocable act which cannot be misconstrued to be a process or ongoing occurrence, such as the term "being made righteous" will allow. The simple truth of Scripture is stated Rom 3:22, *"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe."* God's demonstration of His own righteousness is the faithfulness of Jesus Christ in His perfect life and sacrificial death. The great news is that this absolute righteousness is by imputation *"unto all and upon all them that believe."* Being "called children of God" and "a new creation" is the fruit. It is what follows on this act. "Being made righteous" here is just a rewording of the old lie of the Council of Trent in which it was officially declared, "Justification...which is not merely remission of sins, but also of the sanctification and renewal of the interior man...whereby an unjust man becomes a just man." In this final word of the JD Official Common Statement is the age old Roman Catholic mixing of sanctification with the act of justification, returning to the age old fabrication that righteousness is supposedly within the soul, rather than to the biblical truth that by Holy God the believer is credited with the everlasting righteousness that is in Christ Jesus. *"Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength...."*

What is proposed in JD as the "doctrine of justification" is deficient in two essential ways. It neither upholds the perfect standard of God's Holiness nor does it demonstrate the perfect righteousness of Christ in life and death. In the words of the Apostle Paul, *"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."* (Romans 10:3) The Bible emphasizes and declares the righteousness of God, *"the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith"* (Romans 1: 17). This is not proclaimed nor taught in the Official Common Statement on JD. Destitute and sinful human beings need the perfect righteousness of Christ. This is what the Scripture clearly says is now manifest, *"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested."* (Romans 3:21)

Manifested in Scripture, Missing in JD

What precisely is omitted in JD is *"the righteousness of God without the law the righteousness which is of God by faith"* of Philippians 3:9, *"the righteousness of the one"*, *"the obedience of the one"* of Romans 5:18-19, the righteousness of Jesus Christ *"the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"* of 2 Peter 1:1. The verdict act of God in declaring that a sinner is acquitted and counted righteous because of the obedience and death of Jesus Christ alone is not contained in JD. What is proposed in its

place is a combination of some Biblical truths (such as grace alone, faith alone) with the old lying definition of "justification" being seen as a quality of the soul within the believer.

Because righteousness is of and from God, it is absolutely perfect. The one-time act of God in justifying a sinner in Christ Jesus is perfect. Because man in himself cannot be perfect, righteousness can only be communicated through imputation or reckoning. God's provision of the perfect righteousness of Christ is acquired by faith alone. It is not seen (Hebrews 1:11). The "*righteousness of God without the law*" is not to be seen on earth. The fruitfulness of such righteousness is indeed seen; nevertheless, the righteousness itself is in heavenly places in Christ.

What is proposed to be "justification" in the Official Common Statement on JD is to be seen here on earth, and not the Scriptural, declarative justification "in heaven". Rather justification is presented as taking place "on earth" **in** the believer, as for example, in Annex Para 2,

Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, **we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit**, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works (JD 15). (Emphasis added.)

The simple truth of Scripture is that God never accepts an individual as such. Rather, he is accepted only in the Beloved, in the righteousness of the One, Christ Jesus, that is, in the righteousness of faith. Receiving the Holy Spirit and the renewal of hearts is the old confusion of justification with sanctification. Because the purpose of these statements is to define justification, such stupefaction is studied deceit.

The phrases, "being made righteous" and "we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit" both make room for what is to be concluded, i.e., that "justification" is within the person and a quality of the soul within the believer. Basically the Biblical truth is this: the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer is an act of God in Christ.

Sophisticated Sophistry

The official statement ratifying JD states,

C) Justification takes place "by grace alone" (JD 15 and 16), by faith alone, the person is justified "apart from works" (Rom 3:28, cf. JD 25). "Grace creates faith not only when faith begins in a person but as long as faith lasts" (Thomas Aquinas, S. Th II/II 4, 4 ad 3).

The use of the phrase "Justification takes place" rather than the Biblical concept, "to whom it shall be imputed," is studied deceit because the word "justification" can be made to imply a process rather than a one-time act of the God. Nevertheless, the Scriptures continually speak about the outcome of the justifying act as "righteousness", not justification. JD and the Official Common Statement on JD use the noun "justification" and carefully avoid the verb "justifies". The Greek word "justifies" (logizomai) means to count esteem, impute, number, reason, reckon. It is a verb denoting a one-time action. The repetition of the noun "justification" in JD and in the Official Common Statement on JD conveys the concept of a quality within a person that totally contravenes the Scripture. Not mentioning "imputed righteousness" and continually speaking of "justification" is seductive sophistry.

Thus in the Official Common Statement's endorsement of JD, the basis for the Gospel is given as within man rather than the perfect righteousness of the God-man, Christ Jesus. This is speaking against God and is worse than anything proposed by Israel or the Pharisees. The words of the Lord Christ Jesus therefore apply, *"for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."*

The Mindset of Rome in JD

The Roman Catholic Church cannot conceive of the act of justifying in which man remains a sinner. Catholic theology understands justifying as "justification", something that God graciously pours into a man's heart, displacing sin and sinfulness in the process. Biblically speaking, however, justifying righteousness is something that always resides in the person of Christ alone. The imputation of this righteousness is what makes a believer acceptable to God. As long as the believer lives, he is in himself guilty, but in Christ He is righteous and accounted precious in God's sight.

An Astonishing Quote from Aquinas

It is a surprising thing that a section of Thomas Aquinas' teaching is affirmed in this final word confirming the conclusion of JD and the Official Common Statement. The question Aquinas was answering in S. Th II/II 4, 4 ad 3 is, "Whether Formless Faith Can Become Formed or Formed Faith Formless?" The abstruseness of the question itself gives one a taste of the intricacies of scholastic theology. Why quote from a most intricate question in Aquinas rather than simply giving the words of Scripture that are referred to in the brackets? The Romans 3:28 text given in brackets before the Aquinas quote states, *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."* The word "conclude" in this text is the Greek word "logizometha" meaning, we esteem, impute or reckon *"that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."* This imputation of righteousness ("dikaiousthai") annihilates the concept proposed

that "the person is justified". Had the Scripture been cited rather than Aquinas, "righteousness reckoned" would have been obvious, and the sophistry exposed. The statement agreed on says,

C) Justification takes place "by grace alone" (JD 15 and 16), by faith alone, the person is justified "apart from works" (Rom 3:28, cf. JD 25). "Grace creates faith not only when faith begins in a person but as long as faith lasts" (Thomas Aquinas, S. Th II/II 4, 4 ad 3).

Biblically speaking it ought to say,

The righteousness of Christ is credited to the believer "by grace alone" and by faith alone, and thus the person is justified in Christ alone, "apart from works". As is stated by the Apostle Paul, "*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*" (Rom 3:28)

Cancerous Cuisine

Earlier in the same work cited, Aquinas teaches that grace is a quality of the soul. In the "Treatise on Grace", he asks the question "Is Grace a Quality of the Soul?" In the body of his article, he cites Aristotle's physics saying, "motion is the act of the mover in the moved." Then in Reply Obj. 1, he states, "Grace, as a quality, is said to act upon the soul not after the manner of an efficient cause, but after the manner of a formal cause, as whiteness makes a thing white, and justice, just." The whole idea of grace being moral justice located inside a person, rather than Holy God imputing Christ's righteousness to each person whom He places in Christ, blatantly contradicts Biblical truth. Such teaching is a negation of consistent Biblical teaching of positional legal righteousness in Christ alone.

Complete Perfection in Christ, not in the Individual

Endorsing the teaching of Aquinas and all such teaching in JD as "Justification takes place", "being made righteous", and "we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit" is quite cleverly teaching "inherent righteousness" without using those words. Such teaching opposes both the Gospel and the righteousness of Christ.

The distinction between the righteousness of faith (justification) and the righteousness of the law (i.e., sanctification) was foundational in Luther's understanding of the Gospel. After Luther, the *Formula of Concord* of 1556 reiterated the basic Biblical insights of double righteousness. This was bedrock of historical Lutheranism. It was recognized that if active righteousness (sanctification) were brought into the definition of the passive righteousness by faith, then both the glory of Christ and the Gospel are

denied and one returns to the old lie of Satan that what is inside a man makes him right before God. *"Ye shall be as gods"* (Genesis 3:5).

The written Word of the Lord continually shows the believer where he or she is eternally and splendidly saved. *"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."* The Roman Catholic Church does not rest satisfied with Christ alone, her process program in fact nullifies the grace of God. What is literally damning in the Official Common Statement of JD is that an attempt has been made to masquerade the perfect righteousness of Christ as inherent righteousness. What was truly Biblical in Luther's understanding of imputed righteousness is now subsumed under Rome's idea of "inner" righteousness, the source of her power over the minds and hearts of men, which power she covets. What is most serious, the very truth of the Gospel is thus made void. The "inner" process system is a hopeless practice born of a blasphemous idea. Rather, *"It is God that justifieth."*

The Wrath of God is Revealed

The Lord forewarned of stumbling at the Rock of offence, *"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner."* (1 Peter 2:7) The RCC and LWF in publicizing their apostasy in JD have to fear a revelation of something much more serious; the very wrath of God. *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."* (Rom 1:18)

"With her much fair speech...till a dart strike through his liver"

The intent to continue dialogue "to reach full church community" is a conclusion mentioned in paragraph 3 of the Official Common Statement. The actual words are as follows,

The two partners in dialogue are committed to continued and deepened study of the biblical foundations of the doctrine of justification. They will also seek further common understanding of the doctrine of justification, also beyond what is dealt with in the Joint Declaration and the annexed substantiating statement. Based on the consensus reached, continued dialogue is required specifically on the issues mentioned especially in the Joint Declaration itself (JD 43) as requiring further clarification, in order to reach full church communion, a unity in diversity, in which remaining differences would be 'reconciled' and no longer have a divisive force.

It is quite revealing that the stated conclusion here is one of the primary goals as defined

in the Church of Rome's conditions for dialogue.

RCC Rules of Engagement Applied to JD

In the Vatican Council II Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents No. 42, "Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue", the Church of Rome carefully lays out the ground rules for her program of ecumenical dialogue among Christians. From that document it is clear that the RCC is proceeding to "dialogue" with Christians by adhering to a special set of rules. Thus specifically she states, "...dialogue is not an end in itself...It is not just an academic discussion." Rather, the stated purpose of dialogue is that

little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist [i.e., the Mass], into that unity of the one and only Church...This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose....

The "little by little" may this time be a giant step as it appears in the conclusion to the Official Common Statement of JD (quoted above).

In the introduction to "Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue" (No. 42), the RCC states that

This document concerns only ecumenical dialogue, that is to say, dialogue which is established between the 'Christians of different Churches or Communions.'" (p. 538) "Ecumenical dialogue is rooted in a number of doctrinal and pastoral facts....First, since 'the brethren who believe in Christ are Christ's disciples, reborn in baptism, sharers with the People of God in very many riches,' and since these riches, such as **'the written word of God, the life of grace, faith, hope and charity, along with other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit and visible elements, are accessible to all those who have been baptized...This community of spiritual goods is the first basis** upon which ecumenical dialogue rests. (p. 541 Emphasis added.)

Using many words, the RCC is giving what is consistently her primary basis, "the community of spiritual goods". Her "first basis" is not that of the Lord and the Apostles, which was the written word of God alone.

The dart through the liver: Rome's first basis

For the RCC the first basis on which ecumenical dialogue works is not *Sola Scriptura*, "*the Scripture cannot be broken*" (John 10:35); rather it is a "community of spiritual goods". This basis is exactly the same as the premise on which the RCC builds her doctrine and which is spelled out in her latest official *Catechism*.

Para. 80 "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine wellspring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal."

Thus the first basis for all the dialogue with the LWF was the RCC's own measure of "truth". The rules following on this first basis were also her own rules of engagement. Some of the rules are these:

"Each partner should seek to expound the doctrine of his own community in a constructive manner, putting aside the tendency to define by opposition.... [Interestingly, the Bible teaches much by means of contrast.] The partners will work together towards a constructive synthesis, in such a way that every legitimate contribution is made use of, in a joint research aimed at the complete assimilation of the revealed datum."

The words "revealed datum" are carefully chosen. For a Bible believer, the term would mean just the Written Word; for the RCC, however, the term "revealed datum" consistently refers to Scripture plus Tradition as her first basis. Proceeding from this impure base, the "constructive synthesis" rules are simply the old line of evolution, "truth" by synthesis, or relative "truth". Excluded from start to finish is the principle of *Sola Scriptura*. To the RCC who by so exquisite an application of her rules of engagement has "thrust through" the Lutherans, the words of the Lord speak directly, "[You are] *making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered.*"

According to Vatican Council II Document No. 42, the final goal of the dialogue between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholic Church is that the Lutherans be brought "into that unity of the one and only Church...This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose." For the RCC, the final conclusion has not yet been attained until her stated objective is secured. Until then, "continued dialogue is required...in order to reach full church communion". And to this, the Lutherans apparently have agreed fully—snared by thirty years of hearing her "much fair speech...till a dart strike through his liver", as indeed it has.

The RCC has been clear in laying out her agenda toward all Christians who are not part

of her organization. She has applied her method skillfully, relentlessly since Vatican Council II. Ought one to be surprised by the conclusions to which she and the LWF have come?

For those who are the Lord's own within the Lutheran Churches, the warning of the Lord is clearly given,

"Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." (Proverbs 7:24-27)

JD as ratified in the Official Common Statement is indeed outwardly stunning, but the message is dead men's bones in that it attempts to cleverly establish man's own righteousness. The words of the Lord are indeed appropriate, *"I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20) ♦

Author



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Justification by Faith - Part II: The Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification -

Brian Schwertley

Chapter 2

The Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification

There are many reasons why all Bible-believing Christians should have a solid grasp of the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification. First, the Romish theory of justification is a complete denial of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a damnable heresy. Anyone who adheres to such a gross perversion of the gospel cannot be saved. Second, it is a subtle doctrine of Satan. The papal perversion of justification is one of the cleverest perversions of Scripture that the mind of man has ever conceived. This papal doctrine is not the typical amateur heresy one finds in many cults today. It was formed over a period of one thousand years. It is a combination of errors found in the Patristic fathers, and the speculations of the Aristotelian-influenced medieval scholastic theologians. The doctrine was fully developed at the Council of Trent (1543-1563) in reaction to the great Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone. At Trent Rome slammed the door shut upon the gospel of Christ; it has remained shut ever since. The Second Vatican Council (1965) and the recent Roman Catholic Catechism (1994) both clearly affirm Trent (all Roman Catholics are supposed to affirm the teachings of Trent as infallible truth). Since Trent, the Romish church is truly a synagogue of Satan. Her pope, cardinals, bishops and priests are all antichrists, enemies of the gospel. Third, there has been a move by many Protestants for closer ties with Rome. This move reflects an ignorance of the basic theological differences between Christianity and Romanism, and a shift within Protestantism away from objective justification toward spiritual existentialism. Fourth, Romanism has adopted an aggressive apologetic toward Protestants. There are some intellectual ex-Protestants who are defending Rome on the radio, internet, and books. These papal apologists frequently take advantage of Evangelicals who have a poor understanding of the Romanist view. In order to avoid the accusation that this author is misrepresenting the Roman Catholic view of justification, quotes from Rome's own doctrinal statements will be provided for each assertion.

To many Christians, Roman Catholicism sounds very evangelical. The Council of Trent declared: "If any one saith, that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the teaching of human nature, or that of the law, without the grace of God through Jesus Christ: let him be anathema."⁵³ The Roman Catholic Catechism also appears very evangelical at times: "Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God's merciful initiative of offering forgiveness. It reconciles man with God. It frees from the enslavement to sin, and it heals."⁵⁴ A good Roman Catholic would say that Christians are saved solely by God's grace. "Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life."⁵⁵ The statement regarding salvation from the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* also appears evangelical: "We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ.... All who accept Christ as Lord and Savior are brothers and sisters in Christ."⁵⁶

Although Roman Catholic doctrine sounds very evangelical at times, a close look at their teachings regarding salvation reveals a clear but clever denial of the biblical doctrine of justification. Gerstner writes: “Romanists many times fool Protestants by their claim to teach ‘by grace alone’ (sola gratia). And they sometimes fool themselves when they are more evangelical than a Romanist can honestly be. Romanists are saved by their works which come from grace, according to their teaching. It is not the grace but the works which come from it that save them!”⁵⁷ Virtually anyone can say “I am saved by grace” or “I am saved solely by Christ.” One must look at the fine print to understand what lies behind these statements. An orthodox Protestant and a good Roman Catholic mean two completely different things when they confess Christ.

Basic Statement of the Difference

Before going into detail, a brief statement of the difference between Romanism and the biblical view of justification is in order. The Bible teaches that justification is a legal declaration of God in heaven regarding the sinner who believes on earth. Justification is objective. The Romanist confounds the doctrine of justification with sanctification. “The Tridentine theory makes inward holiness in conjunction with the merits of Christ the ground of justification. It founds human salvation upon two corner-stones.... The unintentional confounding of the distinction between justification and sanctification, which appears occasionally in the Patristic writers, becomes a deliberate and unemphatic identification, in the scheme of the Papal church.”⁵⁸

The Bible teaches that God accepts men solely on the merits of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-4:8; Phil. 3:8-9). Men are declared righteous because their guilt is imputed to Christ on the cross, and Christ’s perfect righteousness is imputed to the believer’s account. Romanism teaches that grace is infused into man and that people are justified only after becoming righteous. Justification is subjective; it is the internal renovation and renewing of man. Men are justified because of what the Holy Spirit does in them. “Justification means that man himself is made just—made pleasing to God in his own person.... A devout Catholic may say: ‘Righteousness by faith means that I cannot save myself, but by faith I can receive God’s transforming grace. His grace can change my heart, and by His grace in my heart I can be acceptable in His sight....’ The focal point of Catholic theology is God’s work of grace within human experience.”⁵⁹

The Scriptures teach that justification is an instantaneous act of God. It is whole, never repeated, eternal and perfect, not piecemeal or gradual (Jn. 5:25; Lk. 18:13, 14; 23:43; Rom. 4:5; 5:1; 8:3-8). Romanism teaches that justification is a gradual process which may not even be completed in this life. It usually is completed by the tortures of purgatory.⁶⁰ The Bible teaches that sinners are saved solely because of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Papal doctrine affirms that justification is a cooperative effort between God and man. Man must cooperate with inward grace until he achieves justification. The Roman Catholic believes that good works contribute to his salvation. However, he would argue that since these good works flow from inward grace, that ultimately he is saved by grace and not by works.

Romanism is the most clever attempt of man to take a religion of human merit, works-righteousness and personal achievement and dress it with the terminology of grace. Romanism

teaches “the most subtle form of the doctrine of justification by works that has yet appeared, or that can appear. For the doctrines of Trent do not teach, in their canonical statements, that man is justified and accepted at the bar of justice by his law. This is, indeed, the doctrine that prevails in the common practice of the papal church, but it is not the form in which it appears in the Tridentine canons. According to these, man is justified by an inward and spiritual act which is denominated the act of faith; by a truly divine and holy habit or principle infused by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit. The ground of the sinner’s justification is thus a divine and gracious one. God works in the sinful soul to will and to do, and by making it inherently just justifies it. And all this is accomplished through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ; so that, in justification there is a combination of the objective work of Christ with the subjective character of the believer.”⁶¹ Protestants who are not aware of these subtleties are often tongue-tied in debates with knowledgeable Roman Catholics, because Romanists insist they do not believe in salvation by works-righteousness. They simply assert that God is the author of infused grace and inherent righteousness. The Romish system is easily exposed as a doctrine of demons when one considers that their theory of an inward infused grace in the heart as a second pillar of justification clearly means that they regard the death of Christ as insufficient for pardon. For them “Christ alone” is not enough. Jesus, according to their statements of faith, did not perfectly satisfy God’s justice by His life and death. Romanism is in reality a cleverly disguised form of humanism.

“The Protestant trusts Christ to save him and the Roman Catholic trusts Christ to help him save himself.”⁶² The Roman Catholic looks at what Christ accomplished as something that enables a person to begin a long journey that possibly leads to salvation. The Protestant looks to Christ and His merits as salvation itself. Good works prove that justification has already occurred. They do not contribute one iota toward salvation.⁶³

The Romanist Theory Examined

The key to understanding Romanism’s heretical view of justification is their false understanding of Christ’s atonement and their rejection of the doctrine of imputation. The papal church teaches that Christ’s satisfaction for sin only applies to sins committed before baptism and to eternal punishments for sins committed after baptism. The satisfaction rendered for the sins committed before baptism is the first plank of justification, but even in this first plank regeneration is confused with justification. Trent, the sixth session, chapter III says: “in that new birth, there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of his passion, the grace whereby they are made just.”⁶⁴ Chapter IV says: “Justification of the impious is...a translation.... And this translation, since the promulgation of the Gospel, can not be effected, without the laver of regeneration.”⁶⁵ Chapter VII continues: “the instrumental cause [of justification] is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which no man was ever justified.”⁶⁶ Romanism teaches baptismal regeneration. For baptized infants, baptism removes original sin. Adult converts (according to Rome) have original sin removed as well as all actual sins committed before baptism. This is an ancient heresy that led (quite logically) to the practice of putting off baptism until one was old and about to die.

Baptismal regeneration which bestows justification was reaffirmed in the 1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church. “Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the

righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy.... The grace of Christ...is the sanctifying or deifying grace received in baptism.”⁶⁷ Even in this initial act of justification the pardoning of sins is not viewed in judicial terms, “which implied a charge of guilt and a sentence of condemnation for what was past, but in the sense of being ‘deleted’ in the heart of the baptized person,—deleted by an infused principle of grace which ‘renewed him in the spirit of his mind.’”⁶⁸

The Romanist confounding of justification with sanctification starts with this defective view of baptismal regeneration. Baptism is not “the laver of regeneration” but is the visible sign that regeneration has taken place.⁶⁹ Regeneration does not bestow justification but enables the sinner to believe. Faith, not baptism, is the instrument of justification. Although regeneration logically precedes or coincides with justification, regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit in man which purifies the heart (Jn. 3:5, 6; Ezek. 36:25-26; Col. 2:11). The second aspect of the change which the Holy Spirit effects upon a man’s heart is one of renovation. The scriptural terms used to describe man’s spiritual birth are “born again” (Jn. 3:3), “regeneration” (Tit. 3:5), and “made alive” or “quicken” (Eph. 2:5). The person regenerated by God is called a “new creation” (Gal. 6:15, 2 Cor. 5:17) and a “new man” (Eph. 4:24). Regeneration deals with a man’s heart. It is what enables a person to believe in Christ (1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 4:6; Ac. 16:13-14). Justification occurs only when a person believes. Justification is judicial; it is not the purification of the heart. The Bible teaches that regeneration is the beginning of the process of sanctification. The Romanist teaches that regeneration is the first ground and also the beginning of the second ground of justification. Hodge explains the Romanist teaching as follows: “As life expels death; as light banishes darkness, so the entrance of this new divine life into the soul expels sin (i.e., sinful habits), and brings forth the fruits of righteousness. Works done after regeneration have real merit, ‘meritum condigni,’ and are the ground of the second justification; the first justification consisting in making the soul inherently just by the infusion of righteousness. According to this view, we are not justified by works done before regeneration, but we are justified for gracious works, i.e., for works which spring from the principle of divine life infused into the heart. The whole ground of our acceptance with God is thus made to be what we are and what we do.”⁷⁰

The second ground of the Romish doctrine of justification flows not only from their confounding of the purificatory aspect of regeneration with pardon, but also their idea that Christ only rendered satisfaction for eternal punishments but not for temporal punishments. Trent says: “If any one saith, that satisfaction for sins, as to their temporal punishment, is nowise made to God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, by the punishments inflicted by him, and patiently borne, or by those enjoined by the priest, nor even by those voluntary undertaken, as by fastings, prayers, alms-deeds, or by other works also of piety; and that, therefore, the best penance is merely a new life: let him be anathema”⁷¹ Furthermore: “If any one saith that God always remits the whole punishment together with the guilt, and that the satisfaction of penitents is no other than the faith whereby they apprehend that Christ has satisfied for them: let him be anathema.”⁷² The Romanist theologians at Trent in their concept regarding the temporal punishments due for sin were following in the footsteps of the medieval scholastic theologians who made a distinction between the guilt of sin and the guilt of punishment. Romanists teach that Christ did not render a satisfaction or pay the price for the guilt of punishment. Out of this legal obligation of punishment flows the entire system

of penance and purgatory. Protestants maintain that God chastises His children to aid them in their sanctification. Roman Catholicism teaches that God actually metes out penal sufferings on His people, that Christians are required “as a satisfaction to God’s avenging justice” to pay for their sins.

Roman Catholicism teaches that Christ’s death did part of what was needed, but that man through prayer, fasting, attending masses, rosary prayers, vows of chastity and poverty, and other “good” works completes the job. Boettner writes, “Penance, as the catechisms say, involves confession of one’s sins to a priest and the doing of good works as the only way by which sins committed after baptism can be forgiven.... Romanism...teaches that salvation depends ultimately upon ourselves, upon what we do, that one can ‘earn’ salvation by obedience to the laws of the church....”⁷³ In any debate with a Romanist regarding justification, one must always remember that the confounding of justification with sanctification and the Romanist idea of the necessity of human merit stands upon the foundation of their deficient view of Christ’s sacrifice. A biblical view of Christ’s atoning death would instantly render unnecessary the whole anti-Christian popish system (e.g., the mass, works of penance, purgatory, etc.).

Can the Romanist view that Christ rendered only a partial satisfaction for sin be proven from the Bible? No. The Bible clearly teaches that the satisfaction for sin that Christ offered in His death was perfect and totally sufficient. Jesus removed every bit of a believer’s guilt for sin. This includes all judicial punishments both eternal and temporal. God requires no more propitiatory offerings (e.g., the mass)⁷⁴ or satisfactions of any kind for sin (e.g. penance and purgatory). Christ satisfied all the claims of the law for believers. The idea that Christ removed the guilt of sin but not its punishment is absurd. If Christ totally removed all the guilt of sin, then He also has removed the punishment for sin both temporal and eternal. “There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). Christ’s expiation of sin for His people was either full and complete or it was not. The Bible teaches that Christ’s perfect obedience is the ground of our justification (Rom. 5:18-19); that by His death He removed all guilt and every penalty (Rom. 5:21; 8:1, 32-34; Heb. 10:14; Ps. 103:12; Isa. 44:22, etc.); that He actually achieved reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18); that He completely propitiated God’s wrath against the elect (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17); that He paid the ransom price in full (Gal. 3:13; Rom. 7:4, 6; Heb. 9:12; Rev. 5:9; Isa. 53:6; 1 Pet 2:24). “As a creditor does not liberate a surety from prison unless a full payment has been made, so neither could Christ be set free unless he had satisfied to the full. Therefore, since he rose again so gloriously and was raised by the Father himself, there is no room left for doubt concerning the perfection of satisfaction and the full payment of the price of redemption....”⁷⁵ Once this perfect satisfaction is established, “the Roman dogmas of the sacrifice of the Mass, of human merit and satisfaction in this life and of the purgatorial punishments to be endured hereafter are at once overthrown. For such things cannot be allowed without either accusing his satisfaction of insufficiency or God of injustice (exacting a double price and a double punishment of the same sin).”⁷⁶

The Protestant recognizes that believers often suffer the consequences of sin. The Christian man

who backslides, gets drunk and slams his car into a tree—who as a result spends the rest of his life in a wheelchair—suffers the consequences of sin. But his sufferings in no way expiate the guilt of punishment. Furthermore, a man who commits murder and then becomes a Christian in jail must still be executed for his crime, even though Christ has removed the guilt of that sin. His execution is not a temporal punishment inflicted by God to expiate sin, but is the proper restitution rendered to his victim by the civil magistrate. Christians who sin are obligated to make restitution when necessary, but acts of restitution do not contribute to one's salvation or remit temporal punishments. God often chastises His people, but these chastisements are never spoken of in Scripture as rendering satisfaction for sin. God chastises those He loves not as a vengeful judge, but as a loving Father who is concerned with His children's sanctification. He is giving medicine, not judicial punishment.⁷⁷

The Romanist doctrine of justification flows not only from their heretical view of the atonement, but also from their rejection of the biblical concept of imputation. The Romanist doctrine of salvation is a combination of errors found in the church fathers and medieval scholastic theology. Schaff writes: "The fathers lay chief stress on sanctification and good works, and show the already existing terms of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the meritoriousness and even the supererogatory meritoriousness of Christian virtue."⁷⁸ Furthermore, in the Western church the Latin translation of the Greek word for justify held a different meaning than the biblical terminology. "The etymology of *iustificare*, drawn from Roman culture, means to make just, from the root *facere*."⁷⁹ The medieval scholastic theologians who were strongly influenced by Aristotle regarded the idea of imputation as irrational. Thus, Roman Catholicism at Trent completely rejected the Protestant doctrine of an imputed righteousness. Trent, the sixth session, canon 11, says, "If any one saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherent in them; or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favor of God: let him be anathema."⁸⁰ Imputation and the forensic nature of justification are also rejected in canon 9: "If anyone saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will: let him be anathema."⁸¹

Romanism regards the doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ to be a legal fiction "because it declares sinners to be righteous contrary to fact."⁸² Protestants, however, have never held to position that believers are simultaneously both righteous and sinful in themselves. But they do teach that God the Father reckons or regards the believing sinner as righteous because of Christ's righteousness. They are not subjectively righteous, but are clothed with the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Christ's righteousness, which is objective to the sinner, is imputed to them by faith. This doctrine is so clearly taught in the New Testament that only a rank heretic would deny it. The apostle Paul says, "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works" (Rom. 4:4-6; cf. 4:7-25; 5:12-21). Charles Hodge writes: "To whom God imputeth righteousness without works, that is, whom God regards and treats

as righteous, although he is not in himself righteous. The meaning of this clause cannot be mistaken. ‘To impute sin,’ is to lay sin to the charge of any one, and to treat him accordingly, as is universally admitted; so ‘to impute righteousness,’ is to set righteousness to one’s account, and to treat him accordingly. This righteousness does not, of course, belong antecedently [i.e., going before in time] to those to whom it is imputed, for they are ungodly, and destitute of works. Here then is an imputation to men of what does not belong to them, and to which they have in themselves no claim. To impute righteousness is the apostle’s definition of the term to justify. It is not making men inherently righteous, or morally pure, but it is regarding and treating them as just. This is done, not on the ground of personal character or works, but on the ground of the righteousness of Christ. As this is dealing with men, not according to merit, but in a gracious manner, the passage cited from Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, is precisely in point: ‘Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.’ That is, blessed is the man who, although a sinner, is regarded and treated as righteous.”⁸³ To reject the imputed righteousness of Christ in favor of an infused righteousness inherent in man, as Romanism does, is an explicit rejection of the gospel.

Given Romanism’s defective view of the atonement and their rejection of justification by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, they developed a system of salvation by works that flows from grace. Roman Catholic theologians knew that the Bible condemned the notion of salvation by keeping the law; however, they believed that these passages did not apply to them because God was the author of such works. They attributed a person’s meritorious good works to the grace of God. The Roman Catholic Catechism says: “The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace. The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man’s free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man’s merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit....⁸⁴ The merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness....⁸⁵ Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life....⁸⁶ Merit is to be ascribed in the first place to the grace of God, and secondly to man’s collaboration. Man’s merit is due to God.”⁸⁷ The Romanist’s system is subtle and deadly. He constantly speaks of salvation by grace, and yet continuously denies it. Grace for the Romanist means that God starts the process and gives aid along the way, but if man does not do his part, he will not merit eternal life. Salvation is called a “collaboration” between God and man. Collaboration means “to labor together; work or act jointly.”⁸⁸

The Romanist believes that Christ’s death was insufficient; that imputation is a legal fiction and that man can merit eternal life by cooperating with God’s grace. Thus, the fundamental principle of the Romish system is a righteousness inherent in man. Sanctification is confounded with justification. Trent, sixth session, chapter seven says, “This disposition, or preparation, is followed by Justification itself, which is not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace, and of the gifts, whereby man of

unjust [sic] becomes just.”⁸⁹ Since Romanists do not believe that justification is a legal declaration but a process inherent in man, they speak of the increase of justification. Trent says, “They, through the observance of the commandments of God and of the church, faith cooperating with good works, increase in that justice which they have received through the grace of Christ, and are still further justified.”⁹⁰ Since justification is ultimately dependent upon man, Romanists teach that justification can be lost and then regained through the sacrament of Penance. Trent says, “As regards those who, by sin, have fallen from the received grace of Justification, they may be again justified, when, God exciting them, through the sacrament of Penance....”⁹¹ The Romanist believes that good works and the sacraments of the church are necessary to increase and preserve justification. “The medieval church thought of grace as being infused to change and transform the sinful nature of man. By this transforming change within him, the believer was said to be made just in God’s sight. Then, as he received more and more grace, the believer was said to become less and less sinful and at the same time more and more just in the sight of God. Good works were done in the believer by the indwelling of Christ and, because of this, were thought to be entirely pleasing and acceptable to God. Rome held out to men the possibility of becoming pure and sinless saints (ontological perfection), and those who attained this perfection reached sainthood and were qualified to enter heaven at the hour of death. Those who did not become perfect and absolutely sinless in the flesh, would need to go to purgatory after death and thus be made completely just and qualified to enter heaven.”⁹²

The Roman Catholic system of salvation is a devilish combination of biblical terminology and human invention. In their councils and catechisms there is much talk about the grace of God and the merits of Christ. Also, there are a few fairly evangelical-sounding statements, but the bottom line is that man must save himself: partly with Christ’s merits, partly with the merits of the saints, partly from the Mass, partly from his own merits, and partly from penance and purgatory. Buchanan says the papal church “did not recognize One only Mediator, and One only sacrifice for sin: it taught the merits and mediation of the saints,—the repetition of the one sacrifice on the Cross by the sacrifice on the Altar,—and addition satisfactions for sin in the austerities of penance, and the pains of purgatory. It made the pardon of sin dependent on the confession of the penitent and the absolution of the priest,—thereby placing the church in the room of Christ, and interposing the priest between the sinner and God: and when absolution was granted on condition of penance, or some other work of mere external obedience, it led men to look to something which they could themselves do or suffer, instead of relying by faith simply and solely on Christ and His finished work.”⁹³ The beauty and perfection of Christ’s completed work are replaced by the filthy, stinking rags of human merit. Roman Catholicism offers a deadly mixture of faith and works in the matter of justification but labels this mixture “pure grace.” One can label a bottle of deadly poison anything he wants to, but the contents remain the same. To offer up a system of salvation by works and excuse the whole thing by saying it all flows from grace is contradictory and deceptive. Paul says that as soon as works of any kind enter the picture, grace is no more grace. “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt” (Rom. 4:4). “You who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4).

A Summary of Scriptural Proofs Against the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification

The Roman Catholic doctrine of justification contradicts the Scriptures in several areas. First, the biblical terms used to speak of justification, *dikaioo*, always means to declare righteous and never means to make righteous (see Lk. 7:29; 10:29; 16:15; Mt. 11:19; Rom. 3:4). Justification is a judicial, forensic term and is often contrasted in Scripture with judicial condemnation (see Dt. 25:1; Pr. 17:15; Isa. 5:23; Job 34:17). Second, when speaking of justification the Bible speaks of the imputation of righteousness and not the infusion of righteousness (see Rom. 4:12, 22-24). Third, the Bible describes justification as something achieved in an instant of time. It is never described as a long process (see Jn. 5:24; Lk. 18:14; 23:43; Rom. 5:1). Fourth, the Scriptures repeatedly declare that all that a person needs to be saved is to believe in Jesus Christ. “Everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Ac. 13:39; cf. Ac. 16:31; Jn. 3:15-16; 5:24; 11:25-26; Rom. 10:9; 1 Th. 4:14). Fifth, the apostle Paul says that God “justifies the ungodly” (Rom. 4:5). This proves that God does not justify people because they are personally righteous but because of the imputation of Christ’s perfect righteousness. Sixth, God’s word makes a clear distinction between justification and sanctification. “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). Justification deals with the guilt of sin and the merits needed for eternal life, while sanctification deals with the pollution of sin. Sanctification proves that a person has already been justified but does not contribute one iota to a person’s salvation. Seventh, the Bible teaches that the good works of believers are tainted with sin and are non-meritorious (Is. 64:6; Lk. 17:10; Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:15 ff.; Phil. 3:8-9). This side of heaven not one believer is without sin (1 Jn. 1:8). Eighth, the Scriptures say that faith alone is the instrument which appropriates Jesus Christ and His saving work (Rom. 3:22, 25-31; 4:5-25; 5:1, 18; 9:30-32; Gal. 2:16; 3:11-13, 24; 5:1-4). After one is justified, the sacraments and other means of grace are used in order to help the believer grow spiritually (i.e., for sanctification not for justification). Ninth, God’s word teaches that Jesus Christ actually accomplished a perfect redemption for His people, the elect (Mt. 1:21; Jn. 10:11-29; Ac. 20:28; Eph. 5:25-27). Romanism erroneously teaches that Christ merely made salvation a possibility if people cooperate with grace. But, as noted, such a view must presuppose that either Christ’s death was insufficient to save or that God is unjust by punishing the same sins twice. Both options are thoroughly unscriptural.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is diametrically opposed to the biblical method of justifying sinners. It contradicts the experience of Abraham and the teachings of Jesus Christ and all the apostles. Therefore, the Protestant reformers opposed the papal doctrine with every fiber of their being. Also, the Reformed churches rightfully opposed the Romish heresy in all their confessions. Now that modern Evangelicalism has degenerated so far in so many critical areas (e.g., soteriology, worship, eschatology, etc.). Protestants need to be even more diligent in defending justification against all attacks from antichrist and his lieutenants.

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WORLD ON THE WEB

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COVER STORY

Now no condemnation?

In light of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, WORLD asked the following four thoughtful Christians to respond to this question: "Does the Roman Catholic Church accept the doctrine of justification by faith alone as the Reformers understood it?" Here's what they said.

By The Editors

J. Budziszewski

WORLD contributor and professor in the Departments of Government and Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin

Christianity is a rescue religion. Deep down, underneath all his evasions and self-deceptions, every human being knows that something is desperately wrong with us, something that we can't fix. What we learn from Christianity is the Good News that the Bad News has a cure: On the cross, Christ bore the burden of both our guilt and our twistedness, so that we can be both forgiven and healed. There is one catch. In order to receive this priceless and wholly undeserved gift, we have to accept it; we have to trust Christ to do what He promises. This means putting ourselves in His hands, accepting Him as Rescuer and Boss. This isn't a philosophy, but surgery, and you have to have faith in the Surgeon.

During the Reformation, Roman Catholics and Protestants split over the right way to describe how Christ rescues us. The disagreement was grave, because to be wrong about that is to be wrong about the gospel itself. The Reformers said that "justification" is by faith alone, Catholics said it is not by faith alone, and each side condemned the other.

Did they understand each other? Probably not, because they didn't mean the same thing by "justification." Two things happen when a person comes to Christ. One is that God forgives him and declares him just; the other is that God begins transforming him and making him just. Protestants have traditionally used the word justification for the first of these two things, while Catholics have traditionally used it for both.

It isn't crucial that Protestants and Catholics agree about the word justification, but that they agree about the biblical truth that the word is meant to express:



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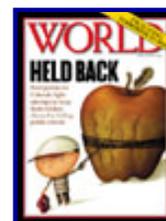
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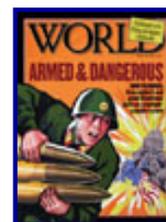
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1) Protestants need assurance that Roman Catholics understand that there is nothing we can do to earn or deserve our forgiveness; that even though God does begin to make us righteous, that's not why he declares us righteous. It is a free gift, which He drops into the hands of faith.

2) Roman Catholics need assurance that Protestants understand that authentic faith is inevitably accompanied by a change in inner self and outer deeds; that even though we aren't declared righteous because God makes us righteous, He does begin to make us righteous. A faith that isn't followed by a change in life is a phony faith.

I support the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification because it gives each side the assurance it needs about the other. The scandal of mutual condemnation can finally be put to rest.

Let's take a look at some common criticisms.

- "Although the Joint Declaration uses the language of being declared just, what it talks about is being made just." Actually it talks about both. But does it correctly state that God declares us just and begins to make us just, or does it erroneously state that God declares us just because He begins to make us just? It states the former.
- "The Joint Declaration takes with one hand what it gives with the other." Each section includes a paragraph about major agreements, followed by two paragraphs about minor disagreements. At no point do the paragraphs about the minor disagreements take back the major agreements.
- "You can't trust the World Lutheran Federation-it's too liberal." Nobody has been asked to join the World Lutheran Federation. What matters is not whether the Federation is liberal, but whether the Declaration expresses biblical truth.
- "The World Lutheran Federation can't even speak for other Lutherans, much less other Protestants." True, but that's not a reason to reject the Joint Declaration; it's a reason to get other Protestants involved in the discussions.
- "The average Catholic still thinks salvation is something we earn." Many Catholics do misunderstand Catholic teaching. Would anyone deny that many Protestants misunderstand Protestant teaching? Both sides must work harder to get the biblical truths they share down to the people in the pews.
- "How can we accept the Joint Declaration when Protestants and Catholics continue to disagree about so many other things, like indulgences?" This is like saying, "I refuse to admit that you agree with me about anything unless you agree with me about everything." These other disagreements do not concern justification. Indulgences, for example, are not about the forgiveness of sins, but about the healing of the damage left over in the heart from already-forgiven sins.

Jesus asked the Father to protect His followers "so that they may be one as we are one." It's time for us to make His prayer our own.

Rev. Paul T. McCain

Assistant to the president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification embraces the Roman Catholic Church's view of justification. It contradicts the doctrine of justification as held by the Reformers of the 16th century. Most importantly, it contradicts the Word of God.

The declaration is ambiguous and equivocating. Therefore, it is fundamentally dishonest. It avoids precise definition of the important biblical terms: grace, faith, and justification. Postmodernism plagues modern Christendom with the view that doctrinal diversity can be reconciled without true doctrinal consensus.

The Roman Catholic Church continues to affirm the heresies that were made official church dogma during the 16th-century Council of Trent. Here is one example: "If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than trust in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this trust alone by which we are justified, let

him be anathema."

The newest edition of the Roman Catholic Catechism states: "We can merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed to attain eternal life." According to Rome, grace is a spiritual power infused into man that makes it possible for him to do the good works that then merit forgiveness and eternal life. This view contradicts the biblical doctrine of justification: A sinner is saved by God's grace alone, for Christ's sake alone, through faith alone.

Luther once said, "We can not pin our hope on anything that we are, think, say or do ... nor can our satisfaction be uncertain, for it consists not of the dubious sinful works which we do, but of the sufferings and blood of the innocent Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

The Pope's recent announcement of a special Jubilee indulgence underscores the fact that Rome teaches a different gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Until the doctrine of Trent is renounced, the claim that Roman Catholicism has embraced the true gospel will continue to be untrue. It is a terrible tragedy that those who claim to be heirs of Luther have permitted this to happen. They have surrendered biblical truth and thus, genuine Lutheranism.

The Book of Concord, the collected doctrinal statements of the Lutheran Church, asks this poignant and timeless question, "Who would not gladly die in the confession of the article that we receive the forgiveness of sins, freely given for Christ's sake, and that our works do not merit the forgiveness of sins?"

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus

Editor in chief of First Things

If our concern were only for explicit biblical teaching, it would be worth noting that the only time the formula "faith alone" appears in the Bible it is rejected ("You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone," James 2:24). But through the tumultuous history of the church (tradition), the formula "faith alone" has become for many Christians an important defense of the teaching that salvation is entirely due to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The statement of Evangelicals and Catholics Together, "The Gift of Salvation," puts it this way: "Faith is not merely intellectual assent but an act of the whole person, involving the mind, the will, and the affections, issuing in a changed life." If that is how we understand the faith in "faith alone," it is certainly true that the Catholic Church accepts the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The evangelical Protestant signers of "The Gift of Salvation" agreed that that is what "the Reformation traditions have meant by justification by faith alone." As for the recent Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification agreed to by Lutherans and Catholics, I believe it is correct in saying that, whatever differences remain in devotional or theological expression, they should not be viewed as church-dividing. One might say that there are two languages about justification in play; the one is dominantly theological and analytical, the other dominantly devotional and experiential. The Council of Trent, for instance, addresses the role of the intellect and the will in cooperating with God's grace. While not wanting to ignore the intellect and the will, many in the Reformation traditions believe that any reference to human cooperation threatens the sheer gratuity of the gift that is salvation. To which Catholics respond that our cooperation with grace is itself a gift of grace. This does not result in a conundrum, and certainly not in a contradiction. In my experience, evangelicals testifying to their new birth in Christ regularly and of necessity refer to their thoughts, emotions, and submission of will. This does not mean that they believe their salvation is partly God's grace and partly their own cooperation with grace. The formula "grace alone" and its corollary, "faith alone," are finally doxological, not analytical, affirmations. All Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant, must finally agree with what are reportedly the last words of Martin Luther. Before the judgment of God, he said, "We are all beggars. That is for sure." *Soli Deo gloria*-to God alone the glory.

Michael S. Horton

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The way one often hears it expressed in evangelical circles, one might conclude that the actors in the 16th-century drama simply didn't have their facts straight. Both sides should have recognized that each party had an important part of the gospel and instead of tearing faith and works apart, they should have brought them together. In actual fact, this is a disservice to both sides. First, late medieval theologians, both Roman and Protestant, were far better educated in theological refinement than their modern successors. Second, Rome affirmed the necessity of grace and the Reformation affirmed the necessity of works in the Christian life.

They understood precisely what the issues were, far better than their successors, who have not resolved anything but instead have concluded that whatever divided them then should no longer divide us now. And since Rome claims that its infallible dogmas are "irreformable," agreement could only mean that the Protestant partners no longer believe what their forebears believed-or at least do not believe that what their forebears insisted was necessary is necessary today.

Rome has not changed an inch on the things that really matter. One thinks of indulgences, that practice of giving people time off in purgatory or outright liberating them from it, often for money. Recently, Pope John Paul II, hailed as one of the greatest Christian pastors of modern times by evangelicals like Billy Graham and Charles Colson, declared the millennial year a "Jubilee," complete with the issuing of indulgences.

As its most recent Catholic Catechism illustrates, Rome still teaches that after believers die "they undergo purification" in purgatory, "so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven" (p. 268). "Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life" (p. 487).

And how about justification itself, the doctrine by which the church stands or falls? The Council of Trent declared, "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone ... let him be anathema.... If anyone says that the good works of the one justified are in such manner the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits of him justified ... let him be anathema."

There have always been critics on both sides who have reacted more out of bigotry than a passion for the gospel. But this must not blind us to the realities of the current situation. According to contemporary Roman Catholic dogma, final acceptance before God is merited by us as we cooperate with grace. For those who know that their "righteousness is as filthy rags," this comes as the worst possible news. Calling bad news good news is destructive of every pastoral instinct and of the prospects for genuine long-term ecclesiastical reconciliation.

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Webcast](#)[Calendar](#)[Guestbook](#)[Contact Us](#)[Support Us](#)[Privacy Policy](#)[Roman Catholicism](#)**Exegetica: Roman Catholic Apologists Practice Eisegesis in Scripture and Patristics****James White**

In scanning a recent article by Mark Bonocore I noted an interesting example of the constant presence of anachronism in Roman Catholic apologetic treatments of both the Bible and patristic sources. In this case, he is responding to an un-named Protestant who wrote the following:

Clement wrote only a little earlier than Ignatius and clearly didn't share Ignatius' ecclesiastical view. Granted, Clement is from the West, but from him it seems clear that both Rome and Corinth of about 100 CE didn't have an Ignatian like monarchical episcopate but just local presbyter governance. It is true that Ignatius like the NT speaks of episkopoi; but also like the NT, he only means local presbyters.

This anonymous writer is surely correct. Indeed, he is supported in his position by the vast majority of historical scholarship, both Catholic and Protestant. For example, Roman Catholic scholar Joseph F. Kelly wrote in *The Concise Dictionary of Early Christianity* (1992, p. 2), "The word 'pope' was not used exclusively of the bishop of Rome until the ninth century, and it is likely that in the earliest Roman community a college of presbyters rather than a single bishop provided the leadership." This is echoed by Protestant church historian J.N.D. Kelly who wrote:

In the late 2nd or early 3rd cent. the tradition identified Peter as the first bishop of Rome. This was a natural development once the monarchical episcopate, i.e., government of the local church by a single bishop as distinct from a group of presbyter-bishops, finally emerged in Rome in the mid-2nd cent. (p. 6).

When speaking of Linus, Anacletus, Clement, Evaristus, Alexander, Telesphorus, and Hyginus (to A.D. 142), Kelly consistently notes the same thing: there was no monarchical episcopate in Rome at this time.

When we combine this fact with a fair reading of the anonymous epistle traditionally attributed to "Clement" we certainly discover that the churches at Rome and Corinth did indeed have a plurality of elders, not a monarchical episcopate. The fact that Rome could write to Corinth and consistently use the plural of "elders" and never once speak in the singular name of the "bishop of Rome" at the time shows this clearly. At the same time, Ignatius' epistles plainly present the monarchical idea existing at the very same period of time, primarily in the Eastern churches. The unnamed Protestant writer is certainly speaking in line with the majority of scholarship on both sides of the Catholic/Protestant divide.

Now we should note at the very beginning that Mr. Bonocore's response is obviously little more than an e-mail (or possibly a post on a discussion board), so it may not be fair to look overly closely at it. But since it has been posted as an article on a [website](#) it seems fair to respond to it. The first assertion Bonocore makes is that since Ignatius uses *episkopos* in the monarchical sense, when he speaks of bishops who are "settled everywhere" (Eph. 3) that this somehow means that Rome must have had a monarchical episcopate as well. But the idea that Ignatius is saying something about the organization of the church at Rome by his comment is unfounded. Upon what basis is this assumption made? We are not told. When Ignatius wrote to the church at Rome, did he address this monarchical bishop? No. In fact, his letter to the Romans is the only one where he does *not* address the bishop by name. This is considered strong testimony by most scholars in support of what J.N.D. Kelly said above.

But most troubling was the citation given of Clement's epistle to the Corinthians. Remember that the title is traditional: the epistle does not give a name of the writer(s). The first troubling item is the way in which the quotation is given:

"Since then these things are manifest to us, and we have looked into the depths of the Divine knowledge, we ought to do in order all things which the Master commanded us to perform at appointed times. He commanded us to celebrate Sacrifices and services (the Eucharist), and that it should not be thoughtlessly or disorderlyHe has Himself fixed by His supreme will the places and persons (the appointed presbyters) whom He desires for these celebrations, in order that all things may be done piously according to His good pleasure, and be acceptable to His will. So then those who offer their oblations at the appointed times are acceptable and blessed, but they follow the laws of the Master and do not sin. For to the high priest (the bishop) his proper ministrations are allotted, and to the priests (the presbyters) the proper place has been appointed, and on the Levites (the

deacons) their proper services have been imposed. The layman is bound by the ordinances for the laity.Our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those who blamelessly and holily have offered its Sacrifices." (1 Clement to the Corinthians, 44:4)

I say this is troubling because this is not merely from section 44 of the epistle: it is actually cobbled together from a number of places in the epistle. It is hard for almost any reader to follow any flow or context when the only reference given is to the very last line of the quotation, nothing more. The second troubling thing is the insertion, without notification or explanation, of parenthetical commentary that is *not* found in the original text. Taking out these a-contextual comments, utilizing a standard translation, providing the actual context, and providing references, we get:

These things therefore being manifest to us, and since we look into the depths of the divine knowledge, it behooves us to do all things in [their proper] order, which the Lord has commanded us to perform at stated times. He has enjoined offerings [to be presented] and service to be performed [to Him], and that not thoughtlessly or irregularly, but at the appointed times and hours. Where and by whom He desires these things to be done, He Himself has fixed by His own supreme will, in order that all things being piously done according to His good pleasure, may be acceptable unto Him. Those, therefore, who present their offerings at the appointed times, are accepted and blessed; for inasmuch as they follow the laws of the Lord, they sin not. For his own peculiar services are assigned to the high priest, and their own proper place is prescribed to the priests, and their own special ministrations devolve on the Levites. The layman is bound by the laws that pertain to laymen. (40)

Let every one of you, brethren, give thanks to God in his own order, living in all good conscience, with becoming gravity, and not going beyond the rule of the ministry prescribed to him. Not in every place, brethren, are the daily sacrifices offered, or the peace-offerings, or the sin-offerings and the trespass-offerings, but in Jerusalem only. And even there they are not offered in any place, but only at the altar before the temple, that which is offered being first carefully examined by the high priest and the ministers already mentioned. Those, therefore, who do anything beyond that which is agreeable to His will, are punished with death. Ye see, brethren, that the greater the knowledge that has been vouchsafed to us, the greater also is the danger to which we are exposed. (41)

The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits [of their labors], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe. Nor was this any new thing, since indeed many ages before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus saith the Scripture in a certain place, "I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith." (42)

And what wonder is it if those in Christ who were entrusted with such a duty by God, appointed those [ministers] before mentioned, when the blessed Moses also, "a faithful servant in all his house," noted down in the sacred books all the injunctions which were given him, and when the other prophets also followed him, bearing witness with one consent to the ordinances which he had appointed? For, when rivalry arose concerning the priesthood, and the tribes were contending among themselves as to which of them should be adorned with that glorious title, he commanded the twelve princes of the tribes to bring him their rods, each one being inscribed with the name of the tribe. And he took them and bound them [together], and sealed them with the rings of the princes of the tribes, and laid them up in the tabernacle of witness on the table of God. And having shut the doors of the tabernacle, he sealed the keys, as he had done the rods, and said to them, Men and brethren, the tribe whose rod shall blossom has God chosen to fulfill the office of the priesthood, and to minister unto Him. And when the morning was come, he assembled all Israel, six hundred thousand men, and showed the seals to the princes of the tribes, and opened the tabernacle of witness, and brought forth the rods. And the rod of Aaron was found not only to have blossomed, but to bear fruit upon it. What think ye, beloved? Did not Moses know beforehand that this would happen? Undoubtedly he knew; but he acted thus, that there might be no sedition in Israel, and that the name of the true and only God might be glorified; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (43)

Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and there would be strife on account of the office (literally, "name") of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry.

For our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled its duties. Blessed are those presbyters who, having finished their course before now, have obtained a fruitful and perfect departure [from this world]; for they have no fear lest any one deprive them of the place now appointed them. But we see that ye have removed some men of excellent behavior from the ministry, which they fulfilled blamelessly and with honor. (44)

A careful reading of the text reveals a few basic things. First, the author(s) of the letter are reproving the Corinthian church for having ejected their elders. They demonstrate that the church is a place of order (a problem Corinth had long before, as evidenced by Paul's letter to them). The Old Testament witness is brought forward in the first sections, demonstrating that God has the right to order His worship as He sees fit. Unfortunately, Mr. Bonocore draws from this Old Testament section as if it is applied *in detail* by the authors to the current situation (an unwarranted action). Clement knows only of elders and deacons in the church at Corinth. A quick scan of the relevant Greek data in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* demonstrates that Clement's normal usage when referring to those who filled the office is *plural*. The singular uses of *episkope* are made in reference to the episcopate as a whole. *There is not a shred of evidence that Clement differentiated between the office of bishop and presbyter within the text itself.* Despite this, after giving the parenthetically-filled citation noted above, Bonocore says,

So, the three-fold ministry (*sic*) was indeed recognized by Clement of Rome.

He bases this upon a misreading of the above text, focusing upon the Old Testament illustration used by Clement. However, as J.B. Lightfoot rightly commented on this passage, "Does the analogy then extend to *three* orders? The answer to this seems to be that...this epistle throughout only recognizes two orders, presbyters and deacons, existing at Corinth....Later writers indeed did dwell on the analogy of the *threefold* ministry; but we cannot argue back from them to Clement, in whose epistle the very element of *threefoldness* which gives force to such a comparison, is wanting." (J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Clement, Volume 2, 123). Bonocore then provides more anachronistic eisegesis of the text in Clement by moving more than two centuries into the future, and a thousand miles away geographically, to a quotation by Athanasius, where Athanasius does use the term "Levite" of a deacon. Are we to conclude that because one writer in the fourth century uses "Levite" of "deacon" that every writer in all preceding centuries followed the same path? Surely not. But this is all that is offered in support of this assertion. A fair reading of the text forces us to reject such fanciful interpretation.

Bonocore goes on to admit that the terms presbyter and bishop were used interchangeably (he seems to limit this to Europe, for some reason). Such is surely the case. Interestingly, Jerome commented upon this very fact in the late fourth and early fifth century. Note his words:

In both epistles commandment is given that only monogamists should, be chosen for the clerical office whether as **bishops** or as **presbyters**. **Indeed with the ancients these names were synonymous, one alluding to the office, the other to the age of the clergy.** *NPNF2: Vol. VI, The Letters of St. Jerome, Letter 69 - To Oceanus, §3.*

However, Bonocore errs in that he assumes, incorrectly, that Ignatius' words, quoted above, mean that a three-fold ministry existed in Rome (it didn't), and that Clement likewise presents such a distinction (the epistle, as we have seen, does not). From this faulty basis he moves on to rightly say that the terms were used interchangeably in the Bible as well. There is surely no distinction made between *episkopos* and *presbuteros* in the New Testament as to office, qualifications, and duties. For the person who follows the advice given by Clement above regarding God's right to define His own worship and those who will carry it out, this should be enough: the inspired Scriptures give us two offices in the church (elders and deacons), and woe to the one who will add to what He Himself has commanded! But Rome has, surely, gone *far* beyond the Scriptures at this point. Following her lead, Bonocore sees evidence of a three fold ministry in the text of Scripture. But this is another example of eisegesis, this time reading into the text of Scripture itself. He writes,

Yet, even in NT times, while the TERMS "bishop" and "presbyter" were still being used interchangeably, it is also clear that each city-church possessed an "arch-presbyter" (what we would call a "bishop") -- a singular leader of the church. For example, this was clearly the role of James in Jerusalem:

Acts 21:17-19: "When we reached Jerusalem the brothers welcomed us warmly. The next day, Paul accompanied us on a visit to James, and all the presbyters were present. He greeted them and proceeded to tell them in detail what God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry."

Galatians 2:12: "For until some people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles..."

There is no question that James had a position of leadership in Jerusalem: but making Jerusalem normative for all churches, as Bonocore does, is utterly unwarranted. Where do we find Paul ordaining "arch-presbyters" in the churches? We do not. James' position was apostolic and unique: to extend his unique ministry in Jerusalem to the entirety of the church is as unwarranted as the conclusions drawn earlier from the words of Ignatius. But his error becomes even more pronounced when he attempts to find more scriptural backing:

Similarly, Timothy held the office of monarchical leader in Ephesus. For, using the singular "you" in Greek, Paul instructs Timothy how to manage the Ephesian church saying,

1 Tim 5:17-22 -- "Presbyters who preside well deserve double honor ...Do not accept (you singular) an accusation against a presbyter unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. Reprimand (you singular) publicly those who do sin, so that the rest also will be afraid. I charge you (singular) before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels to keep these rules without prejudice, doing nothing out of favoritism. Do not lay hands (you singular) too readily on anyone..."

Therefore, Timothy was the one who both ordained presbyters and sat in judgment of them.

So, while there was yet no distinction between the TERMS "bishop" and "presbyter," the practical distinction of the offices was already fully established.

Is it a sound argument to note that Paul wrote a letter to a single elder (Timothy), and since he used singular personal pronouns in writing to him, this means Timothy was the *only* elder, or, held a position of priority over anyone else? Surely not! Such involves the same kind of leap in logic we have seen previously. There is no rational reason to conclude from these words that Timothy was an "arch-presbyter" and hence a three-fold ministry existed in the New Testament. Paul is giving *general instructions* to Timothy (and through him to the entire church, knowing that Timothy, ministering in Ephesus as he did, would pass these truths along just as the gospel had gone forth from Ephesus into all of Asia Minor). He is not creating in Timothy a new office, higher than elder, by addressing the letter to him. These commands are just as valid today. All elders in Christ's church receive these words and operate upon their basis to this very day.

And so we see that this attempt at inserting a three-fold ministry into the Scriptures fails. And just as importantly, in the field of Roman Catholic apologetics, we are again reminded of the fact of history that Rome itself did not see the need for a monarchical episcopate until the middle of the second century. How very strange if, indeed, the concept of the singular bishop of Rome as the singular successor of Peter is actually "apostolic" in origin.

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The Scandal of the Catholic Priesthood

(Selected Scriptures)

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Well, thank you for coming tonight. I am going to put on the hat of sort of a professor and historian tonight. I am so used to getting up and saying "take out your Bible," but that wouldn't help, since the Catholic priesthood isn't found anywhere in scripture, so we can't start there. I want to talk about the scandal of the priesthood, because obviously we are all made very much aware of the tremendous tragedy that is playing out before us in the immorality of the Catholic priesthood. And what I would like to do is to give some historical perspective to that, some sense of the bigger picture of what's going on in the priesthood. And in order to do that, I have to talk a little bit about the scandal of the priesthood itself. So it's a bit of a play on words. It's a bit of a pun, if you will, when I talk about the scandal of the priesthood.

I'm not just talking about the current scandal. I'm talking about the whole scandal of the priesthood itself, as the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic church. Let me give you a little bit of background.

There's a lot that could be said about Roman Catholic theology. We could expose its errors, which are numerous; we could talk about its sources of revelation or divine truth that are outside the pages of scripture, or we could talk about the corruption of the mass. We could talk about the idea that Mary is the co-redemptrix which, of course, is really a blasphemous concept. We could talk about the idea that God is a tough guy, and if anybody wants grace out of God, it's only Jesus who could get it from Him; but you can't expect to go to Jesus because He's pretty tough himself, so you need to go to Mary, because nobody can resist his mother. And so she'll talk to Him and he'll talk to the father, and Mary will get you what you need, or some saint. We could talk a lot about those things; concepts of purgatory, concepts of the sinlessness of Mary, the virgin birth of Mary, a lot of things about Catholic theology that we could speak

about; most notably their erroneous doctrine of justification, which cuts people off from the kingdom of God. But what I want to talk about is the scandal of the priesthood, and give you some sense of what the priesthood really is all about.

We are all very familiar with Catholic priests. We've grown up seeing them in our society, along with nuns, and we see them on the television all the time. We read about them in the newspaper before there were any scandals. We've been very much aware of them. Many of you in your youth were affected or impacted by the image of the priest in his black robe going through the machinations of ceremonies in the Catholic church that you attended as a kid. So we all know that. There's this sort of idea that there's a holy aura about these men; that somehow, they're almost unearthly and transcendent. And we need to kind of put that in perspective.

So let me start by just talking about the divine origin of the hierarchy. There is in Catholic dogma the confidence that the hierarchy of the Catholic church is from Christ; that it is Jesus Christ Himself who granted to the Catholic church its hierarchical structure. And essentially, what that boils down to is an office of clergy, sort of across-the-board, that has three categories of power. Roman Catholics talk about teaching power. They talk about pastoral power, and they talk about sacerdotal power.

Teaching power is what you would think it is. They speak authoritatively for the church; church being the only true interpreter of scripture. They don't speak for the scripture. They speak for the church. That is their teaching power.

They also possess pastoral power, and the way they define that is quite interesting. In the Catholic dogma, it is refined as -- defined as legislative, judicial and punitive. Their idea of pastoral work is not comfort and care and compassion. It is legislative, judicial and punitive. They make laws to which they hold people. They adjudicate as to whether people have violated those laws, and they mete out punishment. And through the years, that punishment has been everything from excommunication to execution.

Thirdly, they possess sacerdotal power. And what that simply means is the power to impart grace through the sacraments. They would say in their dogma that these three parallel the threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest and king.

Now, their dogmas have been crystallized very well, thanks to the Reformation. It was the Reformation that caused them to pronounce anathemas. When -- we're all familiar with the whole story of the Reformation to one degree or another, when Martin Luther and Zwingli and Calvin and Malanchthon all came along and assaulted the system. The system had to respond. And one way it responded was by, of course, digging its heels in the ground, changing nothing, and affirming what it had always held to be true, and then damning everybody who didn't believe it. But out of that came some very clear articulation of their unchanging dogma. One of the primary things that they stood against with regard to the reformers was the priesthood. The reformers rejected completely the idea of a special priesthood. And with it, they rejected the Catholic hierarchy, which essentially is the Pope, and then the bishops, from whom the cardinals are chosen, and then the priests, and under them the deacons.

The reformers rejected that in favor of the general priesthood of all believers. And the Council of Trent said that anybody who rejects the special priesthood, "let him be anathema," and pronounced the curse of damnation on that. They had to preserve their hierarchical structure. That was critical to them in order to preserve the power. Their view is that Christ, of course, is ultimately the divine head of the church, but he mediates his real authority through one man, who is the Pope, who then disseminates that down through the bishops, and the priests carry out the functions determined by that hierarchy. The Pope is where you start in the Catholic hierarchy, and the Pope is supposed to be the direct successor to the apostle Peter. Christ appointed the apostle Peter to be the visible head of the church, and then determined that that succession would pass down through Peter to a line of apostles, if you will, who would bear that same authority.

Council of Trent said: "If anyone says the blessed apostle Peter was not constituted by Christ our Lord prince of all apostles and visible head of the church, a primacy of honor and true jurisdiction, let him be anathema." So you're damned if you assault the priesthood, and you're damned if you assault the papacy of Peter. According to Christ's law in their dogma -- and I'm drawing most of this from a book by Ludwig Ott. It's called Catholic Dogma. It is one of their own systematic theology books which I have read through the years.

But according to Christ's law, Peter is to have successors in his primacy over the whole church for all time. And the Council of Trent says if anyone denies that, "let him be anathema." If anyone says that the Roman pontiff is not the successor of blessed Peter in the primacy, "let him be anathema." So the Council of Trent pronounced a hundred or more damnations on anybody who questioned anything about the Catholic church. And they were particularly concerned about anybody questioning the hierarchy, because if you question the hierarchy, you can -- you could literally bring down the system.

The Pope, according to Catholic dogma: "Possesses full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole church, not merely in matters of morals" -- and I'm reading -- "and faith, and also in matters of discipline and government." Council of Trent says if anybody says he doesn't, "let him be anathema." "The Pope" -- I'll read it again -- "possesses full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole church." They would even look at the Protestant as disenfranchised brethren who should be lining up in submission to the Pope. "Supreme power is his," says Catholic dogma. "There is no greater power than his and there is no equal power. His power transcends both the power of each individual bishop or cardinal and also of all bishops put together. Collectively, they are not equal to the Pope. Singularly, they are not equal to the Pope. "The Pope can rule independently on any matter under the church's jurisdiction. The church rejects all attempts by the state to rule over the Pope and the church." That's why they created their own state, the Vatican, so that the Pope would be the king of his own empire.

Quoting from Catholic dogma: "The Pope is judged by nobody." Now, that gives you a pretty clear idea of the role that he plays. He is unilaterally responsible to have jurisdiction over all matters of church life. The dogma says the Pope is infallible when he speaks "ex cathedra." Have you ever heard that expression? It simply means "out of the chair." All that means is when he speaks and it's not some kind of formal occasion, it means when he speaks in the discharge of his duties as pastor and doctor over all Christians. "He defines doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal church, and is

possessed of that divine infallibility and, therefore, definitions by the Roman pontiff are irreformable. "He never makes a mistake, and nothing he says, therefore, can ever be altered. "The source of his infallibility," says the dogma, "is the supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost, who protects the supreme teacher of the church from error. God in heaven will confirm the Pope's judgment. He is preserved from error." Quote.

So you have this leader who has total power over the entire church; not in their view just those who are faithful Catholics, but anybody else who claims to be a Christian and has wandered astray. He has total power to judge over all matters of faith -- that's doctrine -- and morals -- that's conduct; all matters of discipline, all adjudications in the life of the church. And when he makes any such judgment at any point, he is infallible and God Himself in heaven confirms the Pope's judgment, because he is "preserved from error." And therefore, whatever he says stands permanently as the truth of God and cannot be reformed or changed. Under him are the bishops, and they possess divine right. But theirs is called an ordinary power of government over their dioceses; an ordinary power, rather than an extraordinary power, such as the Pope has, of infallibility. "They have an ordinary power," as their dogma says it, "of government over their dioceses. Only Popes and bishops possess this power by divine right. All others possess it by the church's granting it. It is therefore that the Pope and the bishops are like the apostles, appointed personally by Christ, and the priests and deacons appointed by the church." Bishops are seen as successors of the apostles, who receive their power not from Christ directly, but from Christ mediated to them through the Pope, who once was one of them. The Pope then acts for Christ, infallibly in all matters of the church, including appointing and empowering the bishops. And the clergy, as they're called, the priests, come along to obey this hierarchical structure. The bishops do not determine the dogma. In the end, it is the Pope and the collective council affirmed by the Pope that determine the doctrine.

So you get down to the priests. The dioceses are broken down into parishes. And you're familiar with that, I think. And in the parishes are the priests, and they have responsibility to conduct seven sacraments. This is basically what they do. By law, there are seven sacraments and only seven: Baptism; confirmation, which is something that happens around the age of 12 when your baptism into the kingdom of God, your baptism, which is an expression of divine empowering grace, is confirmed. Then Eucharist, which is the communion, the mass. Then penance, which is the process by which you atone for your sins by the payment of some price or some act; extreme unction, which is what you give somebody when they're dying, and you see the priest rushing in; holy order. And holy order, one of the seven sacraments, is that sacrament by which the priests and bishops are set apart. The other one is matrimony or marriage.

So the responsibility of the priests then fall into those seven sacraments. I want to pull out of that the holy order, because here we begin to see more into the priesthood. Priests are consecrated by this sacrament. It is a sacrament; that is, it is a sacred ceremony. "Sacramentum ordines," it's called; the sacrament of ordination, is what officially puts priests into their positions of ministry. Below them are deacons, who also have their own sacrament of ordination. But we're talking about the priests.

Ordination confers -- this is quite interesting -- sanctifying grace on a priest. And you have to understand this, because this is critical. You've got the infallible Pope. You've got the nearly infallible bishops and, coming down the food chain a little bit, you've got the priests. And the priests at the sacrament of

sacramentum ordines, of ordination, are literally spiritually invested with sanctifying grace. And I'll quote from the dogma. "By the sacrament of order, the priest receives a new and special grace, and a particular help by means of which he can cope in a worthy fashion and with unflinching courage with the high obligations of the office he has assumed and fulfill the duties." Now, they believe that a sacrament dispenses grace.

We have baptism. We don't think it dispenses any grace. We think it's a commemoration. It's a public affirmation, public testimony. We have communion, the Lord's table. We don't think it dispenses any grace, any justifying grace or even sanctifying grace. We see it as a -- as a memorial, a remembrance of the death of Christ. But for them, a sacrament dispenses grace. And the sacrament of ordination dispenses a certain grace to the priests. What is that? As the dogma says: "The sacrament of order imprints a character on the recipient, a new character." And I'm quoting: "The character of order enables the possessor to take an active part in Christ's priesthood. It obliges him to dispense the saving treasures of Christ and" -- here's the key -- "to lead a morally pure life." At the time of his ordination, which can never be repeated, can never be reverted or rescinded: It is once for good. That's why they don't know what to do with priests who abuse people.

Furthermore, the sacrament itself is to infuse them with a sanctifying grace to enable them to lead a morally pure life. One statement in the dogma that struck me was: "The sacrament of order confers a permanent spiritual power on the recipient." So the system teaches that this individual has received grace, permanent spiritual power, in which he has literally entered into the priesthood of Jesus Christ, is then obliged to dispense the saving treasures of Christ, he mediates the treasures of Christ to people, and he is empowered to "lead a morally pure life." Now, this priest then has taken on really almost an aura of holiness. When it comes down to his duties, let me just kind of read you something.

John O'Brien has a popular work called the Faith of Millions. And in that, he has written this. I think it's really fascinating. "When the priest announces the tremendous words of consecration at the mass, he reaches up into the heavens." You've seen that image. "He brings Christ down from his throne and places Him upon our altar to be offered up again as the victim for the sins of man." "It is" -- listen to this -- "a power greater than that of saints and angels, greater than that of seraphim and cherubim." We're talking about a priest now. We're talking about somebody really who is considered supernatural. He has to be, if he has a greater power than angels, including seraphim and cherubim. And why do they say that? Not only because of this grace and this empowerment for a moral life and this engagement in the priesthood of Christ, but because the priest can reach into heaven, bring Christ down from His throne, place Him on our altar to be offered again as the victim for the sins of man. He literally brings Christ down for the sacrifice of the mass.

He goes on writing about the priest and says: "Indeed, it is greater even than the power of the virgin Mary. While the blessed virgin was the human agency by which Christ became incarnate a single time, the priest brings Christ down from heaven and renders him present on our altar as the eternal victim for the sins of man not once, but a thousand times." "The priest speaks and lo, Christ, the eternal and omnipotent God, bows his head in humble obedience to the priest's command." He has the power to go to heaven and pull Christ down, and sacrifice him again on the altar of the church.

In the next paragraph, he writes: "Of what sublime dignity is the office of the Christian priest who is thus privileged to act as the ambassador and the vice-regent of Christ on earth? He continues the essential ministry of Christ. He teaches the faithful with the authority of Christ. He pardons the penitent sinner with the power of Christ. He offers up again the same sacrifice of adoration and atonement which Christ offered on Calvary. No wonder that the name which spiritual writers are especially fond of applying to the priest is that name 'alter cristus,' for a priest is another Christ." Does that bring a verse to mind? If anybody "comes and preaches another" Christ, we have our own Council of Trent. "Let him be anathema."

They are viewed as another Christ, "alter cristus." This bizarre mass, this bizarre attempt to put power in the hands of men, has absolutely nothing to do with the scriptures, and is a wicked twisting of spiritual responsibility and pastoral ministry. To Protestant ears, these are really disturbing assertions. They are to me. What is he talking about when he says that Christ is offered as a sacrifice upon the Roman altar, our altar? What does he mean? That Christ, the omnipotent God: "...bows His head in humble obedience to the priest's command, and comes down from heaven to be offered again and again a thousand times in sacrifice." Isn't this guy going too far?

Well, the Council of Trent, in its 13th session in October of 1551, promulgated a decree concerning the most holy sacrament of the eucharist. The mass at the end of the decree was a list of canons providing anathemas for those who would reject the Council's teaching, since these canons often provide short and -- they do provide short and succinct definitions of Roman teaching. As I said earlier, I want to give you some of them, especially in the concept of transubstantiation. You know, when Christ comes down, you know how he comes down, right? They take the bread and the wine, and the priest literally turns that into the body and blood of Jesus. And that's Christ.

So here are Council of Trent pronouncements.

Canon I: "If anyone denies that in the sacrament of the most holy eucharist are contained truly, really and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ, but says that he is in it only as a sign, a figure or force, let him be anathema." Pronounce a damnation on anybody who says it's not actually Jesus Christ in the whole that the priest has brought down.

Canon II: "If anyone says that in the sacred and holy sacrament of the eucharist the substance of the bread and wine remains conjointly with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and denies that wonderful and singular change of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and the whole substance of the wine into the blood, the appearances only of bread and wine remaining," which change the Catholic church most aptly calls transubstantiation, "let him be anathema."

Canon number VIII: "If anyone says that Christ received in the eucharist is received spiritually only, and not also sacramentally and really, let him be anathema."

This is just perverse. Eleven years later in 1562, the 22nd session of Trent was held. This time the decree promulgated was entitled "Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass." And the decree says this: "In as much as in this divine sacrifice, which is celebrated in the mass is contained and immolated in an unbloodied manner, the same Christ who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, the holy council therefore teaches that this is truly propitiatory and has this effect; that if we, contrite and penitent, with sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence draw nigh to God, we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid." That is to say that there is salvation in the mass. That is what it's saying. "For, appeased by this sacrifice," the mass, "the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence and pardons even the gravest crimes and sins." So if you go into the mass with the right attitude, you come out pardoned. "For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross." There's no difference between what a priest does and what Jesus did on the cross. "Only the manner is different," it says.

This is directly quoting out of the second chapter out of the decree called "Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass." "The fruits of that bloody sacrifice, it is well understood, are received most abundantly through this unbloody one. So far is the latter from derogating in any way from the former. "Wherefore, according to the tradition of the apostles, it is rightly offered not only for the sins, punishment, satisfactions and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those departed in Christ but not yet fully purified."

So the mass saves the people who are alive there, and the people who are dead and not yet purified. Do you want to debate that? Listen to what Trent said:

Canon number I: "If anyone says that in the mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God or that to be offered is nothing else than that Christ is given to us to eat, let him be anathema. If anyone says by those words 'Do this for a remembrance of me' -- if you say that Christ did not institute the apostles priests, and did not ordain that they and other priests should offer his own body and blood -- "let him be anathema." If you say that Christ did not institute the priesthood to offer the mass, you're anathema.

Canon number III: "If anyone says that the sacrifice of the mass is one only of praise and thanksgiving, or that it is a mere commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory one" - - if you say there's no propitiation in the mass -- "or that it profits him only who receives and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead for sin's punishment, satisfactions and other necessities, let him be anathema." That is to say, if you say that the mass isn't propitiatory for the sins of the living, and if you say it's not propitiatory for the sins of the dead, you're cursed.

Canon number IV: "If anyone says," , "that by the sacrifice of the mass a blasphemy is cast upon the most holy sacrifice of Christ" -- if you say the mass is a blasphemy, which we would say -- "let him be anathema."

Canon V: "If anyone says that it is a deception to celebrate masses in honor of the saints, and in order to obtain their intercession with God as the church intends, let him be anathema."

And as you read down these canons, you can tell by their answer what the reformers were saying.

Canon VI: "If anyone says that the canon of the mass contains errors, let him be anathema."

That just covers it all, doesn't it? It's the blanket provision. So if I could summarize, the teachings of the Roman Catholic church on the mass from the Council of Trent, which preserves the primary role of the priest, the summary would go like this:

1. Jesus Christ is truly, really substantially present in the sacrament of the eucharist.
2. Transubstantiation involves the change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of the Christ, change of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of the blood of Christ.
3. Since Christ is said to be really present in the eucharist, the elements themselves following consecration are worthy of worship. They worship them.
4. The sacrifice of the mass is properly called propitiatory, in that it brings about pardon of sin.
5. In the institution of the mass at the Lord's Supper, Christ offered His own body and blood to the Father in the signs of the bread and wine and, in so doing, ordained the apostles as priests of the New Testament, and they passed their priesthood on down.
6. The sacrifice of the mass is properly offered for sins' punishment, satisfaction and all other necessities not only for the living but for the dead as well.
7. Anyone who denies the truthfulness of any of those proclamations is cursed.

Now, somebody's going to say, well, that's the Council of Trent; you know, that's 1500s. Is that still the teaching of the church? Absolutely. How could it not be the teaching of the church, because the church is infallible and irreformable? That is why in the history of the Catholic church, nothing ever changes. The church absorbs its dissidents. It absorbs its immoral. It absorbs its heretics. It absorbs everybody, and perpetuates the system. The one thing the Catholic church cannot tolerate is any kind of schism. And so it just keeps absorbing the dissidents in the perpetration of the system. And, therefore, it is full of all wretched kinds of beliefs, all levels of immorality and all different kinds of disregard for Catholic law down through the laity.

If you did a poll in America, how many Roman Catholics believe in only using the rhythm method to prevent birth or conception? You would find that it's a very small percentage. They don't abide by Catholic dogma or Catholic law. The priests don't live by Catholic law or certainly biblical law. But those laws never change. They just keep absorbing the dissidents, so there's never a fracture. That's why the Reformation was such an unbelievable assault on the church, because it was a true fracture. You couldn't even estimate the power that God unleashed through the reformers to deal a devastating blow to the

system in the Reformation. In a new catechism, Catechism of the Catholic church, to show you where the emphasis lies, there are nine paragraphs dedicated to the subject of justification. There are 84 paragraphs dedicated to the mass. That's what it's all about, and that's what the priest does. Now, now you understand the position of the priest. He's -- operates in the area of the sacraments; primarily, the mass.

As we think about that, let's go behind the priesthood and talk about the issue of celibacy, because this has been debated. I think the latest statistics I've seen in America would be something like 80 percent or 70-some percent of Roman Catholics think -- think the priests should be able to be married. So they have a hard time swallowing the celibate issue in this country, whereas those statistics might not be the same in other parts of the world. But let me talk about celibacy a little bit.

Celibacy has become an obligatory law of the Roman church imposed on all priests. And they -- they try to build that on Matthew 19, where Jesus said: "There are eunuchs for the kingdom" of God. Remember that? Some men are eunuchs from birth; some are made eunuchs and some are eunuchs for the kingdom of God. There are people who are unable to procreate physiologically because of some malformation. There are people who are unable to procreate because they have been wounded, harmed through some violence. And there are some people who choose not to marry. In fact, the apostle Paul says that in some ways being single is better, right? 1st Corinthians 7. Because you don't have to worry about a wife and the family, and you can devote yourself to the Lord. But he also says in 1st Corinthians 7: "It is better to marry than to" -- what? "Than to burn." "Better to marry than to burn" with passion. And certainly, 1st Corinthians 7 makes it very clear that singleness is not preferable to marriage. To make celibacy mandatory is utterly unbiblical. They try to show that Paul taught celibacy. They try to twist the scripture to make Peter into an unmarried man, so that in 1 Corinthians 9 Verse 5 where he says he has the right to "lead about a wife," the confraternity version of the Bible, the Catholic Bible, says he has the right to lead about a sister. But it's not the word "adelphos," sister. It is the word "gunaikas," which is wife.

Now what I've been saying is that celibacy is not mandated by the scripture whatsoever. In fact, there is a reference to celibacy in the Bible, and I want to read it to you. 1st Timothy Chapter 4, listen to what the apostle Paul wrote: "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, both of which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer."

Now what Paul wrote here is this: Those who forbid marriage are advocating a "doctrine of demons." They are listening to "deceitful spirits;" they are hypocritical liars whose consciences have literally been scarred so that they're past feeling. So you can see that the scripture associates celibacy, forbidding marriage, with Satan. And I really believe that's true. I believe Satan has managed to take control of the Catholic system. In a number of ways, this is manifest. But in clearer terms, one of the ways that he has demonstrated his presence in that system is through the forbidding of marriage; which God has created, the scripture says, "to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth." Even marriage, like food, is to be sanctified and received with gratitude because it comes from God.

As a footnote to that, it is also true in Catholicism that there is certain dietary restriction. Everybody who's in the Catholic system knows about not eating meat on Friday. This, too, is drawn out of paganism. Celibacy kind of grew slowly in the Catholic world. It started in the second century. Prior to that, it existed in Asia. It existed in Buddhism. It existed in some other pagan religions; that is to say not being married, being single for devotion to your deity. It didn't say anything about sexual behavior; just said something about marriage. There were some who took a vow of utter abstinence from sexual relationships; whether or not they fulfilled them, they took them. But in the second century, this issue of being unmarried came in, and people followed that path, influenced by the third century by Gnosticism, and what's called Manicheanism; the idea that matter is evil and spirit is good. And therefore, the soul and the spirit of a person is good and the body is wicked, and anything the body does is wicked. And so in this perverted, twisted sort of Gnostic concept, they felt that the highest levels of spirituality were attained by those who literally denied their body all its desires. So they took vows of poverty. They took vows of chastity, which would be different than a vow of celibacy; celibacy having to do with marriage, chastity having to do with sexual activity. They took vows of obedience. Some of them took vows of silence. They didn't want the body to do anything. They didn't want to worry about what it wore; they didn't want to pander to any of its desires. They wanted to eat only meager and austere diets. And some of them didn't even want to hear the body speak, and so they took vows of silence.

And then came the idea that this was in imitation of the virgin Mary, with utter disregard for the fact that after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph had a whole family full of children. But the lie of the system is that she was a perpetual virgin to her death. And they also elevated the celibacy because they said Christ was celibate, and this was the approximation and the imitation of Christ. And the idea began to develop that if people did this voluntarily, if lay people did this voluntarily and ascended to this high level of spiritual devotion, that wouldn't it be imperative for their leaders to go to this high level? And again, this was the influence of some of these philosophical ideas. Shouldn't bishops and priests be the models of asceticism? So by the third century, you started having celibate priests. And it was for the first time in the third century the Council of Elvira in Spain put down the first law that we can find in history enforcing celibacy. Bishops and priests and deacons also were to be deposed if they lived with their wives and begot children after their ordination. They would allow the ones that were married to stay married. But if you were ordained, that in itself said you will never marry. A similar decree was enacted by a Roman Council under Pope Serichias in 384 to 399.

So there were a couple of definitive statements made in that century, fourth century. By the time of Leo the Great in the fifth century, the law of celibacy had become obligatory through the western church. The eastern church never really bought into it, the orthodox church. But the western church did. The eastern churches allowed married priests to stay married. They did prohibit some single ones from marrying, but that has not been their history. So you see it in the third, fourth, fifth century. But, it still was not hard and fast law. That happened in 1079, 11th century. And I'm quoting: "This mandate for celibacy generated all kinds of immorality. The abodes of the priests were often dens of corruption. It was common to see priests frequenting taverns, gambling and having orgies, with quarrels and blasphemy. "Many priests kept mistresses, and convents became houses of ill fame. In many places the people were delighted at seeing a priest with a mistress because the married women would be safe from him." End quote. This was done

under a man named Hildebrand, who is known in Catholic history of Pope Gregory VII, who lived from 1023 to 1085. Why did he do this? Why did he decide that this was an absolute, fixed law?

Well, when he did this, immediately what happened was the priest, if he was going to continue to be a priest, was separated from his wife totally, and his children permanently and for good. More than that, all his property was confiscated. All of it. And the reasons, political and material. Priests up to that time were very influential people. They were very powerful people. People gave them things. They became wealthy. They had families. They passed the wealth on and the family wealth accumulated. And so you had powerful families that were wealthy. They owned land. They had far-reaching influence. Pope Gregory the VII determined that priests controlled too much wealth, and the church should take it. And they would pass their wealth on to their progeny, and those families would get more and more powerful. And if the church was going to take over the state, if the church was going to rule the world, it had to start by ruling the country. And if it was going to rule the country, it had to take the property and the wealth away from the people in power. Philip Schaff, the legendary historian, said: "The motive for opposing the marriage of priests was to prevent the danger of a hereditary line which might appropriate ecclesiastical property to private use and impoverish the church."

So the priests had to give everything they had to the church. And then they could never have a family, so they couldn't pass on anything. Another council in 1123 forbade all marriage of priests, and declared all existing marriages invalid. And the Council of Trent reiterated that in no uncertain terms. Women were cut loose with no means of support. Some really amazing stories about many of them died of hunger, the wives of priests. Some were suicides. Some turned into street walkers.

And one of the really bizarre twists is that priests are called "fathers." Who are they kidding? In Matthew 23:7 Jesus said: "Call no man" -- what? "...father. You have one Father." And in those years when the church was taking its power -- and by the way, the number one landowner on the planet is the Roman Catholic church. They have continued to accumulate massive wealth beyond description. It's always kind of a curiosity to stand in St. Peter's Square in Rome and look at the Banco de Spiritus Sanctus, the Bank of the Holy Spirit. It's all couched in religious terms.

Throughout history during this time priests who didn't obey were exposed to scorn and contempt by the people. They were even attacked by the people. So there was tremendous pressure for them to comply with the church. They then became reduced to extreme poverty. There are stories of priests being mutilated by the people if they wouldn't give in. The people would literally attack them and mutilate them, and some were tortured, and some were run out of town and put into exile. If they wouldn't give up their property willingly, then the church would take them, exile them and confiscate their property. Their children then were designated as illegitimate. It was a horrible tragedy. And many of the women, according to the historians, who were wives of priests, were buried in unconsecrated earth.

So it was about power, and it was about property. So you've got this ugly scenario. There's the scandal of an aberrant, unbiblical, bizarre pagan theology of the priesthood and the mass; there's the scandal of the power and the grasping materialism of a Satanic religious system that wants to engulf the earth.

The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation, Hans Hildebrand, editor, Oxford University Press 1996: "Those priests who were not married often lived in long-term relationships of concubinage, receiving special dispensations from their clerical supervisors to have their children legitimated. This practice began to change in the 12th century when at the Lateran Councils the church declared all clerical marriages invalid and prohibited clerical concubinage." So you could have a sex mistress for a while, and then they prohibited it. "Many lesser clergy responded by rioting and demonstrating. But gradually celibacy became the norm, especially among the higher clergy, and women from honorable families no longer entered into relationships with priests, knowing that these could never be declared valid marriages. The prohibition of concubinage and other types of non-marital sexual activity among the clergy was hard to enforce, however. And by the 14th century, church officials simply advocated discretion." Just be discreet in your sexual misconduct.

So what happened was this mandate tempted all kinds of immorality. Now remember: These people aren't converted, right? They can't be, because they have an aberrant theology. So they have no power to restrain the flesh, right? The abodes of priests then at this period of time and throughout the middle ages became dens of corruption. It was common to see the worst and grossest kinds of sin carried on by priests. There were some who took a vow of chastity and made an effort to be pure. But a vow of celibacy was not a vow of chastity. And, by the way, according to canon law -- this is Roman church law -- a vow of celibacy is broken if the priest marries. But it's not broken if he engages in sexual relationships. You don't break the vow of celibacy, says canon law, by sexual relationships. You have to marry to break the law of celibacy. So a celibate priesthood has nothing to say about the conduct. And further, and I'm reading from dogma: "Pardon for sexual relations comes by confession to a fellow priest." Hmm. That's all you have to do. You tell me yours; I'll tell you mine, right? That's all you have to do to get it expunged.

You know, that's just as an aside, but that whole confessional thing: You take men with normal sexual passions; you put them in a situation where that is restrained and they have to restrain it without any divine power, which is impossible to do, driven by lust, the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life." That's what makes people tick. You put them like that, put them in monasteries, put them in seminaries, put them in enclaves with other men with the same kind of pent-up sexual frustrations. And then all day, every day, stick them in a confessional booth in anonymity where they sit and listen to everybody parade all their iniquities by. And you tell me that's a healthy environment, and that an unconverted man is going to sit in that environment and think holy thoughts? That's a compounding of the curse. It produces a level of hypocrisy that's staggering.

By the way, you get absolution from sexual sin by confession to a fellow priest. Absolution for any priest who marries, you only get one way, from the Pope. From the Pope. You've got to go all the way to the Pope to get absolution. And then it comes with severe penalty. Why? Because they care more about a priest who marries and the impact that will have on the power of the system, than they do about a priest who commits sexual sin. Marriage is far worse to them than sexual sin, because it threatens the church's power and property. And yet, isn't it bizarre that the Roman Catholic church holds that marriage is a sacrament, the sacrament of matrimony? And yet, it's a sacrament of matrimony that the "most holy" quote people, priests and nuns, are denied.

And by the way, the Council of Trent pronounced anathema against all who teach that the marriage state is preferable to celibacy. So they damned anybody who thinks that marriage is preferable. You know, Jesus even said not all men can bear that. Paul said: "It is better to marry than to burn." Let me tell you: That's true even for non-priest single people who prolong their singleness. You know, just give you a little advice? Find somebody. Don't wait for the Messiah; just find somebody. String yourself out, and compound your temptation. And in the eyes of the priesthood, there is an inherent uncleanness in marriage. And it's a hang-over from that sort of Manichean-Gnostic idea of the evil of the flesh. There's an uncleanness in romantic desire; there's an uncleanness in normal love; there's something shameful in that. And that the desire for procreation is somehow the enemy of spiritual devotion. You know, I really -- my heart goes out to priests. They are literally -- I think they are literally in many cases sexual time bombs. It's only a question of when it's going to go. That group of people in themselves has such a warped view of marriage, because they are so fixated on the sexual aspect of it. They think marriage is all about sex and procreating little Catholics, and that's all it is.

I was fascinated to read in Lorraine Boettner's book on Roman Catholicism this quote. "The largest collection of books in the world on the subject of sex is in the Vatican library." Who checks them out? What are they, in there doing some scholastic work? These poor people. This is a horrific sentence. Better they should go to prison and have some time limit when they're going to get out and live a normal life. In order to understand the Roman Catholic position regarding the grouping of men and women in monasteries, you need to understand the basic viewpoint that underlies that system. During the middle ages, the idea developed in Roman theology that man's work was to be divided. And this is really important in their system. In the middle ages, man's work was divided into the natural or the secular, and the spiritual, and those two things are totally separated. Only the spiritual was pleasing to God. And again, this is more of that same old dualistic philosophy. Consequently, while the natural man might be satisfied with the common virtues of daily life, the ideal was that of the mystic, who just disdained all the issues of daily life. And all he wanted to do was develop his spiritual side. And he wanted to go somewhere in deep contemplation and reach out for the spiritual. The natural was viewed as a hindrance to that; a job, a wife, kids, a house, et cetera.

So the life of the monk and the life of the nun withdrawing from society, withdrawing from work, withdrawing from culture, withdrawing from the world, retiring into this cloister, losing themselves in mystic contemplation, was thought to really be the higher life. And then, you know, then they started wearing all these black things; the same stuff they've been wearing since the middle ages. Every time you see these guys parading around in these silly things. They're wearing middle age garb that's supposed to impress us with the fact that they have literally risen above the hoi-polloi, who are all caught up in the natural. And they really believe that in seclusion from the world, the image of God lost in the fall could be restored. Celibacy was the holier state. Some of them even emasculated themselves, thinking that that would remove temptation ultimately.

The ascetic viewed the natural world as sinful, a sphere to be avoided as much as possible, developed a contempt for things of the world, and went into off into these places. You can read the stories about these people. They went into these kind of places and sat there, and just were tormented by the fires of temptation. Read a Heloise and Abelard story; horrific to try to live like that. And that's where the priests

and the nuns, you know, as these celibate ascetics, came from. But for Protestants, the Reformation came along and just demolished all of that, and it did it with, first of all, one very important theological fact, and that was this: That in God's eyes, there's no difference between the sacred and spiritual, and the secular, because in whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, you do it -- what? "To the glory of God." God can be glorified in the way you eat your dinner. The Protestant understood, the Reformation understood: You serve God not by withdrawing from the world. Jesus even prayed: Father, I'm not asking you to keep them out of the world, but to keep them while they're in the world from the evil one. We believe the world has fallen. But it's our Father's world, isn't it? And I can look at everything in this world, except the sin, and I can see a way in it to glorify God. The Reformation spread a sacredness over everything.

You could see that when they understood this, everything in the Catholic system that was related to the priesthood, the convents, asceticism, from the hermits to the monks, they saw as a wicked thing, because they had developed this idea that anything that's material is in itself wicked and, thus, they had forfeited the reality of spiritual life. And that is that we live here in this world, and everything in this world gives us opportunity to glorify God. You know, the inmates -- I call them inmates -- of monasteries are unmarried men. It's just bizarre and abnormal. They say in the United States now -- I read today a statistic: Fifty percent of them are homosexual when they get there. The rest have no chance. These people are predators. Convents, too, promote an abnormal type of life; doing terrible things to these women who are there, who many are good-intentioned, as some priests are. There are orders of priests, Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, who don't like each other; you know that.

There's a place for voluntary celibacy. It's a blessing if you have the "gift," as Paul put it. But to deny someone normal family life, to deny someone normal relationships, is a cruel, cruel thing for the sake of the power of the system. You know, the thing is so sad about a priest. He's absolutely a blip on the screen. He has no past, because when he came into the priesthood or when she came into the convent, they gave up all their possessions and all their relationships. They quote to them that: "If a man is not willing to leave father and mother, and hate father and mother for my sake, he's not worthy to be my disciple." And so there is a strong urge to hate everything that your parents stand for. So you cut yourself off from the past. You have no present, because you share life with nobody. And for sure, you have no future. It's sad. And these kinds of unnecessary restrictions are no help to personal sanctity. Let me tell you: They are a hindrance, a severe hindrance to it.

Charles Hodge, the theologian has written this, and I think it's good to remember this, in his Systematic Theology. "It is only in the marriage state that some of the purest, most disinterested and most elevated principles of our nature are called into exercise. All that concerns filial piety and parental and especially maternal affection depends on marriage for its very existence. It is in the bosom of the family that there is a constant call for acts of kindness, of self-denial, of forbearance and of love. The family, therefore, is the spirit, the best adapted for the development of all the social virtues. And it may be safely said that there is far more of moral excellence and of true religion to be found in Christian households than in the desolate homes of priests, or in the gloomy cells of monks and nuns." End quote.

Priests are broken, shattered, tragic, sad, disconnected people; no past, no present, no future. They belittle

the sanctity of the marriage relationship. They are denied normal relationships; the friendship of marriage. They are victims of a terrible system with no biblical basis whatsoever. It is a soul-destroying process that leaves them in a situation of rampant temptation, exposure to the worst. And the only way to fulfill these drives is sinfully. And they do not have the restraint of a transformed or sanctified life.

Emmet MacLaughlin writes: "The life of a priest" -- he's an ex priest, "...is an extremely lonely one. He lives in a large rectory; he is still lonely. Other priests are not interested in him or in his doubts and scruples. If he is the only priest in a solitary parish or desert mission, he is still more alone. As his years slip by and the memories of seminary and its rigidity fade away, the realization may dawn that his life is not supernatural, but a complete mental and spiritual and physical frustration." He says: "He sees in his parish and his community the normal life from which he has been cut off. He sees the spontaneous childhood which he was denied; he sees the innocent, normal companionship of adolescents, which for him never existed. He performs the rites of matrimony as starry-eyed young men and women pledge to each other the most natural rights and pleasures. He stands alone and lonely at the altar as they turn from him and confidently, recklessly, happily step into their future home, family, work and troubles and the successes of a normal life. More than anything else, he seeks companionship, the companionship of normal people; not frustrated, disillusioned victims like himself. He wants the company of men and women, young and old, through whom he may at least vicariously take part in a relationship with others that he has been denied, and for which at least subconsciously the depth of his nature craves. No priest who has heard priests' confessions and has any respect for the truth will deny that sexual affairs are extremely common among the clergy. The principal concern of the hierarchy is that the priest keep such cases quiet."

That's the sad reality. That's the scandal. And in that environment, all kinds of sin abounds. In many countries of the world, it is predominantly heterosexual sin. Priests have relationships with women in the parish, prostitutes or even nuns. But in this modern time and certainly back 50 years, we're finding out now, as homosexuality has always been a part of this life, we're finding now that it's even more and more a part of it. In fact, I read an interesting article. It was an editorial op ed piece in -- I think it was the L.A. Times -- in which a man was writing and saying the whole problem with this, the whole problem is the church's problem. The church has forced this. The church has forced this to happen; this abuse of boys, this pedophilia. Because the church says homosexuality is a sin -- this is the bizarre character of this op ed piece -- it says homosexuality is a sin and, therefore, for homosexuals who are Roman Catholics to be accepted by the church, the only thing they could do is become priests. And so the church, by identifying homosexuality as a sin, forced homosexuals who wanted to be good Catholics into the priesthood.

I read another piece today from -- I think it was the New York Times -- in which they were concerned that there would now become a homosexual witch-hunt in the United States Catholic church; there were 46,000 or 45,000 priests, that there would be a witch-hunt trying to sort out the homosexuals. And all the homosexual lobby groups are concerned that that's going to happen. They're there. I mean that's like -- that's like the place you'd want to be, if you were a homosexual. And that's the sad reality of what's happened. And just a word about that; I don't need to say a lot about that.

Pedophilia isn't the beginning of anything. It's the end of a long, long pornographic conduct trail. You

don't start there. You end there. That's how it goes. You know, you take what's there, at first. And then the deviation demands more and more aberrant behavior, and it moves down younger and younger and younger. In fact, one of the people in law enforcement said to me pedophilia is the caboose on a long train.

So it's easy to see why this happens in this terrible, terrible system. And yet, they can't change it. Can't change it, because there is an inerrancy and an infallibility in the church. And one of the elements of that is that if you're a priest, you're a priest. And it can't be reverted or rescinded. And that as long as you don't get married, all you have to do is confess to another priest. And that perpetuates the power of the system. That's why you can see the cardinals all go over to Italy and come back. And what happened? Nothing. Absolutely nothing happened, because nothing can happen. The Pope, what did he say? Nothing. There's nothing to say. One of the things that we, you know, just kind of a -- I've got more than I can give to you. But one of things has to be talked about. It's not just the immorality of the monasteries and the convents, which is legendary. It's legendary everywhere.

I was reading an article that talked about how many kids in the small towns in Italy and so forth are the children of the priests, whom they call "uncle;" they're calling him "father" wouldn't reveal anything. Forced celibacy is conducive to sexual perversion. You know, John Calvin dealt with it. He said this in *The Institutes*: "In one instance they are too rigorous and inflexible, that is, in not permitting priests to marry. With what impurity fornication rages among them." John Calvin. He went on to say: "Emboldened by their polluted celibacy, they have become hardened to every crime. This prohibition has not only deprived the church of upright and able pastors, but has formed a horrible gulf of enormities and precipitated many souls into the abyss of despair." Henry the VIII of England in 1535 appointed commissioners to inspect all monasteries and nunneries. "And so terrible were the cruelties and corruptions uncovered," writes Boettner, "...so terrible were the cruelties and corruptions uncovered that a cry went up from the nation that all such houses without exception to be destroyed."

Henry the VIII was no paragon of virtue. He destroyed these places. "And the fall of the monasteries," quote, "...was attributed to the monstrous lives of the monks, the friars and nuns." Henry Banford Parks has written a history of Mexico. And in that history he writes, quote: "Clerical concubinage is the rule rather than the exception, and friars openly roamed the streets of cities with women on their arms. Many of the priests were ignorant and tyrannical, whose chief interest in their parishioners was the exaction of marriage, baptism and funeral fees, and who were apt to abuse the confessional." I mean it's a terrible thing.

There's a lot of interesting things about the nuns. I used to always wonder: Why would anybody do that, right? Why would anybody do that? And in my reading, I have discovered that the confessional is the recruiting booth for the convents. When a woman goes into a convent, she renounces family. She's basically told that she has to hate her parents and her family. It's a hard disconnect for a woman, harder than a man. She has to slaughter all maternal instincts, which are God-given. She has to put to death the idea of being cared for by a man, which is God-given, to enter this stoic environment. She is given a wedding ring because she's marrying whom? Jesus. She has to wear this bizarre, medieval garb consisting of a long, black dress, symbol of grief. That's what it is, the symbol of death. And then some grotesque

headpiece, which is no good in the summer or the winter or the wind. It's so -- but, you know, they recruit them in the confessional. They take advantage of particularly the women who are coming off of a shattered relationship, and they're deeply wounded. And they get to know them because in a parish church, the same people keep coming back. And they look for a sensitive soul who comes often to confession, comes often to mass, who's gone through some difficulty. And at that point, it's really a matter of preying on that person in a time of weakness, a time of pain and suffering, to make this bizarre commitment.

Emmet MacLaughlin writes: "The nun is one of the most remarkable products of the Roman Catholic church. She's an absolute slave, one whose willingness to offer her life should fill communist leaders with jealousy; one from whom the hierarchy conceals her slavery by the wedding ring on her finger; one who believes that in shining the Bishop's shoes, waiting on his table or scrubbing the floor, she is gathering treasure in heaven. She is the one who makes possible the church's hundreds of hospitals, the one who teaches in parochial schools and orphanages and so forth. She is also a woman with all the desires, instincts, loyalties and hatreds of which a woman is capable. Subservient to her man, through her indoctrination of her wedding to Christ, often catty and gossipy towards sister nuns and hospital nurses, maternal in her hoverings over priests and children, matriarchal in her petty policies for the control of her hospital and convent," goes on and on. "Self-annihilating all normal desires."

And the position of the cloistered nuns, there's a -- there's really a strange group. Do you know there are nuns who take a vow of silence and spend their entire life, never speak? Never say a word. And they think that somehow they're going to get salvation from that. Boettner says: "In the set-up of the Roman Catholic church, it is the confessional box that feeds the nunneries. The groundwork is done on the Catholic girl in the parochial school, where the nun is made an object of holy glamour, a replica of the virgin Mary. The institution of the confessional makes it easy for the priest to find the girls they want, and naturally try to select the choice ones. "Ordinarily, confessions begin at the age of seven. Through this means, the priest comes to know the very heart and soul of those who confess, which to them would be desirable in the service of the church, and which can be persuaded and which can not. It's easy for a trained priest to seize a passing fancy and blow it into a full-scale vocation. "Once a victim has been chosen, pressure is applied directly and indirectly until the battle is won. Appeals are made to the girl's Christian sense of duty. The girl's natural reluctance to enter in such a life is pictured as the evil influence of the world and the devil."

And then he writes: "Usually, the most important -- or the most opportune time for persuading a girl to enter a convent comes just after she's been disappointed in love. Blighted romance often afford the priest his most value opportunity." Helen Conroy has written this. "A jilted girl in the first rush of shame and agony at the shattering of her romance is an easy victim of any priest. Knowing that such intense grief cannot last long, the girl is urged to go into a convent at once. Poor girl sees in it a chance to get away from an embarrassing situation. "This, coupled with the fact that she is assured she can leave anytime she wishes, has led thousands to rush headlong into the convent. They give up everything they possess, of course, at that particular time, which becomes immediately the church's possession." And it's quite an interesting thing. They have 60-day period -- I think this is still true -- they have a 60-day period in which to dispense of everything. And it's in the euphoria of that 60 days, when they're processing into the convent, that they're so caught up with the convent that they're basically urged to give it all there.

And then Conroy writes: "The girl's mind is poisoned against the mother who bore her, and the father and sisters and brother who make up her family. Of all the crimes committed in the name of religion" -- this is from a book, by the way, *Forgotten Women in Convents*: "... in the name of religion, this forcing of hatred of parents is the blackest. It is dehumanizing. This doctrine of hatred of parents by nuns and sisters fully explains why a girl is not allowed to dispose of her property until 60 days before she is to take the veil" -- that's what it is -- "...and the vows. The church fully expects by that time the girl will have learned that her convent is her real home." And so it goes.

Well, I could say more but the time is gone. Just one thing. Estimates -- I don't know how they vary -- but it has been estimated there are a hundred thousand women in cloisters. Have you ever heard of the Carmelite sisters? Some of you have. The Carmelite sisters neither teach, nor nurse, nor care for the old, the orphans or the infants. They take a vow of complete silence. At 5:30, they rise from their pallets, wooden boards across sawhorses. They've taken a vow of poverty. At 8:30, they eat a slice of bread, drink one cup of black coffee. The table is set with plain wooden utensils and a covered water pitcher. In the middle of the table is the mask of death, a skull, to symbolize thoughts of death that we are mortal beings soon to pass into the unknown. Their main meal of the day is fish and vegetables. Their evening meal is soup and bread. Their day ends at 11:00 P.M., when they silently return to their cells.

That's their life. I mean that -- I'm surprised Amnesty International doesn't raid those places. How are these pitiful souls to be reached? You know, what is all this to say? Look, how do you get to somebody in a convent? You don't. How's that for a ploy for Satan? Lock them up in a false religion so that absolutely nobody can get near them. And then take a vow of silence. Boy, there's a damnation sentence, right? They can't even ask a question or have a conversation. This is wicked stuff. How do you reach these people? How do you reach priests? You know, we think somehow that, you know, you've all these evangelicals who think we ought to just embrace arms with this system. Is that bizarre? What we need to do is rescue these people. And the only way they'll ever be rescued is through the gospel. But I think we have to say what has to be said.

New York Times says -- this is April 19th article by Lori Goodstein -- that now the count is at about a thousand priests that are being charged with abuse. And the number of women abused to one degree or another by priests is going to far exceed men. What do we do with these poor, poor people who are trapped in these terrible, sinful things? Well, there's only one thing, and that's to somehow, if you know somebody, you've got to give them the gospel.

One other little note I wrote down. A homosexual offender, according to the latest data -- this is from WorldNet, April 29th -- what, two days ago, three days ago: "The average male homosexual offender will abuse 150 boys. The average heterosexual violator, 20 girls." And the pedophilia is a basic part of the homosexual movement. So, you know, this is a scandal of massive, massive proportions. But more than just a scandal, this is a horrible, horrible Satanic system that has captured the souls of these people. There's no way we can strike any kind of alliance with this.

Richard John Neuhaus, do you know that name? Wasn't he the author of that document, that ECT

document, Phil, that Colson and all those guys signed? Richard John Neuhaus said he is not in favor of banning gay men from the priesthood. Quote: "I think we would probably discover we would be retroactively excluding a good many canonized saints over 2,000 years." End quote. Richard John Neuhaus says that: If we banned gays from the priesthood, we'd be banning canonized saints over the last 2,000 years. Is that a long-term problem? He doesn't have to say that. If I was him, I wouldn't have said that. Why would he say that? Because it really doesn't matter in the system.

You know, I just keep going back: "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free" -- what? "...indeed." These dear people need to be delivered and liberated. You say: Well, how do we do that? Well, if you meet one, you need to treat them with compassion, but you need to recognize that they're probably in some pretty profound turmoil. And you could talk about freedom and deliverance in Christ. You know, let's just pray that God will start giving us opportunities to witness to priests and nuns. Wouldn't that be great? So while the whole system is crumbling, these lives can be picked up and no -- no homosexual, 1st Corinthians 6: No sodomite is going to enter the kingdom of God, right? But then Paul followed up by saying: "But such were some of you." But you have been what? Washed. Wouldn't it be great?

Let's just pray that God will give us opportunity to see some of these terrible imprisoned people in a Satanic system washed and sanctified. You shouldn't even be a pastor if you're not the husband of one wife, right? Shouldn't be a pastor if you haven't ruled your own household. Well, shouldn't be a pastor if you don't have faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. These people shouldn't be pastors. Furthermore, they're not Christians.

Listen to this: "If you say you have fellowship with him, but you walk in darkness, you lie and do not the truth." They say they have this elevated fellowship with God. That's a lie. And you want to know? I think in many cases, they know it. They know that there's no victory over their terrible plight. Now there are probably some exceptions to that; men, women who do good, feel good about it. There might even be some people who've actually confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and been redeemed, and they're still stuck somewhere in that system. God could do that. That must be another kind of torture.

We don't need any priests. Revelation 1: You are a kingdom of priests. We only need one high priest, and it's not the Pope. We have one mediator, the man Christ Jesus. The veil is torn. We go right into the Holy of Holies. You are a priest and I am a priest unto God.

Father, we thank you tonight for a wonderful time together, and just kind of sorting through some of these things, our hearts are indeed gripped and grieved. How terrible is this system and how, you know, in the evangelical world, Lord, how can people look at this, and think somehow that this is all fine, and they're just, you know, another denomination; and leave these poor, darkened, benighted, beleaguered, tragically bound, fettered, eternal souls in that system? Lord, God, in the midst of all of this, draw some of these people to your Son. May they awaken to the true gospel, and may they not be so buried deep under the perversions and the lies of the Roman system that they can't rise from the dead. Would you be gracious in that way? And if you can use us along the way to accomplish it, we would be pleased. For your eternal glory, Lord, we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Transcribed by Bonnie Frankfurt of Grace Community Church and added to Bible Bulletin Board's "MacArthur's Collection" by:

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The Concept and Importance of Canonicity

by Greg Bahnsen

Scripture as Final Authority

The Christian faith is based upon God's own self-revelation, not the conflicting opinions or untrustworthy speculations of men. As the Apostle Paul wrote: "your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (I Cor. 2:5).

The world in its own wisdom would never understand or seek God (Rom. 3:11) but always suppress or distort the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18, 21). So Paul concluded that "the world in its wisdom did not know God" (I Cor. 1:21), and he set in sharp contrast "the words which man's wisdom teaches" and those which "God revealed unto us through the Spirit" (I Cor. 2:10, 13). In light of that contrast, we need to see that the apostolic message did not originate in persuasive words of human wisdom or insight (I Cor. 2:4). The light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ was, as they said, "of God and not from ourselves" (II Cor. 4:6-7). Paul thanked God that the Thessalonians received his message "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (I Thess. 2:13). As Peter wrote, "no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). Paul said of the sacred writings which make us wise unto salvation that every one of them is "God-breathed," inspired by God (II Tim. 3:15-17).

It is for this reason that the Scriptures are profitable for our doctrine, correction, and instruction. We must pay attention to the message which is divine - and all of it, as Jesus said: "Man shall live... by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). But God's people must *not* submit to uninspired words of men. "Thus says Jehovah of hosts, Hearken not unto the word of the prophets... speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah" (Jer. 23:16). Nor should God's people allow their faith to be compromised by any philosophy which is "after the tradition of men... and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). Christ Himself condemned those who "have made void the word of God because of [their] tradition" (Matt. 15:6). Human philosophy and human traditions have no place in defining the Christian faith.

The message of the Christian faith is, therefore, rooted in and circumscribed by God's own revealed word - not the authoritative words of men. Where is *God's Word* found? "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). God verbally revealed Himself in many ways: from His personal address to Adam or Abraham to the inspired preaching of Jonah, Amos, or Ezekiel. He also sent His word *in writing* to His people: from the tablets of the Mosaic law to the written message of Isaiah or Jeremiah. Even the word of God which was originally delivered orally needed to be reduced to writing in order for us to know about it and for it to function as an objective standard for faith and obedience. The word of false teachers was to be exposed by the previously inscribed law (Deut. 13:1-5) or written testimony (Is. 8:20).

The grandest expression of God's Word was found in the very person of Jesus Christ, who is called "the Word of God" (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13). Again, what we know of Christ is dependent upon the written word of the gospels by men like Matthew and Luke. Christ commissioned

certain men to act as His authorized representatives, His apostles. He inspired them with His word (John 14:26), so they spoke for Him (Matt. 10:40). It is noteworthy, however, that the oral preaching and teaching of the apostles were to be tested against the *Scriptures*, as we see from Paul's commendation of the Bereans (Acts 17:11). What the apostles themselves wrote was to be accounted as the very word of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). Their written epistles came to have for the church the same authority as "the other scriptures" (II Pet. 3:16).

A key work of the apostles was precisely that of revelation: their confessing Christ, testifying to Him, interpreting and applying His person and work for the church (Matt. 16:18; John 15:27; 16:13; Acts 1:8, 22; 4:33; 10:39-41; 13:31). They did not speak by flesh and blood or according to human instruction, but rather by revelation of the Father and Son (Matt. 16:17; Gal. 1:11-12), being taught of the Spirit (John 14:26). In virtue of this revelatory work, Christ builds His church upon the foundation of the apostles (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20; cf. 3:5).

The teaching of the apostles was received as a body of truth which was a criteria for doctrine and life in the church; because this teaching was passed down to the church and through the church, it was called the "tradition" (what had been "delivered") or the "deposit" (to be distinguished from the uninspired traditions of men which the Bible elsewhere condemns (e.g. Col. 2:8; Matt. 15:3). The apostolic deposit or tradition formed a "pattern of sound words" for the church (II Tim. 1:13-14) which was to be guarded (I Tim. 6:20-21) as the standard for Christian life (II Thess. 3:6; II Pet. 2:21) and for all future teaching in the church (II Tim. 2:2). This apostolic tradition was found in both oral instruction and written epistle (II Thess. 2:15); obviously only the latter is available to us today.

In the very nature of the case, apostolic revelation did not extend beyond the apostolic generation, the "foundational days" of the church. [1] Thus Jude in his day could speak of "the faith" - meaning the teaching content of the Christian faith - as now "once for all delivered to the saints" (v. 3). About this verse, F.F. Bruce comments: "Therefore, all claims to convey an *additional* revelation... are false claims... whether these claims are embodied in books which aim at superseding or supplementing the Bible, or take the form of extra-Biblical traditions which are promulgated as dogmas by ecclesiastical authority." [2]

The Question of the Canon

As we have seen from the Scriptures themselves, "the faith which has once for all been delivered to the saints" must be defined and circumscribed by God's revelation as it is found particularly in the written Word, from the law of Moses to apostolic deposit. The Christian faith is defined by all of Scripture, but only Scripture. From the Scriptures we may not add or subtract anything (Deut. 4:2; e.g. Rev. 22:18-19), lest our doctrine and conduct be governed by a defective standard. This, then, brings us to the question of what literary works ought to be recognized as the word of God -- the question of "the canon." The word "canon" denoted a rod used for measuring (defining) things. In the context of theological discussion, "the canon" is the term used to name that established list of authoritative writings which are the rule of faith and life for God's people.

The idea of a canon -- a set of writings bearing unique, divine, authority for God's people -- goes back to the very beginning of Israel's *history*. A covenant document which defined the

proper understanding of God, redemption, and life was placed in the ark of the covenant in the Holiest Place of the tabernacle, thus setting it apart from the words and opinions of men. Moreover, the notion of a canon is at the *theological* foundation of the Christian faith. Without revealed words available to God's people, there would be no exercise by God of Lordship over us as servants, and there would be no sure promise from God the Savior to save us as sinners.

Nature of Canonicity Distinguished from Its Recognition

What books properly make up the canon for the church? In answering this question, it is imperative that we not confuse the nature of the canon with the recognition of certain writings as canonical. The legitimate authority of canonical books exists independently of their being personally acknowledged as authoritative by any individual or group. The nature (or grounds) of canonicity is thus logically distinct from the history (or recognition) of canonicity.

It is the inspiration of a book that renders it authoritative, not human acceptance or recognition of the book. If God has spoken, what He says is divine in itself, regardless of human response to it. It does not "become divine" through human agreement with it.

Accordingly, the canon is not the product of the Christian church. The church has no authority to control, create, or define the Word of God. Rather, the canon controls, creates and defines the church of Christ: "...having been begotten again, not by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible, by the word of God which lives and abides forever.... And this is the word of good news which was preached unto you" (I Peter 1:23-25).

When we understand this, we can see how erroneous it is to suppose that the corporate church, at some council of its leaders, voted on certain documents and constituted them the canon. The church cannot subsequently attribute authority to certain writings. It can simply receive them as God's revealed word which, as such, always has been the church's canon. Authority is inherent in those writings from the outset, and the church simply confesses this to be the case.

The Canon Not Identical with Special Revelation

In order for a book to be accounted canonical, it is necessary that it be inspired. However, while inspiration is a necessary condition of canonicity, it is not a sufficient one. Otherwise all of God's special (verbal) revelation would constitute the canon of the church; yet this is not the case, as we can see for a couple of reasons.

First, remember that not all special revelation was given in written form or subsequently committed to writing (e.g., many discourses by Jesus while on earth, John 21:25; private revelations to the apostles, II Cor. 12:4,7; Rev. 10:4; unpublished messages from New Testament prophets, I Cor. 12:28).

Second, we must note that not all of those inspired messages which were reduced to writing have been preserved by God's providence for use by His people through history, such as "The Wars of Jehovah," "The Book of Asher," Paul's previous letter to the Corinthians, etc. (c.f.,

Num. 21:14; Josh. 10:13; II Chron. 9:29; 12:15; I Cor. 5:9; II Cor. 2:4; 7:8). Therefore, we should say more precisely that the canon of the Christian church is constituted by those inspired writings which God has preserved for His people in all subsequent ages.

Inspiration is Self-Attesting and Self-Consistent

Scripture teaches us that only God is adequate to witness to Himself. There is no created person or power which is in a position to judge or verify the word of God. Thus: "when God made promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself..." (Heb. 6:13).

Accordingly, men are not qualified or authorized to say what God might be expected to reveal or what can count as His communication. That is why Scripture draws such a sharp distinction between "words which man's wisdom teaches" and those "which the Spirit teaches" (I Cor. 2:13). The wisdom of man cannot be relied upon to judge the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1:20-25). Indeed, in its natural condition, man's mind will always fail to receive the words of God's Spirit: "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God...he cannot know them because they are Spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

Only God can identify His own word. Thus God's word must attest to itself -- must witness to its own divine character and origin. "And you do not have His word abiding in you, for whom He sent you believe not. You search the scriptures..., and these are what bear witness of Me" (John 5:38-39).

Throughout the history of redemption God has directed His people to find His message and words in written form. Indeed, God Himself provided the prototype of written revelation when He delivered the tablets of law upon Mount Sinai. And when God subsequently spoke by His Spirit through chosen messengers (II Peter 1:21), their words were characterized by self-vindicating authority. That is, it was evident from their message that they were speaking for God -- whether the claim was *explicit* (e.g., "Thus saith the Lord...") or *implicit* (the arresting power or demand of their message as a word from the Lord of the covenant: e.g., Matt. 7:28-29).

Moreover, their messages were of necessity coherent with each other. A genuine claim to inspiration by a literary work minimally entailed consistency with any other book revealed by God, for God does not lie ("...it is impossible for God to lie," Heb. 6:18) and does not contradict Himself ("But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no," II Cor. 1:18). A genuine word from God could always be counted upon, then, to agree with previously given revelation -- as required in Deut. 13:1-5, "If there arises among you a prophet..., saying `Let us go after other gods...,` you shall not hearken unto that prophet...You shall walk after Jehovah your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice...."

The Old Testament Jews had to beware of false prophets, and caution was likewise necessary in the early days of the New Testament church because of misleading messages from false teachers -- words which were not revealed by God. For instance, Paul says "If any man preaches to you any gospel other than that which you received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9). Spurious "apostolic" letters sometimes circulated and troubled the early church, as we see from Paul's words: "...be not unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report, or letter

supposedly having come from us" (II Thess. 2:2).

It was necessary to instruct the church to "believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). And the criterion for judging was consistency with previous revelation -- whether the Old Testament (e.g., "Now these were more noble than those at Thessalonica, in that they received the word [of Paul] with all readiness of mind, examining the [Old Testament] scriptures daily, whether these things were so," Acts 17:11) or the teaching of the apostles (e.g., I John 4:2-3; Gal. 1:9).

The Spirit's Persuasion

The self-attestation of Scripture as God's Word makes it objectively authoritative in itself, but such authority will not be subjectively received without an internal, spiritual change in man. The Holy Spirit must open our sinful eyes and give personal conviction concerning the Scripture's self-witness: "Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, in order that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God" (I Cor. 2:12).

We must be especially careful not to confuse this with subjectivism, which is ultimately relativistic. The internal testimony of the Holy Spirit does not stand by itself or operate in a vacuum; it must be teamed with the objective self-witness of the Scriptures themselves.

Moreover, this work of the Spirit is not an individual or idiosyncratic matter, as though the internal testimony operated uniquely upon one person by himself. Thus it is the corporate church, not mystical religious mavericks, which recognizes -- through the Spirit's gracious, internal ministry -- that the objective self-witness of the Scriptures is genuine.

The Canon Historically Settled Under God's Providence

Those works which God gave to His people for their canon always received immediate recognition as inspired, at least by a portion of the church (e.g., Deut. 31:24-26; Josh. 24:25; I Sam. 10:25; Dan. 9:2; I Cor. 14:37; I Thess. 2:13; 5:27; II Thess. 3:14; II Peter 3:15-16), and God intended for those writings to receive recognition by the church as a whole (e.g., Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:4). The Spiritual discernment of inspired writings from God by the corporate church was, of course, sometimes a drawn-out process and struggle. This is due to the fact that the ancient world had slow means of communication and transportation (thus taking some time for epistles to circulate), coupled with the understandable caution of the church before the threat of false teachers (thus producing dialogue and debate along the way to achieving one mind).

Historical evidence indicates that, even with the difficulties mentioned above, the Old and New Testament canons were substantially recognized and already established in the Christian church by the end of the second century. [3] However, there is adequate Biblical and theological reason to believe that the canon of Scripture was essentially settled even in the earliest days of the church.

By the time of Jesus there existed a well-defined body of covenantal literature which, under the influence of the Old Testament prophets, was recognized as defining and controlling genuine faith. When Jesus or the apostles appealed simply to "the Scriptures" against their Jewish opponents, there is no suggestion whatsoever that the identity and limits of such writings were vague or in dispute. Confirmation of the contents of the Jewish canon is found toward the end of the first century in the writings of Josephus (the Jewish historian) and among the rabbis of Jamnia.

The New Testament church acknowledged the canonical authority of this Old Testament corpus, noting that "...not one jot or tittle" (Matt. 5:18) of "the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms" (Luke 24:44) was challenged or repudiated by our Lord. His full submission to that canon was evident from the fact that He declared "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). As Paul later said: "whatever things were previously written were written for our instruction" (Rom. 15:4).

The traditional Jewish canon was divided into three sections (Law, Prophets, Writings), and an unusual feature of the last section was the listing of Chronicles out of historical order, placing it after Ezra-Nehemiah and making it the last book of the canon. In light of this, the words of Jesus in Luke 11:50-51 reflect the settled character of the Jewish canon (with its peculiar order) already in his day. Christ uses the expression "from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah," which appears troublesome since Zechariah was not *chronologically* the last martyr mentioned in the Bible (cf. Jer. 26:20-23). However, Zechariah is the last martyr we read of in the Old Testament according to Jewish *canonical* order (cf. II Chron. 24:20-22), which was apparently recognized by Jesus and his hearers.

As for the New Testament, the covenantal words of Christ -- which determine our lives and destinies (e.g., John 5:38-40; 8:31; 12:48-50; 14:15, 23-24) -- have been, through the power of the Holy Spirit, delivered faithfully to us by Christ's apostles: "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26; cf. 15:26-27; 14:16-17; 16:13-15).

The very concept of an "apostle" in Jewish jurisprudence was that of a man who in the name of another could appear with authority and speak for that other man (e.g., "the apostle for a person is as this person himself," it was said). Accordingly, Jesus told His apostles, "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent me" (Matt. 10:40). And through these apostles He promised to "build My church" (Matt. 16:18).

We know that in this way there came about a body of New Testament literature which the church, "being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20), came to recognize as God's own word, being the canon of their covenantal relation with Him. This recognition traces from the days of the apostles themselves, who either identified their own works as canonical (e.g., Gal. 1:1, 11-12; I Cor. 14:37), or verified the canonical authority of the works by other apostles (e.g., II Peter 3:16) and writers (e.g., I Tim. 5:18, citing Luke 10:7).

But whether or not each was given particular written attention by an apostle, the individual books of the New Testament came to be seen for what they were: the revelation of Jesus

Christ through His chosen messengers. It is in this body of literature that God's people discern the authoritative word of their Lord -- as Jesus said: "My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

To recapitulate: we know from God's Word (1) that the church of the New Covenant recognized the standing canon of the Old Testament, and (2) that the Lord intended for the New Covenant church to be built upon the word of the apostles, coming thereby to recognize the canonical literature of the New Testament. To these premises we can add the conviction (3) that all of history is governed by God's providence ("...according to the plan of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will," Eph. 1:11). So then, trusting Christ's promise that He would indeed build His church, and being confident in the controlling sovereignty of God, we can be assured the God-ordained recognition of the canon would be providentially accomplished -- which, in retrospect, is now a matter of historical record.

To think otherwise would be, in actual effect, to deprive the Christian church of the sure word of God. And that would in turn (a) undermine confidence in the gospel, contrary to God's promise and our spiritual necessity, as well as (b) deprive us of the philosophical precondition of any knowledge whatsoever, thus consigning us (in principle) to utter scepticism.

Application of Canonicity

In terms of the previous discussion, then, what should we make of the Roman Catholic decision in 1546 (the Council of Trent) to accept as canonical the apocryphal books of "Tobit," "Judith," "Wisdom," "Ecclesiasticus," "Baruch," "I and II Maccabees"?

Such books do not claim for themselves ultimate divine authority. Consider the boldness of Paul's writing ("if anyone thinks he is spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I write is the commandment of the Lord" -- I Cor. 14:37-38; if anyone "preaches any other gospel that what we preached to you, let him be accursed" - Gal. 1:8). Then contrast the insecure tone of the author of II Maccabees: "if it is poorly done and mediocre, that was the best I could do" (15:38). Moreover, when the author relates that Judas confidently encouraged his troops, that boldness came "from the law and the prophets" (15:9), as though this were already a recognized and authoritative body of literature to him and his readers. (This is also reflected in the prologue to Ecclesiasticus.) I Maccabees 9:27 recognizes the time in the past when "prophets ceased to appear among" the Jews.

The ancient Jews, to whom were entrusted the "oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2), never accepted these apocryphal books as part of the inspired canon -- and still do not to this day. [4] Josephus speaks of the number of Jewish books which are divinely trustworthy, not leaving a place for the apocryphal books. Josephus expressed the common Jewish perspective when he said that the prophets wrote from the time of Moses to that of Artaxerxes, and that no writing since that time had the same authority. The Jewish Talmud teaches that the Holy Spirit departed from Israel after the time of Malachi. Now, Artaxerxes and Malachi both lived about four centuries before Christ, while the books of the Apocrypha were composed in the vicinity of two centuries before Christ.

When Christ came, neither He nor the apostles ever quoted from the apocryphal books as though they carried authority. Throughout the history of the early church, the acceptance of

the Apocrypha was no better than spotty, inconsistent, and of ambiguous import -- the bottom line being that the books never gained universal respect and clear recognition as bearing the same weight and authority as the very Word of God.

The first early Christian writer to address explicitly the question of an accurate list of the books of the Old Covenant was Melito (bishop of Sardis, about 170 A.D.), and he does not countenance any of the apocryphal books. Athanasius forthrightly rejected Tobit, Judith, and Wisdom, saying of them: "for the sake of greater accuracy... there are other books outside these [just listed] which are not indeed included in the canon" (39th festal letter, 367 A.D.). [5]

The scholar Jerome was the main translator of the Latin Vulgate (which Roman Catholicism later decreed has ultimate authority for determining doctrine). About 395 A.D., Jerome enumerated the books of the Hebrew Bible, saying "whatever falls outside these must be set apart among the Apocrypha." He then lists books now accepted by the Roman Catholic church and categorically says they "are not in the canon." He later wrote that such books are read "for edification of the people but not for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas." Likewise, many years later (about 1140 A.D.), Hugo of St. Victor lists the "books of holy writ," adding "There are also in the Old Testament certain other books which are indeed read [in church] but are not inscribed...in the canon of authority"; here he lists books of the apocrypha.

The apocryphal books were sometimes highly regarded or cited for their antiquity or for their historical, moral, or literary value, [6] but the conceptual distance between "valuable" and "divinely inspired" is considerable.

Thus the 1395 Wycliffe version of the Bible in English included the Apocrypha and commends the book of Tobit in particular, yet also acknowledges that Tobit "is not of belief" -- that is, not in the same class as inspired books which can be used for confirming Christian doctrine. Likewise, the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1562) names the canonical books of Scripture in one separate class, and then introduces a list of apocryphal books by saying: "And the other books the Church doth read for example of life... by yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine." [7] This is likewise the attitude of most Roman Catholic scholars today, who regard the books of the Apocrypha as only "deutercanonical" (of secondary authority). [8]

The Protestant churches have never received these writings as canonical, even though they have sometimes been reprinted for historical value. Even some Roman Catholic scholars during the Reformation period disputed the canonical status of the apocryphal books, which were accepted (at this late date) it would seem because of their usefulness in opposing Luther and the reformers -- that is, for contemporary and political purposes, rather than the theological and historical ones in our earlier discussion.

Finally, the books of the Apocrypha abound in doctrinal, ethical, and historical errors. For instance, Tobit claims to have been alive when Jeroboam revolted (931 B.C.) and when Assyria conquered Israel (722 B.C.), despite the fact that his lifespan was only a total of 158 years (Tobit 1:3-5; 14:11)! Judith mistakenly identifies Nebuchadnezzar as king of the Assyrians (1:1, 7). Tobit endorses the superstitious use of fish liver to ward off demons (6:

6,7)!

The theological errors are equally significant. Wisdom of Solomon teaches the creation of the world from pre-existent matter (7:17). II Maccabees teaches prayers for the dead (12:45-46), and Tobit teaches salvation by the good work of almsgiving (12:9) -- quite contrary to inspired Scripture (such as John 1:3; II Samuel 12:19; Hebrews 9:27; Romans 4:5; Galatians 3:11).

The conclusion to which we come is that the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha fail to demonstrate the characteristic marks of inspiration and authority. They are not self-attesting, but rather contradict God's Word elsewhere. They were not recognized by God's people from the outset as inspired and have never gained acceptance of the church universal as communicating the full authority of God's own Word. We must concur with the Westminster Confession, when it says: "The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings" (I, 3).

Footnotes

[1] The theological error of believing that special, verbal revelation or quasi-revelation continued beyond the time of the apostles is made equally by Roman Catholics (imputing inspired authority to papal "interpretations" and unwritten tradition) and Charismatics (teaching tongues and prophecy as gifts to be expected throughout the life of the church). Both the office of Apostle and the gifts which accompanied the ministry of the apostles (cf. II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4) were intended to be temporary, confined to the founding of the church. To be an Apostle, it was required to be a witness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; e.g. I Cor. 9:1) and to be commissioned directly by Him (Gal. 1:1), thus restricting the apostolic office to the first generation of the church. Paul indicated that he was the last of the apostles (I Cor. 15:7-9); his successor, Timothy, is never given that title. By the later New Testament epistles we have no further mention or discussion of revelatory gifts like tongues and prophecy, for with the completing (bringing to its end or "perfection") of that which was "partial" - namely, the process of revelation - the temporary revelatory gifts of tongues and prophecy had to "cease" (I Cor. 13:8-10).

[2] Bruce, F.F., *The Defence of the Gospel in the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 80.

[3] For a good discussion of the evidence, see Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987).

[4] Fragments of three Apocryphal books are among extant Qumran texts, with no evidence that they were considered canonical even by the sect that produced them. Philo shows no sign of accepting them either. Sometimes appeal is made to the Greek version of the Old Testament (the "Septuagint") to suggest "the canon of the Alexandrian Jews was more comprehensive." F.F. Bruce goes on to say, "There is no evidence that this was so: indeed, there is no evidence that the Alexandrian Jews ever promulgated a canon of scripture"

(*Canon*, pp. 44-45). Indeed, the Septuagint manuscripts we possess were produced by Christians much later, and extant manuscripts differ between themselves, some excluding books of the Apocrypha which Rome accepted, while others included apocryphal books which even Rome denied.

[5]Those who study the history of canonicity will trip themselves up badly if attention is not paid to the varying and unsettled use of terms at this point in church history (late fourth century). For instance, the term "apocrypha" itself carries different import between Athanasius and Jerome. Athanasius spoke of three categories of books: canonical, edifying, and "apocryphal" - meaning heretical works to be avoided altogether. Jerome on the other hand, used the term "apocryphal" for the second category of books, those which are edifying (and Rufinus termed them "ecclesiastical," since they could be read in the church). The same is true of the early use of the term "canon." Athanasius appears to be the first to use it in the strict sense that we do today; naturally, such usage was not immediately inculcated by all writers. Sometimes "canonical" was used broadly and indiscriminately to include what other authors more carefully delineated as the books of highest, inspired authority (the church's standard - "canon") *as well as* the edifying or "ecclesiastical" books which could be read in the church. We see this, for instance, at the provincial (non-ecumenical) Third Council of Carthage in 397, which explicitly identifies "the canonical writings" with what "should be read in the church" - and includes the works deemed "edifying" by Athanasius or "apocryphal" by Jerome. Contemporary Roman Catholic scholars recognize the varying use of the term "canonical" by speaking of the apocryphal books as "deuterocanonical."

[6]Roman Catholic apologists sometimes jump to canonical conclusions from the simple fact that the books of the Apocrypha were copied and included among ancient manuscripts or from the fact that an author draws upon them. But obviously a writer can quote something from a work which he takes to be true without thereby ascribing divine authority to it (for instance, Paul quoting a pagan writer in I Cor. 15:33).

[7]Roman Catholic apologists often misunderstand the Protestant rejection of the Apocrypha, thinking it entails having no respect or use for these books whatsoever. Calvin himself wrote, "I am not one of those, however, who would entirely disapprove the reading of those books"; his objection was to "placing the Apocrypha in the same rank" with inspired Scripture ("Antidote" to the Council of Trent, pp. 67,68). Likewise, Luther placed the Apocrypha in an appendix to the Old Testament in his German Bible, describing them in the title as "Books which are not to be held equal to holy scripture, but are useful and good to read."

[8]The preceding history and quotations concerning the canon can be pursued in F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, *passim*

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The Formation of the Canon of the New Testament

By B.B. Warfield

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IN ORDER to obtain a correct understanding of what is called the formation of the Canon of the New Testament, it is necessary to begin by fixing very firmly in our minds one fact which is obvious enough when attention is once called to it. That is, that the Christian church did not require to form for itself the idea of a "canon," - or, as we should more commonly call it, of a "Bible," - that is, of a collection of books given of God to be the authoritative rule of faith and practice. It inherited this idea from the Jewish church, along with the thing itself, the Jewish Scriptures, or the "Canon of the Old Testament." The church did not grow up by natural law: it was founded. And the authoritative teachers sent forth by Christ to found His church, carried with them, as their most precious possession, a body of divine Scriptures, which they imposed on the church that they founded as its code of law. No reader of the New Testament can need proof of this; on every page of that book is spread the evidence that from the very beginning the Old Testament was as cordially recognized as law by the Christian as by the Jew. The Christian church thus was never without a "Bible" or a "canon."

But the Old Testament books were not the only ones which the apostles (by Christ's own appointment the authoritative founders of the church) imposed upon the infant churches, as their authoritative rule of faith and practice. No more authority dwelt in the prophets of the old covenant than in themselves, the apostles, who had been "made sufficient as ministers of a new covenant "; for (as one of themselves argued) "if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory." Accordingly not only was the gospel they delivered, in their own estimation, itself a divine revelation, but it was also preached "in the Holy Ghost" (I Pet. i. 12) ; not merely the matter of it, but the very words in which it was clothed were "of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. ii. 13). Their own commands were, therefore, of divine authority (I Thess. iv. 2), and their writings were the depository of these commands (II Thess. ii. 15). "If any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle," says Paul to one church (II Thess. iii. 14), "note that man, that ye have no company with him." To another he makes it the test of a Spirit-led man to recognize that what he was writing to them was "the commandments of the Lord" (I Cor. xiv. 37). Inevitably, such writings, making so awful a claim on their acceptance, were received by the infant churches as of a quality equal to that of the old "Bible"; placed alongside of its older books as an additional part of the one law of God; and read as such in their meetings for worship - a practice which moreover was required by the apostles (I Thess. v. 27; Col. iv. 16; Rev. i. 3). In the apprehension, therefore, of the earliest churches, the "Scriptures" were not a closed but an increasing "canon." Such they had been from the beginning, as they gradually grew in number from Moses to Malachi; and such they were to continue as long as there should remain among the churches "men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

We say that this immediate placing of the new books - given the church under the seal of apostolic authority - among the Scriptures already established as such, was inevitable. It is also historically evinced from the very beginning. Thus the apostle Peter, writing in A.D. 68, speaks of Paul's numerous letters not in contrast with the Scriptures, but as among the Scriptures and in contrast with "the other Scriptures" (II Pet. iii. 16) - that is, of course, those

of the Old Testament. In like manner the apostle Paul combines, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, the book of Deuteronomy and the Gospel of Luke under the common head of "Scripture" (I Tim. v. 18): "For the Scripture saith 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn' [Deut. xxv. 4]; and, 'The laborer is worthy of his hire'" (Luke x. 7). The line of such quotations is never broken in Christian literature. Polycarp (c. 12) in A.D. 115 unites the Psalms and Ephesians in exactly similar manner: "In the sacred books.... as it is said in these Scriptures, 'Be ye angry and sin not,' and 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.'" So, a few years later, the so-called second letter of Clement, after quoting Isaiah, adds (ii. 4): "And another Scripture, however, says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners'" - quoting from Matthew -- a book which Barnabas (circa 97-106 A.D.) had already adduced as Scripture. After this such quotations are common.

What needs emphasis at present about these facts is that they obviously are not evidences of a gradually-heightening estimate of the New Testament books, originally received on a lower level and just beginning to be tentatively accounted Scripture; they are conclusive evidences rather of the estimation of the New Testament books from the very beginning as Scripture, and of their attachment as Scripture to the other Scriptures already in hand. The early Christians did not, then, first form a rival "canon" of "new books" which came only gradually to be accounted as of equal divinity and authority with the "old books"; they received new book after new book from the apostolical circle, as equally "Scripture" with the old books, and added them one by one to the collection of old books as additional Scriptures, until at length the new books thus added were numerous enough to be looked upon as another section of the Scriptures.

The earliest name given to this new section of Scripture was framed on the model of the name by which what we know as the Old Testament was then known. Just as it was called "The Law and the Prophets and the Psalms" (or "the Hagiographa"), or more briefly "The Law and the Prophets," or even more briefly still "The Law"; so the enlarged Bible was called "The Law and the Prophets, with the Gospels and the Apostles" (so Clement of Alexandria, "Strom." vi. 11, 88; Tertullian, "De Prms. Men" 36), or most briefly "The Law and the Gospel" (so Claudius Apolinaris, Irenaeus); while the new books apart were called "The Gospel and the Apostles," or most briefly of all "The Gospel." This earliest name for the new Bible, with all that it involves as to its relation to the old and briefer Bible, is traceable as far back as Ignatius (A.D. 115), who makes use of it repeatedly (e.g., "ad Philad." 5; ("ad Smyrn." 7). In one passage he gives us a hint of the controversies which the enlarged Bible of the Christians aroused among the Judaizers ("ad Philad." 6). "When I heard some saying," he writes, "'Unless I find it in the Old [Books] I will not believe the Gospel' on my saying, 'It is written.' they answered, 'That is the question.' To me, however, Jesus Christ is the Old [Books]; his cross and death and resurrection and the faith which is by him, the undefiled Old [Books] - by which I wish, by your prayers, to be justified. The priests indeed are good, but the High Priest better," etc. Here Ignatius appeals to the "Gospel" as Scripture, and the Judaizers object, receiving from him the answer in effect which Augustine afterward formulated in the well known saying that the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is first made clear in the New. What we need now to observe, however, is that to Ignatius the New Testament was not a different book from the Old Testament, but part of the one body of Scripture with it; an accretion, so to speak, which had grown upon it.

This is the testimony of all the early witnesses - even those which speak for the distinctively Jewish-Christian church. For example, that curious Jewish-Christian writing, "The Testaments

of the XII. Patriarchs" (Beni. 11), tells us, under the cover of an ex post facto prophecy, that the "work and word" of Paul, i.e., confessedly the book of Acts and Paul's Epistles, "shall be written in the Holy Books," i.e., as is understood by all, made a part of the existent Bible. So even in the Talmud, in a scene intended to ridicule a "bishop" of the first century, he is represented as finding Galatians by "sinking himself deeper" into the same "Book" which contained the Law of Moses ("Babl. Sabbath," 116 a and b). The details cannot be entered into here. Let it suffice to say that, from the evidence of the fragments which alone have been preserved to us of the Christian writings of that very early time, it appears that from the beginning of the second century (and that is from the end of the apostolic age) a collection (Ignatius, II Clement) of "New Books" (Ignatius), called the "Gospel and Apostles" (Ignatius, Marcion), was already a part of the "Oracles" of God (Polycarp, Papias, II Clement), or "Scriptures" (I Tim., II Pet., Barn., Polycarp, II Clement), or the "Holy Books" or "Bible" (Testt. XII. Patt.).

The number of books included-in this added body of New Books, at the opening of the second century, cannot be satisfactorily determined by the evidence of these fragments alone. The section of it called the "Gospel" included Gospels written by "the apostles and their companions" (Justin), which beyond legitimate question were our four Gospels now received. The section called "the Apostles" contained the book of Acts (The Testt. XII. Patt.) and epistles of Paul, John, Peter and James. The evidence from various quarters is indeed enough to show that the collection in general use contained all the books which we at present receive, with the possible exceptions of Jude, II and III John and Philemon. And it is more natural to suppose that failure of very early evidence for these brief booklets is due to their insignificant size rather than to their nonacceptance.

It is to be borne in mind, however, that the extent of the collection may have - and indeed is historically shown actually to have varied in different localities. The Bible was circulated only in handcopies, slowly and painfully made; and an incomplete copy, obtained say at Ephesus in A.D. 68, would be likely to remain for many years the Bible of the church to which it was conveyed; and might indeed become the parent of other copies, incomplete like itself, and thus the means of providing a whole district with incomplete Bibles. Thus, when we inquire after the history of the New Testament Canon we need to distinguish such questions as these: (1) When was the New Testament Canon completed? (2) When did any one church acquire a completed canon? (3) When did the completed canon -the complete Bible - obtain universal circulation and acceptance? (4) On what ground and evidence did the churches with incomplete Bibles accept the remaining books when they were made known to them?

The Canon of the New Testament was completed when the last authoritative book was given to any church by the apostles, and that was when John wrote the Apocalypse, about A.D. 98. Whether the church of Ephesus, however, had a completed Canon when it received the Apocalypse, or not, would depend on whether there was any epistle, say that of Jude, which had not yet reached it with authenticating proof of its apostolicity. There is room for historical investigation here. Certainly the whole Canon was not universally received by the churches till somewhat later. The Latin church of the second and third centuries did not quite know what to do with the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Syrian churches for some centuries may have lacked the lesser of the Catholic Epistles and Revelation. But from the time of Ireanaeus down, the church at large had the whole Canon as we now possess it. And though a section of the church may not yet have been satisfied of the apostolicity of a certain book or of certain books; and though afterwards doubts may have arisen in sections of the church as to the apostolicity of

certain books (as e. g. of Revelation): yet in no case was it more than a respectable minority of the church which was slow in receiving, or which came afterward to doubt, the credentials of any of the books that then as now constituted the Canon of the New Testament accepted by the church at large. And in every case the principle on which a book was accepted, or doubts against it laid aside, was the historical tradition of apostolicity.

Let it, however, be clearly understood that it was not exactly apostolic authorship which in the estimation of the earliest churches, constituted a book a portion of the "canon." Apostolic authorship was, indeed, early confounded with canonicity. It was doubt as to the apostolic authorship of Hebrews, in the West, and of James and Jude, apparently, which underlay the slowness of the inclusion of these books in the "canon" of certain churches. But from the beginning it was not so. The principle of canonicity was not apostolic authorship, but imposition by the apostles as "law." Hence Tertullian's name for the "canon" is "instrumentum"; and he speaks of the Old and New Instrument as we would of the Old and New Testament. That the apostles so imposed the Old Testament on the churches which they founded - as their "Instrument," or "Law," or "Canon" - can be denied by none. And in imposing new books on the same churches, by the same apostolical authority, they did not confine themselves to books of their own composition. It is the Gospel according to Luke, a man who was not an apostle, which Paul parallels in I Tim. v. 18 with Deuteronomy as equally "Scripture" with it, in the first extant quotation of a New Testament book as Scripture. The Gospels which constituted the first division of the New Books, - of "The Gospel and the Apostles," - Justin tells us were "written by the apostles and their companions." The authority of the apostles, as by divine appointment founders of the church was embodied in whatever books they imposed on the church as law not merely in those they themselves had written.

The early churches, in short, received, as we receive, into the New Testament all the books historically evinced to them as give by the apostles to the churches as their code of law; and we must not mistake the historical evidences of the slow circulation an authentication of these books over the widely-extended church, evidence of slowness of "canonization" of books by the authority or the taste of the church itself.

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Is The Church of Rome a Part of the Visible Church?

by: Charles Hodge
(*Princeton Review*, April 1846)

It is very plain that our remarks, in our number of July last, in favor of the validity of Romish baptism, have not met the approbation of a large portion of our brethren. This, though a matter of regret, is not a matter of surprise. The large majority of the last Assembly by which the resolution pronouncing such baptism null and void was carried, as well as other indications of the public mind in the church, made it plain from the beginning that we should be for the present, at least, and probably for some years, in a small minority on this question. Our confidence, however, in the correctness of our position, has not been shaken. That confidence rests partly on the conviction we cannot help feeling of the soundness of the arguments on which our conclusion rests; and partly on the fact that those arguments have satisfied the minds of the vast majority of the people of God from the Reformation to the present time. We have, however, waited, with minds we hope open to the conviction, to hear what was to be said on the opposite side. The religious papers early announced that full replies to our arguments would speedily appear. Providential circumstances, it seems, have prevented, until recently, the accomplishment of their purposes thus early announced. All that we have seen in the shape of argument on the subject, are two numbers of a series of articles now in the course of publication in the *Watchman and Observer*, of Richmond, and the essays of Theophilus, in the *Presbyterian*. Our respect for the writer in the *Watchman*, and for the thoroughness and ability which distinguish his opening numbers, imposes on us the duty of silence as to the main point in dispute, until the series of articles is completed. It will then be time enough to decide whether the discussion can with profit be further continued in our pages. We are also as yet without any light from Theophilus. After writing ten weeks he is but approaching the subject. he closes the tenth number with saying: "We are now prepared to begin the argument." All that precedes, therefore, is not properly, in his judgment, of the nature of argument; though doubtless regarded as pertinent to the discussion. Under these circumstances it is obvious that the way is not open for us to attempt to justify our position. We gave the definition of baptism contained in our standards--and then endeavored to show that Romish baptism falls within that definition. Neither or these points has, as yet, been seriously assailed. This is what the writer in the *Watchman and Observer* proposes to do, and we respectfully wait to hear what he has to say. In the meantime the topic discussed by Theophilus in his eleventh and twelfth numbers, is so important in itself and so intimately connected with this whole subject, that we have determined to devote a few pages to the consideration of the question, Whether the church of Rome is still a portion of the visible church of Christ?

Those taking the negative of this question, have every advantage of an adventitious kind in their favor. They have no need of definitions, or distinctions, or of affirming in one sense

and denying in another. The round, plump, intelligible no, answers all their purposes. They make no demand upon the discrimination, or the candor of the public. They deal in what is called plain common sense, repudiating all metaphysical niceties. They have in this respect the same advantages that the ultra temperance man and the abolitionist possess. The former disembarasses himself of all need of distinctions and qualifications by affirming that the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage is sinful; not sometimes right and sometimes wrong, according to circumstances, which implies the necessity of determining what those circumstances are which give character to the act. He takes the common sense view of the case; and asserts that a practice which produces all the drunkenness that is in the world, and all the vice and misery which flow from drunkenness, is a sinful practice. He therefore hoots at those who beg him to discriminate between the what is wrong in itself and universally, and what is wrong only in certain circumstances; and cries them down as the friends of publicans and sinners. The abolitionist is still more summary. Slavery is a heinous crime; it degrades human beings into things; it forbids marriages; it destroys domestic relations; it separates parents and children, husbands and wives; it legalizes what God forbids, and forbids what God enjoins; it keeps its victims in ignorance even of the gospel; it denies labor its wages, subject the persons, the virtue, and the happiness of many to the caprice of one; it involves the violation of all social rights and duties, and therefore is the greatest of social crimes. It is as much as any man's character for sense, honesty or religion is worth, to insist that a distinction must here be made; that we must discriminate between slavery and its separable adjuncts; between the relationship itself and the abuse of it; between the possession of power and the unjust exercise of it. Let any man in some portions of our country, in England, in Scotland, or Ireland, attempt to make such distinctions, and see with what an outburst of indignation he will be overwhelmed. It is just so in the present case. Rome is antichrist, the mystical Babylon, the scarlet woman, the mother of harlots, drunk with the blood of the saints. What room, asks Theophilus, is there for argument here? Is Babylon Zion? Is the synagogue of Satan the church of Christ, the scarlet woman the bride of the Lamb? Woe to the man who ventures to ask for definitions, and discrimination; or to suggest that possibly these antagonistic designations are not applied to the same subject, or to the same subject under the same aspect; that as of old the prophets denounced the Hebrew community under the figure of an adulterous woman, and almost in the same breath addresses them as the beloved of God, his chosen people, compared to the wife of one's youth; so it may be here. The case is pronounced too plain for argument; the appeal is made at once to the feelings of the reader, and those who do not join in the cry are represented as advocates of popery, or at best very doubtful Protestants.

We do not mean to complain of anything of this kind we may have ourselves experienced. We gratefully acknowledge the general courtesy of Theophilus and the Christian spirit and gentlemanly bearing of the writer in the *Watchman*. Our object in these remarks is to call attention to the fact that there is very great danger of being carried away by the mere sound and appearance of argument in all such cases, and that while an easy triumph may be gained for the moment by taking things in the gross, and refusing the trouble of determining accurately the meaning of terms we use, yet that the evils which flow from

this course are often serious and lasting. We have seen churches rent asunder by the anti-slavery agitation, when it is probable, if the different parties had calmly sat down to compare their views and define their terms, it would have been found they were substantially of the same mind.

It is neither by research nor argument the question whether Romanists are members of the visible church to be answered. It is a simple matter of definition and statement. All that can be done is first to determine what is meant by the word church; and secondly what is meant by Rome, church of Rome, Romanists, or whatever term is used, and then see whether the two agree, whether Rome falls within or without the definition of the church.

By a definition we do not mean a description including a specification of attributes which properly pertain to the thing defined; but an enumeration of its essential attributes and of none other. We may say that a Christian is a man who believes all that Christ taught, who obeys all that he commanded, and trusts all his promises. This, however, is a description of an ideal or perfect Christian. It is not a definition which is to guide our judgment, whether a particular individual is to be regarded and treated as a Christian. It is not a definition which is to guide our judgment, whether a particular individual is to be regarded and treated as a Christian. It is not a definition which is to guide our judgment, whether a particular individual is to be regarded and treated as a Christian. We may say that a church is a society in which the pure word of God is preached, the sacraments duly administered, and discipline properly exercised by legitimate officers. This, however, is a description of a pure and orderly church, and not an enumeration of the essential attributes of such a body. If we use that description as a definition, we must exclude all but orthodox Presbyterians from the pale of the church. The eastern churches, the church of England, the Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists would without exception be cut off. Every one of these classes of Christians fails, according to our standard, in some one or more of the above specifications. They are all defective either as to doctrine, or as to the sacraments, or as to the proper exercise of discipline, or as to the organs through which such discipline is exercised. This distinction between a description and definition, between an enumeration of what belongs to a pure church, and what is necessary to the being of a church, is often disregarded. We think Theophilus overlooks it. He quotes largely from Turretin as sustaining his views on this subject; whereas Turretin is on precisely the opposite ground; affirming what Theophilus denies, and denying what Theophilus affirms. Turretin expressly makes the distinctions between "a true church," *i.e.*, a church which conforms of the true standard of what a church ought to be, and a heretical, corrupt, and apostate church. True, in his use of the term, corresponds to orthodox or pure; not with real. A body, therefore, according to him may be a church, and yet not a true church. We adverted to this fact in our former article, and referred so distinctly to the statements of Turretin that we are surprised to find Theophilus quoting from him as he does. "Since the church of Rome," says Turretin, "may be viewed under a twofold aspect, either in reference to the profession of Christianity and of the evangelical truths which she retains, or in reference to her subjection to the pope, and to her corruptions both in matters of faith and morals, we

can speak of her in two different ways. under one aspect, we do not deny she retains some truth; under the other we deny that she is Christian and apostolical, and affirm her to be anti-christian and apostate. In one sense, we admit she may be still called a CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 1st. In reference to the people of God, or the elect, who are called to come out of her even at the time of her destruction, Rev. xviii. 4. 2d. In reference to external form, or certain elements of a dispersed church, the vestiges of which are still conspicuous, as well as regards the word of God and the preaching thereof, which she still retains, although corrupted, as the administration of the sacraments, especially baptism, which as to its substance is there retained in its integrity. 3d. In reference to the evangelical truths, as concerning the Trinity, Christ the mediator, God and man, by which she is distinguished from a congregation of pagans or infidels. But we deny that she can be properly and simply (*i.e.*, without qualification) be called a true church, much less the only and the catholic church, as they would wish to have her called."

In the next paragraph but one, he explains what he means by *verity* as affirmed of a church, when we say she is *vera ecclesia*. It includes "verity in faith," or freedom from heresy; purity, or freedom from all superstition and idolatry; liberty in government, freedom from servitude and tyranny; sanctity of morals, as opposed to corruption of manners; and certainty and consolation, or freedom from doubt or diffidence.

Again, in answer to the objection that if Romanists have true baptism they must be a true church, as far as Christianity in the general is concerned, as opposed to a congregation of infidels; but not as it relates to pure Christianity, free from heretical errors; since true baptism may be found among heretics, who are not a true church."--P. 151.

. It is very evident, therefore, that Rome, according to Turretin, is to be viewed under two aspects; under the one she is a church, *i.e.*, a body in which the people of God still are; which retains the word of God and the preaching of it, though corrupted, and the sacraments, especially baptism. Under the other aspect, *i.e.*, as a papal body, she is not a church; *i.e.*, her popery and all her corruptions are anti-christian and apostate. She is not therefore a *true* church, for a *true* church is free from heresy, from superstition, from oppressive regimen, from corruption of manners, and from doubt or diffidence. Whether Theophilus approves of these distinctions or not; whether he thinks that the English word *true* can be used in the latitude which Turretin give the Latin word *versus*, or not; still he ought to give the Geneva professor the benefit of his own statements and definitions; and not represent him as denying that the church of Rome is a church, when he denies that she is a *true*, *i.e.*, a pure church. Turretin says that Romish baptism is valid. Theophilus says it is not. Both however agree that if Rome is in no sense a church, her baptism is in no case valid. It is obvious, therefore, that Turretin admits her to be a church in the sense in which Theophilus denies it.

Professor Thornwell very correctly remarked, in his effective speech before the General Assembly, that it is very plain that though the Reformers denied Rome to be the true

church, they admitted her to be in some sense a church. The fact is, they used the word *true* as Turretin does, as implying conformity with the true mode or standard. They made a distinction between a description of a church including all the excellencies such a body ought to possess; and a definition including nothing but what is essential to the being of a church. It is to the danger of confounding between these two things, that the foregoing remarks are directed.

The real difficulty in the case, is that it is impossible to give any one definition of a church, except in the most general terms, which includes all the established uses of the word. Among Congregationalists a church is a number of persons giving credible evidence of regeneration, united by a covenant for the purpose of Christian worship and mutual watch and care. It is not to be denied that such a body is a church; it falls within the legitimate sense and wider definition of the term. This narrow sense has gradually diffused itself through our common modes of speech. We talk of man's being admitted to the church, or excluded from it, meaning by the church the body of communicants, to the exclusion of the great body of the baptized. To those accustomed to this use of the term, no body larger than a single congregation can be a church, and none composed in great part of those who give no evidence and make no profession of regeneration. Men possessed with this idea of the church, and unable to get a wider conception of it, ask with confidence, can a corrupt, wicked, persecuting body be a church? Of course not. No such body falls within their definition of the church; and if they can prove that that definition of the church is the only proper one, there can be no further dispute about the matter. But the *usus loquendi* neither of the Bible nor of the English language is determined by Congregationalists. It is an undeniable fact that we speak and speak correctly of the Reformed Dutch church; of the Episcopal church, and of the Presbyterian church, without intending to affirm that the several bodies thus designated are composed of persons giving credible evidence of regeneration, and united by covenant for worship and discipline. It will not do therefore to conclude that the church of England or that of Scotland is no church, because it does not fall within the New England definition of a church.

When we turn to the Scriptures and to the common language of Christians, we do not find the word church used in senses which admit of being embraced under one definition. In other words, the essential attributes of the church, in the established sense of the term, are not its essential attributes in another equally authorized sense. Thus we are told that the church consists of the whole number of the elect who ever have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof. In this sense of the word, it is essential to the church that it consist of the elect only, and that it should include them all. That this definition is sustained by scriptural usage cannot be disputed. It is in this sense the church is the body of Christ, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. It is by the church, thus understood, God is to manifest to principalities and powers his manifold wisdom. This is the church which Christ loved, and for which he gave himself that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church. It would of course be absurd to contend that no society is a church which

does not come under this definition.

Again the word is often used as equivalent with saints, believers, the true people of God, existing at any one time on earth, or in any one place. The word is used in this sense when Paul exhorts us to give no offence to the church, *i.e.*, the people of God; and when he says he persecuted the church. In like manner, when we pray for the church, either in the whole world, or in a particular country, or city, we surely do not mean the Presbyterian, or Episcopal, or Methodist church, or any one organized body. We have in our mind the true people of God, scattered abroad it may be, existing in every Christian denomination. In this sense of the word it is essential to the church that it consist of true believers.

A third sense of the word is that in which it is used when we say the church consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children. This is a legitimate established meaning of the term. In this view of the church, nothing is essential to it but the profession of the true religion; and in this sense every individual making that profession is a member, and every society composed of such individuals is a portion of the church or is included in it.

Theophilus expresses great surprise that we should venture the assertion that organization is not essential to the church. He ridicules the statement, and appeals to the language of the Psalmist when he bids us walk about Zion and tell the towers thereof, as sufficient refutation of it. By organization we meant, and it is very evident he means, external ordered union. We presume Theophilus himself will not maintain that in either of the three established senses of the word above state, organization is among its essential attributes. It is not enumerated in the definitions as given from our standards and from Scripture; nor is it necessarily included in the complex conception which we give the name church. When we conceive of the whole body of the elect, which have been or are to be gathered into one under Christ, it is not as an external organized body furnished with ministers and sacraments, but simply as the great body of the redeemed united to Christ and to each other by the indwelling of the Spirit. So too when we speak of the church as consisting of true believers, we do not conceive of them as an external organized body. We pray for no such body when we pray for the church of God throughout the world. The word is equivalent to the true Israel; Israel [according to Spirit--tr. from Greek] as distinguished from the Israel [according to flesh]. In like manner, when the word is used for all those throughout the world who profess the true religion; the idea of organization is of necessity excluded from that of the church. The visible church catholic is not an organized body on any but Romish principles. We are therefore surprised that Theophilus should be thrown off his balance, by a remark so obviously true, and of such constant recurrence in the writings of Protestants.

There is a fourth established meaning of the word church, which has more direct reference to the question before us. It often means an organized society professing the true religion, united for the purpose of worship and discipline, and subject to the same form of government and to some common tribunal. A multitude of controversies turn upon the

correctness of this definition. It includes the following particulars. 1. A church is an organized society. It is thus distinguished from the casual or temporary assemblies of Christians, for the purpose of divine worship. 2. It must profess the true religion. By the true religion cannot be meant all the doctrines of the true religion, and nothing more or less. For then no human society would be a church unless perfect both in knowledge and faith. Nor can it mean all the clearly revealed and important doctrines of the Bible for then no man could be a Christian and no body of men a church, which rejects or is ignorant of those doctrines. But it must mean the essential doctrines of the gospel, those doctrines without which no man can be saved. This is plain, because nothing can be essential, as far as truth is concerned, to a church, which is not essential to union with Christ. We are prohibited by our allegiance to the word of God from recognizing as a true Christian, any man who rejects any doctrine which the Scriptures declare to be essential to salvation; and we are bound by that allegiance not to refuse such recognition, on account of ignorance or error, to any man who professes what the Bible teaches is saving truth. It is absurd that we should make more truth essential to a visible church, than Christ has made essential to the church invisible and to salvation. This distinction between essential and unessential doctrines Protestants have always insisted upon, and Romanists and Anglicans as strenuously rejected. It is, however, so plainly recognized in Scripture, and so obviously necessary in practice, that those who reject it in terms in opposition to Protestants, are forced to admit it in reality. They make substantially the same distinction when they distinguish between matters of faith and matters of opinion, and between those truths which must be received with explicit faith *i.e.*, known as well as believed) and those which may be received with implicit faith; *i.e.*, received without knowledge, as a man who believes the Bible to be the word of God may be said to believe all it teaches, though it may contain many things of which he is ignorant. Romanists say that every doctrine on which the church has pronounced judgment as part of the revelation of God, is a matter of faith, and essential to the salvation of those to whom it is duly proposed. Anglicans say the same thing of those doctrines which are sustained by tradition. Here is virtually the same distinction between fundamental and other doctrines which Protestants make. The only difference is as to the criterion by which the one class is to be distinguished from the other. Romanists and Anglicans say that criterion is the judgment of the church; Protestants say it is the word of God. What the Bible declares to be essential to salvation, is essential: what it does not make absolutely necessary to be believed and professed, no man can rightfully declare to be absolutely necessary. And what is not essential to the true church, the spiritual body of Christ, or to salvation, cannot be essential to the visible church. This is really only saying that those whom Christ declares to be his people, we have no right to say are not his people. If any man thinks he has such a right, it would be well for him to take heed how he exercises it. By the true religion, therefore, which a society must profess in order to its being recognized as a church, must be meant those doctrines which are essential to salvation.

3. Such society must not only profess the true religion, but its object must be the worship of God and the exercise of discipline. A church is thus distinguished from a Bible,

missionary, or any similar society of Christians.

4. To constitute it *a church*, *i.e.*, externally one body, it must have the same form of government and be subject to the same common tribunal. The different classes of Presbyterians in this country, though professing the same doctrines and adopting the same form of government, are not all members of the same external church, because subject to different tribunals.

Now the question is, Is this a correct definition of a church? Does it omit anything that is essential? The only things which we can think of as likely to be urged as omissions, are the ministry and the sacraments. Few things in our July number seem to have given Theophilus more pain than our saying that the ministry is not essential to the church. With regard to this point, we would remark. 1. That we believe the ministry to be a divine institution. 2. That it was designed to be perpetual. 3. That it has been perpetuated. 4. That it is necessary to the edification and extension of the church. But we are very far from believing the popish doctrine that the ministry is essential to the being of a church, and that there is no church where there is no ministry. Officers are necessary to the well-being of a nation, and no nation can long exist without them. But a nation does not cease to exist when the king or president dies. The nation would continue though every civil officer was cut off in a night; and blessed be God, the church would still live, though all ministers should die or apostatize at once. We believe with Professor Thornwell, and with the real living church of God in all ages, that if the ministry fails, the church can make a ministry; or rather that Christ, who is in his church by the Spirit, would then, as he does now, by his divine call constitute men ministers. It strikes us as most extraordinary for a Presbyterian to say the ministry is essential to the church, and that it must enter into the definition; when our own book makes provision, first, for the organization of a church, and then for the election of its officers. A number of believers are constituted a church, and then, and not until they are a church, they elect their elders and call a pastor. Every vacant church is a practical proof that the ministry does not enter into the definition of the church. Theophilus amuses himself at our expense for our venturing to say, "Bellarmine has the credit of being the first writer who thus corrupted the definition of the church," that is, by introducing subjection to lawful pastors as part of that definition. We were well aware of the danger of asserting a negative. We knew that we had not read every writer before the time of Bellarmine, and that we could remember very little of the little we had read. We were, therefore, wise enough not to say that no man before the popish cardinal had perpetrated a like interpolation into the definition of the church, but contented ourselves with the safe remark that he has the credit of being the first who was guilty of that piece of priestcraft. That he has that credit among Protestants can hardly be disputed. Dean Sherlock says: "I know indeed of late the clergy have in a great measure monopolized the name of the church, whereas, in propriety of speech, they do not belong to the definition of a church," any more than a shepherd to the definition of a flock, which is his illustration. "The learned Launoy," he adds, "has produced texts of Scripture for this definition of the church, *viz.*: that it is the company of the faithful; and has proved by the testimony of the fathers in all

ages, even down to the Council of Trent itself, that this was the received notion of the church, till it was altered by Canisius and Bellarmine," the former "putting Christ's vicar into the definition," the later, subjection "to lawful pastors." "Whereas," continues the Dean, "before these men, neither pastor nor bishops, much less the Pope of Rome, were ever put into the general definition of a church" [1]. Very much the same complaint is uttered by Dr. Thomas Jackson, against "Bellarmine, Valentia, Stapleton, and some others," for troubling the stream of God's word as to the nature and definition of the church [2]. It surely does not become Presbyterians to exalt the clergy beyond the place assigned them by these strong Episcopalians, and make them essential to the being of the church, and of course an element in the definition of the term.

Very much the same remarks may be made in reference to the sacraments. We of course believe, 1 [sic] That the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are of divine appointment. 2. That they are of perpetual obligation. 3. That they are signs and seals of the covenant, and means of grace. 4. That the observance of them is a high duty and privilege, and consequently the neglect or want of them, a great sin or defect; but to make them essential to the church is to make them essential to salvation, which is contrary to Scripture. If baptism made a man a Christian, if it communicated a new nature which could be received in no other way, then indeed there could be no Christians and no church without baptism. But such is not the Protestant or scriptural doctrine of the sacraments. The Hebrew nation would not cease to be Hebrews, if they ceased to practice circumcision. They did not in fact cease to be the church, though they neglected that rite for the forty years they wandered in the wilderness, until there was not a circumcised man among them, save Caleb and Joshua. Yet far more is said of the duty and necessity of circumcision in the Old Testament than is said of baptism in the New. It is the doctrine of our church that baptism recognizes, but does not constitute membership in the church. Plain and important, therefore, as is the duty of administering and observing these ordinances, they are not to be exalted into a higher place than that assigned them in the word of God. Though the due celebration of the sacraments may very properly be enumerated, in one sense, among the signs of the church, we do not feel authorized or permitted by the authority of Scripture, to make such celebration essential to salvation or to the existence of the church. If any of our brethren should differ from us as to this point, it would not follow that they must reject the definition above given. For as the sacraments are a means and a mode of divine worship, the due celebration of them may be considered as included in that clause of the definition, which declares that a church is a society for the worship of God.

We revert therefore to the question, Is the definition given above correct? Is a church an organized society professing the true religion, united for the worship of God and the exercise of discipline, and subject to the same for of government and to common tribunal? It certainly has in its favor the common *usus loquendi*. When we speak of the church of England, of Scotland, the Free church, the Secession church, the Protestant Episcopal church; or when we speak of a single congregation as a church, as the church at Easton, or the first, second, or third Presbyterian church in Philadelphia; or if we take the term in the

New England sense, as distinguished from parish or congregation, still all these cases fall under the definition. By the word church, in all such cases, we mean an organized society professing the true religion, united for the worship of God and the exercise of discipline, under the same form of government and under some common tribunal. That common tribunal in a Congregational church, is the brotherhood; in a Presbyterian church, the session; in the Presbyterian church in the United States, our General Assembly; in the Episcopal church, the general convention; in the Church of England, the reigning sovereign; in the Evangelical church of Prussia, the king. In all these cases it is subjection to some independent tribunal that gives unity to a church, in the light in which it is here contemplated.

2. This definition is substantially the one given in our standards. "A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians with their offspring, voluntarily associated together for divine worship and godly living agreeably to the Holy Scriptures; and submitting to a certain form of government [sic] [3]. "Professing Christians" is here used as equivalent to "those professing the true religion," the form of expression adopted in the Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism. It is obvious that the definition suits all the cases mentioned above, applying equally well to a single congregation, and to a whole denomination united in one body.

3. This definition suits the use of the term as it occurs in many passages of Scripture. When we read of the church of Corinth, of Antioch, of Rome, the word is universally admitted to designate a number of persons professing the true religion, united for religious worship and discipline, under some common tribunal.

4. This definition is one to which the principles laid down on this subject in Scripture necessarily lead. The Scriptures teach that the faith in Christ makes a man a Christian; the profession of that faith makes him a professing Christian. The true, or invisible church consists of true believers; the visible church, of a society of such professors, united for church purposes and separated from other societies by subjection to some one tribunal. These seem to be plain scriptural principles. If any thing else or more than faith in Christ is absolutely necessary to union with him, and therefore to salvation [sic]; then something more than faith is necessary to make a man a Christian, and something more than the profession of that faith to make him a professing Christian, and consequently some other sign of a visible church must be necessary than the profession of the true religion. But we do not see how consistently with the evangelical system of doctrine, and especially with the great doctrine that salvation is by faith, we can avoid the conclusion that all true believers are in the true church, and all professing believers are in the visible church. 5. Did time permit, or were it necessary, it could easily be proved that in all ages of the church, this idea of the church has been the prevailing one. We have already quoted the testimony of Sherlock against the Romanists in proof of this point, and it would be easy to fill volumes with quotations from ancient and modern writers to the same effect. "Church," says Hooker in his Eccles. Polity, vol. ii, 17, "is a word which art hath devised thereby to

sever and distinguish that society of men which professeth the true religion from the rest, which profess it not, whereupon, because, the only object which separateth ours from other religions, is Jesus Christ, in whom none but the church doth believe, and whom none but the church doth worship; we find that accordingly the apostles do everywhere distinguish hereby the church from infidels and Jews, accounting them which call upon the name of the Lord Jesus to be his church." And again, B. 3, 1, "The visible church of Jesus Christ is one by outward profession of those things which supernaturally appertain to the essence of Christianity, and are necessarily required in every particular Christian man." Barrow, in his Discourse on the Unity of the Church says, "It is evident that the church is one by consent in faith and opinion concerning all principal matters of opinion." Bishop Taylor, in his Dissuasive against Popery, says, "The church (visible) is a company of men and women professing the saving doctrine of Jesus Christ." This is but saying what Tertullian, Augustin, Jerome, Hilary, Chrysostom and the whole line of God's people have said from the beginning.

6. Finally, we appeal in support of the essential element of the definition of a church given above, to the constant testimony of the Spirit. The Scriptures teach that the Spirit operates through the truth; that we have no right to expect his influence (as far as adults are concerned) where the truth is not known, and that where it is known, he never fails to give it more or less effect; that wherever the Spirit is, there is the church, since it is by receiving the spirit, men become members of the true church; and wherever the true or invisible church is, there is the church visible, because profession of faith; and, therefore, where these true believers are united in the profession of that truth by which they are saved, with a society or community--then such society is within the limits of the visible church, *i.e.*, is a constituent portion of that body which embraces all those who profess the true religion. All we contend for is that the church is the body of Christ, that those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells are members of that body; and consequently that whenever we have evidence of the presence of the Spirit, there we have evidence of the presence of the church. And if these evidences occur in a society professing certain doctrines by which men are thus born unto God, it is God's own testimony that such society is still a part of the visible church. It strikes us as one of the greatest absurdities of Ritualism, whether among Romanists or Anglicans, that it sets up a definition of the church, not at all commensurate with its actual and obvious extent. What more glaring absurdity can be uttered than that the Episcopal church in this country is here the only church, when nine tenths of the true religion of the country exists without its pale. It may be man's church, but God's church is much wider. Wherever, therefore, there is a society professing truth, by which men are actually born unto God, that society is within the definition of the church given in our standards, and if as a society, it is united under one tribunal for church purposes, it is itself a church.

The next step in the argument is, of course, the consideration of the question, whether the church of Rome comes within the definition, the correctness of which we have endeavored to establish? It was very common with the reformers and their successors to distinguish between the papacy, and the body of people professing Christianity under its dominion.

When, by the church of Rome they meant the papacy, they denounced it as the mystical Babylon, and synagogue of Satan; when they meant by it the people, considered as a community professing the essential doctrines of the gospel, they admitted it to be a church. This distinction is natural and just, though it imposes the necessity of affirming and denying the same proposition. If by the church of Rome, you mean one thing, it is not a church; if you mean another, it is a church. People will not trouble themselves, however, with such distinctions, though they often unconsciously make them, and are forced to act upon them. Thus by the word England, we sometimes mean the country, sometimes the government, and sometimes the people. If we mean by it the government, we may say (in reference to some periods of its history), that it is unjust, cruel, persecuting, rapacious, opposed to Christ and his kingdom: when these things could not be said with truth of the people [4].

Though we regard the above distinction as sound, and though we can see no more real contradiction in saying Rome is a church, and is not a church, than in saying a man is mortal and yet immortal, spiritual yet carnal, a child of God yet sold under sin; yet as the distinction is not necessary for the sake either of truth or perspicuity, we do not intend to avail ourselves of it. All that we have to beg is, that brethren would not quote against us the sweeping declarations and denunciations of our Protestant fore-fathers against popery as the man of sin, antichrist, the mystical Babylon, and synagogue of Satan, as proof of our departure from the Protestant faith. In all those denunciations we could consistently join; just as our fathers, as Professor Thornwell acknowledges, while uttering those denunciations, still admitted Rome, in one sense, to be a church. Our present object is to enquire whether the church of Rome, taking the term as Bishop Sanderson says, *Conjunctim pro toto aggregato*, just as we take the term, church of England, falls within the definition of a church given above.

That it is an organized society, is of course plain; that it is united for the purpose of worship and discipline is no less so. That is, it is the professed ostensible object of the society, to teach and promote the Christian religion, to convert men to the faith, to edify believers, to celebrate the worship of God, and to exercise the power of the keys, *i.e.*, the peculiar prerogatives of a church in matters of doctrine and discipline. This is the ostensible professed object of the society. That its rulers have left its true end out of view and perverted it into an engine of government and self-aggrandizement is true, and very wicked; but the same thing is true of almost all established churches. It has been palpably true of the church of England, and scarcely less obviously true of the church of Prussia, as well as the Greek church in Russia. When a church is perverted by its rulers into an engine of state, it does not cease to be a church, because it is by the church as such, *i.e.*, as a society designed for the worship of God and the edification of his people, such rulers endeavor to secure their own secular ends.

The only point really open to debate is, whether the Romish church as a society professes the true religion. In reference to this point we would remark, 1st. That by true religion in

this connection, has ever been understood, and from the nature of the case must be understood, the essential doctrines of the gospel. Men may enlarge or contract their list of such doctrines; but it involves a contradiction to say, that those who hold the essentials of the gospel, do not hold the gospel. This would be saying that the essence of a thing is not the thing itself, but something else. By the essential doctrines of the gospel we mean, and Protestants have been accustomed to mean, those doctrines which, in the language of Hooker, "are necessarily required in every particular Christian man." The question, therefore, as correctly stated by Professor Thornwell, really is, Whether Rome as a society still teaches enough to save the soul? 2. Our second preliminary remark is, that in determining what are the essential doctrines of the gospel, we cannot consent to bow to any other authority than the word of God. We cannot with Romanists and Anglicans, on the one hand, consent to make the judgment of the church the criterion of decision on this subject; nor on the other, can we submit to the judgment of individuals or sects, some of which would close not the church only, but heaven itself, against all Presbyterians, others against all Calvinists, others against all Armenians, others against all who sing hymns. 3d. A third remark is, that we must distinguish between what is essential to the gospel, and what is essential for a particular individual to believe. The former is fixed, the other is a variable quantity. The gospel in its essential principles is now what it always was and always must be. But what is essential for a man to believe depends upon that man's opportunities of knowledge. A poor Hottentot may get to Heaven though he knows nothing about, or should unintelligently reject many doctrines which it would argue an unsanctified heart in a man nurtured in the bosom of a pure church, even to question. 4. We must interpret language according to the *usus loquendi* of those who use it, and not according to our own usage. If a man defines justification so as to include sanctification, and says that justification is by works as well as faith, we must understand him accordingly. We may say a man is sanctified by love, hope, and other Christian graces and works; meaning that all these tend to promote his conformity to God; when we could not say, that he is justified, in our sense of the term, by these things.

It is then impossible to give any list of essential doctrines of the gospel, if so doing were to imply that all doctrines not included in such list might be safely rejected by men, no matter what their opportunities for knowledge might be. By essential doctrines we mean, as already stated, those which no man can be saved without believing. We shall not undertake the delicate task of giving a list of such doctrines, but content ourselves with remarking that the Scriptures adopt a twofold mode of statement on the subject. First, they give certain doctrines which, they declare, if any man believes he shall be saved. And secondly, they state certain doctrines which, if a man rejects, he shall be lost. These two modes of statement must be consistent, *i.e.*, they cannot lead logically to contradictory conclusions, even though the Bible arranges under the one head some doctrines which it does not place in the other. One reason why more particulars are found under the latter head than the former, no doubt is, that the rejection of a doctrine implies a knowledge of it. And the rejection of a doctrine when known may be fatal, when the knowledge of it, as a distinct proposition, may not be essential to salvation. These essential doctrines therefore may be

learned both from the affirmative and negative statements of the Bible. For example, it is said, whosoever believes in Christ shall be saved; whosoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God is born of God; whosoever believes and confesses that Christ is Lord, does it by the Holy Ghost; on the other hand, it is fatal to deny God, for he that cometh unto God must believe that he is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him. He who denies the Son, the same hath not the Father; he who denies sin, or that he is a sinner, the truth is not in him; he who rejects the sacrifice of Christ, has only a fearful looking for of judgment; he who seeks justification from the law has fallen from grace, and Christ shall profit him nothing; he who denies the resurrection of Christ, makes our preaching and our faith vain; he who denies holiness, and the obligation of holiness, has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel; so he who says that the resurrection is past already, has made shipwreck of the faith. The denial of these doctrines is said to forfeit salvation; but it does not follow that they must all be clearly known and intelligently received in order to salvation. It is a historical fact, as far as such a fact can be historically known, that men have been saved who knew nothing of the gospel but that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. The Scriptures do not warrant us in fixing the minimum of divine truth by which the Spirit may save the soul. We do know, however, that if any man believes that Jesus is the Son of God, he is born of God; that no true worshipper of Christ ever perishes. Paul sends his Christian salutations to all in every place, theirs and ours, who shall call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, their Lord and ours.

That Romanists as a society profess the true religion, meaning thereby the essential doctrines of the gospel, those doctrines which if truly believed will save the soul, is, as we think, plain. 1. Because they believe the Scriptures to be the word of God. 2. They direct that the Scriptures should be understood and received as they were understood by the Christian Fathers. 3. They receive the three general creeds of the church, the Apostle's, the Nicene, and the Athanasian, or as these are summed up in the creed of Pius V. 4. They believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. In one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried. And the third day rose again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end. And they believe in one catholic apostolic church. They acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

If this creed were submitted to any intelligent Christian without his knowing whence it came, could he hesitate to say that it was the creed of a Christian church? Could he deny that these are the very terms in which for ages the general faith of Christendom has been expressed? Could he, without renouncing the Bible, say that the sincere belief of these doctrines would not secure eternal life? Can any man take it upon himself in the sight of

God, to assert there is not truth enough in the above summary to save the soul? If not, then a society professing that creed professes the true religion in the sense stated above. 5. We argue from the acknowledged fact that God has always had, still has, and is to have a people in that church until its final destruction; just as he had in the midst of corrupt and apostate Israel. We admit that Rome has grievously apostatized from the faith, the order and the worship of the church; that she has introduced a multitude of false doctrines, a corrupt and superstitious and even idolatrous worship, and a most oppressive and cruel government; but since as a society she still retains the profession of saving doctrines, and as in point of fact, by those doctrines men are born unto God and nurtured for heaven, we dare not deny that she is still a part of the visible church. We consider such a denial a direct contradiction of the Bible, and of the facts of God's providence. It was within the limits of the church the great anti-christian power was to arise; it was in the church the man of sin was to exalt himself; and it was over the church he was to exercise his baneful and cruel power.

The most common and plausible objections to the admission that the church of Rome is still a part of the visible church are the following. First, it is said that she does not profess the true religion, because though she retains the forms or propositions in which the truth is stated, she vitiates them by her explanation. To which we answer, 1. That in her general creeds, adopted and professed by the people, no explanations are given. The doctrines are asserted in the general terms, just as they were presented and professed before the Romish apostasy. 2. That the explanations, as given by the Council of Trent, are as stated by Theophilus, designedly two-sided and ambiguous; so that while one class of Romanists take them in a sense consistent with their saving efficacy, others take them in a sense which destroys their value. It is notorious that the thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England are taken in a Calvinistic sense by one class of her theologians; in a semi-Pelagian sense by another class; and in a Romish sense by a third. 3. While we admit the truth of the objection as a fact, viz., that the dominant class of theologians do explain away most of the saving doctrines of her ancient creeds, yet we deny that this destroys the argument from the profession of those creeds, in proof that as a society she retains saving truth. Because it is the creeds and not the explanations, that constitute the profession of the people.

Secondly, it is objected that Rome Professes fundamental errors. To this we answer, 1. That we acknowledge that the teaching of many of her most authoritative authors is fatally erroneous. 2. That the decisions of the Council of Trent, as understood by one class of Romish theologians, are not less at variance with the truth; but not as they are in fact explained by another class of her doctors. 3. That these decisions and explanations are not incorporated into the creed professed by the people. 4. That the profession of fundamental error by a society retains with such error the essential truths of religion. The Jewish church at the time of Christ, by her officers, in the synagogues and in the sanhedrim [sic], and by all her great parties professed fundamental error justification by the law, for example; and yet retained its being as a church, in the bosom of which the elect of God still lived.

Thirdly, Rome is idolatrous, and therefore in no sense a church. To this we answer, 1. That the practice of the great body of the church of Rome is beyond doubt idolatrous. 2. That the avowed principles of the majority of her teachers are also justly liable to the same charge. 3. That the principles of another class of her doctors, who say they worship neither the images themselves, nor through them, but simply in the presence of them, are not idolatrous in the ordinary meaning of the term. 4. That it is not necessary that every man should be, in the fatal sense of that word, an idolater in order to remain in that church; otherwise there could be not true children of God within its pale. But the contrary is, as a fact, on all hands conceded. 5. We know that the Jewish church, though often overrun with idolatry, never ceased to exist.

Fourthly, it is objected that the people of God are commanded to come out of the church of Rome, which would not be the case were she still a part of the visible church. To this we answer, that the people of God are commanded to come out of every church which either professes error, or which imposes any terms of communion which hurt an enlightened conscience. The non-conformists in the time of Charles II, were bound to leave the church of England, and yet did not thereby assert that it was no longer a church.

Fifthly, it is said we give up too much to the papists if we admit Romanists to be in the church. To this we answer, Every false position is a weak position. The cause of truth. The cause of truth suffers in no way more than from identifying it with error, which is always done when its friends advocate it on false principles. When one says, we favor intemperance, unless we say that the use of intoxicating liquors is sinful; another, that we favor slavery, unless we say slaveholding is a sin; and a third, that we favor popery unless we say the church of Rome is no church, they all, as it seems to us, make the same mistake, and greatly injure the cause in which they are engaged. They give the adversary an advantage over them, and they fail to enlist the strength of their own side. Men who are anxious to promote temperance, cannot join societies which avow principles which they believe to be untrue; and men who believe popery to be the greatest modern enemy of the gospel, cannot co-operate in measures of opposition to that growing evil, which are founded on the denial of what appear to be important scriptural principles. It is a great mistake to suppose popery is aided by admitting what truth it does include. What gives it its power, what constitutes its peculiarly dangerous character, is that it is not pure infidelity; it is not the entire rejection of the gospel, but truth surrounded with enticing and destructive error. Poison by itself is not so seductive, and therefore not so dangerous, as when mixed with food. We do not believe that those of our brethren from whom we are so unfortunate as to differ on this subject, have a deeper impression than we have either of the destructive character of the errors of popery, or of the danger to which religion and liberty are exposed from its progress. We believe it to be by far the most dangerous forms of delusion and error that has ever arisen in the Christian world, and all the more dangerous from its having arisen and established itself in the church, or temple of God.

Endnotes

- [1.](#) See Preservative against Popery, vol. 1, tit. iii., ch. i., p. 36.
- [2.](#) See treatise on the church, page 50, Goode's edition.
- [3.](#) Form of Government, ch. 2, sec. 4.
- [4.](#) "The church of Rome," says Bishop Sanderson, "may be considered, 1. *Materialiter* , as it is a church professing the faith of Christ, as we also do in the common points of agreement. 2. *Formaliter* , and in regard to what we call Popery, viz., the point of difference, whether concerning the doctrine or worship, wherein we charge her with having added to the substance of the faith her own inventions. 3. *Conjunctim pro toto aggregato* , taking both together. As in an unsound body, we may consider the body by itself; the disease by itself; and the body and the disease both together, as they make a diseased body." Considered in the first sense, he says, it is a church; considered in the second sense or "*formally* , in regard of those points which are properly of popery, it has become a false and corrupt church; and is indeed an anti-Christian synagogue, and not a true Christian church taking truth in the second sense." He had previously said: " the word *truth* applied to any subject is taken either absolute or respective. *Absolutely* a thing is true, when it hath *veritatem entis et essentia* , with all those essential things which are requisite to the being and existence of it. *Respectively* , when over and above these essentials, it hath also such accidental conditions and qualities, as should make it perfect and commendably good. A thing may be true in the first sense, and yet not true in the second, but false. As a man may be a true man (*animal rationale*) and yet a false knave." Treatise on the Church, pp. 214 and 219.

This article keyed in by [Mark Horne](#), 1997



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A Vindication of the Doctrine that the Sacrifice of the Mass is Idolatry 1550

John Knox

Extracted from: *Selected Writings of John Knox: Public Epistles, Treatises, and Expositions to the Year 1559*

Editor's Note

"When Knox was released from his imprisonment on board the French galleys in 1549, he proceeded to England, and was received by the Protestants with much joy. Cranmer and his associates in promoting the Reformation, having stationed several pious and zealous preachers to itinerate in different parts of the kingdom, sent Knox to Berwick, where he laboured for nearly two years with much success. His preaching was very disagreeable to the clergy of that country, who were almost entirely bigoted Romanists, and were countenanced by Tonstall, bishop of Durham, a Papist in his heart, and who opposed the Reformation as far as he could with safety, till he was deprived of his see in 1553.

"A charge was brought by these ecclesiastics against Knox for teaching that the service of the Mass was idolatrous, and the reformer was summoned to appear before the council of the North, which directed public affairs in that district. Bishop Tonstall and several of his clergy were also present, not being suffered by the Protestant counsellors to proceed against Knox according to the usual practice of the church of Rome. Knox being permitted to declare his mind fully and freely, made a most able and impressive defence, which completely silenced the Romish prelate and his clergy. He was allowed to continue his labours; in the following year he was stationed at Newcastle, and in December, 1551, received a further mark of approval of the government, being appointed one of King Edward's chaplains in ordinary." [Introductory note in the British Reformers edition of *Writings of John Knox* (Philadelphia, 1842), p. 154.]

In exposing the idolatrous nature of the Mass, Knox stresses that all religious ceremonies and institutions must have clear biblical warrant, if they are to be admitted as valid expressions of worship. All worship

invented by man is idolatry. Knox demonstrates that the Mass is a human invention; and, therefore, the Mass is idolatrous. The entire discussion turns upon Knox's defence of the scriptural law of worship.

A Vindication of the Doctrine that the Sacrifice of the Mass is Idolatry

[INTRODUCTION]

The fourth of April, in the year 1550, was appointed to John Knox, preacher of the holy evangel of Jesus Christ, to give his confession why he affirmed the Mass [to be] idolatry: which day, in [the] presence of the council and congregation (amongst whom were also present the bishop of Durham and his doctors), on this manner he began:

This day I do appear in your presence, honourable audience, to give a reason why so constantly I do affirm the Mass to be, and at all times to have been, idolatry and abomination before God. And because men of great erudition in your audience affirmed the contrary, most gladly would I that they were present here, either in person, or else by their learned men, to ponder and weigh the causes moving me thereto. For unless I evidently prove my intent by God's holy scriptures, I will recant it as wicked doctrine, and confess myself most worthy of grievous punishment.

How difficult it is to pull forth of the hearts of the people the thing wherein [their] opinion of holiness stands, declares the great tumult and uproar moved against Paul by Demetrius and his fellows, who, by idolatry, got great advantage, as our priests have done by the Mass in time past. The people, I say, hearing that the honour of their great goddess Diana stood in jeopardy, with furious voices cried, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:23-41). As [if] they would say, "We will not have the magnificence of our great goddess Diana (whom not only Asia but the whole world worships) called into doubt, come into question or controversy. Away with all men intending that impiety." And hereunto they were moved by long custom and false opinion.

I know that in the Mass has not only been esteemed great holiness and honouring of God, but also the ground and foundation of our religion. So that, in the opinion of many, [if] the Mass [is] taken away, there rests no true worshipping nor honouring of God in the earth. The deeper it has pierced the hearts of men, it occupies the place of the last and mystical Supper of our Lord Jesus. But if I shall, by plain and evident scriptures, prove the Mass (in her most honest garment) to have been idolatry before God, and blasphemous to the death and passion of Christ, and contrary to the Supper of Jesus Christ; then good hope have I, honourable audience and beloved brethren, that the fear, love, and obedience of God, who in his scriptures has spoken all verity [*truth*] necessary for our salvation, will have you give place to the same.

"O Lord eternal! move and govern my tongue to speak the verity, and the hearts of thy people to understand and obey the same."

That you may better perceive and understand the manner of my doctrine in this my confession: first, I will collect and gather the sum thereof in a brief and short syllogism; and hereafter explain the same more largely.

[THE FIRST SYLLOGISM]

The Mass is Idolatry. All worshipping, honouring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without his own express commandment, is idolatry. The Mass is invented by the brain of man, without any commandment of God; therefore it is idolatry.

*[Part One: All Worship
Invented by Man is Idolatry]*

[I.] For probation of the first part, I will adduce none of the Gentiles' sacrifices, in which, notwithstanding, was less abomination than has been in the Mass; but of God's scriptures I will bring forth the witnesses of my words. And first, let us hear Samuel speaking unto Saul, after he had sacrificed unto the Lord upon Mt. Gilgal, what time his enemies approached against him. "Thou art become foolish," says Samuel, "thou hast not observed the precepts of the Lord, which he commanded thee. Truly the Lord had prepared to have established this kingdom above Israel for ever; but now thy kingdom shall not be sure" (1 Sam. 13).

Let us consider what was the offence committed by Saul. His enemies approaching, and he considering that the people declined from him, and that he had not consulted with the Lord, nor offered sacrifice for pacification of the Lord's wrath - by reason that Samuel (the principal prophet and high priest) was not present - [*Saul*] himself offered burnt and peace offerings.

Here is the ground of all his iniquity, and of this proceeds the cause of his dejection from the kingdom: that he would honour God otherwise than was commanded by his express word. For he [*Saul*], being none of the tribe of Levi (appointed by God's commandment to make sacrifice), usurps that office not due to him, which was most high abomination before God, as by the punishment appears.

Consider well that no excuses are admitted by God: [such] as that his enemies approached, and his own people departed from him; he could not have a lawful minister, and gladly would have been reconciled to God, and consulted with him of the end and chance of that journey; and therefore he, the king, anointed by God's commandment, makes sacrifice. But none of all these [excuses] were admitted by God; but Saul was pronounced foolish and vain. For no honouring knows God, nor will [he] accept, without it having the express commandment of his own word to be done in all points. And no commandment was given unto the king to make or offer unto God any manner of sacrifice: which, because he took upon him to do, he and his posterity were deprived from all honours in Israel.

[2.] Neither availed his preeminence, the necessity wherein he stood, nor yet his good intent. But let us hear more. When commandment was given unto Saul by Samuel, in God's name, to destroy Amalek (1 Sam. 15), because that sometime they troubled the people of Israel passing up from Egypt [cf. Ex. 17:8-16] (advert, you that presently persecute the people of God; albeit your pains be deferred, yet they are already prepared of God), this people Amalek were not immediately punished after the violence done against Israel (Deut. 25:17-19). But long after, they were commanded to be destroyed by Saul: man, woman, infant, suckling, oxen, cattle, camels, and asses - and finally, all that lived in that land.

Terrible should be the remembrance hereof to all such as trouble or molest such as would follow the commandment and vocation [*calling*] of God, leaving spiritual Egypt (the kingdom of Antichrist) and the abomination thereof. But Saul saved the king (named Agag) and permitted the people to save the best and fattest of the beasts, to the intent sacrifice should be made thereof unto God. But let us hear how this is accepted. Samuel before admonished [*Saul*] of his disobedience; [and] coming unto Saul asked, what voice was it which he heard? The king answers, "The people hath saved the fattest and best beasts thereof to make sacrifice unto their God." Here [it] may be marked, that Saul had no sure confidence in God; for he speaks as though God appertains nothing unto him. Samuel answers, "Suffer and I shall declare unto thee what the Lord hath spoken unto me this night." And shortly he rebuked him most sharply that he had not obeyed the voice of the Lord.

But Saul, standing in [the] opinion that he had not offended because he did all of good intent, says, "I have obeyed the Lord's voice: I have destroyed the sinners of Amalek, and I have saved only the king; and the people have reserved certain beasts to be offered unto God." And so he defended his own work to be just and righteous. But thereto answers Samuel, "Delighteth God in burnt offering, and not rather that his voice be obeyed?" The sin of witchcraft is not to obey his voice, and to be stubborn is the sin of idolatry. As [if] Samuel would say: "There is nothing that God more requires of man than obedience to the commandment; yea, he prefers obedience to the selfsame sacrifice ordained by himself, and no sin is more odious in God's presence than to disobey his voice; for God esteems that so odious that he does compare it to the two sins most abominable, incantation and idolatry - so that disobedience to his voice is very idolatry."

Disobedience to God's voice is not only when man does wickedly contrary to the precepts of God, but also when of good zeal, or good intent (as we commonly speak), man does anything to the honour or service of God not commanded by the express word of God, as in the matter plainly may be espied. For Saul transgressed not wickedly in murder, adultery, or like external sins, but saved one aged and impotent king (which thing who would not call a good deed of mercy?); and permitted the people, as is said, to save certain beasts to be offered unto the Lord - thinking that God should therewith stand content and appeased, because he and the people did it of good intent. [1] But both these Samuel called idolatry: first, because they were done without any commandment of God; and, secondly, because in doing thereof he thought himself not to have offended. And that is principal idolatry when our own inventions we defend to be righteous in the sight of God, because we think them good, laudable, and pleasant. We may not think us so free nor wise, that we may do unto God, and unto his honour, what we think expedient. No! the contrary is commanded by God, saying, "Unto my word shall ye add nothing; nothing shall ye

diminish therefrom, that ye might observe the precepts of your Lord God" (Deut. 4:2); which words are not to be understood of the Decalogue and moral law only, but of statutes, rites, and ceremonies; for equal obedience of all his laws requires God.

3. And in witness thereof, Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire, whereof God had given unto them no charge, [and] were instantly (as they offered) punished to death by fire (Lev. 10:1-3). Strange fire which they offered unto God was a common fire, and not of that fire which God had commanded to burn day and night upon the altar of burnt sacrifice, which only ought to have been offered unto God.

O bishops! you should have kept this fire: at morning and at evening ought you to have laid fagots thereupon; yourselves ought to have cleansed and carried away the ashes; but God shall behold.

In punishment of these two aforesaid is to be observed, that Nadab and Abihu were the principal priests next to Aaron, their father; and that they were comprehended neither in adultery, covetousness, nor desire of worldly honour, but of a good zeal and simple intent were making sacrifice - desiring no profit of the people thereby, but to honour God and to mitigate his wrath. And yet in the doing of this selfsame act and sacrifice were they consumed away with fire. Whereof it is plain, that neither the preeminence of the person or man that makes or sets up any religion, without the express commandment of God, nor yet the intent whereof he does the same, is accepted before God. For nothing in his religion will he [*God*] admit without his own word; but all that is added thereto does he abhor, and punishes the inventors and doers thereof, as you have heard in Nadab and Abihu; by Gideon and diverse other Israelites setting up something to honour God (Judges 8:24-27), whereof they had no express commandment.

4. A story, which is recited in the *Pope's Chronicles*, will I recite, which differs nothing from the punishment of Nadab, etc. Gregorius Magnus, in the time of the most contagious pestilence wherewith God punished the iniquity of Rome (for now was the wicked hour that Antichrist sprang up and sat in authority); in this time, I say, Gregory the pope devised a new honouring of God, the invocation of saints called the Litany,^[2] whereof in the scriptures neither is there authority nor commandment. Upon which sacrilege and idolatry God declared his wrath, even as he did upon Nadab and Abihu. For in the instant hour when first the Litany^[3] was recited in open procession (as they call it), four score of the principal men that recited the same were stricken horribly with the plague of God to death, all in one hour. The Papists attribute this to the contagious air and vehemence of the plague;^[4] but it was no other thing but a manifest declaration of God's wrath for inventing and bringing into the church a false and diabolical religion. For while we desire saints to make intercession and to pray for us, [by] what other thing do we then esteem the advocacy of Jesus Christ not to be sufficient for us? And what can be more devilish?

Of these precedents, it is plain that no man in earth has power nor authority to statute anything to the honour of God not commanded by his own word.

^[5]5. It profits nothing to say the kirk has power to set up, devise, or invent honouring of God, as it thinks most expedient for the glory of God. This is the continual crying of the Papists, "The kirk, the kirk has all power; it cannot err, for Christ says, 'I will be with you to the end of the world.' 'Wheresoever are two or

three gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "Of this they falsely conclude the kirk may do all that seems good for the glory of God; and whatsoever the church does, that God accepts and approves.

6. I could evidently prove that which they call the kirk, not to be the kirk and immaculate spouse of Jesus Christ, which does not err. But presently I ask, if the kirk of God be bound to this perpetual precept? "Not that thing which appeareth righteous in your own eyes, that shall you do, but what God hath commanded, that observe and keep" (cf. Deut. 12:8, 31-32). And if they will deny [this], I desire to be certified [*notified*] who has abrogated and made the same of none effect? In my judgment, Jesus Christ confirms the same, saying, "My sheep hear my voice, and a stranger they will not hear, but flee from him" (John 10:5). To hear his voice (which is also the voice of God the Father) is to understand and obey the same; and to flee from a stranger is to admit none other doctrine, worshipping, nor honouring of God than has proceeded forth of his own mouth - as he himself testifies, saying, "All that are of the verity [*truth*], hear my voice" (John 18:37). And Paul says, "The kirk is founded upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles" (Eph. 2:20): which foundation, no doubt, is the law and the evangel. So that it [*the church*] may command nothing that is not contained in one of the two; for if it does so, it is removed from the only foundation, and so ceases to be the true kirk of Christ.

7. Secondly, I would ask if Jesus Christ is not King and Head of his kirk? This will no man deny. If he is King, then he must do the office of a king; which is not only to guide, rule, and defend his subjects, but also to make and statute laws, which laws only are his subjects bound to obey, and not the laws of any foreign princes. Then it becomes the kirk of Jesus Christ to advert [*heed*] what he speaks, to receive and embrace his laws; and where he makes end of speaking or law-giving, here to rest; so that all the power of the kirk is subject to God's word. And that is most evident by the commandment given of God unto Joshua, his chosen captain and leader of his people, in these words, "Be strong and valiant that they may do according to the holy law, which my servant Moses commanded unto thee. Decline not from it, neither to the right hand nor to the left," etc. (Josh. 1:7-8). "Let not the book of the law depart from thy mouth, but meditate in it both day and night that you may keep and do, in all things, according to that which is written therein," etc. Here was it not permitted to Joshua to alter one jot, ceremony, or statute in all the law of God, nor yet to add thereunto, but diligently to observe that which was commanded. No less obedience requires God of us than he did of Joshua, his servant. For he will have the religion ordained by his only Son, Jesus Christ, most straightly observed, and not violated in any part.

8. For that I find given in charge to the congregation of Thyatira in these words: "I say unto you, and unto the rest that are in Thyatira, who hath not the doctrine (meaning of the diabolical doctrine before rehearsed), and who that knoweth not the deepness of Satan; I will put upon you none other burden but that which ye have. Hold till I come" (Rev. 2:24-25). Mark well, the Spirit of God calls all which is added to Christ's religion, the doctrine of the devil, and deep invention of the the adversary Satan. As also Paul, writing to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:1-3). And Jesus Christ says, "I will lay upon you none other burden than I have already; and that which ye have, observe diligently" (Rev. 2:24-25).

"O God eternal! hast thou laid none other burden upon our backs than Jesus Christ laid by his word? Then who hath burdened us with all these ceremonies, prescribed fasting, compelled chastity, unlawful vows, invocation of saints, and with the idolatry of the Mass?" The devil! the devil! brethren, invented all these

burdens to depress imprudent men to perdition!

9. Paul, writing of the Lord's Supper, says, *Ego accepi a Domino quod et tradidi vobis*: "I have received and learned of the Lord that which I have taught to you" (1 Cor. 11:23). And consider if one ceremony he added or permitted to be used, other than Christ did use himself; but commanded them to use with reverence the Lord's institution until his returning to judgment.

10. Albeit Moses was replenished with the Spirit of wisdom, and was more familiar with God than ever was any mortal man; yet was there not of all the ceremonies [any] referred to his wisdom one jot. But all was commanded to him, to be made according to the similitude shown unto him (Ex. 25:9), and according as the word expresses. Of the which precedents I think it is plain, that all which is added to the religion of God, without his own express word, is idolatry.

[6]11. Yet I must answer to one objection, objected by the Papists; for never may they abide to be subject unto God's word. The apostles (say they), in the council held at Jerusalem, set up a religion, and made laws whereof no jot was contained in God's word; therefore the kirk may do the same.

That there was any religion (that is, honouring of God, whereby they might merit, as you call it, anything before God) invented in that council, you never are able to prove. [7]Precepts were given, but neither such, nor to that intent that you allege. All precepts given in that council had the commandment of God, as after shall be heard.

[8]First, let us hear the cause of the council. Paul and Barnabas had taught amongst the Gentiles that only faith in Christ's blood justifies; and a great multitude of Gentiles by their doctrine embraced Jesus Christ, and by him truly worshipped God. Unto Antioch from Judea came certain false teachers, affirming that unless they were circumcised according to Moses' law, they could not be saved (Acts 15:1-35): as our Papists say this day, that true faith in Christ's blood is not sufficient purgation for our sins, unless also we buy their mumbled Masses.[9] This controversy troubled the hearts and consciences of the brethren, insomuch that Paul and Barnabas were compelled to go to Jerusalem unto Peter and James, and others, I think, of the apostles; where, a convention had, the question was propounded: whether the Gentiles should be subject to the observation of Moses' law or not? That is, whether only faith in Jesus Christ did justify, or necessary was also to justification the law observed.

After great contention, Peter expounded how the house of [10]Cornelius, being all Gentiles, had, by his preaching, received Jesus Christ, and were declared in his presence just and righteous before God. For they did receive the Holy Ghost visibly, not only without the observation of Moses' law, but also before they had received any sacramental sign of Christ's religion. Peter concludes that to put a yoke upon the brethren's necks, which yoke might none of the Jews bear themselves, was nothing but to tempt God: that is, to prove if God would be pleased with such laws and ordinances as they would lay upon the necks of men, without his own word, which was most extreme impiety. [11]And so he concluded that the Gentiles ought not to be burdened with the law.

Hereafter, Paul and Barnabas declared what wondrous works God had shown by them amongst the Gentiles, who never observed Moses' law. And last, James, who appears to me principal in that council (for he collects the scriptures and pronounces the final sentence, as you shall hear plainly), declares that the vocation [*calling*] of the Gentiles was prophesied before, and that they should be accepted and accounted to be the people of God without observation of Moses' law - adding that no man ought to inquire a cause of God's work. And so he pronounces the sentence, that their liberty should not be diminished.

Advert now the cause, the process, and the determination of this council. The cause was to inquire the verity [*truth*] of certain doctrine: that is, whether the Gentiles should be charged with the observation of Moses' law, as was affirmed and taught by some. In this matter they proceeded by example of God's works, finding that his gracious Majesty had accepted the Gentiles, without any thralldom or ceremony observed. Last, the scriptures are produced, declaring so to be forespoken; and according to all that is concluded and defined, that the Gentiles shall not be burdened with the law.

[12]What congruence, I pray you, has the Antichrist's councils with this council of the apostles? The apostles gathered to consult upon the verity. The papistical councils are gathered for private commodity, setting up of idolatry, and all abomination, as their determinations manifestly prove. The apostles proceeded in their council by consideration of God's works and applying of them to the present cause, whereupon deliberation was to be taken and determined as God's scriptures command. But the Papists, in their councils, proceed according as their wisdom and foolish brain thinks good and expedient; and concluding not only without authority of God's scriptures, but also manifestly contrary to the same. And that I offer myself most clearly to prove, if any would deny or allege that it is not so.

[13]But yet, they say, the apostles commanded the Gentiles to abstain from certain things, whereof they had no commandment of God. Let us hear the things inhibited: "Ye shall abstain (says the epistle sent to Antioch) from fornication" (Acts 15:29). This is the commandment of God. So, although the Gentiles esteemed it to be no sin, yet it is expressly forbidden in God's law.

But it follows, "From things offered unto idols, from [things] strangled, and from blood shall ye abstain." If the causes moving the apostles to forbid these things be well considered, it shall be found that they had the express commandment of Jesus Christ to do so. The Spirit of truth and knowledge, working in the apostles with all abundance, showed them that nothing was more profitable, and more might advance the glory of God, and increase the kirk of Christ, than that the Jews and Gentiles should use together in familiarity and daily conversation, that by mutual company, love might increase. One thing was easy to be espied: the Jews could not hastily be persuaded that the eating of meats forbidden in Moses' law was no sin before God. For difficult it is to pull forth of the heart that which is planted by God's own word; so the Jews would have abhorred the company of the Gentiles if they had eaten in their presence such meat as was forbidden in the law. The apostles considered that the abstaining from such things was nothing prejudicial to the liberty of Christians; for with time, and as the Jews grew more strong and were better instructed, they would not be offended for such matters. And therefore they commanded the Gentiles to abstain for a time. For that it was not a perpetual precept declares this day, when no man holds the eating of such things sin.

But what precept had they to do so? The last and new precept given by Jesus Christ to his disciples [is], "that every one love one another, as he hath loved us" (John 15:12). May not Christian love command that none of us do in the sight of others that which may offend or trouble the conscience of the infirm and weak? So witnesses Paul, affirming, "that if a man eat with offence he sinneth" (1 Cor. 10:32). And by virtue of this same precept, the apostles forbid that the Gentiles shall eat things offered unto idols, etc., that bearing some part with the infirmity of the Jews, they might grow together in mutual amity and Christian love. And these are the traditions of the seniors [*elders*] which Paul commanded to be observed. I pray you, what similitude have our papistical laws with this precept of the apostles?

[14] But greatly it is to be marvelled that men do not advert that the book of God's law (that is, of all his ordinances, testament, promises, and exhibition thereof) was sealed and confirmed in the days of the apostles: the effect and contents thereof promulgated and published; so that most extreme impiety it is to make any alteration therein. Yea, and the wrath and fearful malediction of God is denounced to fall upon all them that dare attempt to add or diminish anything in his religion, confirmed and proclaimed by his own voice.

O Papists! where shall you hide from the presence of the Lord? You have perverted his law; you have taken away his ordinances; you have placed up your own statutes instead of his. Woe and damnation abide you! Albeit that the apostles had made laws other than the express word commanded, what appertains that to you? Have you the Spirit of truth and knowledge in abundance as they had? Was the kirk of Christ left imperfect after the apostles' days? Bring yourselves to mind, and be ashamed of your vanity. For all men, whose eyes Satan has not blinded, may espy that neither wisdom nor authority of man may change or set up anything in the religion of God, without his own express commandment and word.

And thus, I think, the first part of my argument sufficiently proved: which is, that all worshipping, honouring, or service of God invented by the brain of man (in the religion of God), without his own express commandment, is idolatry.

[*Part Two: The Mass is an Invention of Man*]

But in vain, some will think, that all this labour I have taken; for no man of whole judgment any part of this would half deny. Nor yet does it prove anything of my intent; for the Mass is not the invention of man, but the very ordinance of God. Then I descend to prove the Mass to be the mere invention of man, set up without all commandment of God.

And first, of this name *Missa*, which we call the Mass, I would ask at such as would defend that papistical abomination: "Of what spirit is it invented that *Missa* shall signify a sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead?" Of the Spirit of God? Or of the spirit of man? Or of what origin is it descended?" Some will answer, from the Hebrew diction, *Missah*, which, after some, does signify an oblation or a gift - like as tribute which the inferior offers or pays to the superior. In the Hebrew tongue I confess myself ignorant, but have (as God knows) fervent thirst to have some entrance therein: and so of the Hebrew diction

cannot contend. But men of great judgment in the same tongue say that nowhere in [the] scriptures [does] *Missah* betoken an oblation. But admitting that it did so, what shall they be able to prove thereby? My question is, if the Spirit of God has invented and pronounced this diction *Missa* to signify a sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead. Which if they be not able to prove, then must they needs confess that it is of man's invention, and not of God's imposition. I could give unto them a more apparent cause and derivation of that diction, *Missa*; but of the name I am not greatly solicitous.

Secondly, I desire to be certified what they call their Mass - whether [it is] the whole action, with all ceremonies used now of old, or a part thereof? It will not satisfy the hearts of all [the] godly to say, "St. James and St. Peter celebrated the first Mass in Jerusalem or Antioch." If it were so, one of the two celebrated first, and the other after; but neither of the two can be proved by scripture. Great marvel it is that so manifestly men shame not to lie! Peter and James (say the Papists) celebrated the first Mass.

[15] But I shall prove that Pope Sixtus was the first that did institute the altars. Felix, the first of that name, did consecrate them and the temples both. Bonifacius commanded the altars to be covered with clean cloths. Gregorius Magnus commanded the candles to be lighted at the Evangel, and did institute certain clothes. Pontianus commanded *Confiteor* to be said. [16] And wherefore should I trouble you and myself both, in reciting what every pope added. You may for two pence [17] have the knowledge [of] what every pope added, until at last was compact [*put together*] and set up the whole body of that blasphemous idol. And yet shame they not to say, "St. Peter said the first Mass," although that many hundred years after him no such abominable ceremonies were invented.

[18] But they say, "All these ceremonies are not the substance of the Mass, but are added for good causes." What commandment have they received to add anything to the ordinance of God, for any cause appearing to them? But let them certify [to] me what is the Mass. "The canon," they will answer, "with the words of consecration."

Who is the author of the canon, can they precisely tell? Be well advised before you answer, lest by neglecting yourself you be proved liars. [19] Will you say that the apostles used your canon? So you have affirmed in times past. If the canon descended from the apostles to the popes, bold and malapert impiety it had been to have added anything thereto; for a canon is a full and sufficient rule, which in all parts and points is perfect. But I will prove diverse popes to have added their portions to this holy canon. If they will deny, advise what Sergius added, and what Leo added, and what the two Alexanders added; for I may not abide presently to recite all; but if they doubt, their own law shall certify them.

Secondly, the remembrance of the names of such men, who were not born [until] many hundred years after the days of the apostles, declares the canon not to have been invented [for] many years after the apostles. For who used to make mention of a man in his prayers before he is born? And *masteris memorie* [20] is made in the canon of such men and women whose holiness and godly life credible histories make little mention [of], which is an evident testimony that your holy canon is vain and of none effect. And if any will take upon him to defend the same, I will prove that therein is indigestible, barbarous, foolish congestion of words, imperfection of sentences, ungodly invocations, and diabolical

conjurations. All this is that holy canon whose authority excels all scripture. O! it was so holy, it might not be spoken plainly as the rest, but secretly it behooved to be whispered!^[21] That was not evil [*poorly*] devised, for if all men had heard it, men would have espied the vanity thereof.

But to the words of consecration: by whom have they that name, I desire to know? "By Jesus Christ," will they say? But nowhere are they able to prove that the words which he pronounced at his Last Supper called he, or any of his apostles after him, "words of consecration." And so have they received the name by the authority of man.

Which are the words? Let us hear. *Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes. Hoc est enim corpus meum. Similiter et calicem post quam coenavit, dicens, etc.* ["Take and eat ye all of this, for this is my body. In like manner he took the cup after supper, saying," etc.] (Cf. Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:23-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-24.) Let us inquire if anything be here added to Christ's words, or if anything be changed or altered therein. First, in which of the evangelists are these words, "*ex hoc omnes*" [*all of this*], spoken of the bread? Jesus Christ did speak them of the cup, but not of the bread.

^[22]O Papists! you have made alteration, not so much in words as in deed. And of the selfsame action commanded to be used by him, you permitted all to eat of the bread, but of the cup you reserved to you - clipped in the crowns [*heads*] and anointed upon the fingers.^[23] And in pain of your anathema - of your great cursing - you forbade that any laity presume to drink thereof. But tell me, Papists, were the apostles clipped and besmeared as you are? Or will you say that the congregation of the Corinthians were Papist priests? I think you will not. And yet they all drank of the cup, like as they ate of the bread. Mark, brethren, that of Christ's own words they make alteration.

But let us proceed. They say, *Hoc est enim corpus meum* ["For this is my body"]. I pray them, show where they find *enim*. Is this not their own invention, and added of their own brain? O! here make they a great matter, and here lies a secret mystery and hidden operation. For in five words the virgin Mary conceived, they say, when she conceived the Son of God. What if she had spoken seven, ten, or twenty words? Or what if she had not spoken three? Should thereby the determined counsel [have] been impeded? But, O Papists! is God a juggler? Uses he [a] certain number of words in performing his intent? But whereto are you ascended, to be exalted in knowledge and wisdom above Jesus Christ? He says only, *Hoc est corpus meum*. But you, as though there lacked something necessarily requisite, have added *enim* ["for"], saying, *Hoc est enim corpus meum*. So that your affirmation makes all perfect.

Consider, I exhort you, beloved brethren, if they have not added here of their own invention to Christ's words. And as they add, so steal they from them. Christ says, *Hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vobis datur, or frangitur*. "This is my body which is given for you," or "which is broken for you." These last words, wherein stands our whole comfort, they omit, and make no mention of them. And what can be judged more bold or wicked than to alter Christ's words, to add unto them, and diminish from them. Had it not been convenient, that after they had introduced Jesus Christ speaking, that his own words had been recited, nothing interchanged, added, or diminished; which, seeing they have not done, but have done the express contrary, as before is proved.

[*Conclusion of First Syllogism:
The Mass is Proven to be Idolatry*]

I think it is in vain to labour further to prove the rest of this abominable action to be invented and devised by the foolish brain of man, and so it cannot be denied to be idolatry. It shall not profit them to say, "The epistle and evangel are in the Mass; hereto is nothing added." What shall they prove thereby? For the epistle and the evangel, as themselves do confess, are not of the substance of the Mass. And although they were, it did nothing excuse the rest of that idolatry. For the devil may speak the words of God, and his false prophets also, and yet thereby are they neither better nor more holy. The epistle and evangel are God's words, I confess, but there they are spoken for no edification of the people, but for to be a cloak unto the body of that mischievous idolatry. All the action is abominable, because it is the invention of man; and so a few or certain good words cannot sanctify that whole Mass and body of abomination.

But what if I shall admit to the Papists, that the whole action of the Mass were the institution and very ordinance of God, and never one jot of man's invention therein; [if] I admit it be the ordinance of God (as it is not), yet will I prove it abomination before God.

THE SECOND SYLLOGISM

All honouring, or service of God, whereunto is added a wicked opinion, is abomination. Unto the Mass is added a wicked opinion. Therefore it is abomination.

[*The First Part: All Service with a
Wicked Opinion is Abomination*]

The first part, I think, no godly man will deny. And if any would, I ask, "What made the selfsame sacrifice, instituted and ordained to be used by God's express commandment, odious and abominable in his sight?" As it is written, "Bring unto me no more your vain sacrifices; your burnt offering is abomination; your new moons, sabbaths, and conventions I may not abide; your solemn feasts, I hate them from the heart" (Isa. 1:13-14). And also, "Who slayeth an ox in sacrifice, killeth a man:" that is, doth me no less dishonour than if he killed a man. "Who slayeth a sheep," says he, "choketh a dog: who brought meat offerings unto me, doth offer swine's blood" (Isa. 66:3). These two beasts, the dog and the swine, were abominable to be offered in sacrifice, the one for the cruelty, the other for filthiness. But, O priests! your sacrifices are mixed with the blood of dogs and swine; while that, on the one part, most cruelly you do persecute the professors of Christ's word; upon the other part, yourselves live most filthily.

The prophet proceeds, "Who maketh a memorial of incense, praiseth a thing that is vain." Amos says, "I hate and detest your solemn feasts. I will not accept your incense; your burnt offerings and meat offerings are not thankful before me" (Amos 5:21-23). And why all this? Because, says the prophet Isaiah, "They have chosen these in their own ways, and their own hearts have delighted in their abominations" (Isa. 66:3). And it is plain, that the aforesaid sacrifices were commanded to be done by God, and were not invented - no, not one jot thereof - by man's wisdom. Read the books of Moses (Exodus and Leviticus),

and you shall perceive them to be very commandments of God. And yet says the prophet, "They have chosen them in their own ways." Whereby the prophet meant and understood, that they had added unto them an opinion which made them to be abominable before God.

This opinion was, as in the same prophet and diverse others may be espied, that by working of the external work, they might purchase the favour of God, and make satisfaction for their sins by the same sacrifices. And that I collect of Jeremiah saying, "Ye believe false words which shall not profit you. For when you have stolen, murdered, committed adultery, and perjury, etc., then ye come and stand before me in this house, which hath my name given unto it; and ye say, 'We are delivered or absolved, albeit we have done all these abominations' " (Jer. 7:8-10). They thought and verily believed their sins to have been remitted by virtue of their sacrifice offered. But Isaiah asks of them, "Why spend ye silver for that which is not sure, and consume labour for that which does not satiate?" (Isa. 55:2). "Ye do hide yourselves with lies (but they esteemed them to have been verities) and ye make a band or covenant with death; but it shall not stand, for when destruction cometh it shall overwhelm you" (Isa. 28:15, 18). Their false prophets had taught them to cry, "Peace, peace," when yet there was no peace in their consciences (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). For they which did eat the sin of the people (as our priests have long done), for the more wicked men were, the more desire they had of the Mass, thinking by virtue thereof all was purged. The pestilent priests of Moses' law, as witness the prophets, caused the people to believe that by oblation of the sacrifice, they were just and innocent; and did desire, for such offerings, plague and the wrath of God to be removed (Hos. 7; Jer. 2). But it is answered unto them by the prophet Micah, "Shall I come in his presence with burnt offerings, and yearling lambs? Or doth a thousand rams please him, or ten thousand boats [*containers*] of oil? Shall I give my first-born son for expiation of mine iniquity; or the fruit of my womb a sin offering for my soul?" (Micah 6:6-7). Here the prophet plainly witnesses that no external work, how excellent ever it be, does purge or make satisfaction for sin. [24] And so of the precedents, it is plain that a wicked opinion added to the very work, sacrifice, or ceremony commanded to be done and used by God, makes it abomination and idolatry. For idolatry is not only to worship that thing which is not God, but also to trust or lean unto that thing which is not God, and has not in itself all sufficiency. And therefore Paul calls covetous men idolaters (Col. 3:5), because their confidence and trust are in their riches; much more would he call him an idolater whose heart believed remission of sins [comes] by a vain work, done by himself or by any other in his name.

[*Part Two: Unto the Mass is
Joined a Wicked Opinion*]

[25] But now let us hear if unto the Mass be joined a wicked opinion. It has been held in common opinion; it plainly has been taught; by law it is decreed; and in the words of the Mass it is expressed, that the Mass is a sacrifice and oblation for the sins of the quick and the dead: so that remission of sins undoubtedly was believed by that same action and work presently done by the priest. Sufficient it were for me, by the plain words of the aforesaid prophets, therefore to conclude it [an] abomination; seeing they [*the prophets*] plainly show that remission of sins comes only of the mere mercy of God, without all deserving of us, or of our work proceeding of ourselves. As Isaiah writes, saying, "I am he which removeth thine iniquity, and that for my own sake."

But if I shall prove this aforesaid opinion which has been held of the Mass to be false, deceitful, and vain - and that it is no sacrifice for sin (Isa. 43:25) - shall either consuetude [*custom*], long process of time, or multitude of papistical patrons, defend that it is not abomination and idolatry?

And first I ask, "Who offers this sacrifice, and what is offered?"

"The priest," say the Papists, "offers Jesus Christ unto the Father."

Then I demand, if a man can offer unto God a more precious thing than himself? And it appears not, for Paul commands that "we offer unto God a holy, lively, and reasonable sacrifice," which he calls our own bodies (Rom. 12:1). And Jesus Christ, having nothing more precious than himself, did offer up himself. If Paul had known any other sacrifice, after the death of Jesus Christ (that is, in all the times of the New Testament), more acceptable unto God than the mortification of our own bodies, would he not have advertised us thereof? If there was any other sacrifice, and he did not know thereof, then the Spirit led him not into all verity: which to say is blasphemy. If he knew it, and yet did not advertise us thereof, then did he not the duty and office of a true preacher; and to affirm that is like impiety. If any man might have offered Jesus Christ but himself only, in vain had it been to him to have suffered so cruel torment in his own person by oblation of himself. And so to affirm that mortal man may offer him who is immortal God, in my opinion is malapert proudness.

But let us hear more. Paul says, "By one oblation hath he made perfect forever them which are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). And also, "Remission of sins once gotten, there resteth no more sacrifice" (Heb. 10:18). They will not avoid Paul's words, although they say Paul speaks of the Levitical sacrifice. No, Papists! he excludes all manner of sacrifice, saying, *Nulla amplius restat Oblatio*, "No more sacrifice resteth." And thereto testifies Jesus Christ himself upon the cross, saying, *Consummatum est* ["*It is finished*"] (John 19:30): that is, whatever is required for pacifying my Father's wrath justly moved against sin; whatever is necessary for reconciliation of mankind to the favour of my eternal Father; and whatever the purgation of the sins of the whole world required, is now completed and ended, so that no further sacrifice rests for sin.

Hear, you Papists! Two witnesses speak against you. How can you deny the opinion of your Mass to be false and vain? You say that it is a sacrifice for sin, but Jesus Christ and Paul say only the death of Christ was sufficient for sin, and after it rests none other sacrifice. Speak! or else you are likely to be condemned.

[27]I know you will say, it is no other sacrifice, but the selfsame, save that it is iterated [*repeated*] and renewed. But the words of Paul bind you more straightly than that so you may escape. [28]For in his whole disputation, he contends not only that there is no other sacrifice for sin, but also that the selfsame sacrifice, once offered, is sufficient, and never may be offered again. [29]For otherwise of no greater price, value, nor extenuation, should the death of Christ be, than the death of those beasts which were offered under the law - which are proved to be of none effect, nor strength, because it behooved them often times to be iterated.

The apostle, by comparing Jesus Christ to the Levitical priests, and his sacrifice unto theirs, makes the matter plain that Christ might be offered but once. First, the Levitical priests were mortal, and therefore it behooved them to have successors; but Christ is an eternal priest, and therefore is alone, and needs no successor. The Levitical priests offered the blood of beasts; but Jesus Christ offered his own body and blood. The Levitical priests, for impotence of their sacrifice, did iterate the same; but the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, having in itself all perfection, needs not to be iterated. Yea, to affirm that it ought (or may be) iterated, is extreme blasphemy; for that were to impute imperfection thereupon, contrary to the whole religion, and the plain words of Paul, saying, "Such is our High Priest, holy, just, unpolluted, separate from sinners, and higher than the heavens; to whom it is not necessary every day to offer, as did those priests first offer for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for that he hath done once, when he offered himself" (Heb. 7:26-27). What words can be more plain? Here Paul shows all causes, wherefore it needs not Christ to be offered again; and would conclude, that he may not be offered again.

[30] Yet, they say, it repugns nothing that we offer Christ, so that he offer not himself. The text says plainly, as before is shown, that Christ only might offer himself - which sacrifice is sufficient, and never may be offered again. "For if it had behooved him to have been oftener offered than once, he should have suffered often times from the beginning of the world. But once hath he appeared for the away taking of sin, offering himself" (Heb. 9:26): that is, of his own body, once slain, now living, and may suffer death no more. "For by his only one sacrifice hath he made us perfect, and sanctifieth forever."

Here is answered to that objection, that some object: "Men every day sin; therefore it is necessary that every day be sacrifice made for sin." Paul says, "By one sacrifice hath he consummated [*completed*] us forever" (Heb. 10:14). For otherwise, his death is not the only and sufficient sacrifice for our sins: which to affirm is blasphemy. And so there rests of our whole redemption nothing but his second coming, which shall be to judgment: where we, depending upon him, shall receive glory and honour; but his enemies shall be made a footstool to his feet. Not that I mean that his death ought not to be preached, and the remembrance thereof extolled and praised in the right administration of his Supper; but none of this to be sacrifice for sin. [31] What will you answer to this, which Paul produces against your Mass? [32] He plainly says there is no sacrifice for sin, but Christ's death only, etc.; and that neither may you offer him, nor yet may he offer himself any more.

[33] You will say, "It is a memorial sacrifice, under which Jesus Christ is offered unto the presence of God the Father by the kirk, under the appearance of bread and wine, for remission of sins. I answer with Paul, *Apparet nunc in conspectu Dei pro nobis*, "He appeareth now in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24). So that it is not requisite that any man offer or represent him to the Father; for that he does himself, making continual intercession for us.

But let us consider this doctrine more deeply. The kirk, say they, offered Jesus Christ unto God the Father for a memorial sacrifice, or in a memorial sacrifice. Is there any oblivion or forgetfulness fallen upon God the Father? Has he forgotten the death and passion of Jesus Christ, so that he needs to be brought in memory thereof by any mortal man? Behold, brethren, how that impiety discloses and declares itself! Can there be any greater blasphemy than to say, God the Father has forgotten the benefits which he gave to

mankind in his only Son Jesus! And whoever will say that they offer any memorial sacrifice or remembrance thereof unto God, does plainly say that God has forgotten them. For otherwise, what needs a representation or remembrance?

Advert, Papists, and consider how Satan has blinded you; you do manifestly lie, and do not espy the same. You do blaspheme God at every word, and can you not repent?

[34]They say it is *Sacrificium* speaking here; for a memorial sacrifice it cannot be. They say it is a *Sacrificium applicatorium* [*an applicatory sacrifice*], a sacrifice whereby they do and may apply the merits of Christ's passion unto sinners. They will be layers-to of plasters![35] But I fear the wound be not well ripened, and therefore that the plasters are unprofitable.

You say you may apply the merits of Christ's passion to whom you list. This is proudly spoken. Then may you make peace with God at your pleasure. But the contrary he speaks in these words, "Who may make" (Isa. 27:5). Here God says, that as none may move his wrath against his chosen (and hereof ought you to rejoice, brethren: the pope, nor his priests, nor bishops whomsoever may not cause God to be angry against you, albeit they curse you with cross, bell, and candle),[36] so no man may compel him to love or receive in favour but whom it pleases his infinite goodness. Moses, I confess, prayed for the people when God was displeased with them (Ex. 32:11-14; 32:32). But he speaks not proudly as you do, but either desired God to remit the offence of the people, or else destroy him altogether with them. I fear that your love be not so fervent. He obtained his petition of God.

But will you say, "So it was determined before in the counsel of God?" Advise you well. The nature of God is to be free, and thrall unto nothing. For although he is bound and obliged to fulfill all that his word promises to faithful believers, yet is that neither subjection nor thralldom; for freely he made his promises, and freely he does fulfill the same. I desire to be certified where God made his promises unto you Papist priests, that you should have power to apply (as you speak) the merits of Christ's passion to all and sundry who told or numbered money to you for that purpose? Takes God any part of the profit you receive? Alas, I have compassion upon your vanity, but more upon the simple people that have been deceived by you and your false doctrine.

Are you better heard with God than Samuel was? He prayed for King Saul, and that most fervently, and yet obtained not his petition, nor might not apply any merits or holiness unto him. And it is said to Jeremiah, "Pray thou not for this people, for my heart is not towards it; no, though Moses and Samuel should pray for them, yet would I not hear them, for they love to go wrong, and do not abstain from iniquity. Albeit they fast and cry, yet will I not hear them; and although they offer burnt sacrifice, I take no pleasure in it. And therefore pray not for this people, nor yet make any intercession for them, for I will not hear thee" (Jer. 14:11-12; cf. Jer. 15:1, Ezek. 14:14, 20).

What say you to these words, Papists? The prophet is forbidden to pray, for God says he neither will hear him nor yet the people. He will accept none of their sacrifices; and that because the people manifestly rebelled against God, rejoiced in iniquity, committed idolatry and abomination. And he manifestly shows

that nothing may appease him but true repentance and conversion again unto God. O priests! has there not as great iniquity abounded in your days as ever did from the beginning? Have you not been enticers and leaders of the people to all idolatry? Yea, has not the mischievous example of your abominable lives provoked thousands unto iniquity? And yet do you say, that you may apply the merits of Christ's passion to whom you list! Hear you not that God never will accept prayers nor sacrifice whiles [*until*] true repentance were found? Of that you were dumb, and always kept silence. Your clamour and crying was, "Come, come to the Mass; buy with money, substance, and possessions, remission of your sins. We have the merits of Christ's passion. We may offer Jesus Christ unto the Father, whom he must needs receive for an acceptable sacrifice and satisfaction of all your sins." Think not, brethren that I allege anything upon them which they themselves do not speak, as their own law and Mass shall testify.

In the beginning of the canon,[\[37\]](#) the proud priest, lifting up his eyes, as that he had God even always bound to his commandment, says, "We beseech thee, most merciful Father, by Jesus Christ our Lord, that you receive and bless this untasted sacrifice (unsavoury sacrifice, truly he might have said) which we offer to thee for thine universal church."

O proud and perverse prelates and priests! who gave you that authority? Is it not expressly forbidden by the apostle Paul that any man should usurp the honour to make sacrifice, except he be called by God, as was Aaron? Have you the same commandment which was given to Aaron (Heb. 5:4)? His sacrifices are abrogated by Christ. Let us hear where you are commanded to make sacrifices. Search the scriptures, but search them with judgment. It will not be, *Hoc facite* ["*Do this*"], for that is spoken of eating, drinking, and thanksgiving, and not of sacrifice making. Nor yet will the order of Melchizedek, nor the text of Malachi prove you priests to make sacrifice. Advise with others that have more appearance to prove your intent; for if this be well pondered, the weight of them will depress the proudness of your papistical priesthood.

Now will I collect shortly, all that is said for probation, that the Mass is no sacrifice for sin. Advert: the New Testament is eternal, that is, once made, can never be dissolved (Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 31:31-37), and therefore the blood wherewith this Testament is confirmed is eternal: for it is the blood of the eternal Son of God. Only the blood of Jesus Christ takes away our sins; for it is he alone that takes away the sins of the world, and who by his own blood has reconciled all (Col. 1:14, 19-20). [\[38\]](#) For if otherwise sin might have been taken away, then Christ has died in vain. And if full remission stood not in him alone, then they that ate him yet hungered, and they that drank him yet thirsted (John 6:35). And that were contrary to his own words. "The blood of Christ is once offered," and is sufficient, for it is the eternal blood of the eternal Son of God; and "by his own blood hath he once entered into the holy place" (Heb. 9:12). Therefore, the blood of Christ once offered remains forever, for purgation of all sins; and so rests there no sacrifice in the Mass. Advert these reasons precedent,[\[39\]](#) and give place to the verity. For while the scriptures of God shall be held of authority, never are you able to resolve these arguments.

[*Summary and Conclusion
of the Second Syllogism*]

Consider now, brethren, if the opinion of the Mass be not vain, false, and deceitful? Caused they not you to believe it was a sacrifice, whereby remission of sins was obtained? And you may plainly perceive that no sacrifice there is, nor at any time was, for sins, but the death of Jesus Christ only. For the sacrifices of the old law were only figures of that verity and true sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ. And in them was a commemoration of sins made, but neither was remission of sins obtained, nor purgation made by any such sacrifice.

What will you do, Papist priests? There rests no sacrifice to be offered for sin by you, nor by any mortal man. These are dolorous tidings unto your hearts. And no marvel. For by that vain opinion that the Mass was a sacrifice for sin, have you so quietly rested into that flood of Euphrates,[\[40\]](#) that is, in all worldly felicity, which flows unto you as a continual flood. But the Mass known not only to be no sacrifice, but also to be idolatry, the waters appear to dry up. And it is likely that you lack some liquor to refresh your tongues, being excruciated [*tormented*] with drought and heat intolerable.

*[Further Arguments
Against the Mass]*

Would you then hear glad tidings? What if I should permit unto you (as one willing to play the good fellow, and not to be stiff-necked) that the Mass were a sacrifice for sin, and that you did offer Jesus Christ for sin? Would you be content that this were permitted unto you? I think you would, for therefore have you long contended. Then let us consider, what should subsequently follow thereupon.

A sacrifice for sin was never perfect until the beast offered was slain. If in your Mass you offer Jesus Christ for sin, then necessarily in your Mass must you needs kill Jesus Christ. Do not esteem, beloved brethren, these words shortly spoken, to be vain or of small effect. They are collected of the very ground of scriptures, for they plainly testify that Christ to be offered, Christ to suffer, and Christ to shed his blood or die, are all one thing.

Paul, in the epistle to the Hebrews, says, "He appeareth now in the presence of God for us, not to offer himself often times for us, for otherwise it behooved him to have suffered often times, from the beginning of the world" (Heb. 9:24-26). Mark well, that Paul makes to offer and to suffer both one thing, and therefore he proves that Christ made but one sacrifice, because he once did suffer the death. Jesus Christ says, as it is written in Matthew, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for you and for many, in remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Mark, that remission of sins is attributed to the shedding of Christ's blood. And Paul says, "Christ is dead for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). And in another place, "By one oblation or sacrifice hath he made us perfect forever" (Heb. 10:14). Consider diligently that remission of sins is attributed sometime to the shedding of Christ's blood, sometime to his death, and sometime to the whole sacrifice which he made in suffering all pain. And why is this? Whether if there be diverse manners to obtain remission of sins? No, but because every one of these three necessarily follows [the] others. Remission of sins is commonly ascribed to any of them, for wherever Christ is offered, there is his blood shed, and his death subsequently follows.

And so Papists, if you offer Christ in sacrifice for sin, you shed his blood, and thus newly slay him. Advert what fine [*end*] your own desire shall bring you - even to be slayers of Jesus Christ. You will say, you never pretended such abomination. I dispute not what you intended, but I only show what absurdity does follow upon your own doctrine. For necessarily if you do offer Christ for sin, as you confess, and your law does teach, you cruelly shed his blood, and finally do slay him.

But now I will relieve you of this anguish. Dolourous it were daily to commit manslaughter, and oftentimes to crucify the King of Glory. Be not afraid; you do it not; for Jesus Christ may suffer no more, shed his blood no more, nor die no more. For he has died - he so died for sin - and that once; and now he lives, and death may not prevail against him. And so you do not slay Christ, for no power have you to do the same. Only you have deceived the people, causing them [to] believe that you offered Jesus Christ in sacrifice for sin in your Mass - which is frivolous and false, for Jesus Christ may not be offered, because he may not die.

I most gently exhort all desiring to object against these precedents, ripely to consider the ground thereof, which stands not upon the opinion of man, but upon the infallible word of God; and to resume [*review*] every part of their arguments and lay them to the whole body of God's scriptures. And then, I doubt not, but all men whose sense the Prince of Darkness and of this world has not execated [*blinded*], shall confess with me, that in the Mass can be no sacrifice for sin. And yet, to the great blasphemy of Christ's death, and open denial of his passion, it has been affirmed, taught, and believed, that the Mass was a sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead: which opinion is most false, vain, and wicked. And so, I think, the Mass to be abominable and idolatry no man of indifferent judgment will deny.

[*The Mass is Not the Lord's Supper*]

Let no man intend to excuse the Mass with the pretext of the Lord's Supper. For now will I prove that therewith it has no congruence, but is expressly contrary to it; and has taken the remembrance of the same out of mind. And further, it is blasphemous to the death of Jesus Christ.

First, they are contrary in institution. For the Lord's Supper was instituted to be a perpetual memory of those benefits which we have received by Jesus Christ, and by his death. And first we should call to mind in what estate we stood in the loins of Adam, when we all blasphemed the majesty of God in his face.

Secondly, that his own incomprehensible goodness moved him to love us - most wretched and miserable, yea, most wicked and blasphemous - and love most perfect compelled him to show mercy. And mercy pronounced the sentence, which was that his only Son should pay the price of our redemption. Which thing being rightly called to memory in the present action of the Supper, could not but move us to unfeigned thanksgiving unto God the Father, and to his only Son Jesus, who has restored us again to liberty and life. And this is it which Paul commands, saying, "As often as ye shall eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, ye shall declare the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26). That is, you shall laud, magnify, and extol the liberal kindness of God the Father, and the infinite benefits which you have received by Christ's death.

But the Mass is instituted, as the plain words thereof and their own laws do witness, to be a sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead: for doing of the which sacrifice, God is bound not only to remit our sins, but also to give unto us whatever we will ask. And that shall testify diverse Masses celebrated for diverse causes: some for peace in time of war, some for rain, some for fair weather; yea, and (alas, my heart abhors such abomination!) some for sickness of beasts. They will say, they severally take prayers for obtaining such things. And that is all which I desire they say; for the obtaining such vain trifles, they destinate [*appoint*] their whole purpose, and so profane the sacrament of Christ's body and blood (if that were any sacrament which they abused so), which should never be used but in memory of Christ's death. Then should it not be used to pray that the toothache be taken away from us, that our oxen should not take the lowing ill, our horse the spavin or farcy [*diseases*], and so of all manner of diseases for our cattle. Yea, what was it wherefore you would not say Mass, perverse priests? But let us hear more.

The Supper of the Lord is the gift of Jesus Christ, in which we should laud the infinite mercy of God. The Mass is a sacrifice which we offer unto God, for doing whereof we allege God should love and commend us.

In the Supper of the Lord, we confess ourselves redeemed from sin by the death and blood of Jesus Christ only. In the Mass, we crave remission of sins - yea, and whatsoever thing we list - by working of that same work, which we presently do ourselves. And herein is the Mass blasphemous unto Christ and his passion. For insofar as it offers or permits remission of sins, it imputes imperfection upon Christ and his sacrifice; affirming that all sins were not remitted by his death, but that a great part are reserved to be purged by virtue and the value of the Mass. And also it is injurious unto Christ Jesus, and not only speaking most falsely of him, but also usurping to itself that which is proper to him alone. For he affirms that he alone has, by his own death, purged the sins of the world; and that no part rests to be changed by any other means. But the Mass sings another song, which is, that every day, by that oblation offered by the priests, sin is purged and remission obtained. Consider, Papists, what honour your Mass gives unto Christ Jesus!

Last, in the Supper of the Lord, we grant ourselves eternal debtors to God, and unable any way to make satisfaction for his infinite benefits which we have received. But in the Mass, we allege God to be a debtor unto us for oblation of that sacrifice which we there presently offer, and dare affirm that we there make satisfaction by doing thereof, for the sins of ourselves and of others.

If these precedents be not contrary, let men judge with indifference [*impartiality*]. They differ in use; for in the Lord's Supper, the minister and the congregation sat both at one table - no difference between them in preeminence nor habit, as witnesses Jesus Christ with his disciples, and the practice of the apostles after his death. But in the papistical Mass, the priests (so they will be styled) are placed by themselves at one altar. [41] And I would ask of the authority thereof, and what scripture commands so to be done. They must be clad in several habits, [42] whereof no mention is made in the New Testament. It will not excuse them to say, Paul commanded all to be done with order and decently (1 Cor. 14:40). Dare they be so bold as to affirm that the Supper of Jesus Christ was done without order, and indecently, wherein were seen no such disguised vestments? Or will they set up to us again the Levitical priesthood? Should not all be

taught by the plain word?

Prelates or priests, I ask one question: You would be like the vestments of Aaron in all things. Aaron had affixed unto his garments certain bells, which were commanded to ring, and to make sound, as often as he was clad therein. But, priests, your bells want tongues; they ring not; they sound of nothing but of the earth. The people understand nothing of all your ceremonies. Fear you not the wrath of God? It was commanded Aaron that the sound of bells should be heard, that he died not. Advise with this, for the matter appertains to you.

In the Supper of the Lord all were equally participants: the bread being broken, and the cup being distributed amongst all, according to his holy commandment. In the papistical Mass, the congregation gets nothing except the beholding of your jukings, noddings, crossings, turning, uplifting, which all are nothing but a diabolical profanation of Christ's Supper. Now, juke, cross, and nod as you list; they are [nothing] but your own inventions. And finally, brethren, you got nothing, but gazed and beheld while one did eat and drink all.

It shall not excuse you to say, the congregation is participating spiritually. O, wicked Antichrists! says not Jesus Christ, "Eat of this, and drink of this; all do this in remembrance of me?" (Matt. 26:26-27). Christ commanded not that one should gaze upon it, bow, juke, and beck [*nod*] thereto, but that we should eat and drink thereof ourselves; and not that we should behold others do the same; unless we would confess the death of Jesus Christ to appertain nothing to us. For when I eat and drink at that table, I openly confess the fruit and virtue of Christ's body, of his blood and passion, to appertain to myself; and that I am a member of his mystical body; and that God the Father is appeased with me, notwithstanding my first corruption and present infirmities.

Judge, brethren, what comfort has this taken from us, [by them] which will that the sight thereof shall be sufficient. I would ask, first, if the sight of corporeal meat and drink does feed or nourish the body? I think they will say, "Nay." And I affirm that no more profit receives the soul in beholding another eat and drink the Lord's very Supper (as for their idolatry it is always damnable), than the body does in beholding another eat and drink, and though receiving no part thereof.

But now briefly, let this contradiction be collected [*examined*].[\[43\]](#) In the Lord's Supper are offered thanks for the benefits which we have received of God. In the Mass, the Papist will compel God to grant all that he asks of him, by virtue of the sacrifice, and so alleges that God should refer thanks unto him that does [the] Mass.

In the Supper of the Lord, the actors [*partakers*] humbly do confess themselves redeemed only by Christ's blood, which once was shed. In the Mass, the priest vaunts himself to make a sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead.

In the Lord's Supper, all the partakers at that table grant and confess themselves debtors unto God, unable to refer thanks for the benefits which we have received of his liberality. In the papistical Mass, the priest

alleges that God is a debtor to him, and unto all them for whom he makes that sacrifice. For he does affirm remission of sins to be obtained thereby; and in that the Mass is blasphemous to Christ's death.

In the Lord's Supper, all sit at one table: no difference in habit or vestment between the minister and the congregation. In the papistical Mass, the priests are placed by themselves at one altar (as they call it), and are clad in disguised garments.

In the Lord's Supper, finally, all do eat of one bread and drink of one cup. But in the mischievous Mass, one man did eat and drink all.

[FINAL REMARKS]

Consider now, beloved brethren, what the fruits of the Mass have been, even in her greatest purity. The Mass is nothing but the invention of man, set up without all authority of God's word, for honouring of God; and therefore it is idolatry. Unto it is added a vain, false, deceitful, and most wicked opinion: that is, that by it is obtained remission of sins; and therefore it is abomination before God. It is contrary unto the Supper of Jesus Christ, and has taken away both the right use and remembrance thereof, and therefore it is blasphemous to Christ's death. Maintain or defend the papistical Mass who so list, this honour and service did all which used the same. And here I speak not of the most abominable abuses, as of buying and selling, used now of late by the mischievous priests; but of the Mass in her most high degree, and most honest garment; yea, even of the great *Gaudeamus*^[44] sung or said by Gregory the Great, as Papists do call him.

Let no man think that, because I am in the realm of England, therefore so boldly I speak against this abomination. Nay, God has taken that suspicion from me, for this body lying in most painful bonds, amongst the midst of cruel tyrants,^[45] his mercy and goodness provided that the hand should write, and bear witness to the confession of the heart more abundantly than ever yet the tongue spoke.

And here I call my God to record that neither profit to myself, hatred of any person or persons, nor affection or favour that I bear towards any private man, causes me this day to speak as you have heard; but only the obedience which I owe unto God in [the] ministry, showing of his word, and the common love which I bear to the salvation of all men. For so odious and abominable I know the Mass to be in God's presence, that unless you decline from the same, to life can you never attain. And therefore, brethren, flee from that idolatry, rather than from the present death.

Here would I have spoken of the diversity of sacrifice, but neither does time nor the wickedness [*frailty*] of my own flesh permit that I do so. I will you [to] observe, that where I say there rests no sacrifice, nor yet are there any priests; that I mean, there rests no sacrifice to be offered for sin, nor yet are there any priests having power to offer such oblations. Otherwise, I do know that all true Christians are kings and priests, and do daily offer unto God a sacrifice most acceptable: the mortification of their affections, as Paul commanded in Romans. But hereof I may not remain to speak presently.

Such doctrine as was taught in your audience, upon Sunday before noon, I will prove, as opportunity shall permit, by God's scriptures, not only unprofitable, but also erroneous and deceitful. But first, according to my promise, I will send unto the teacher the extract thereof, to add or diminish as by his wisdom shall be thought most expedient. For God knows my mind is not captiously to trap men in words, but my only desire being that you, my audience, be instructed in the verity; wherefrom dissents some doctrine taught [to] you (if truly I have collected) moves me to speak against all that may have appearance of lies and superstition.

And pray with me, brethren, that the Spirit may be ministered unto me in abundance, to speak at all times as it becomes a true messenger. And I will likewise pray that you may hear, understand, and obey with all reverence, the good will of God, declared unto the world by Jesus Christ, whose omnipotent Spirit remain with you forever. Amen.

Give the glory to God alone.

JOHN KNOX

Notes

1. *Marginal note:* Note
2. Knox here refers to the *Greater Litany* of the church of Rome, containing invocation to saints, and ascribed by that church to Pope Gregory the First. Basnage, a divine of the reformed church, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, has noticed very fully the subject of the ancient litanies; and [he] states, that the earliest litanies now extant, which contain addresses to saints, were not written before the conclusion of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century. The litanies, when regularly celebrated, were recited in Ascension week; persons walked in the processions barefooted and fasting. Such invocations were added to the earlier litanies in more corrupt times; and the names of saints to whom prayers for intercession were offered were frequently changed at different periods. The variety of formularies used in the church of Rome was a subject which came under the notice of the Council of Trent. The revision of the service book was committed to Pope Pius V; and the Roman Litany now contains direct invocations only to forty-three saints. [Note abridged from the British Reformers, *Writings of John Knox* (American edition; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1842), pp. 187-88.]
3. "Gregory, in the time of a common pestilence, ordained this service, called Litany, which is a Greek word, as much in English to say, as Supplication or Prayer." (*The Primer in English*, 1808, sign. i, ij.) In this edition, the Litany contains eighty-three distinct invocations. [D.L.]
4. The historical event referred to by Knox is thus related by the earliest biographers of Pope Gregory I. In 590, Rome suffered very severely from an infectious distemper, when Gregory, not then installed in the

popedom, preached a sermon, earnestly calling upon the people to repent. The conclusion is preserved in his works, and contains an exhortation to the people to unite publicly in supplication to God, appointing that they should meet at day-break in seven different companies, according to their several ages, sex, and stations, and walk in seven processions, reciting litanies or supplications, till they all met in one place. They did so, and proceeded singing and uttering the words, "*Kyrie eleison*," or "Lord have mercy upon us." In the space of one hour, while thus engaged, eighty persons fell to the ground, and breathed their last. (*Vit. Gregor. a Jo. Diacon. xlii. et. seq.* See also *Fleury*, liv. 35, § 1. *Baron. Annal.* 590, p. 6.) Baronius relates that Gregory caused an image of the virgin to be carried on this occasion. With regard to the persons who died while thus engaged, we may remember that the plague then raged fiercely, and doubtless many had assembled who were already infected by it. [Part of a note from the British Reformers edition of the *Writings of John Knox*, pp. 187-88.]

5. *Marginal note*: Objection

6. *Marginal note*: Objection

7. *Marginal note*: Precepts were given

8. *Marginal note*: The cause of the council of Jerusalem.

9. A reference to private Masses.

10. *Marginal note*: Cornelius

11. *Marginal note*: Conclusion of the council

12. *Marginal note*: Question

13. *Marginal note*: Objection

14. *Marginal note*: Note

15. *Marginal note*: Popes who instituted the Mass

16. That is, the general Confession in the Ordinary of the Mass, beginning, *Confiteor Deo omnipotenti, beatæ Mariæ semper virgini, beato Michaeli archangelo*, etc. [D.L.]

17. The price of many of the smaller religious tracts published at this time. [D.L.]

18. *Marginal note*: Evasion

19. *Marginal note:* Improbation of the canon
20. A reference to the commemoration of holy men in the ritual of the Romish church.
21. That is, some parts of the Mass are repeated by the priest in a tone inaudible to the people. [D.L.]
22. *Marginal note:* Note
23. The priests were shaved and consecrated according to the Romish practices.
24. *Marginal note:* Note
25. *Marginal note:* Opinion held of the Mass
26. *Marginal note:* Note
27. *Marginal note:* Answer of the Papists
28. *Marginal note:* Contra
29. *Marginal note:* Note
- 30.. *Marginal note:* Papists anwer
31. *Marginal note:* Question
32. *Marginal note:* Papists advert
33. *Marginal note:* Evasion
34. *Marginal note:* Papists
35. That is, those who apply plaster or ointment to heal a wound.
36. The Romish form of cursing. [D.L.]
37. The service of the Mass. [D.L.]
38. *Marginal note:* Note
39. That is, notice these reasons which have preceded.

40. The waters of Babylon. [D.L.]

41. *Marginal note*: Question

42. Knox here refers to the dresses worn by the Romish priests while saying Mass, as they are described in some of their works of devotion. The colours of the priestly ornaments used in the Romish church service vary at different seasons; and to each colour a mystical meaning is attached. [D.L.]

43. That is, let these contradictions be examined.

44. *Gaudeamus omnes in Domino*, etc., sung in the Mass on the festival of the Assumption of the virgin.

45. This is an allusion to Knox's imprisonment aboard the French galleys.

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Gerry Matatics vs. James White
November, 1992
Omaha, Nebraska

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Four 7-minute rebuttals

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White (Third)	Matatics (Fourth)

Two one-minute questions for both debaters, each question followed by a three minute response, followed by a two-minute rebuttal and then another 1-minute rebuttal.

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John 6, the Father and the Son, Salvation, and Roman Catholic Apologists

James White

"James White Has Been Proven Wrong So Many Times, It Isn't Funny"

So runs part of the headline on Scott Windsor's "response" to his appearance on our webcast. I swore I would not even waste my time looking at it. Many felt I had wasted an entire program a few weeks ago having an amateur "apologist" on the program, Scott Windsor, to discuss John six ([click here to listen](#)). I did so for a reason many could not possibly understand: I have tried, repeatedly, for almost fifteen years, to reason with Mr. Windsor, all to no avail. I have provided him with resources, information....you name it. But, Scott simply doesn't hear the message. So when I heard that Scott had spent many hours crafting a "response" to our debate (why do folks feel the need to "respond" to debates *when they were in them?*), I told a friend of mine, "I'm not even going to look." And at first, I didn't. But Mr. Windsor kept making reference to it, and even sent me an e-mail in which he again asserted he had proven me "wrong" numerous times, so I finally gave in. Maybe it was a moment of weakness, I don't know. But here is the article I looked at: [click here](#).

Any person who listens to the program will find the majority of the written "response" most telling. The problems with it are so manifold it is about as difficult to respond to it as it is to rebut Gail Riplinger: it takes three pages just to set up all the background and context errors made by the author under review, so that any response ends up being an exercise in frustration (let alone as exciting as chewing aluminum foil while watching paint dry). Some of the alleged errors are simply humorous they are so obviously the result of Mr. Windsor's lack of comprehension of what it was we were supposed to be talking about in the first place. But, in the midst of scanning through the article, I ran across a few citations of Robert Sungenis. In fact, right as I started looking at the article, Scott Windsor himself dropped into our chatroom, so we started discussing the problems with his article. One of the issues I raised with him was the "24th" error he alleged in my comments. Here is what his article alleges:

69. Scott:

- Let's go on to this other point though, Jesus turns to the 12 and I assume you would agree that these are part of the elect, the called, the drawn. (James responds "right.") And He turns to them and says, "Will you also leave?" He gave them a choice! Was He only kidding when He said that?

70. James:

- Oh, wait-wait-wait-wait-wait! This is where we have to look at what the Scripture actually says. There is a way in the Greek language that you can phrase a question that expects a negative answer, and that is the way Jesus phrased this.

71. Scott:

- He may have phrased it that way, but He still gave them a choice.
- "The Greek wording does not use the type of wording used with a rhetorical question." (Telephone conversation, Robert Sungenis, February 6, 2001).
- Obviously it was not purely a rhetorical question, **because Peter answered Him! [WC=24]**

Now I immediately chuckled since it seems Mr. Windsor is unaware of the difference between a question that expects a negative answer and a rhetorical question. They are, of course, not the same thing, and his response assumes they are. We demonstrated in the chat channel that indeed the particle *mh* when used with a question

assumes a negative answer: we cited three different Greek grammars (Mounce, Davis, and Perschbacher) that all said the exact same thing and fully substantiated the assertion I made. As anyone can see from listening to the program, Mr. Windsor tried to insert the concept of free will into John 6:67, and I pointed out the form of the text does not support his position. I did not attempt to make any positive point on the basis of the passage: I had already done so in John 6:37ff.

So it was clear that Mr. Windsor, being unable to deal with the original text himself, had decided to depend upon Robert Sungenis. In fact, when faced with the joint citation of two of the above three grammars, Mr. Windsor commented,

<BigScott> again... I don't know the Greek.... I asked someone who did (actually a couple people who did and both concurred)... so I defer to Sungenis

So Mr. Windsor invests in Robert Sungenis greater authority in the Greek language than established, proven and published grammars. I'm thankful Mr. Sungenis does not claim such a position for himself, but for some reason Mr. Windsor is comfortable making such a blind leap. Now while I wish to focus upon a later issue wherein Mr. Sungenis provides a lengthy section of Mr. Windsor's article, I should note in passing that when I wrote to Mr. Sungenis about this particular issue, I was most surprised by his response. He attempted to say that *mh* does not always have to indicate a negative response. He provided one example that he said indicates a positive response, John 7:31. However, upon examination, Mr. Sungenis is obviously in error:

But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?" (NASB)

Mr. Sungenis interprets this passage to mean, "Yes, Christ will perform more signs" than those Jesus did. Yet this is not the obvious meaning of the text at all. Instead, Mr. Sungenis has completely missed the clear statement that these are the words of *believers* in Jesus. They are responding *favorably* and were saying that surely the Christ would not perform more signs than Jesus had performed, hence, Jesus *was* the Messiah. As A.T. Robertson put it,

Will he do? (*mh poihsēi*). Future active indicative of *poiew* with *mh* (negative answer expected). Jesus had won a large portion of the pilgrims (*ek tou oclou polloi*) either before this day or during this controversy. The use of epistean (*ingressive aorist active*) looks as if many came to believe at this point.

Whether these were true, regenerate believers or not is not the issue at the moment; their statement is properly translated by the NASB, which recognizes the form of the question. Not only does Robertson contradict Sungenis regarding the use of *mh*, but he also recognizes the obvious fact that these people are indeed arguing *for* Christ, not against Him. Sungenis is simply in complete error at this point.

With this in mind, I would like to turn to the assertions made by Mr. Sungenis in the body of Mr. Windsor's "response" to our debate. I believe his words provide an excellent opportunity of testing both the validity of my oft-repeated claim that consistent Roman Catholics are not able, due to what I might call "epistemological ham-stringing," to engage the text in its native context (i.e., to engage in meaningful exegesis), and hence that this is supportive of my belief that Rome teaches *sola ecclesia*, the Church as the highest and final authority in all things.

John 6:37-39 and the Sovereignty of God

Before we can meaningfully examine, and refute, Robert Sungenis' position, we must first understand what it was I was attempting to say. One can listen to the program and hear that in the course of five minutes I presented the standard Reformed understanding of this passage. But, for those who may not have access to the Real Audio recording, I provide here the section I wrote on this passage from my rebuttal of Norman Geisler titled *The Potter's Freedom*:

The setting is important: Jesus speaks to the crowds gathered in the synagogue at Capernaum. They have followed Him there after the feeding of the five thousand the day before. They are seeking more miracles, and more food. Jesus does not pander to their "felt needs," but goes directly to the real issue: who He is and how He is central to God's work of redemption. He identifies Himself as the "Bread of life" (v. 35), the source of all spiritual nourishment. In our modern setting we might not feel the force of His words as they must have felt them that morning. "Who is this man to speak this way of Himself?" they must have thought. Not even the greatest prophets of Israel had directed people to faith in *themselves*! Not even an Abraham or an Isaiah would claim to have come down from heaven, nor would they ever say "the one coming to Me will never hunger and the one believing in Me will never thirst." We must attempt to feel the sharp impact of these words just as they were spoken.

The blessed Lord was quite blunt with His audience. He knew they did not possess real faith. "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe" (v. 36). They had seen Him with their eyes, but unless physical sight is joined with spiritual enlightenment, it profits nothing. Often the importance of this statement is overlooked. Verse 36 is a turning point in the chapter. Jesus now explains their unbelief. How is it that these men could stand before the very Son of God, the Word made flesh, and *not* believe? Anyone who does not take seriously the deadness of man in sin should contemplate this scene. The very Creator in human form stands before men who are schooled in the Scriptures and points to their unbelief. He then explains the *why*, and yet so few today will listen and believe.

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me." These are the first words to come from the Lord in explanation of man's unbelief. We dare not engage in hopscotch across this text and ignore the very order of teaching He provides. The first assertion is one of complete divine sovereignty. Every word speaks volumes.

"All that the Father gives Me." The Father gives someone to Christ. The elect are viewed as a single whole, [footnote: The neuter form *pa'n* is used when the entire group is in view; when each individual person comes into view with reference to their response of faith the masculine participle *ejrcovmeno* is used, showing the personal element of faith.] given by the Father to the Son. [footnote: Two tenses are used by the Lord in this passage: here the present tense is used, "all the Father *gives* (*divdwsin*) Me..." In verse 39, however, the perfect tense is used, "all that He *has given* (*devdwken*) Me..."] The Father has the right to give a people to the Son. He is the sovereign King, and this is a divine transaction.

All that are given by the Father to the Son come to the Son. Not some, not most, but all.

All those given by the Father to the Son *will come* to the Son. It is *vital* to see the truth that is communicated by this phrase: *the giving by the Father to the Son precedes and determines the coming of the person to Christ*. The action of giving by the Father *comes before* the action of coming to Christ by the individual. And since *all* of those so given *infallibly come*, we have here both unconditional election as well as irresistible grace, and that in the space of nine words! It becomes an obvious exercise in eisegesis to say, "Well, what the Lord really means is that all that the Father has seen will believe in Christ will come to Christ." That is a meaningless statement. Since the action of *coming* is dependent upon the action of *giving*, we can see that it is simply not exegetically possible to say that we cannot determine the relationship between the two actions. God's giving results in man's coming. Salvation is of the Lord.

But note as well that it is *to the Son* that they come. They do not come to a religious system. They are *coming* to Christ. This is a personal relationship, personal faith, and, given that the ones who come are described throughout the passage by the present tense participle, it is not just a coming that happens once. This is an on-going faith, an on-going looking to Christ as the source of spiritual life. The men to whom the Lord was speaking had "come" to Him for a season: they would soon walk away and follow Him no more. The true believer *is coming* to Christ, always. This is the nature of saving faith.

"And the one who comes to Me I will never cast out." The true believer, the one "coming" to the Son, has this promise of the Lord: using the strongest form of denial possible, [footnote: Here the aorist subjunctive of strong denial, *ouj mh; ejkbavlw e[xw*, "I will *never* cast out." The idea is the emphatic denial of the possibility of a future event.] Jesus affirms the eternal security of the believer. Jesus is the one who gives life and raises His own up at the last day. He promises that there is no possibility whatsoever that any one who *is coming* to Him in true faith could ever find Him unwilling to save. But this tremendous promise *is the second half of a sentence*. It is based upon the truth that was first proclaimed. This promise is to those who are given by the Father to the Son *and to no one else*. Of course, we will see in verse 44 that no one but those who are so given will be coming to Christ in faith anyway: but there are surely those who, like many in that audience in Capernaum, are willing to follow *for a while*, willing to believe *for a season*. This promise is *not* theirs.

The promise to the elect, however, could not be more precious. Since Christ is able to save perfectly (He is not dependent upon man's will, man's cooperation), His promise means the elect cannot ever be lost. Since He will not cast out, and there is no power greater than His own, the one who comes to Christ will find Him an all-sufficient and perfect Savior. This is the *only* basis of "eternal security" or the perseverance of the saints: they look to a perfect Savior who is able to save. It is *Christ's* ability to save that means the redeemed cannot be lost. If it were, in fact, a synergistic relationship, there could never be any ground for absolute confidence and security.

Many stop at verse 37 and miss the tremendous revelation we are privileged to receive in the following verses. Why will Christ never cast out those who come to Him? Verse 38 begins with a connective that indicates a continuation of the thought: verses 38 and 39 explain verse 37. Christ keeps all those who come to Him for He is fulfilling the will of the Father. "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." The divine Messiah always does the will of the Father. The preceding chapter in John's Gospel had made this

very clear. There is perfect harmony between the work of the Father and the Son.

And what is the will of the Father for the Son? In simple terms, it is the Father's will that the Son *save perfectly*. "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." It is vital to remember that this *continues* the explanation of why He does not cast out the one coming to Him. We must see this for some might be tempted to say that the Father has entrusted all things into the hands of the Son, and that this passage is saying nothing more than the Son will act properly in regards to what the Father has given Him. But the context is clear: v. 37 speaks of the Father "giving" the elect to the Son, and v. 39 continues the same thought. Those who are given infallibly come to the Son in v. 37, and it is these same ones, the elect, [footnote: Jesus uses the neuter *pa'n* again to refer to the elect as an entire group, though the fact that this group is made up of *individuals* is seen in their being raised to life and in their individually coming to Him.] who are raised up at the last day. Resurrection is the work of Christ, and in this passage, is paralleled with the giving of eternal life (see v. 40). Christ gives eternal life to all those who are given to Him and who, as a result, come to Him.

We must ask the Arminian who promotes the idea that a truly saved person can be lost: does this not mean that Christ can fail to do the will of the Father? If the will of the Father for the Son is that He lose *none* of those that are given to Him, does it not follow inexorably that Christ is *able* to accomplish the Father's will? And does this not force us to believe that the Son is able to save *without introducing the will of man as the final authority in the matter*? Can any synergist (one who teaches, as Dr. Geisler does, that God's grace works "synergistically" and that man's free will is a vitally important part of the salvation process, and that no man is saved unless that man wills it) believe these words? Can one who says that God *tries* to save as many as "possible" but *cannot* save any man without that man's cooperation fully believe what this verse teaches? It is not the Father's will that Christ *try* to save but that He *save a particular people perfectly*. He is to lose *nothing* of all that He is given. How can this be if, in fact, the final decision lies with man, not with God? It is the Father's will that results in the resurrection to life of *any individual*. This is election in the strongest terms, and it is taught with clarity in the reddest letters in Scripture.

Verse 39 begins with "This is the will of Him who sent Me," and verse 40 does the same, "For this is the will of My Father." But in verse 39 we have the will of the Father for the Son. Now we have the will of the Father for the elect. "That everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." Amazingly, many wrench this verse out of its context, misunderstand the reference to "every one who beholds...every one who believes in Him," and say, "See, no divine election here! Any one can do this." But it is obvious, when the text is allowed to stand as a whole, that this is not the intention of the passage. Who is the one "beholding" the Son and "believing" in Him? Both these terms are present participles, referring to on-going action, just as we saw in "the one coming" to Christ in verse 37. Jesus raises up on the last day *all* those who are given to Him (v. 39) and *all* those who are looking and believing in Him (v. 40). Are we to believe these are different groups? Of course not. Jesus only raises one group to eternal life. But since this is so, does it not follow that all those given to Him will look to Him and believe in Him? Most assuredly. Saving faith, then, is exercised by all of those given to the Son by the Father (one of the reasons why, as we will see, the Bible affirms clearly that saving faith is a gift of God).

This, then, is the position I have presented over the course of the past decade in previous books, in *The Potter's Freedom*, and in brief on the webcast with Mr. Windsor. In response, Mr. Sungenis is quoted as saying:

- The perfect tense of dedooken is not crucial. White is taking it to mean that the Father chose everyone without their free will, but the text does not say that.

From our perspective, it is very easy to interpret this as the Father having given to Jesus those who responded to the grace the Father gave them. They respond by their free will.

In fact, the next verse, John 6:40, uses "sees" and "believes" in the Greek present tense, active voice, showing that the people are seeing and believing at the present time, by their own wills (Greek active voice, not passive), and it is the Father's will that each one who does this will be raised on the last day.

This is also significant since the "last day" in John 6:40 is pivoting off of the "last day" in John 6:39, showing that the "have given" of John 6:39 must be related to the those who chose to "see" and "believe" in John 6:40. If anything, there is a dynamic relationship here, not one weighted to the Father making all the decisions.

Also, the verb "give" in John 6:37 ("All that the Father gives to me will come to me") is a Greek present tense, not a perfect, which shows that the action of "giving" is occurring presently, and is not confined to whatever White conceives the perfect tense of 6:39 to be saying. The "give" of John 6:37 is the same Greek word as the "has given" of John 6:39, only a different tense.

Moreover, we can say the same about 6:37 as we did about 6:39, that is, those the Father "gives" to Jesus are those who have responded to the Father's call by their free will. The Father gathers these people and brings them to Jesus.

In the final analysis, one cannot say what period of time the perfect tense of John 6:39 refers to, since the text does not give a reference point. It is very easy to abuse the perfect tense, because we don't always know when the action of the perfect tense starts.

White is assuming that the perfect tense refers to a time long before the coming of Jesus. But all we can tell from the verse is that the action of the perfect tense occurs before the future tense occurrences of "I shall not lose" and "I shall raise him up."

Although it is possible that the perfect tense refers to an event in the mind of God before the world was created, there is absolutely nothing in the grammatical text itself that demands that interpretation. That interpretation is simply commandeered from other passages they see as teaching absolute predestination, which they then place in John 6:39.

That fact, coupled with the present tense *didoosin* in John 6:37, and the present tense, active voices of "seeing" and "believing" in John 6:40, leans the interpretation to a present interaction between the Father and man, not an exclusive action by the Father in the distant past.

What shall we say in response to this? A striking fact to note is that Mr. Sungenis *assumes* the presence of "free will" in the exact same way an Arminian does (and Mr. Windsor did). Yet, the text never makes reference to such a concept, and instead denies the very heart of that concept in 6:44. He asserts, "From our perspective, it is very easy to interpret this as the Father having given to Jesus those who responded to the grace the Father gave them. They respond by their free will." Yet, there is nothing about God giving "grace" to anyone, nor is there any reference to "free will." The point I made in the program is completely skipped by Mr. Sungenis in his response, that being the fact that the giving of the Father to the Son *precedes* the coming of those so given to the Son. Further, the context of the passage, that being the *unbelief* of those who are hearing His words, is ignored as well. Instead, a foreign context of "free will" theology is inserted out of nowhere, and the text is left in a jumbled mess. In fact, the reader may well notice that Sungenis' interpretation does not follow the flow of the text: it skips from one section to another, even making 6:40 determinative in the meaning of the words that come immediately before it, rather than following the logical method of realizing that 6:40 is to be interpreted in light of what comes in 6:37-40. In fact, it is unfair to say that Mr. Sungenis is even offering exegesis here: he is offering Mr. Windsor a way around the offered exegesis, but is not actually exegeting the passage at all.

Now we can summarize this response as follows: 1) the perfect tense does not tell us this took place in eternity (i.e., it could take place as a result of human action); 2) John 6:40 indicates that man actively believes, and 3) the use of the present tense "give" in 6:37 refutes the interpretation White makes of 6:39. Let's respond to each of these arguments in turn.

"The perfect tense is irrelevant" argument.

I emphasized the use of the perfect tense with Mr. Windsor because he was inserting into the text his concept of free-willism, and limiting God to the role of *responding* to the actions of man. In fact, he introduced a very unusual, very difficult to understand idea of how men are given to Christ "at the last day." I pointed out this was impossible, since the action of giving by the Father *obviously* comes before the "last day." Look again at the text:

"This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

Obviously, "raise up on the last day" is a terminal action: the danger of "losing" then must come *before* the last day. The giving, therefore, is logically prior to the last day, which contradicts what Mr. Windsor was trying to say. Further, and naturally, the "giving" would precede the experience of danger on the part of *any* who might otherwise be lost, hence, it precedes (as is seen in 6:37) any action on the part of those who are so given.

Mr. Sungenis divorces this passage from the context. As I noted in my exegesis, 6:38-39 *explains* the glorious claim of 6:37: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." Why do *all* who are given by the Father to the Son come to the Son? And *why* will He not cast out the one who comes to Him? Verses 38 and 39 explain this in the text, but not in the attempted explanation offered by Mr. Sungenis. He joins Mr. Windsor in reversing the order of the action of 6:37 (i.e., he makes the giving of the Father dependent upon the coming of the believer, when the text says it is the other way around).

The perfect tense makes sense in the context in which it is used: Christ came to do the will of the Father. Surely Christ knew, when He came to earth, what that will was, did He not? Are we to actually believe that what Jesus is saying here is that He came to perform a general salvation of an unknown group, so that the text really should say, "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He *will give Me upon the basis of their free will action* I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day"? How would that be relevant to the assertion of 6:37? Remember, Jesus is explaining the *unbelief* of the crowd: how would this explain their unbelief, since such would involve the assertion that they have the very ability to believe that is denied to them in 6:44 and 6:65?

Instead, the Father's will is obviously well known to the Son. He is entrusted with God's elect, and His unlimited power and salvific ability explain His assertion in 6:37: not only will He never cast those who are given to Him by the Father out, but *all who are given will come to Him*, since He has the capacity to bring this about! If this were not the case, nothing in 6:39 would make any sense.

Mr. Sungenis says the perfect tense is not "crucial" to the passage. Then why does he later lay weight upon the present tense of the same verb, if the verb tenses are not crucial? (Mr. Windsor said on the program that discussing these issues was really irrelevant anyway. Mr. Sungenis seems to disagree). The perfect tense tells us that the Son has already been given, at the time of the speaking of these words, a people. Mr. Sungenis neglects to note the use of the neuter *pa'n* as the object of what has been given to the Son. As I pointed out in my exegesis, it is a people, a whole, that has been entrusted to the Son. [We will see this helps us to see the consistency of the use of the present tense in 6:37 below as well.] This people is defined by God's act of giving, not by any human act of "free will." The perfect tense points to a completed action. Mr. Sungenis says that we cannot tell *when* this action took place. That is quite true, but we can surely determine that it took place *prior* to other actions. It took place *prior* to the coming of anyone to Christ; and it takes place *prior* to Jesus' action of "not losing" those who are given to Him. I certainly do believe that this giving took place in eternity past: but as I said on the program, I prove that by direct reference to such passages as Romans 8:29-30 and Ephesians 1:3-11. The key in John 6 is that the giving *results in* the actions of coming and believing.

So in summary, the perfect tense is surely very important: it not only refutes the erroneous application Mr. Windsor made (and which Mr. Sungenis did not repeat—we truly wonder what he thought of it), but it *does* communicate to us vital information concerning the absolute freedom of God in giving a people unto the Son. The people of God *have been given* to the Son. What a tremendous truth!

John 6:40 indicates that man actively believes

The single most common means of attempting to get around the meaning of John 6:37-39, which so strongly precludes the insertion of human will and effort into the sovereign work of salvation, is to literally turn the text on its head and read it backwards. That is, rather than following the natural progression of thought, from the topic of unbelief in 6:35, through the assertion of v. 37, into the will of the Father in 38-39, and then into verse 40, they start with an a-contextual interpretation of 6:40, and then insist that the preceding verses cannot bear their natural meaning because of their assumed, but undefended (and indefensible) interpretation of that one verse.

There is no doubt on anyone's part that 6:40 clearly presents man as active and believing. That is not even relevant to the debate, since no one is asserting that man does not believe in Christ as an active agent. Note the plain assertion of the text:

"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

The "free will" argument is clear: "beholds" and "believes" are active verbs. Men behold the Son, men believe in the Son. Hence, it is argued, this act of beholding and believing forms the basis upon which God elects. Such an explanation takes a partial truth (the elect surely come to Christ, behold Christ, believe in Christ) and turns it upside down in clear violation of the text.

The careful reader, however, will note that 6:40 *follows* 6:35-39. Hence, if the flow of thought means anything, we already have the identity of those who will come, behold, and believe, established in these preceding verses. Remembering that Jesus is explaining the *unbelief* of those who have seen Him work miracles, we have the identification of those who *do* come to Christ as those who are given to the Son by the Father (6:37); the same ones who will be infallibly raised up by the Son as per the Father's will (6:38-39). We have already been told in 6:37 that those the Father gives to the Son *come* to the Son: coming is active. Believers *believe*. Saving faith is a gift of God, given to His elect people. Indeed, Augustine put it well long ago:

CHAP. 16.--WHY THE GIFT OF FAITH IS NOT GIVEN TO ALL.

Faith, then, as well in its beginning as in its completion, is God's gift; and let no one have any doubt whatever, unless he desires to resist the plainest sacred writings, that this gift is given to some, while to some it is not given. But why it is not given to all ought not to disturb the believer, who believes that from one all have gone into a condemnation, which undoubtedly is most righteous; so that even if none were delivered therefrom, there would be no just cause for finding fault with God. Whence it is plain that it is a great grace for many to be delivered, and to acknowledge in those that are not delivered what would be due to themselves; so that he that glorieth may glory not in his own merits, which he sees to be equaled in those that are condemned, but in the Lord. But why He delivers one rather than another,--" His judgments are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out." (On the Predestination of the Saints)

So it is completely true that every believer *believes*, every believer *comes to Christ*. But the wonder of the passage is that *every single one given by the Father to the Son*, all, without exception, look to Christ in faith and receive eternal life. It is a gross misuse of the passage to turn it into a proof-text for "free will" by removing it from its context and turning it backwards. Such is very much like those who read the words of Jesus in John 8:47: "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God," and *hear* it saying the opposite of what it actually says. When tradition is allowed to over-ride the text, people *hear* the text saying the opposite of what it really says: they hear it say, "the reason you do not belong to God is because you refuse to hear," rather than what it actually says, the reason they do not *hear* is because the pre-existing condition which *allows* them to hear, that of belonging to God (being of the elect, being one of Christ's sheep) is not present. So too, here in John 6, while verse 40 is *surrounded* by the testimony of God's sovereignty (6:37-39, 44-45, 65, etc.), those who exalt man's will due to their *traditions* refuse to listen and understand.

The use of the present tense "give" in 6:37 refutes the interpretation White makes of 6:39

The final element of Mr. Sungenis' attempt to derail the exegesis of John 6:37-39 and its witness to the truth of sovereign election and divine predestination is based upon the use of the present tense "give" at John 6:37. Jesus says, "All that the Father gives (present tense) Me will come to Me." Sungenis comments:

Also, the verb "give" in John 6:37 ("All that the Father gives to me will come to me") is a Greek present tense, not a perfect, which shows that the action of "giving" is occurring presently, and is not confined to whatever White conceives the perfect tense of 6:39 to be saying. The "give" of John 6:37 is the same Greek word as the "has given" of John 6:39, only a different tense.

What shall we say to this? Does the use of the present tense in 6:37 mean the perfect in 6:39 cannot have reference to the same divine act we see in Ephesians 1:4-6? Not in the least. So then, why is "give" in the present in 6:37, but the perfect in 6:39?

The answer is not difficult to see. John 6:37 speaks of the person *coming* to Christ in faith. All that the Father *is giving Him*, as a result of being given, *will come* (future tense) to Him. This fits perfectly with John 6:44, where the Father is actively (and effectively, without failure), drawing those He has given to the Son to Christ. Sungenis' point, however, is fully refuted by simply thinking about the use of the present *in context*. In John 6:37, the present tense giving results in the *future tense* coming. Sungenis' idea is that our "free will" decision predicates and informs the "giving" of the Father, so that it is *our* choice that determines the Father's choice. But the text refutes this clearly. Those who *will come* will do so not out of some mythological "free will" but due to the gracious work of the Father wherein He will draw them to the Son: and the Father performs this miracle of grace *only* in the lives of those He *gives* to the Son.

Now, it seems Mr. Sungenis is insisting that the present tense here must be emphasizing an *on-going action* (though, for some reason, the normal meaning of the perfect is said to be less than definitional in 6:39), which while possible, is not the most logical syntactical choice. In fact, given his position, Sungenis would have to assert a kind of "iterative present" understanding of this present tense verb, since the action of "giving" would be dependent upon the free-will actions of men. This makes the future action of coming determine the present action of giving, just the opposite of what the text indicates. Instead, the fact that this present tense is used in tandem with a future tense (*gives/will come*) throws the emphasis upon the *timing* of the action into the future, hence the normative translation "All that the Father *gives* me" (NASB, NIV, KJV "giveth", NRSV) rather than the unusual "All that the Father *is giving* me...." While not fully a "gnomic" present, surely it exists in the same general area, stating a general truth of the Father's giving of a people to the Son, and the emphasis lies squarely upon the result of that giving, the coming of the elect to Christ. Contextually this is the point: those who stood before the Lord in unbelief, who, despite seeing miracles, would not *come* to Him, did not because they were not given to Him by the Father. This explains their continued unbelief. To throw the emphasis in 6:37 upon the present tense rather than the future action is to miss the context; to miss the weight of the perfect in 6:39 in defining the will of the Father is likewise an error.

Mr. Sungenis responded to this article. Our reply to that response is over 200K in length, and can be read [here](#).

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1 Cor 3:10-15: Exegesis and Rebuttal of Roman Catholic Misuse

James White

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.

11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

This passage of Paul's first epistle to the church at Corinth has prompted much discussion down through church history. The context of the preceding ten verses is really quite simple: Paul is discussing the problems that exist in the Corinthian congregation. He has used harsh words with them, referring to them as "men of flesh" and "infants in Christ." He refers to the strife and jealousy that exists among them. He zeroes in on their partisanship: the fact that they are saying "I am of this Christian leader or that one." He reminds them that leaders are but servants of the Lord, and that it was the Lord that even gave those servants the opportunity to preach the gospel to them. He writes in verse 6, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth." God used Paul and Apollos as means, but the growth was caused by God, not by the Christian leaders themselves. At this point then Paul begins to speak of the role Christian leaders have in the work of the Church. Note his words:

8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Verse 8 provides the first reference to "reward," and it is clearly in the context of the Christian leaders who labor in the work of ministry. It will be significant to note that the phrase "receive a reward" in verse 8 is *identical* in terminology to the same phrase in verse 14. Since in this context we know that the planting and watering mentioned goes back to Paul and Apollos, the topic remains consistent throughout this passage. Paul then speaks of himself and Apollos as "God's fellow workers," and they labor in this high calling in God's field. He uses two terms, field and building, but picks up only on the second, "God's building." A fellow worker of God works in building God's building, and that building is the church.

This then brings us to the main passage. Verses 10-15 give us an illustration of how weighty it is to minister in the church, and how God will someday manifest the motivations of the hearts of all those who have engaged in that work. Then in verses 16-17 Paul adds a further warning, speaking of God's certain judgment upon those who do not build, but instead tear down, or destroy. There is an obvious movement between 10-15 and 16-17, for in 10-15 the metaphor remains the construction of a building upon a foundation; in 16-17 this switches to the metaphor of the temple of God, already constructed. Further, in 10-15 the "certain ones" are those who are indeed building upon the foundation, even if they have less than perfect motivations or understanding; the certain one in verses 16-17 is not building anything at all, but is instead tearing down and ruining what has already been built. This distinction is important as well, as we shall see.

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Paul continues the context, insisting that by God's grace he has laid a foundation, knowing that others would build upon that same foundation. This foundation, of course, refers to the work of ministry in building up the church that he has engaged in. But there is an element of personal responsibility that is part of ministry in Christ's church: a man must be "careful" how he builds upon the foundation, which Paul reminds us is holy. The only foundation of the church is Jesus Christ Himself. So just as we are to have an attitude of fear and trembling when considering that it is the holy God who is at work within us, working out our salvation (Philippians 2:12-13), so the minister is to recognize that ministry in the church is a holy task, and he must "look well" (a literal understanding of the Greek) upon how he goes about this work. This leads to further expansion upon this

thought in the following section.

12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

The first thing to see in v. 12 is that we are still talking about the same group: Christian workers. Those under discussion *build* upon the foundation. We will see that in vv. 16-17 Paul refers to a different group, those who do not build, but instead tear down. So we have one group who build upon the one foundation, but with different quality "materials." Now obviously, the terms gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and straw, are all figures of speech, metaphors. Christian leaders are not known for having an abundance of gold, silver, or precious stones, let alone is the "building" being done here a literal activity either. These are terms referring, as Paul himself puts it, to "the quality of each man's work." Some labor selflessly and in obscurity with motivations pure and honorable, while others have mixed motivations, tinged to a lesser or greater degree by selfishness and vainglory (cf. Phil 2:3-4). During this lifetime we cannot necessarily know which Christian leaders, even within the bounds of orthodox teaching and practice, are doing what they do with motivations that are pleasing to God. But Paul is reminding us that such will not always be the case: God will reward those who have labored diligently for His glory in that day when all the secrets of men's hearts will be revealed.

Paul says that each man's work "will become evident, for the day will show it." The nature of the Christian minister's work will be plain and clear: the lack of clarity that exists during this lifetime will no longer cloud our vision at the judgment. What a tremendously sobering thought for those who labor in building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ! God, who searches the hearts, will reveal our true motivations on that day!

The revelation of whether one's ministerial works are precious and lasting, or surface-level and temporary, will be accomplished "by fire." Obviously, fire differentiates, at the most basic level, between gold and wood, silver and straw, precious stones and stubble. The precious elements withstand the fire's presence, whereas the others are consumed in their entirety. Given that it has already been established that gold and silver, etc., are figures for the quality of men's works, so it follows inexorably that "fire" refers to a testing that makes its verdict as clear as the destruction of wood, hay, and stubble by the raging flames of a fire. The works that were not done to God's glory are destroyed, while those works having the proper character pass through unharmed.

14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

The context continues, unbroken. Note the repetition of the preceding concept of "building" on the "foundation." If a man's work, built upon the foundation of Christ in the church, remains in the presence of the judgment of God, he receives a reward. But in direct parallel, if another worker's labors are burned up, he will suffer loss. The opposite of the reception of a reward is to suffer loss. The Greek term Paul uses is translated by the vast majority of recognized translations as "suffer loss," and there is a reason for this. Despite the fact that you can render the term as "punish," its normative meaning, especially in the NT, refers to experiencing the opposite of gain (i.e., loss), and often what is *not* gained is found in the immediate context of the words use. For example:

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have **suffered the loss** of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, (Philippians 3:8)

Obviously, this does not mean Paul has been "punished," but has "suffered the loss" of all things. The same is true in Jesus' use of the term:

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and **forfeits** his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26, see also Mark 8:36, Luke 9:25)

In 1 Corinthians 3:15, the term is used in a context that provides a direct correlation to the term: the one whose work remains *receives a reward*, so the one whose work is burned up does not, hence, they *suffer loss* (for further information on this word, see *TDNT* 2:888).

We are reminded, however, that despite the seriousness of the loss of reward for the Christian worker, we are still talking about those who have found salvation in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that despite suffering loss, these are saved, "yet so as through fire." This in no way makes the judgment of the motivations of Christian workers a trivial matter: it is obvious that for Paul, who himself faced this test, it was not. But it also safeguards against the misuse of his teaching. No one can argue that one's salvation is based upon the works one does: this is not his teaching here, nor anywhere else. A man is justified before God by the imputation of Christ's righteousness to him, and the imputation of the man's sin to Christ, the perfect substitute, who bears in His body the sins of His people upon Calvary (Romans 3:20-4:8). But this is not his subject here. The context has remained constant: the revelation of the motivations of the hearts of Christian workers.

In a perfect world it would not be necessary to go beyond the mere exegesis of the text to understand Paul's meaning and intention. But we do not live in such a world. In God's providential wisdom, we live in a time when the church must struggle against false teaching and false teachers (Acts 20:24ff). Specifically, the truth of God's sovereign grace is attacked by Roman Catholicism, and its man-centered sacramentalism. One of the most egregious attacks upon the finished nature of Christ's work on Calvary is the dogma of purgatory. We have often engaged in debate on this topic (see, for example, the debate against [Fr. Peter Stravinskis](#) on this topic, May, 2001). Rome attempts to enlist this passage in support of its doctrine, but in the process engages in gross eisegesis of the text, missing its plain meaning, and inserting concepts utterly foreign to Paul's theology. Just a few items should be noted that, in light of the preceding comments, should be sufficient for any person not committed to the ultimacy of Roman authority.

First, the passage is about Christian workers, not all the Christian faithful.

Next, the passage says nothing about the purification of individuals. Works are tested in this passage. Rome teaches souls are purified from the temporal punishment of sins by suffering *satispassio* in purgatory: but there is nothing about temporal punishments, *satispassio*, or suffering of individuals for their sins, in this passage. All these are extraneous to the text itself.

Further, the insertion of the Roman concepts into the passage turns it on its head. Remember, those with works of gold, silver, and precious stones (i.e., Christian workers who had godly motivations) appear in this passage: their works are subject to the *same* testing as the others. If this "fire" is relevant to purgatory, then are we to assume that even those with godly motives "suffer"? Are there no saints involved in building upon the foundation?

But most telling is this: the fire of which Paul speaks *reveals*. It does not *purge*. If this were the fire of Rome's purgatory, it would not simply demonstrate that gold is, in fact, gold, or hay is truly hay. The sufferings of purgatory are supposed to *sanctify* and *change* a person's soul, enabling them to enter into the very presence of God! If this passage supported Rome's position, it would speak of *purifying* the gold, making it more pure, spotless, precious, and ready for God's presence. It would speak of the fire removing wood or other "impurities" from a person's soul, not simply telling us that the works a Christian minister did were or were not done with God's sole glory in mind. But the text speaks of a revelation of the *quality of a man's work*, which is wholly incompatible with Rome's use of the passage.

Modern Roman Catholics have started to move away from the term "fire" (though this was, inarguably, what attracted the attention of Rome to the passage in the first place), and seek to focus more upon the suffering of a loss, so that only the second group is seen as being relevant to purgatory. Of course, this is made possible by the constant repetition of the assertion, "Rome has never officially declared the meaning of this passage, nor that there is fire in purgatory, nor that purgatory is a place, nor that we experience time in purgatory..." etc and etc. The fact that one can go into history and determine with great clarity what was taught and believed only a few centuries ago does not seem to matter.

Finally, it should be noted that in Roman Catholic theology, a person sent to purgatory *has already been judged* to be in need of further purging (sanctification) before entering into the presence of God. Yet, there is no mention of such a judgment here; in fact, most RC interpretations see this as the judgment itself.

An Example From Roman Catholic Scholarship: The Jerome Biblical Commentary

A fascinating example of the divide between what the text says and what a Roman Catholic *needs* it to say is provided by the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Note the interpretation provided by this Roman Catholic source:

In a world where serious theology and understanding of God's truth is rarely found in the words of modern "Christian music," the exceptions to the rule shine most brightly. My friend, Derek Webb, sings with *Caedmon's Call*. Their most recent CD, *In the Company of Angels*, features Derek singing an Isaac Watts classic, *I Boast No More*. Consider well these tremendous words:

*No more my God, I boast no more.
Of all the duties I have done
I quit the hopes I held before,
To trust the merits of Thy Son.
No more my God, no more my God
No more my God, I boast no more.
Now for the loss I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss
My former pride I call my shame
And nail my glory to His cross.
No more my God, no more my God
No more my God, I boast no more.
Yes, and I must, I will esteem
All things but loss for Jesus' sake
O may my soul be found in Him
And of His righteousness partake
The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before Thy throne,
But faith can answer Thy demands,
By pleading what my Lord has done
No more my God, no more my God
No more my God, I boast no more.
No more my God, no more my God
No more my God, I boast no more.*

10. Developing the metaphor, Paul describes his ministry and the responsibility of all who follow him, as they build upon the foundation he has laid. 11. Christ, as the unique foundation, may be an allusion to Is 28:16 or Ps 118:22 (cf. Eph 2:20 and 1 Pt 2:6-8). This Christ, Preached by Paul, dwells in the hearts of the faithful (Eph 3:17) and communicates his Spirit to them. Succeeding preachers must take care how they build on this foundation. 13. the Day: The Lord's Day when Christ returns as victorious judge (1 Thes 5:4). fire: It is to test the quality of various building materials. Fire is the customary biblical metaphor describing the might and majesty of the divine judgment. it: Probably the neut. pron. auto refers to ergon, "work." The fire tests the work, destroying what is of poor quality and perishable. 14. A wage will be paid only for good, durable work. 15. The man whose work will not endure the searching test of judgment will suffer a loss. Like one escaping from a burning house, he will be saved, but his work and his reward will be lost. This metaphor clearly teaches the responsibility of ministers of the gospel, who will be rewarded or punished for the manner in which they have fulfilled their ministry. That the preacher will be saved implies that his sins were not serious and have not ruined the Christian community, because God destroys such a one.

To this point all is well: the Roman Catholic exegete follows the text, sees the context, recognizes the meaning of the words. But since Rome has defined *more* than this in her teachings, something must be said about purgatory:

Although the doctrine of purgatory is not taught in this passage, it does find support in it. The metaphor suggests an expiatory punishment—which is not damnation—for faults that, although not excluding salvation, merit punishment. When Paul wrote this epistle he was still hoping for the coming of the Lord's Day in his lifetime. Consequently, he locates this expiatory punishment at the final judgment.

Where does one find the basis, *in the exegesis offered by the commentary itself*, for the assertion that there is an "expiatory punishment" in the passage, especially when this involves, in the Roman context, the punishment of *the person* and not an examination of *the works he performed*? All of the elements of Rome's concept of purgation, including temporal punishments, *satispassio*, etc., are *absent* from both the text *and the interpretation offered by the commentary itself*, and yet we have the unfounded assertion that while the text does not *teach* purgatory, purgatory finds support within the text.

Robert Sungenis' Attempt to Connect 1 Corinthians 3 with Purgatory

Not long after his conversion to Catholicism, Robert Sungenis wrote an article for the November/December, 1994 issue of *The Catholic Answer* (the article has been distributed widely on the Internet; here is one location: <http://net2.netacc.net/~mafgrgtry01.htm>). In it he attempts to conform the passage to the teachings of the Roman magisterium. In light of the above exegesis, a brief review of his comments is most useful.

For Protestants, 1 Corinthians 3:15 certainly ranks as one of the Pauline passages of which Peter comments in his second epistle: "In his writings there are some things hard to understand . . ."

This simply is not true. The passage is not difficult at all, and without the insertion of anachronistic Roman Catholic concepts that developed centuries later, there really would not be any meaningful question about its teaching.

The idea that Christ will someday judge the work of the Christian to determine its value, and that some Christians will suffer for their bad works done on earth but still be saved by fire, presents some difficult and complex ideas of Pauline theology that do not mesh well with the Protestant concept of justification by faith alone.

Mr. Sungenis, it should be remembered, swung from the Boston Church of Christ to the views of Harold Camping to Presbyterianism, all in a relatively short space of time. Hence, his recollections of what Protestants "believe" is often rather fuzzy, and hence inaccurate. There is, of course, nothing contradictory between asserting that the motivations of Christian workers will be made known at the end of time and that those who had pure motives will receive a reward and those who did not will suffer loss (not "will suffer" as in a judicial sense of "*satispassio*"). There is nothing in justification by grace through faith alone that is in any way out of harmony with such a revelation of motivations, an opening of hearts.

Paul's emphasis on whether one is saved as a direct result of his works seems to defy the very tenets of justification by faith that Protestants thought he established so well in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

Of course, Paul makes no such emphasis here, or anywhere else. The judgment is of works relative to reward, not to salvation. All judged here were Christian workers: their salvation was already a matter of fact.

As a result, Protestant theologians have formulated surprising interpretations of 1 Cor 3:15 in a desperate attempt to corroborate this obscure passage with the principles of sola fide theology.

This is little more than rhetoric. When one considers the highly anachronistic interpretations offered by Rome of all the passages relevant to purgatory, as well as such passages as John 19:26, or Luke 1:28, speaking of "desperate attempts" becomes

almost humorous. In fact, as to the actual interpretation of the passage itself, the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* is in perfect harmony with Protestant interpretation. It is only after giving the obvious meaning that it attempts to find a way of attaching a purgatorial concept.

In these efforts, Protestants find themselves stumbling over Paul's plain words, and as a consequence, end up producing all kinds of distortions to the text and contradictions to their own theology.

More rhetoric that lacks substantial backing.

Classical Catholic interpretation has always understood 1 Cor 3:15 as referring to the state of purgatory in which the temporal punishment due to sins committed on earth is sustained, as well as the purging of all imperfections not acceptable for entrance into heaven.

Roman Catholic apologists live in a world where double-standards abound. When speaking to their own followers, terms like "always" abound, as if there is a unified, consistent, easily discerned "tradition" to which to refer. But, as soon as anyone points out counter-citations from those same sources, all of a sudden we begin to hear either about how that was an early Father speaking "as a private theologian" and "not for the universal church," or, the spirit of Newman arises to make all historical issues "go away" since we can just rely upon "development" anyway. While Mr. Sungenis does not identify what "classical Catholic interpretation" is, given what comes after this, we can assume that he is not referring to the position taken only over the past few centuries.

The doctrine of purgatory has the unanimous support of the Church Fathers who addressed the matter, either in direct references to an intermediate state prior to heaven, or in reference to prayers for the dead. Fathers Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Lactantius, Eusebius, Cyril, Gregory of Nyssa, Epiphanius, Jerome, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Venerable Bede and second-millennium theologians such as Anselm, Bernard, Aquinas and Bonaventure supported the doctrine of purgatory.

This is truly a classic example of the utter misuse of historical sources in the service of Rome. Consider, for example, the breadth of the beliefs represented by Tertullian or Gregory the Great--no serious scholar suggests that what Tertullian believed regarding prayers for the dead, for example, is the same as what Gregory the Great believed about purgation after death. Not only had there been a number of developments during the intervening centuries, but the sources Gregory accepted as relevant were much wider (and less orthodox) than those used by Tertullian. To say these *all* "supported the doctrine of purgatory" is to make a statement that has no meaning: Tertullian speaks of prayers for *refrigerium* for those who have died. This is nothing like Gregory; Augustine's view is different than either one. Origen's entire theology was wildly off-base, so throwing him into the mix is hardly a positive thing for anyone interested in truly biblical theology. And so it goes. To say these all "supported the doctrine of purgatory" puts words and concepts into the mouths and theologies of men who would not recognize the modern Roman dogma at all.

Both purgatory and prayers for the dead were upheld by the major councils, beginning with the Council of Carthage in 394 A.D. to the Council of Trent in 1554 A.D. Evidence of prayers for the dead also appeared in inscriptions on the walls of Christian catacombs in the very early years of the Church. In addition, all the liturgies of the early Church, without exception, made references to prayers for the dead.

What Mr. Sungenis does *not* mention is that these prayers were requests for *refrigerium*, that is, for the joy of those who have gone on, *not* for redemption or release from the sufferings of purgatory! The "prayers for the dead = purgatory" equation, despite its constant repetition, simply does not support the weight put upon it.

Despite this evidence, the Protestant Reformation rejected the doctrine of purgatory, as well as prayers for the dead.

It would be significantly more accurate to point out the exegetical and historical reasons non-Catholics have presented against purgatory than to misrepresent the situation as a mere ignoring of supposed "evidence," especially when that "evidence" fails muster, as we have seen.

However, not until the later stages of the Reformation was the doctrine of purgatory rejected outright. Luther, as late as 1519, had said that the existence of purgatory was undeniable.

The reader familiar with the history of the Reformation cannot help but smile a bit at the phrase, "as late as 1519..." Given that Luther viewed himself as a faithful son of the Church in October of 1517, and that he went through his greatest period of study, consideration, and writing between 1518 and 1521, to speak of 1519 as "late" in the Reformation is humorous. In reality, 1519 is "within a matter of months of the posting of the 95 Theses," and very *early* in the history of the Reformation.

James R. White, a staunch Calvinist and prolific anti-Catholic,

Remember, "anti-Catholic" is the term RC apologists use to make sure their Roman Catholic readers will be biased against the person they are citing. If Protestants introduced Roman Catholic apologists as "anti-Protestants" or "anti-Baptists" with such regularity there would be no end to the complaints. The double-standard has always been, and remains, striking.

has written the following on 1 Cor 3:15: "But aside from this, nothing can be found to substantiate a concept of purgatory. What is judged is the sort or kind of works the Christian has done. Sins, and their punishments, are not even mentioned. It is works that are judged and put through the fire ... we must strongly affirm that this judgment is not a judgment relative to sin but to works and rewards."

That's from The Fatal Flaw, p. 179.

Similar to White's view, the typical evangelical/fundamentalist interpretation of 1 Cor 3:14-15 views it as a preliminary judgment for Christians in which those with an abundance of good works will be personally rewarded with a crown, or some other accolade, while those with an excess of bad works will lose their chance for a personal reward. The rewards depend on the type and amount of good work performed.

The reader should realize that Mr. Sungenis' experience of the "evangelical/fundamentalist" viewpoint included such wildly divergent groups as Harold Camping's "Family Radio" and the Boston Church of Christ. It is surely not the Reformed, or even scholarly, interpretation of the passage that is here presented. The passage is plainly about Christian leaders and their building upon the "foundation" that Paul had laid. Surely there are those who may provide a shallow, or a-contextual reading of the text, but that is hardly relevant to the point at hand.

The notion of "barely being saved" is even borne out in Protestant translations of the verse which paraphrase it into a description of a man who narrowly escapes from a burning building, (e.g., The New International Version: "He himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through flames").

The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* has, "Like one escaping from a burning house, he will be saved, but his work and his reward will be lost." Why would a Catholic commentary "paraphrase" the text as well?

The most curious aspect about these interpretations of 1 Cor 3:14-15 is that they seem more Catholic than Protestant, and as a result, are not very consistent with sola fide theology. Works are not supposed to be a criterion for how close or far one is from salvation since, in Protestant theology, one is saved strictly by faith, not works.

Again, Mr. Sungenis' knowledge of what he calls "sola fide theology" is highly suspect. The passage does not in any way identify works as a "criterion for how close or far one is from salvation" in the first place; further, in actual historic Protestant theology, one is saved strictly by grace through faith.

The logical question that surfaces is: If faith, as Protestants believe, is the only virtue that justifies one before God,

Of course, the actual position is, "Christ's work, finished and complete, is the perfect basis of one's relationship with God." The "virtue," if one will even use such a term, is all of Christ, not of man.

on what basis can someone's works advance or retard his chances for salvation? In addition, if works are just "fruits of salvation," as Protestants teach, why are these works being judged at all, and on what judicial basis are they rewarded or rejected'?

Because, as the text clearly indicates, it is God's will to reveal the motivations of Christian leaders at the end of time, and to reward those servants who engaged in His work of ministry with proper motivations. They are judged on the basis of God's knowledge of the hearts of all men.

"Works" are understood as judicially neutral actions that have no possibility of making one fall under God's eternal judgment. Hence, anytime the Scripture specifies a judgment for the Christian's works, Protestants presuppose that the bad works cannot be equated with sin. Since it is believed that Christ paid the punishment for all the Christian's sins, thus making judgment for sin complete, it is concluded that the judgment for bad works in 1 Cor 3:13-15 must necessarily exclude any evaluation or penalty for one's sins. Once they are made to be totally separate from sin, Protestant "works" are then available to be judged by their own merits or demerits.

Note that the context of this referring to Christian *leaders* is ignored. Beyond this, the statement of the text itself, that the judgment is *not* in regards to salvation, but to reward, is skipped over. It is hard to avoid concluding that Mr. Sungenis does not, in fact, believe that Christ paid the punishment for all the Christian's sins, and this is indeed his position. As he asserted in our

debate on justification in [May of 2000](#), many sons of God will be in hell. The vast chasm that separates the God-centered gospel of Scripture and the man-centered message of Rome can hardly be more highly contrasted than in these discussions.

The fact that the "works that are burned" in 1 Cor 3:15 refer to sin can be gleaned from many biblical sources, not the least of which is the immediate and extended context of the passage itself. For example, in verse 17, Paul includes the warning that if anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him. How one builds for God has been a pivotal point of discussion in the preceding context. For example, some are said to build with gold, silver and precious stone, while others build with wood, hay and stubble (verse 12). Apparently, those who persistently and deliberately build with defective materials, and end up destroying the temple of God, will receive the worst punishment - it is stipulated that they will be destroyed by God (verse 17).

I hope the reader will note well the reverse order of interpretation that leads to this glaring example of eisegesis. Written and spoken words start at one point and move to the next: we interpret them by starting at the beginning and moving forward. You interpret verse 1, then verse 2, etc. Surely, verse 27 may have something to do with verse 1, but you don't jump in at verse 27 and use the conclusions you come to there to interpret verse 1. In the same way, the logical means of understanding Paul's point here is to start at the beginning of chapter three, determine the context, and follow the train of thought through the passage. When one does this, one realizes that there is a great distinction between 16-17 and 14-15: specifically, in 14-15 we have Christian workers who *build*, but in 16-17 we have an individual who does *not* build, but instead, *tears down* or *destroys*. Mr. Sungenis needs to find a way around Paul's direct point, so he does so by 1) ignoring the context (the revelation of the motives of Christian workers), 2) bringing up issues of sin vs. bad or good works, 3) jumping to verse 17 and taking its warning and inserting it back into a previous (and contradictory) context, 4) turns the building of God into the temple (this transition is made in 16, but Sungenis pushes it back into the previous context), and finally, 5) conflating, against the context of the text itself, 16-17 and coming up with a concept utterly unfounded in the text itself: the creation of a group who "persistently and deliberately build with defective materials, and end up destroying the temple of God." Paul nowhere says that those who were *builders* become those who *tear down*. Verses 16-17 emphasize the importance of God's people as His temple, and His concern for its purity, and the grave danger awaiting His enemies. Since Paul's point in the previous verses will not support the Roman position, eisegesis is the last resort.

Obviously, in light of such harsh punishment, Paul does not view the actions of the brother who deliberately builds with defective materials and eventually destroys the temple as judicially neutral. He has committed a very serious sin which is adjudicated by a very serious punishment. Since the man of verse 15 has also built the temple with defective materials, albeit less destructive than the man of verse 17, his sin is of a lesser degree - but it is still sin

Very little of the rest of Mr. Sungenis' comments are really relevant, since this is the heart of his assertion. Notice that he speaks of the one destroyed by God as a "brother." It is vital that he extend the context of 10-15 to include 16-17 *so that* he can define the works which are judged as sins which can also bring the final judgment of God. Without this effort, his entire attempt fails. But we have already seen that, in fact, this entire effort contradicts the text and is unwarranted. Sungenis' position collapses when it is seen as the eisegetical effort it truly is.

Later in his article Sungenis continues to attempt to turn Paul's discussion of the revelation of the motives of Christian leaders into a discussion of sin and its punishment. In passing he says,

These definitions of sin do not leave much room for the so-called "bad works" of Protestant theology to be anything other than sin. One of the typical ways in which Protestant theologians attempt to show some difference between sins and bad works is by stressing the "motivation" of the action. Hence, James White claims in his book "The Fatal Flaw," "For the Christian, the idea of not being able to present to his Lord works that were done for the proper motivation ... is a terrifying one indeed." This is another example of a theological fabrication to make the verse fit into one's preconceived ideas.

Given that we have already listened to the apostle Paul himself speak of the testing of the works of Christian leaders so that it might be made known "of what sort" they are (something Paul never says of *sins!*), we can see very quickly who is actually engaging in the "theological fabrication" so as to fit a text into one's preconceived ideas!

Scripture simply does not teach that bad motivations are sinless.

This is another common debate tactic: prove what is not disputed. What Mr. Sungenis fails to allow for is that 1) Paul can address the revelation of who engaged in ministry for proper reasons and who did not without turning the context into one of judgment of sin, 2) that a person can be a Christian, have their sins forgiven completely in Christ, and still have the quality of their works as a Christian revealed in the last day. Evidently, Paul could never address the examination of the motives of Christian leaders working in the church without at the same time raising the issue of the punishment of sin.

Following this, Sungenis attempts to draw parallels to other passages, but each one fails the simple test of context: he simply will not allow for the reading of the text provided above. Of course, given that Mr. Sungenis likewise rejects *sola scriptura* and

embraces the ultimate authority of Rome, I would assert that true textually-based exegesis is not something he can faithfully engage in anyway (i.e., this would involve a fundamental contradiction of his beginning commitment to Rome's authority). Under "The Catholic Solution," Sungenis takes the over-riding thesis he has attempted to argue (mainly from texts other than the one allegedly under consideration), that being that "bad works" are sins (hence, if Christian worker's motivations are judged, this must mean there is a post-mortem judgment for sin), and says:

Consequently, since "bad works" are sins, as Catholic theology teaches, then indeed Christians will be judged for their sins and recompensed accordingly. Some will be "destroyed," some will "be saved by fire," and others will receive their heavenly reward immediately.

We again note that this ignores the text's own distinction between 14-15 and 16-17, and it likewise makes a mockery of Jesus' ability to save His own. Of course, Roman Catholic soteriology is very man-centered, hence, the idea that Jesus is able to save completely without human cooperation is not a part of the system. Note just a few more elements of this article:

First, it is clear from 1 Cor 3:17 that those who deliberately and consistently build with defective materials in an attempt to destroy the temple of God are to receive the ultimate punishment - they will be destroyed by God Himself.

There is, of course, nothing in the text that speaks of "deliberately and consistently building with defective materials," but Mr. Sungenis is certain of it anyhow. This is pure eisegesis.

The final destruction Paul has in view refers to eternal damnation (cf., Ezekiel 13:10-16; 22:28-30; Luke 12:47; Hebrews 10:26-39). Second, 1 Cor 3:8 and 3:14 speaks of those whose work survives the test of fire and who will be rewarded according to their labor. The better his work, the better his reward. The reward refers to the eternal state of heaven in which, as Catholic doctrine teaches, those who have been more dedicated to the work of Christ will receive a greater reward or higher place in heaven.

One immediately has to ask, if this is true, what the "loss" of those "saved by fire" is? If the "reward" is the eternal state of heaven, and those whose works are burned up do *not* receive a reward, as v. 15 says, yet they are saved, then where do they go?

Third, 1 Cor 3:15 speaks of a man who builds with defective material, but it is not to the same degree as the man in verse 17 who ends up destroying the temple.

One looks in vain for "same degree" or greater degree or anything even slightly relevant thereto in the text.

Based on the difference in degree, the man in verse 15 is eventually saved, but the man in verse 17 is not. The "fire" endured by the man in verse 15 that eventually leads to his salvation is what Catholic theology understands as the state of purgatory.

The person who has carefully followed the argument cannot help but see the tremendous self-contradiction the Roman position brings to the text. Those in v. 14 have their works tested by fire...but according to Sungenis, they receive eternal salvation, since theirs are "good works." But wait...if the fire that burns up the works of those in v. 15 is purgatory, why isn't it for those in v. 14? See what happens when you force Roman tradition upon a simple Scripture that has nothing to do with what Rome says it is teaching? The result is endless contradiction. Despite the glaring contradictions already seen, Sungenis plows on,

Hence, the three divisions of 1 Cor 3:14-17 are describing: heaven (verse 14), purgatory (verse 15) and hell (verse 17).

As we have seen, 14-15 both experience the same testing, destroying the glib, and erroneous, distinction Sungenis inserts into the text.

The Catholic understanding of mortal and venial sins also comes into play here. The man of 1 Cor 3:17 has committed unrepentant mortal sin, and thus he is banished to hell (1 Jn 5:16). In God's eyes, blaspheming His name and destroying His Church are very serious sins. On the other hand, the man of 1 Cor 3:15 has also committed sin, but not as seriously or consistently. These types of sins are what Catholic theology calls venial sins (1 Jn 5:17). They do not take away sanctifying grace that leads to eternal life, but one is accountable to God for them, and will suffer the temporal punishment due them either in this life or in purgatory.

The reader can readily see that in fact this is where Sungenis is deriving his teaching. Indeed, the text of 1 Corinthians 3:10-17 is more of a hindrance to him, than a help. Paul knew nothing of mortal versus venial sins, and all the rest of this kind of theology, that Rome imports into the text. Following this, Sungenis discusses the Greek term translated "suffer loss" and, of course, opts for the idea of "punishment," though he does not deal with the information we presented above, that being that the context does not support the rendering "punishment," as the phrase is directly parallel to verse 14. In Sungenis' eisegesis, there is a great chasm between 14 and 15, not only regarding this term and its parallel to "receive a reward," but in regards to the idea

of types of sin, rewards, etc.

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Enduring Anathemas of the Roman Catholic Eucharist

Douglas M. Jones

Understanding the framework of the Roman Eucharist and the reasons given in its support helps to remind us why we should reject it.

In an age like ours, which mocks religious debate, a critical evaluation of the Roman Catholic Eucharist appears quaint. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic Sacrifice of the Mass is nothing to trivialize. The stakes in this debate are too high, and sincere persons on all sides of the issue realize that this is not a minor Swiftian quibble. The answers in this debate stand at the very heart of Christian faith and have eternal consequences.[\[1\]](#)

With the very apparent resurgence of Roman Catholicism over the last decade, we've witnessed renewed *Biblical* defenses of the Roman Catholic Eucharist. My goal in this essay is to provide a helpful summary of the Roman Catholic Eucharist and analyze traditional and recent Biblical arguments for two of its central features: Real presence and sacrifice. These two aspects of the Roman Eucharist, like any doctrines, do not sit in a moral vacuum. From a Protestant perspective, these doctrines are grave offenses against a holy God. The two primary offenses or "anathemas" -- idolatry and a distortion of Christ's atoning work -- have, since the Reformation, yet to be expunged from Roman Catholic teaching, and therefore remain under Christ's condemnation. My Roman Catholic friends obviously reject such contentions, but I hope they will consider the arguments.

I. Theological Background and Outline of the Roman Catholic Eucharist

In order to understand the Roman Eucharist adequately, we need a sketch of its general theological underpinnings. The doctrines discussed under the Roman Catholic understanding of "God the Sanctifier" provide an apt starting point for this overview.

A. God the Sanctifier

Taking Ludwig Ott's *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* as our benchmark,[\[2\]](#) the discussion of "God the Sanctifier" would translate in Protestant theology to a discussion of soteriology in general -- the doctrines of salvation. This usage in itself is a portend of what is to come.

Grace, the most general concept in the discussion of God the Sanctifier, is understood in subjective and objective senses. In the subjective sense, it is the "disposition of condescension or benevolence shown by a highly-placed person to one in a lower place, and especially of God towards mankind."[\[3\]](#) In the objective sense, the concept of grace is "an unmerited gift proceeding from this benevolent disposition."[\[4\]](#) This objective sense of grace is further distinguished into uncreated (God Himself) and created (any gift or work of God) grace. Created grace includes natural (e.g., Creation, bodily health, Eden) and redemptive grace.

In turn, redemptive grace may be divided into External (e.g., revelation, sermons, liturgy, sacraments) and Internal graces. Internal grace "affects the soul and its powers intrinsically, and operates physically on it."[\[5\]](#) For this discussion, the main subdivision of Internal grace is *Gratia Gratum Faciens* or the grace of sanctification. This grace is distinguished as either Actual grace, which is "a temporary supernatural intervention by God by which the powers of the soul are stirred up to perform a salutary act...directed toward [an] increase of sanctifying grace" or Habitual grace, which is "a constant supernatural quality of the soul which sanctifies man intrinsically and makes him just and pleasing to God (sanctifying grace or justifying grace)."[\[6\]](#)

B. Habitual or Sanctifying Grace

Sanctifying grace is the key to redemption in Roman Catholic theology. Ott declares that "[a]ccording to the teaching of the Council of Trent, sanctifying grace is the sole formal cause of justification."[\[7\]](#) In popular language, Sheed contends, "When we come to die there is only one question that matters -- have we sanctifying grace in our souls? If we have, then to heaven we shall go...[though] there may be certain matters to be...cleansed, on the way....If we have not [sanctifying grace], then to heaven we cannot go."[\[8\]](#)

As noted above, sanctifying grace is, according to Roman Catholic theology, a created supernatural gift which God infuses into the soul in order to sanctify/justify believers, thus elevating them "to participation in the Divine nature."[\[9\]](#)

Two characteristics of this definition must be drawn out. First, the physicalistic language used to describe grace is *not metaphorical*. The notorious Roman Catholic devotion to, and utter dependence on, an Aristotelian worldview plays heavily in this discussion. For example, Ott explains that "sanctifying grace is not a substance, but a real accident, which inheres in the soul-substance."[\[10\]](#) Similarly the Council of Trent describes sanctifying grace as: "a divine quality inhering in the soul."[\[11\]](#) Sanctifying grace as this sort of Aristotelian quality or property can be "inserted," "added," "lost," "conveyed," "balanced," "outweighed," "contained," etc., since sanctifying grace and other divine properties "are really *in* our

very souls." [12]

This object-like nature of grace provides the ground for the second notable characteristic in the definition of sanctifying grace, namely, that by it we become like God, partakers of His nature, that is, by grace man "becomes elevated to a supernatural grade of assimilation to God." [13] Ott contends that the church fathers had "a firm conviction that God became man so that man might become God, that is, deified...[since this is] `the greatest possible assimilation to and unification with God.'" [14] As sanctifying grace is added to the soul, a person becomes more assimilated to or united with God's nature. Nevertheless, Roman Catholic theology denies that this understanding of grace is in any sense pantheistic since "the infinite distance between Creator and created remains." [15] [n.b., R. Catholic theology assumes that both God and man, I claim, are, nevertheless, on the same grade or continuum of being.]

On the positive side, and particularly relevant to this discussion, the unity resulting from the infusion of sanctifying grace "represents a physical communion of man with God." [16] Hence, God assimilates man closer to His grade of being by means of increasing the created gift of sanctifying grace. This assimilation is completed in the next life by the Beatific Vision of God -- "the direct vision of himself....[T]he seeing that causes bliss." [17]

Finally, according to Roman Catholic theology, though God is the ultimate source of sanctifying grace, sanctification/justification "requires the free co-operation of men." Though mysterious, the "mutual co-operation of Divine power and human freedom" [18] lies at the heart of Roman Catholic doctrines of grace. Hence, Roman Catholic theology does not flinch in asserting that the grace of God is resistible. The Council of Trent declares, "If anyone says that man's free will moved and aroused by God, by assenting to God's call and action, in no way cooperates toward disposing and preparing itself to obtain the grace of justification, that it cannot refuse its assent if it wishes, but that as something inanimate, it does nothing whatever and is merely passive, let him be anathema." [19] Hence, by this claim alone, the Roman Catholic church has forever revealed itself as a false teacher, and, with Arminians and Lutherans, has determined that the *success* of Almighty God's Sovereign plan rests upon the caprice of finite man.

C. The Instrument of Sanctifying Grace

Contrary to Protestant theology which maintains that God's Spirit may effect salvation apart from intermediaries, Roman Catholic theology teaches that God has chosen to dispense His grace only through the instrumentality of the church: "While Christ acquired the fruits of Redemption by His own efficacy, the task of the Church consists in the application of the fruits to mankind....[T]he Church is Christ's continuing and perpetually working on earth." [20] Thus, "[t]hrough the Apostles -- and, since it was to be until the world should end, through their successors -- we were to find the truth, the life, the union by which we shall be saved." [21]

Given that the Roman church is the only instrument of sanctifying grace, Pius IX could declare: "By faith it is to be firmly held that outside the Apostolic Roman Church none can achieve salvation. This is the

only ark of salvation. He who does not enter into it, will perish in the flood." [22] Strangely, Roman Catholic theologians are quick to add that in rare cases persons might be saved by merely desiring baptism or desiring membership in the church. [23]

Hence, as the "only ark of salvation" the Roman Catholic church is the instrument which distributes the sanctifying grace of God through seven sacraments.

D. The Sacraments

In Roman Catholic theology, a sacrament is "a thing perceptible to the sense, which on the ground of Divine institution possesses the power both of effecting and signifying sanctity and righteousness (= sanctifying grace)." [24] There are two primary characteristics which hold of any of the sacraments.

1. Conduits of Sanctifying Grace

Each of the seven sacraments in Roman Catholic teaching -- baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing the sick, priestly orders, and matrimony -- serves to infuse sanctifying grace into the souls of the recipients. Moreover, each of the seven sacraments confers its own specific sacramental grace in accord with its particular aim. [25]

2. Objective Efficacy -- *ex opere operato*

Roman Catholic theology maintains that the sacraments operate objectively in the sense that they have "an efficacy independent of the subjective disposition of the recipient or minister," [26] and have more than a merely symbolic or psychological significance. This sort of claim, as an example of a typical misunderstanding on the part of the Roman Catholic church, is supposedly set in opposition to even a Reformed understanding of the sacraments. Though the Reformed tradition within the Protestant Reformation was one of the main targets of Tridentine curses, we will see below that it never maintained that the sacraments have only "psychological and symbolic significance." [27] Instead, Reformed theology holds that the efficacy of the sacraments is decisively "objective," in that, as means of grace, the Holy Spirit Himself works through them to curse or bless.

Nevertheless, Roman Catholic theology goes on to maintain that the sacraments contain the sanctifying grace which they signify within themselves. Thus Trent curses: "If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify, or that they do not confer that grace on those who place no obstacles in their way, as though they are only outward signs of grace or justice received through faith...let him be anathema." [28]

The Scholastic theologians designated this objective characteristic by the phrase: "*Sacramenta operantur ex opere operato*, that is the Sacraments operate by the power of the completed sacramental rite." [29] The Council of Trent subsequently etched this terminology in doctrinal stone and cursed anyone who

held otherwise. The essence of the *ex opere operato* formula is (a) that the efficacy of the sacrament is not dependent on the subjective disposition of the recipient as a cause of grace and (b) that the sacramental grace is caused by the validly operated sacramental sign.^[30] Nevertheless, Roman Catholic theology denies that *ex opere operato* has a mechanical or magical operation, since the sacrament's efficacy *does* depend upon the recipient's subjective disposition as "an indispensable pre-condition of the communication of grace."^[31] Hence, interestingly, the necessity of the recipient's subjective disposition is both affirmed and denied.

In general, then, according to Roman Catholic theology, "the Sacraments are the means appointed by God for the attainment of eternal salvation."^[32] Some of these are so necessary that "without their use salvation cannot be attained."^[33] Of all the sacraments, "[t]he Blessed Eucharist is *the* Sacrament. Baptism exists *for* it, all the others enriched by it."^[34]

E. The Roman Catholic Eucharist

Peter Stravinskis summarizes the entire Mass as "God's mysterious plan, conceived from all eternity and brought to fulfillment in His divine Son's passion, death, and resurrection,...made present. Or as Pope St. Leo the Great put it, "What our redeemer did visibly has passed over into the sacraments."^[35] Thomas Howard describes the Roman Catholic Eucharist in the following terms:

The Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood is the great pledge, given by the Lord to His Church, for as long as history lasts, of the reunion of form and matter, or spirit and flesh. Put more directly, it presents to us His death, by which He redeemed the world from sin and death and from ruin brought on by the Fall. The "rebuilding," or reunion, of things from this ruin was inaugurated by God in the Old Testament, manifested at the Incarnation, and will be completed at the Parousia. It is pledged and kept present to us in the Eucharist which is both memory and anticipation. It recalls Christ's body, broken for us, and it looks forward to His glorious reappearing.^[36]

In less eloquent though more precise terminology, Joseph Jungmann summarizes the Mass, in general, and Eucharist, in particular, as follows:

The Mass is a celebration for which the Church assembles, a celebration which occupies the center of her charge and service, a celebration which is dedicated to the Lord. It is a celebration which presents God with a thanksgiving, an offering, indeed a sacrifice. And it is a celebration which reacts with blessings upon those who gather for it.^[37]

1. Purpose of the Roman Catholic Eucharist

The Council of Trent (13, I) specifies at least four purposes for its Eucharist. First, it was instituted as a remembrance of God's work, especially to show forth the death of Christ until He comes to judge the

world. Second, it was instituted as "spiritual food for souls, whereby they may be nourished and strengthened, living by the life of Him who said: He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me" (i.e. a means of infusing sanctifying grace). Third, it was instituted as an antidote to free participants from daily faults and preserve them from daily sins. Fourth, it was instituted as a pledge of future glory and happiness of that "one body" to which all Christians ought to be "mutually bound and united."

2. Nature of the Roman Catholic Eucharist

The first two of the above purposes -- memorial and meal -- can be used to explain the nature of the Eucharist (the other purposes are dependent upon these).

a. Memorial Sacrifice: One of the most unique (and, to Protestants, scandalous) aspects of the Roman Catholic theology is its insistence that the Lord's Supper is in itself a "true and real sacrifice," not merely the commemoration of a sacrifice. Trent declares that, on the night Christ was betrayed, He "offered up to God the Father His own body and blood under the form of bread and wine," and subsequently left to His church a "visible sacrifice" whereby His bloody sacrifice on the cross "might be represented," remembered, and "its salutary effects applied to the remission of...sins" (22: I, II). This "unbloody" sacrifice "is truly propitiatory" and thus since God is "appeased by this sacrifice" He forgives "even the gravest crimes and sins." This unbloody sacrifice is essentially identical to the bloody sacrifice of the cross, since the "victim is one and the same,...the manner alone of offering is different." Hence, according to Roman theology, the unbloody sacrifice in the Roman Eucharist is far "from derogating in any way from the former" -- i.e. Christ's atonement on the cross.

The foregoing sketch may be summarized by the following characteristics.

(i) *Genuine Sacrifice:* The Roman Eucharist is not only a memorial meal but a genuine sacrifice in which "Christ is offered as a sacrificial gift to God"[\[38\]](#) by "the Church [which] joins in the sacrifice of her Lord and Master."[\[39\]](#)

(ii) *Unbloody Sacrifice:* Roman Catholic theology presses the "unbloody" aspect of the sacrifice to counter accusations that Christ is re-sacrificed and not in the sense that no blood is present, since to deny that Christ's blood is truly in the Eucharist is to invoke the curses of Trent (13: Canon 1).

(iii) *Essentially Identical to Calvary:* By maintaining that the Sacrifice of the Mass is "essentially identical" to the Sacrifice of the Cross, Roman theology aims to receive the same benefits provided by the latter, thus continuing Christ's sacrifice on the cross "until the end of time."[\[40\]](#)

(iv) *Non-Repetitive Sacrifice:* The Roman Eucharist is sacrificial in nature in that Christ's "one-time act of redemption [is] made present under cloak of the rite, `in the mystery."[\[41\]](#) As such, it is "a liturgical reenactment of Christ's death on Calvary and not a blasphemous effort to `add to' His saving death and resurrection."[\[42\]](#)

(v) *Sacrificial Act in Transubstantiation*: The precise sacrificial action in the Eucharist has been long disputed among Roman Catholic theologians. Contrary to what many might suppose, the precise sacrificial act is not the breaking or eating of the Host but rather the transubstantiation of the sacrificial gifts.[\[43\]](#)

(vi) *Effects Glory to God* : The primary goal of the Eucharistic sacrifice is "the most perfect sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving."[\[44\]](#) God alone, Roman Catholics theology maintains, is worthy of such a genuine sacrifice, given the "infinite value of the sacrificial gift [i.e. Christ]...and on account of the infinite dignity of the Primary Sacrificing Priest [i.e. Christ]."[\[45\]](#)

(vii) *Effects Propitiation of Sin*: Finally, given its essential identity to Calvary, the Roman Eucharist effects not only praise to God but also the remission of sins. As "truly propitiatory," it allegedly turns away the wrath of God from participants and "the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence and pardons even the gravest crimes and sins."[\[46\]](#)

These seven characteristics summarize the sacrificial nature of the Roman Eucharist. Many, if not each of these characteristics, ought to appall Protestants. The source of this Protestant revulsion resides in the central claim that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice. Hence, we will focus on that claim and not its subsidiary characteristics. However, prior to evaluating the Roman Catholic arguments used to defend the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, we must summarize the other equally important aspect of the Roman Eucharist -- Real presence.

b. Meal of Presence: The other unique and equally scandalous aspect of the Roman Eucharist is the claim that "immediately after the consecration, the true body and the true blood of our Lord, together with His soul and divinity exist under the form of bread and wine."[\[47\]](#) Roman Catholics glory in the "Real presence" of Christ, since by ingesting the Divine, they are directly in union and communion with Him. Ex-Reformed pastor Scott Hahn describes the sublime effects of this Roman Eucharistic union:

We have become a temple. We have become a tabernacle. We have become almost like the blessed virgin Mary, who carried the Word incarnate within her womb for nine months. We carry the Word incarnate for about ten or fifteen minutes. And as He is flowing through our veins, and as he is assimilated into our bodies, we need to speak the most loving, generous words that our hearts can create.[\[48\]](#)

By partaking in the Roman Eucharist and thus maintaining that the body of Christ "is flowing through our veins," the Roman Catholic aims to assimilate divinity (cf. section B above, footnotes 12-14). In his recent popular exposition of the Mass, Stravinskias speaks of the part the Eucharist plays in deifying those who partake in it:

To aspire to divinity is the noblest of human yearnings. It is implanted in us by God Himself to keep us on the road back to Him. That is why we should reflect very carefully

on the words we pray each day at Mass: `...*may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.*'

We need to look to the example of Jesus the Perfect Man, the Second Adam, *who brought us the possibility of becoming gods* -- the right way -- by submission to the will of the Father....*Yes, we can become gods with a small `g,' for perfect humanity leads to divinity....*To strive to be god-like was not a sin for our first parents, but the desire to do it on their own was [emphasis added].[\[49\]](#)

(I cannot forbear noting that statements like the two preceding ones are the type which should make our hair stand on end and enable us to better realize why our Reformation predecessors were so willing to lay down their lives in opposition to Rome.)

Finally, given the Real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, Roman Catholics are obligated to "give to this most holy sacrament in veneration the worship of *latría*, which is due to the true God."[\[50\]](#)

The foregoing sketch may be summarized by the following characteristics:

(1) *Transubstantiation*: In short, transubstantiation is the name of the supernatural and mysterious process by which the underlying (invisible) substance of the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. The substances of the bread and wine, not their visible characteristics, are transformed by God so that they take on the "matter and form" of the body and blood of Christ. This conversion of substances, according to Roman theology, is unique, without analogue in nature.[\[51\]](#) This view stands in contrast to the view that the elements of the supper are merely symbols (no presence), the Lutheran view that the substances of the bread and wine exist conjointly with the body and blood of Christ (Consubstantiation), and the Reformed view that Christ is present "really, but spiritually" (Real, Spiritual presence).[\[52\]](#)

(2) *Totality of the Presence*: According to Roman Catholic theology, Christ's entire person, "body and soul and Divinity" are present in the Eucharist. Moreover, He is totally present under each and in every part of the two elements individually. Hence, though communicants since the thirteenth century have regularly received only the bread, they, therefore, receive the body and blood of Christ.[\[53\]](#)

(3) *Adoration Due to the Eucharist*: Ott states that "it follows from the wholeness and permanence of the Real Presence that the absolute worship of adoration (*cultus latría*) is due to Christ present in the Eucharist."[\[54\]](#) In this regard Stravinskis explains, "[a]s the procession reaches the altar, priest and ministers genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament, if it is visible from the central axis, or else bow profoundly to the altar. The priest kisses the altar, in effect, greeting Christ....Why do we honor the Eucharist with incense, candles, bells, hymns, a sanctuary lamp, and genuflections? For one reason alone: Because God has come into our midst."[\[55\]](#)

We now have before us a critical outline of the Roman Catholic Eucharist. It fits within a broader system of grace and is the Roman Catholic Church's most important conduit of sanctifying grace. The two primary characteristics of the Eucharist are that (1) it is a genuine sacrifice propitiating sin and (2) it is a meal in which Christ's body, blood, soul, and Divinity are present in the place of the substance of the common elements. These two primary characteristics -- sacrifice and Real presence -- are the targets for Reformed Protestant charges of idolatry and a distortion of Christ's atonement. Since the theology of the Roman Eucharist hinges on these two primary characteristics, I will now turn to evaluate traditional and contemporary Biblical arguments used to defend these notions.

II. Evaluating Roman Catholic Arguments for the Eucharist's Sacrificial Nature and Real Presence

A. Arguments For and Against the Eucharist as a Sacrifice

Traditionally, Roman Catholic theology has forwarded three primary Biblical arguments to support its claim that the Lord's Supper was intended to be a genuine propitiatory sacrifice. More recent Roman Catholic apologists have offered rejoinders to some of the common Protestant objections to viewing the Lord's Supper as a Sacrifice.

1. Melchizedek's Priestly Offering

The first argument to consider arises from the fact that following Abraham's rescue of Lot from the four enemy kings, Melchizedek, king of Salem, "brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God" (Gen. 14:18ff.). Add to this, the truth that Christ was made "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:6; 7:1; Ps. 110:4), and infer that, since Melchizedek offered a sacrifice of bread and wine, Christ too "offers a sacrifice similar to that of Melchizedek. This Sacrifice can only refer to the proffering of His Body and Blood under the forms of bread and wine at the Last Supper and in the Holy Mass." [56] Hence, the Eucharist is a proper sacrifice.

In response, first, the text makes no reference at all to a sacrifice, and so the argument depends upon the implicit premise that every time a priest presents some kind of food, he is making a sacrifice. Karl Keating sets up the universal generalization of this premise as, "a priest sacrifices the items offered -- that is the main task of all priests, in all cultures, at all times." [57] Hence, we need only one counterexample to this premise to dispose of the argument. A very pertinent counterexample is found in Christ's feeding of the multitudes (Matt. 15; Mk. 8). Christ is a priest, and he presents a miraculous meal, yet no one claims that a sacrifice takes place. Hence, the appeal to Melchizedek fails.

Second, even if we grant the eisegeted premise that Melchizedek offers some kind of sacrifice, it is clearly not expiatory since no blood is shed. Yet, the Roman Eucharist is explicitly so; hence, if Christ allegedly offers a sacrifice "in the manner of Melchisedek," [58] He cannot be doing what Roman Catholic theology requires Him to do.

2. Malachi's Future Perfect Sacrifice

A second argument for the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist is drawn from Malachi's prophecy that "in every place incense and a pure offering will be brought to my name, because My name will be great among the nations," says the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. 1:11). Ott sees two requirements here. One is that a future Messianic sacrifice will be offered "in every place," and two, it will be a clean oblation -- "a pure offering." According to Ott, this cannot speak of the sacrifice on Calvary, since that sacrifice was carried out in one place, and it was not clean.[\[59\]](#)

First, if Roman Catholics are determined to stand arm-in-arm with Dispensationalists in demanding narrow literalism regardless of the genre and context of a passage, then they need to be consistent and not just press *ad hoc* for literalism at Malachi 1:11 and John 6, but everywhere (including the book of Revelation).

Second, the truth is that prophets commonly use designations familiar to their audience to describe the glories of the Messianic age to come (e.g. Is. 2; 11; 19; 60; Mic. 4; Joel 2; Ezek. 40ff.; etc.). For example, Isaiah speaks in a manner very similar to Malachi, when he prophesies of sacrifices and altars that will arise in Egypt, Assyria, and Judah for pure worship of Jehovah. Must we apply the same wooden exegesis to Isaiah that Roman Catholics apply to Malachi and infer that these three nations and no others will literally erect altars for sacrifices and offerings?[\[60\]](#) Obviously not; both Malachi and Isaiah figuratively describe the spread of true worship of God throughout the earth in terms their immediate audience would relish. Hence, Malachi's prophecy does not stand as a support for the sacrificial nature of the Roman Eucharist without implying hermeneutical absurdities.

3. Christ's Words of Institution

Roman Catholic theology maintains that a third proof for the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist is that Christ Himself designated it a sacrifice when he used "biblical sacrificial terms, which express the oblation of a true and proper sacrifice."[\[61\]](#)

Yet Christ's use of sacrificial terms could easily be seen to designate a commemorative meal. This third argument is simply missing too many premises for its desired conclusion, or it assumes Real presence, which we will evaluate in a moment. Nevertheless, as these three primary arguments stand, none of them successfully implies that the Lord's Supper is a Sacrifice.

4. Considerations Precluding the Lord's Supper as a Sacrifice

Beyond the failure of the three primary proofs presented above, there are weighty Biblical considerations which preclude considering the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice.

First, if anything is at the heart of Biblical redemption, it is the claim that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22; Lev. 17:11). Yet, the entire theology of the Eucharist contradicts this

basic Biblical teaching; the Eucharist is dogmatically prescribed as an "unbloody" sacrifice by which the Lord is appeased and for which He "pardons even the gravest crimes and sins." Even the Roman Catholic appeal to the Eucharist's "essential identity" with Calvary cannot solve the dilemma.

Second, the Reformers strongly denounced the Roman Eucharist as a violation of Hebrews 7-11 which teaches that Christ's atonement was "once for all." The now standard Roman Catholic rejoinder is that "the sacrifice of the Mass *is* the sacrifice of the Cross, only presented in a different manner. The aspect of redemption which involved his death is finished, but Christ lives forever to offer, by his very presence in the Mass, his work on the Cross for our sins to the Father in heaven. In no way does this diminish Calvary."[\[62\]](#) Keating claims that "what makes the Mass literally unbelievable for fundamentalists is that they cannot conceive of a single act that is perpetuated through time."[\[63\]](#) In short, Roman Catholic theology denies that the Eucharist repeats the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary; it merely presents anew[\[64\]](#) or re-enacts[\[65\]](#) the once-for-all sacrifice "in order that the redemption won for our race should produce its fruit in us individually."[\[66\]](#)

However, the problem is not that Protestants are uniformly so dull that they cannot conceive the alleged subtleties of the Roman Catholic answer, it's that the answer woefully misses the mark. Contrary to Roman Catholic claims, the theology of the Eucharist still grossly denigrates Calvary since it assumes that Christ's atonement was radically incomplete. Roman theology assumes that Christ did not complete His propitiatory and expiatory work or else there would be no need for a re-enacted sacrifice in the Eucharist.

Yet Scripture presents Christ's atonement as "having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). He did not obtain six months or six day redemption but eternal redemption, since in the past by Calvary "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ" (Heb. 10:10). And by this past, historical "offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" or set apart (Heb. 10:14). Because God's people have by Christ's perfect and complete atoning work received this forgiveness, "there is no longer any offering for sin" (Heb. 10:18). Given these glorious truths, Calvin was absolutely correct when he declared, "The cross of Christ is overthrown as soon as the altar is set up."[\[67\]](#) Hence, the theology of the Roman Eucharist, even granting the "single-act-through-time" rejoinder, still grossly distorts and diminishes Christ's atoning work. Given these constraints, Scripture cannot conceive of the Eucharist as a sacrifice.

Let us now turn to evaluate the Roman Catholic arguments for Real Presence to see if they fare any better.

B. Arguments For and Against "Real" Presence in the Eucharist

Roman Catholic theology also has traditionally forwarded three primary Biblical arguments to support its claims for Christ's Real Presence in its Eucharist. And as before, we will evaluate how more recent Roman Catholicologists have rejoined historical Reformed objections.

Before examining the three arguments, please note that the Roman Catholic use of "Real" in this discussion should not be taken as in opposition to "unreal" or no presence. The Reformed faith as expressed in the *Westminster Confession* strongly endorses "Real" presence as well, though not in the Roman Catholic sense. We maintain that God's Spirit is real, in fact, God is a Spirit, and He is the foundation and precondition of all reality. A Biblical metaphysic, contrary to the Roman Catholic usage of "Real," need not require that reality be grounded in the physical, as is the tendency in those enslaved to an Aristotelian outlook.

1. Christ's Command to Eat His Body

John 6:48ff is the classic focus for the Roman Catholic defense of Real presence. The basic argument is that Christ declares that "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves" (v. 53). Roman Catholic apologists emphasize the fact that Christ does not soften his words, though he lost many disciples. "If they merely had misunderstood him, if they foolishly had taken a metaphor in a literal sense, why did he not call them back and straighten things out?...[They] would have remained had he told them he meant no more than a symbol." [68] Hence, Roman Catholics argue that the simple, literal, obvious meaning of the words teaches the Real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Sheed continues, "There are those, bent upon escaping the plain meaning of the words used, who say the phrase really means 'This represents my body.' It sounds very close to desperation! No competent speaker would ever talk like that, least of all Our Lord, least of all *then*." [69]

First, the whole Roman Catholic case depends upon a strictly literal interpretation of the passage, and so one way to quickly pull the rug out from its defenders is to show that they themselves do not read the text literally. They read John 6 figuratively by not maintaining that (a) Christ is some genuine conglomeration of grain as "bread" -- vv. 48, 51, (b) eating Christ's flesh is an unqualified necessity for salvation -- v. 53, (c) believers actually live within the physical body of Christ -- v. 56, and (d) by eating this bread believers shall never die in history -- v. 58. These are all the "plain" meanings of the words, yet Catholics themselves reject such silly interpretations. Moreover, they can hardly succeed in having others take them seriously if they will not apply their *a priori* commitment to literalism everywhere else in the Bible. Once they concede that the text determines whether it should be taken as poetic, narrative, apocalyptic, dogmatic, etc., they lose the heart of their case from John 6 (Cf. the discussion below regarding figurative interpretation in the institution of the Lord's Supper).

Second, Roman Catholic appeals to John 6 assume that Christ would have no desire to drive away some of His disciples, [70] but this assumption is false given His own reasons for speaking in parables (Matt. 13:13-16; cf. John 6: 44,65).

Third, the gospel of John provides us with a pattern of Christ's dialogues in which the hearers mistakenly interpret Christ literally, and yet Christ does not explicitly correct their misinterpretations. [71] In John 3, Nicodemus mistakenly interprets Christ literally and falsely in regard to the new birth, and Christ rebukes him for misunderstanding spiritual matters. Similarly, in John 4, the woman at the well mistakenly interprets Christ literally and falsely in regard to "living water," and Christ does not explain his words but

rather redirects the discussion.

These patterns match that of the John 6 discussion, except that at least in chapter six, Christ does indicate that he is speaking figuratively, when finally he states, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (v. 63). Karl Keating rejoins that the Protestant interpretation of this verse makes it a "fairly clumsy" circumlocution for "symbolic." Yet Keating himself offers an interpretation which makes the Protestant's case. He argues that Christ is not using "flesh" in the same sense as in vv. 53-59, but rather like John 3:6, in which the contrast is between a spiritual understanding over against a carnal, earthly understanding: "Christ detects in some of his listeners an unsupernatural attitude....[By "flesh," Christ] means instead carnal understanding, as distinguished from spiritual."[\[72\]](#) Protestants heartily agree, and as Leon Morris argues,

there is [in John 6:63] also in the manner of II Cor. 3:6 a contrast between the letter of the words and the spirit. A woodenly literal, flesh-dominated manner of looking at Jesus' words will not yield the correct interpretation. That is granted only to the spiritual man, the Spirit-dominated man. Such words cannot be comprehended by the fleshly, whose horizon is bounded by this earth and its outlook. Only as life-giving Spirit informs him may a man understand these words."[\[73\]](#)

Fourth, beyond the above, most Roman Catholic defenses of John 6 narrowly aim to refute those Zwinglian type understandings of the Eucharist which maintain that the Lord's Supper is merely symbolic, but this is not the Scriptural view, and so many of their rejoinders are irrelevant or do not support "Real" in the Catholic sense over "Real" in the Reformed sense.

As it stands, then, John 6 cannot be used to support the Roman understanding of Real presence.

2. The Institution of the Lord's Supper

Ott contends that "the principal biblical proof for the Eucharistic Real Presence lies in the words of institution."[\[74\]](#) At the institution, Christ declares regarding the bread, "Take, eat; this is My body," and regarding the cup, "this is My blood of the covenant" (Matt. 26:26ff.; Mk. 14:22-34; Lk. 22:15-20). The argument from these verses is that the wording is not figurative, the circumstances are straightforward, and the arguments raised against a literal understanding are flawed. Scott Hahn has also recently argued on the basis of Isaiah 55:11 that Christ's words bring about whatever they ascribe to an object.[\[75\]](#)

First, contrary to the simplistic claim that the words are in *no way* figurative, Scripture provides a wide array of just such covenant language which is obviously figurative. For example, "thus shall my covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:13), "the rock was Christ" (I Cor. 10:4), and most relevant, the lamb "is the Lord's Passover" (Ex. 12:11).[\[76\]](#) The covenantal context bespeaks very important figurative language; a literal interpretation crassly misses the point.

Second, once again, Roman Catholics decidedly don't interpret these passages literally. For example, in

Luke 22:20, Christ declares "*the cup* which is poured out for you *is the new covenant* in my blood." The emphasized text shows that the identification is now made between the wine or cup and an administration of God's grace, instead of Christ's blood. On Roman Catholic premises, we should expect some change in the substance of the wine's container (the cup) itself. Or similarly, promises, commands, and New Covenant mercies are constituted of fermented grapes! Such giant category mistakes are hard to come by.

Third, Hahn's argument that whatever God speaks comes to pass and that by declaring "This is My body" Christ immediately transformed substances requires that *every* time Christ makes a claim the event must come to pass. No one denies the power of Christ's word to create and destroy, but what I do deny is the premise that Christ always chooses to transform reality in this way. The frightful *reductio* that follows from Hahn's premise is that when Christ declared to Peter, "Get thee behind Me Satan" (Matt. 16:23), Peter was transformed into Satan. Similarly when Christ declared that he was the door, vine, or bread, dreadful transformations would have to take place. If Hahn rescinds the universality of his premise, then he simply loses his argument.[\[77\]](#)

Fourth, Protestants have often argued that Christ's presence at the meal was a clear indication to those present that His words did not signify that He was also in the bread and wine. As a wild rejoinder, Roman apologists often claim that "Christ was at the Last Supper in two ways. He was present at the table in a natural way, as were the apostles, and he was present in the eucharistic elements in a sacramental way....There is no contradiction in Christ being both physically and sacramentally present."[\[78\]](#) Whatever "sacramental existence" is, this rejoinder surely forever bans Roman Catholic defenders from appealing to the "plain sense" of the text to buttress their case.

Fifth, Rumble and Carty rejoin the Protestant figurative interpretation of the institution of the Supper by arguing that those who appeal to such texts as "I am the vine" to prove the figurative nature of Christ's statements fail to see that,

There is no logical parallel between the words 'This is My body' and 'I am the vine' or 'I am the door.' For the images of the vine and door can have, of their very nature, a symbolical sense. Christ is like a vine because all the sap of my spiritual life comes from Him. He is like a door since I go to heaven through Him. But a piece of bread is in no way like His flesh. Of its very nature it cannot symbolize the actual body of Christ.[\[79\]](#)

Here we have a distinction with no difference. Contrary to their claim that bread cannot symbolize Christ ("actual body" begs-the-question), one need only see the symbolism in John 6 regarding God's provision of Manna in the wilderness. God nourished and sustained His people by bread in the desert, and now Christ applies that symbolism to Himself who nourishes us spiritually. The symbolism is evident.

As with John 6, Roman Catholic appeals to Christ's words of institution simply do not entail Real presence.

3. Paul and Those Who Have Died

The third and final primary support for Real presence is the appeal to I Corinthians 11:23ff. in which Paul warns him who takes the Lord's Supper unworthily that he "eats and drinks judgment to himself" and that "whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord." Hence, we are told that the passage assumes Real presence since mere symbols could not have such disastrous effects.

Reformed Protestants heartily agree and use this as a proof-text against those who hold to a mere Memorialist view. But again, it does not prove Real presence in the Roman Catholic sense.

In all then, none of the three arguments can be used to support Christ's "Real" presence in the Roman Eucharist. The arguments are either fallacious or do not uniquely support Roman Real presence.

Given such a weak Biblical basis for the Roman Eucharist, I would hope that Roman Catholics would recoil from the grave implications of Real presence, namely, the adoration of the creature over the Creator. The Westminster Confession speaks solemnly and truly when it declares, "The doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine in the substance of Christ's body and blood...is the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries."[\[80\]](#)

III. A Biblical Approach

If we reject the Roman Eucharist as grossly unbiblical, how ought we to understand the Lord's Supper? Below I provide a brief sketch of a Biblical understanding of the Lord's Supper, realizing that each point is worthy of a lengthy discussion in and of itself.

* God's grace is not a material-like object but rather His personal favor and beneficence spiritually communicated to accomplish His purposes.

* God communicates His grace commonly to the unregenerate (Matt. 5:45) and redemptively to His people by various means, including His Word, written and preached, prayer, and the sacraments.

* A sacrament is one of the means of grace and is a perpetual ordinance instituted by Christ to serve as a *sign* and *seal* to those within the covenant of Grace (Gen. 17:7; Matt. 28: 19; 27: 26-28; Rom. 4:11; I Cor. 11:24; Rom. 15:8; Ex. 12:48).

* As a *sign*, a sacrament directs our thoughts to the redemptive reality it represents (Gen. 17:7; Matt. 3:11; I Pet. 3:21; Rom. 2:28, 29).

* As a *seal*, a sacrament serves to authenticate or confirm God's promises to His people individually. The Lord seals or places his mark of ownership on His people to strengthen their faith, unify them, and to separate them from unbelievers (Rom. 4:11; I Cor. 11: 24; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5; 2:11,12; I Cor. 12:13; Ex. 12:48).

* A sacrament is not effective due to anything in itself or its operation but only because the Spirit of God works through it to *curse* or *bless* (I Cor. 10:16; 11:20ff; 12:13). Moreover, since a sacrament is God's Word conveyed in pictorial or ritual form, and God's Word surely effects *blessing* or *cursing* as He determines (Is. 55:11), a sacrament, in turn, assuredly effects God's purposes as well. Hence, a sacrament is not merely a symbol but a powerful means of God's action (I Cor. 10:16; 11:26).

* The New Testament describes only two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 28:19; I Cor. 11:20ff), and these two sacraments are essentially the same as the Old Covenant sacraments of Circumcision and Passover (Col. 2:12; I Cor. 5:7), though the latter anticipated Christ's work, "whereas those of the New Testament are concerned with and point back to Christ and His perfect redemptive sacrifice, which has now been *accomplished*." [\[81\]](#)

* The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ on the night He was betrayed to serve as a commemoration of His perfect and complete sacrifice of Himself as the Lamb of God (Lk. 22:7ff.; I Cor. 10:20; 9:12; 10:10,14,18; Matt. 1:21; Jn. 10:11; Eph. 5:25). The Supper is not a true sacrifice, since Christ's work is complete, but it is a commemoration of that perfect sacrifice.

* Though the common bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are called by the names of what they signify, the body and blood of Christ (cf. Gen. 17:13; Ex. 12:11; Matt. 26:26), the Scripture rejects Transubstantiation (see discussion above). Hence, believers do really, spiritually, "yet not carnally and corporally,...receive and feed upon Christ crucified," [\[82\]](#) the Lamb of God, who thereby effects union, communion, and peace between God and His people.

* This spiritual nourishment of the Lord's Supper furthers believers' growth, as well as a the bond-of-unity to their Lord and each other, and distinguishes them from unbelievers ("incommunicants" vs. "excommunicants").

* The celebration of the Lord's Supper requires due preparation and discernment (I Cor. 11:27-29), and the norm of New Testament practice demonstrates that the Supper ought to be celebrated weekly (Acts 20:7).

The Lord's Supper is indeed the blessed and triumphant meal. It should lead us to glory in the truth that Christ "was pierced for our transgressions" (Is. 53:5) in order that He would "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Our new song is "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (Rev. 5:12) for He "purchased for God with [His] blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). Yet, as we've seen, the Roman Catholic Eucharist makes a mockery of all of this. It transforms the glorious into the grotesque. It denigrates Christ's atoning work and idolatrously confuses the Creator and the creature. Therefore, our deepest and most sincere compassion should constrain us to cry out to our Roman Catholic friends, "Come forth from her midst, My People, and each of you save yourselves from the fierce anger of the Lord" (Jer. 51:45).

Notes

[1] I am grateful to Kark Keating and Gerry Matatics of *Catholic Answers* for comments on an earlier version of this essay.

[2] Lynch, P. (trans.), Bastible, J., (ed), (Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, 1974)

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 219.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 222.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[8] Sheed, F.J., *Theology for Beginners*, (Michigan: Servant Books, 1981), p. 67.

[9] Ott, *Fundamentals*, pp. 254, 255.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 255.

[11] Cited in *Ibid.*

[12] Sheed, *Theology* , p. 72.

[13] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 257.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 256.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

[17] Sheed, *Theology*, p. 75, 67.

[18] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 219.

- [19] *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. Schroeder, H., (Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, 1978), p. 42: VI, 4.
- [20] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 274.
- [21] Sheed, *Theology*, p. 105.
- [22] Cited in Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 312.
- [23] *Ibid.*, p. 312, 313.
- [24] *Ibid.*, p. 326.
- [25] *Ibid.*, p. 332.
- [26] *Ibid.*, p. 329.
- [27] *Ibid.*, p. 327.
- [28] Schroeder, *Trent*, p. 52: VI, 6.
- [29] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 329.
- [30] *Ibid.*, p. 330.
- [31] *Ibid.*
- [32] *Ibid.*, p. 340.
- [33] *Ibid.*, p. 341.
- [34] Sheed, *Theology*, p. 153.
- [35] Stravinskis, P., *The Bible and the Mass: Understanding the Scriptural Basis of the Liturgy*, (Michigan: Servant Publ., 1989), p. 15.
- [36] Howard, T., *Evangelical is Not Enough*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), p. 105.
- [37] Jungmann, J., *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origin and Development*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1986 [1951]), p. 175.

[38] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 402.

[39] Jungmann, *Roman Rite*, p. 183

[40] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 407.

[41] *Ibid.* Jungmann notes that describing the Eucharist as the "sacrifice of the Church" dwindled in conflicts with the Reformers, since the Roman Catholic theologians focused on the question of whether "the Mass was a sacrifice at all, and -- opposing Calvin especially -- whether believing it was contradicted by the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews regarding the *one* sacrifice of Christ" *Ibid.*, p.180.

[42] Stravinskas, *Bible and Mass*, p. 86.

[43] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 409.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 412.

[45] *Ibid.*

[46] Schroeder, *Trent*, p. 146 (22, II).

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 73 (13, III).

[48] Hahn, Scott, "Communion as Reunion," (audio cassette), Saint Joseph Communications, Inc., P.O. Box 720, W. Covina, CA 91793.

[49] Stravinskas, *Bible and Mass*, p. 112.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 76 (13,5).

[51] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 380.

[52] *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXIX, 7.

[53] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 385.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 387.

[55] Stravinskas, *Bible and Mass*, pp. 23, 113. Roman Catholic scholar Joseph Jungmann provides the following unnerving account of the origins of elevating the Eucharist for adoration. Note well how the

people, as opposed to God's command, motivate innovations in divine worship:

"[I]n the twelfth century, we begin to hear accounts of eucharistic miracles. In place of the species of bread, our Lord was seen in His own human appearance....Even if the ordinary Christian acknowledges his unworthiness to be favored by the visible appearance of the Redeemer, he will at least want to see the outward veil beneath which He lies hid....For such a view of the host the first opportunity was offered by an old traditional rite, when at the words *accepit panem* the priest took the bread in his hands, as one our Lord Himself had done, and lifted it slightly. *Urged by the desire of the people*, the priests emphasized and augmented the rite. But since the interest of the people was centered not only on the outward act of oblation but on the presence of the Lord (which was not yet at this moment actual), many bishops were greatly concerned lest the people adore the bread, and so about 1210 a decree of the Bishop of Paris introduced the regulation which determined everywhere that the priest should elevate the Host only after the words of consecration, and so high then that all might see and adore.

Thus the Mass acquired a new center, a new focal point, and the devotion of the people acquired an object which corresponded to their understanding and to which they clung tenaciously....

To look at the sacred Host at the elevation became for many in the later Middle Ages the be-all and end-all of Mass devotion. See the body of Christ at the consecration and be satisfied! In the cities people ran from church to church, to see the elevated Host as often as possible, since rich rewards could be expected from such a practice. People even started lawsuits to ensure their getting a favorable view of the altar. There are examples of congregations where the majority of the faithful waited for the sancebell signalling the approach of the consecration before they entered the church and then after the elevation they rushed out as quickly as they had come in.

Of course such abuses were discountenanced, *but the underlying usage itself obtained ecclesiastical approval*" -- Jungmann, *Roman Rite*, pp. 119-121 [emphasis added].

[56] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 403.

[57] Keating, Karl, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), p. 253.

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 403.

[60] cf. Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, [ed. McNeill, J.T.], (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) p. 1433; Bk. IV, Ch. 18, 4.

[61] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 404.

[62] Brumley, Mark, "Once For All," *This Rock*, June 1990, p. 26. Cf. Sheed, *Theology*, p. 159, 160;

Keating, *Catholicism*, p. 256.

[63] *Ibid.*

[64] Sheed, *Theology*, p. 160.

[65] Jungmann, *Roman Rite*, p. 183.

[66] Sheed, *Theology*, p. 160.

[67] Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 1431; Bk. IV, Ch. 18, 3.

[68] Keating, *Catholicism*, p. 234.

[69] Sheed, *Theology*, p. 154.

[70] Ott, *Fundamentals*, p. 374.

[71] My thanks to Doug Wilson for suggesting this line of thought.

[72] Keating, *Catholicism*, p. 242.

[73] Morris, Leon, *The Gospel According To John*, (Eerdmans Publ. Co.: Grand Rapids, 1984), p. 385.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 374.

[75] Hahn, "Communion as Reunion."

[76] cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 1384; Bk. IV, Ch. 17, 20.

[77] Hahn has also recently attempted another defense of Real presence by means of a rather interesting interpretation in which usually unmentioned details of the Last Supper are shown to have apparently direct ties to the four cups of the Passover. Though worthy of more study in itself, it simply doesn't entail Real presence over a Reformed view of presence -- Hahn, Scott, "The Fourth Cup," (audio cassette) Saint Joseph Communications, Inc.

[78] Keating, *Catholicism*, pp. 243, 244.

[79] Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 236.

[80] *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXIX, 7

[81] Marcel, Pierre, *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism*, (trans. P.E. Hughes) (Greenwood: Attic Press, Inc. 1953, 1981) p. 91.

[82] *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXIX,7.

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Where Judgement Must Began

The modern American gospel of abject tolerance, sad to say, has writhed its way into most Protestant churches, resulting in scandalous lives which shame the name of Christ. While many in the Protestant camp rightly challenge the doctrinal deficiencies of the Roman Catholic church, at least the Roman Catholic church has recently demonstrated its desire for Christian principle by harnessing wayward members, particularly by putting out from its midst those who practice or advocate abortion.

To name just a few examples, the Roman Catholic church has, in recent years, excommunicated a director of Planned Parenthood in Providence, Rhode Island, as well as an abortuary director and abortion-performing obstetrician in Corpus Christi, Texas. And just a while ago, Cardinal O'Connor, the Archbishop of New York, warned Roman Catholic politicians that they will be excommunicated if they continue to support "abortion rights." O'Connor quite clearly had politicians such as Mario "I-am-personally-pro-life-but-publicly-pro-choice" Cuomo in mind when he issued his stern warning.

Predictably, pro-death Catholics (oxymoron?) have decried the Catholic church's ultimatums which, quite frankly, haven't left them too much room to backpedal. Having found themselves against one wall, they have appealed to yet another wall, the wall of separation between church and state. Such appeals to the separation of church and state, however, are misleading, since Scripture itself teaches that the keys (the church) and the sword (the state) belong to two distinct and separate institutions.

Most pro-death pundits, however, mean something completely different when they speak of the separation of church and state: the separation of God from politics. Implicit in this pro-death drivel is the assumption that politics is a religiously neutral something. Contrary to this naive myth of neutrality, politics is ultimately and inescapably religious. Since Christ is Lord of all, His Lordship, by definition, is total. The Lordship of Christ knows no sacred-secular distinction. Hence, the Catholic Church is well within its rights to challenge those within its fold to choose this day whom they will serve, and by doing so, it in no way commingles the institutions of church and state.

Even more distressing than this separation rhetoric is the way some Protestant churches conveniently ignore Scripture's explicit commands to discipline those who continue to sin in an unabated and unrepentant fashion. It's as if such churches take scissors to Biblical passages which offend their modern American sense of libertine tolerance.

Isn't it time that Protestant churches learn that it is God who dictates what He will and will not tolerate? Isn't it time that Protestant churches shed the easy-believism that has wreaked havoc in the church and defamed the name of Christ? Isn't it time that Protestant churches improve on the Catholic cue and begin

to discipline those in their midst who refuse to repent of sins like abortion?

It's time for Protestant churches to realize that judgment must begin in the household of God.

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Purging a Problem

James Sauer

Purgatory presents a problem. Why is it that such a fanciful doctrine should have a following? Why does the Roman Catholic Church hold to a doctrine which cannot be found in the Biblical apostolic tradition? Why is it that even the most conservative Protestants feel happy in using Purgatory as an image of jest or as a descriptive example about the problems of life? Why does it form such a perfect framework for witticism?--as one wag said, "England is the paradise of women, the purgatory of men, and the hell of horses." And why does it have such a profound effect on us artistically? How can a false idea seem so aesthetically true?

I think the answers lie in the fact that the Purgatorial Idea, though doctrinally a heresy, contains a spiritual truth when applied to the human situation. There is something in this false doctrine which reminds us of life. And there's the key.

There is very little, almost a non-existent Biblical case for Purgatory; and there is a most substantial Biblical case against it. Biblical soteriology and eschatology know nothing of it. Even the *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits: "In the final analysis the Catholic doctrine of purgatory is based on tradition not Sacred Scripture." So be it. The Biblical Christian must concur with *The Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles*, on this and like doctrines, that: "The Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Relics, and also the Invocation of Saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather is repugnant to the Word of God." It is a negation of the Scripture itself to hear a Roman pontiff express the following reprieve: "An indulgence of three years is granted to the faithful who read the Books of the Bible for at least a quarter of an hour, with the reverence due to the Divine Word and as a spiritual reading. To the faithful who piously read at least some verses of the Gospel and in addition, while kissing the Gospel Book, devoutly recite one of the following invocations...an indulgence of 500 days is granted." The man who penned these words was ignorant of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All these doctrines and practices are tied to a heterodox way of looking at the process of salvation. Human effort and merit are somehow made part of Christ's work on our behalf. Purgatory is a negation of the doctrine of grace; it is a monument to a theology of works. And that, after all, is the way fallen man likes it. But why, we keep asking, the aesthetic attraction?

Three literary examples readily come to mind when talking about Purgatory; they will help explain this theological error's imaginative power and appeal as an idea.

In Dante's *Divine Comedy* we find a tremendous treatment of Purgatory as an artistic, theological, and even political concept. It forms a hierarchical framework for medieval reality. It is a travelogue of the spiritual realms; a marvelous epic that takes one over the scenic road map of Catholic theology and Renaissance politics. It blends the classical with the Christian, giving guides for both worlds through Virgil and Beatrice. Its complexity is to art what Aquinas' *Summa* is to theology. Factual or false, the reader knows he is in the presence of artistic greatness--because he is in the presence of myth.

In C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, visitors from the Gray City take a day trip to Heaven. For those who stay, the visit is a kind of Purgatory; for those who return, heaven is just another part of Hell. Lewis's literary Purgatory was not intended as a doctrinal explanation of the afterlife. In his introduction he says of the tale: "I intended it to have a moral. But its transmortal conditions are solely an imaginative supposal." While he has his Virgil-esque mentor George MacDonald say: "And if ye come to tell of what ye have seen, make it plain that it was a dream. See ye make it very plain. Give no fool the pretext to think ye are claiming knowledge of what no mortal knows." Though Lewis was a believer in some form of purgatory, as allusions in *Reflections On the Psalms* indicate, he was not fighting for its inclusion as a tenet of mere Christianity. Although he used a purgatorial notion as the basis for his spiritual character studies, he recognized that reality was becoming more focused, more bifurcated, that in fact, a great divorce separated heaven from hell, and that this separation was widening.

The third piece which sheds some light on the sufferings of life is the non-purgatorial, puritanical *Pilgrim's Progress*. This primitive epic, like Dante and Lewis, sees life as a journey. It is a movement from spiritual death to spiritual life. We have in Christian's journey to the Celestial City, with all its pitfalls, snares, sloughs, dungeons, vain fairs, and adventures a picture of redeemed perseverance.

Now the *Comedy* is superior to *Pilgrim's Progress* as a myth and as a piece of art, just as a Cathedral is superior to a little Baptist chapel. And if we were to judge truth on the basis of architecture, as some people do, we might be all Romans, Orthodox, . . . or for that matter, Buddhists or Hindus--they've got wonderful pagodas. And the Mormons have neat temples too. But if we judge the art of Bunyan and Dante doctrinally, and effectually, then we have a different comparison. Bunyan in all his roughness is superior to Dante as the Bible is to Scholastic dialectic. The comparatively unlettered Bunyan towers over the urbane Dante; not by any worldly standard, but by every eternal standard. There will be few men in Heaven who have been led there by Dante's work, regardless of its obvious artistic superiority. There will be throngs in Heaven who will bless Bunyan the Evangelist, albeit the inferior artist, for leading them to the Narrow gate. Lewis, like a true Anglican--half Catholic, half Reformed--stands between them both.

Whatever truth there lies in Purgatory comes from its imaginative projection of the Christian life. For the Christian, life is a Bunyan-like sojourn, a Dante-esque cathartic experience, a Lewis-like movement from reprobation to salvation. It is suffering; it is cleansing. This is the fundamental Roman truth. Every piece of art is a little Purgatory: a place of spiritual battle, a time of playful suffering, a projection of human healing. It is in these artistic purgatories where we try to live out our metaphysical realities. It is one thing to use purgatory as an artistic platform; it is quite another thing to proclaim it as a doctrine.

The fundamental Roman error is the transference of this image, this imaginary doctrine, into the eternal realms. Purgatory is the here and now: Today is the day of damnation, today the day of cleansing, today the day of salvation. The doctrine negates the atonement, empties the gospel, encourages antinomianism, institutionalizes a system of works, and opens the door to work upon work of supererogation.

The failure to preach the true nature of the gospel results in the creation of untold spiritual miseries. Men fail to turn to God for their present salvation, since they know it can be purchased later; they fail to live a holy life now, since they know that their sins can be expiated by later efforts. They labor in spiritual solidarity with the dead through senseless devotions, masses, candles, prayers, pilgrimages, and rites, hoping to transfer merit to those who are either beyond hope, or who are presently in bliss. And they are unaware, that bankrupt in their own sins, they have no merit to transfer. They blaspheme the gospel with their indulgent works of supererogation; they attempt to buy the Holy Spirit's gift through pious effort. Purgatory produces a gospel of works extended into the afterlife. Not content to live a life of Semi-Pelagian heresy in this world, they extend it into the next. "The moment a coin in the coffer pings, out from purgatory a sinner springs." No wonder Luther penned his angry theses.

The value of purgatory is that of all creative fiction; it forms a framework for a Christian parable. It is not to be confused with Christian doctrine, wherein it forms the framework for damnation--as all heresy ultimately does. Purgatory must lead men away from God because it leads men away from the cross.

But do not let it be said that we are not imaginative men. Perhaps there is a purgatory. Perhaps there is this intermediate place "where the souls of those who die in the state of grace, but not free from all imperfection, make expiation for unforgiven venial sins or for the temporal punishment due to venial and mortal sins that have already been forgiven. . . ." Perhaps being forgiven of our sins does not really mean that we are forgiven by Christ at all. Perhaps Christ's work on our behalf wasn't enough. Perhaps there are a hundred strange, absurd doctrines not found in the Bible. Perhaps all people who purposely sing off key will be ushered into heaven at the Second Coming. Perhaps the wearing of a piece of blessed brown cloth around your neck will entitle you to special treatment from the Almighty--you know, a kind of "This coupon entitles you to Eternal Life" special. Perhaps giving money, or lighting candles, or buying indulgences, or saying prayers, or making pilgrimages can work off a debt to God. Perhaps God accepts a line of credit: just make your easy monthly payments to the Bank of the Rock, and all will be well. Perhaps all this is true and our ancient Biblical faith is false. For if this is true, then clearly the Bible is in error. Call this new faith whatever you want, but don't call it Christianity. Call this ancient error what you will; but don't call it the Apostolic tradition.

As for those who do not follow the Purgatorial faith, we will continue to gather wisdom from the paradigm of the *Divine Comedy* and enjoy parabolic truth from *The Great Divorce*. For our lives are, indeed, "living sacrifices" and our journey is a *Pilgrim's Progress*. Dante for us is a poet; Lewis a teller of parables; Bunyan a preacher. In its fictive form, the Purgatorial idea -- like any piece of science fiction -- gives the artist the ability to clothe spiritual truth. As Lewis says: "Do not ask a vision in a dream more than a vision in a dream can give."

As for spiritual purgation, we will be content with the cleansing of the Cross.

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Preface

For more than a century, J. C. Ryle was best known for his plain and lively writings on practical and spiritual themes. His great aim in his entire ministry was to encourage strong and serious Christian living. But Ryle was not naive in his understanding of how this should be done. He recognized that, as a pastor of the flock of God, he had a responsibility to guard Christ's sheep and to warn them whenever he saw approaching dangers. His penetrating comments are as wise and relevant today as they were when he first wrote them. His sermons and other writings have been consistently recognized, and their usefulness and impact have continued to the present day, even in the outdated English of the author's own day.

Why then should expositions already so successful and of such stature and proven usefulness require adaptation, revision, rewrite or even editing? The answer is obvious. To increase its usefulness to today's reader, the language in which it was originally written needs updating.

Though his sermons have served other generations well, just as they came from the pen of the author in the nineteenth century, they still could be lost to present and future generations, simply because, to them, the language is neither readily nor fully understandable.

My goal, however, has not been to reduce the original writing to the vernacular of our day. It is designed primarily for you who desire to read and study comfortably and at ease in the language of our time. Only obviously archaic terminology and passages obscured by expressions not totally familiar in our day have been revised. However, neither Ryle's meaning nor intent has been tampered with.

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Idolatry

by

J. C. Ryle

(1816-1900)

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"Flee from idolatry"

(1 Corinthians 10:14)

Our text for today may seem at first to be hardly needed in our country. In an age of education and intelligence, we might almost fancy it is waste of time to tell us to "flee from idolatry."

I am bold to say that this is a great mistake. I believe that we have come to a time when the subject of idolatry demands a thorough and searching investigation. I believe that idolatry is near us, all around us, and in the midst of us, to a very fearful extent. The second commandment, in one word, is in danger. "The plague is begun."

Without further preface, I propose to consider the following four points:

I. The definition of idolatry. WHAT IS IT?

II. The cause of idolatry. WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

III. The form idolatry assumes in the visible Church of Christ. WHERE IS IT?

IV. The ultimate termination of idolatry. WHAT WILL END IT?

I feel that the subject is encompassed with many difficulties. Our lot is cast in an age when truth is constantly in danger of being sacrificed to "toleration," "love," and "peace," falsely so-called. Nevertheless, I cannot forget, as a minister, that the Church has given little or no warnings on the subject of idolatry; and, unless I am greatly mistaken, truth about idolatry is, in the highest sense, truth for the times.

I. Let me, then, first of all supply a definition of idolatry. Let me show WHAT IT IS.

It is of the utmost importance that we should understand this. Unless I make this clear, I can do nothing with the subject. Vagueness and indistinctness prevail upon this point, as upon almost every other in religion. The Christian who desires not be continually running aground in his spiritual voyage, must have his channel well buoyed, and his mind well stored with clear definitions.

I say then, that Idolatry is a worship, in which the honor due to the Triune God,

and to God only, is given to some of His creatures, or to some invention of His creatures.

It may vary. It may assume different forms, according to the ignorance or the knowledge—the civilization or the barbarism, of those who offer it. It may be grossly absurd and ludicrous, or it may closely border on truth, and being most superficially defended. But whether in the adoration of the idol of Juggernaut, or in the adoration of the Pope in St. Peter's at Rome, the principle of idolatry is in reality the same. In either case the honor due to God is turned aside from Him, and bestowed on that which is not God. And whenever this is done, whether in heathen temples or in professedly Christian Churches, there is an act of idolatry.

It is not necessary, for a man to formally deny God and Christ, in order to be an idolater. Far from it. Professed reverence for the God of the Bible and actual idolatry, are perfectly compatible. They have often been done side by side, and they still do so. The children of Israel never thought of renouncing God when they persuaded Aaron to make the golden calf. "Here are your gods," they said, "who brought you up out of Egypt." And the feast in honor of the calf was kept as a "festival to the LORD (Jehovah)" (Exodus 32:4, 5).

Jeroboam, again, never pretended to ask the ten tribes to cast off their allegiance to the God of David and Solomon. When he set up the calves of gold in Dan and Bethel, he only said, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28).

In both instances, we should observe, the idol was not set up as a rival to God, but under the pretense of being a help—a steppingstone to His service. But, in both instances, a great sin was committed. The honor due to God was given to a visible representation of Him. The majesty of Jehovah was offended. The second commandment was broken. There was, in the eyes of God, a flagrant act of idolatry.

Let us mark this well. It is high time to dismiss from our minds those loose ideas about idolatry, which are common in this day. We must not think, as many do, that there are only two sorts of idolatry—the spiritual idolatry of the man who loves his wife, or child, or money more than God; and the open, gross idolatry of the man who bows down to an image of wood, or metal, or stone, because he knows no better. We may rest assured that idolatry is a sin, which occupies a far wider field than this. It is not merely a thing in pagan lands, that we may hear of and pity at missionary meetings; nor yet is it a thing confined to our own hearts, that we may confess before the mercy-seat upon our knees. It is a pestilence that walks in the Church of the Living Christ to a much greater extent than many suppose. It is an evil that, like the man of sin, "that sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

It is a sin that we all need to watch and pray against continually. It creeps into our religious worship unnoticed, and is upon us before we are aware. Those are tremendous words which Isaiah spoke to the faithful Jew—not to the worshiper of Baal, remember, to the man who actually came to the temple (Isaiah 66:3): "Whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man, and whoever offers a

lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol."

This is that sin which God has especially denounced in His Word. One commandment out of ten is devoted to the prohibition of it. Not one of all the ten contains such a solemn declaration of God's character, and of His judgments against the disobedient: "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" (Exodus 20:5). Not one, perhaps, of all the ten is so emphatically repeated and amplified, and especially in the fourth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. This is the sin, of all others, to which the Jews seem to have been most inclined to commit before the destruction of Solomon's temple. What is the history of Israel under their judges and kings but a sorrowful record of repeated falling away into idolatry? Again and again we read of "high places" and "false gods." Again and again we read of captivities and chastisements on account of idolatry. Again and again we read of a return to the old sin. It seems as if the love of idols among the Jews was naturally bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. The besetting sin of the Old Testament Church, in one word, was idolatry. In the face of the most elaborate ceremonial ordinances that God ever gave to His people, Israel was incessantly turning aside after idols, and worshipping the work of men's hands.

This is the sin, of all others, which has brought down the heaviest judgments on the visible Church. It brought on Israel the armies of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. It scattered the ten tribes, burned up Jerusalem, and carried Judah and

Benjamin into captivity. It brought on the Eastern Churches, in later days, the overwhelming flood of the Muslim invasion, and turned many a spiritual garden into a wilderness. The desolation which reigns where Cyprian and Augustine once preached, the living death in which the Churches of Asia Minor and Syria are buried, are all attributable to this sin. All testify to the same great truth which the Lord proclaims in Isaiah: "I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols" (Isaiah 42:8).

Let us gather up these things in our minds, and ponder them well. Idolatry is a subject which, in every Christian Church, that wants to keep herself pure, should be thoroughly examined, understood, and known. It is not for nothing that Paul lays down the stern command, "Flee from idolatry."

II. Let me show, in the second place, the cause to which idolatry may be traced. **WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?**

To the man who takes an extravagant and exalted view of human intellect and reason, idolatry may seem absurd. He fancies it too irrational for any but weak minds to be endangered by it.

To a mere superficial thinker about Christianity, the peril of idolatry may seem very small. Whatever commandments are broken, such a man will tell us, professing Christians are not very likely to transgress the second.

Now, both these persons betray a woeful ignorance of human nature. They do not see that there are secret roots of idolatry within us all. The prevalence of

idolatry in all ages among the heathen must necessarily puzzle the one—the warnings of Protestant ministers against idolatry in the Church must necessarily appear uncalled for to the other. Both are alike blind to its cause.

The cause of all idolatry is the natural corruption of man's heart. That great family disease, with which all the children of Adam are infected from their birth, shows itself in this, as it does in a thousand other ways. Out of the same fountain from which "come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly" (Mark 7:21, 22)—out of that same fountain arise false views of God, and false views of the worship due to Him, and, therefore, when the Apostle Paul tells the Galatians (Galatians 5:20) what are the "works of the flesh," he places prominently among them "idolatry."

Man will have some kind of a religion. God has not left Himself without a witness in us all, fallen as we are. Like old inscriptions hidden under mounds of rubbish, there is a dim something—engraved at the bottom of man's heart, however faint and half-erased—a something which makes him feel he must have a religion and a worship of some kind. The proof of this is to be found in the history of voyages and travels in every part of the globe. The exceptions to the rule are so few, if indeed there are any, that they only confirm its truth. Man's worship in some dark corner of the earth may rise no higher than a vague fear of an evil spirit, and a desire to appease him; but a worship of some kind man will have.

But then comes in the effect of the fall. Ignorance of God, carnal and low

conceptions of His nature and attributes, earthly and sensual notions of the service, which is acceptable to Him, all characterize the religion of the natural man. There is a craving in his mind after something he can see, and feel, and touch. He is eager to bring his God down to his own crawling level. He would make his religion a thing of sense and sight. He has no idea of the religion of heart, and faith, and spirit. In short, just as he is willing to live on God's earth, until renewed by grace, a fallen and degraded life, so he has no objection to the worship of idols, until renewed, by the Holy Spirit. In one word, idolatry is a natural product of man's heart. It is a weed, which like the uncultivated earth, the heart is always ready to bring forth.

And now does it surprise us, when we read of the constantly recurring idolatries of the Old Testament Church, of Baal, and Moloch, and Ashtaroath—of high places and hill altars, and groves and images—and this in the full light of the Mosaic ceremonial? Let us cease to be surprised. It can be accounted for. There is a cause.

Does it surprise us when we read in history, how idolatry crept in by degrees into the Christian Church, how little by little it thrust out Gospel truth, until, in Canterbury, men offered more at the shrine of Thomas a'Becket, than they did at the shrine of the Virgin Mary, and more at the shrine of Virgin Mary, than at the shrine of Christ? Let us cease to be surprised. It is all intelligible. There is a cause.

Does it surprise us when we hear of men going over from Protestant Churches to the Roman Catholic Church, in the present day? Do we think it impossible,

and feel as if we ourselves could never forsake a pure form of worship for one like that of the Roman Catholic Church? Let us cease to be surprised. There is a solution for the problem. There is a cause.

That cause is nothing else but the corruption of man's heart. There is a natural proneness and tendency in us all, to give God a sensual, carnal worship, and not that, which is commanded in His Word. We are always ready, by reason of our laziness and unbelief, to devise visible helps and stepping-stones in our approaches to Him, and ultimately to give these inventions of our own the honor due to Him. In fact, idolatry is all natural, downhill, easy, like the broad way. Spiritual worship is all of grace, all uphill, and all against the grain. Any worship whatsoever is more pleasing to the natural heart, than worshipping God in the way, which our Lord Christ describes, "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23).

I, for one, am not surprised at the quantity of idolatry existing, both in the world and in the visible Church. I believe it perfectly possible that we may yet live to see far more of it than some have ever dreamed of. It would never surprise me if some mighty personal Antichrist were to arise before the end—mighty in intellect, mighty in talents for government, yes, and mighty, perhaps, in miraculous gifts too. It would never surprise me to see such a one as him setting up himself in opposition to Christ, and forming an Agnostic conspiracy against the Gospel.

I believe that many would rejoice to do him honor, who now glory in saying, "We will not have this Christ to reign over us." I believe that many would make a god of him, and reverence him as an incarnation of truth, and

concentrate their idea of hero-worship on his person. I advance it as a possibility, and no more. But of this at least I am certain, that no man is less safe from danger of idolatry than the man who now sneers at every form of religion; and that from belief to unbelief, from Atheism to the grossest idolatry, there is but a single step. Let us not think, that idolatry is an old-fashioned sin, into which we are never likely to fall. "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" We shall do well to look into our own hearts: the seeds of idolatry are all there. We should remember the words of Paul, "Flee from idolatry."

III. Let me show, in the third place, the forms which idolatry has assumed, and does assume in the visible Church. WHERE IS IT?

I believe there never was a more baseless fabric than the theory, which obtains favor with many—that the promises of perpetuity and preservation from apostasy, belong to the visible Church of Jesus Christ. It is a theory supported neither by Scripture nor by facts. The Church against which "the gates of Hades will not overcome," is not the visible Church, but the whole body of the elect, the company of true believers out of every nation and people. The greater part of the visible Church has frequently maintained gross heresies. The particular branches of it are never secure against deadly error, both in faith and practice. A departure from the faith—a falling away—a leaving of first love in any branch of the visible Church, need never surprise a careful reader of the New Testament.

That idolatry would arise, seems to have been the expectation of the Apostles,

even before the canon of the New Testament was closed. It is remarkable to observe how Paul dwells on this subject in his Epistle to the Corinthians. If any Corinthian called a brother an idolater, with such a man the members of the Church were not to even eat with (1 Corinthians 5:11). "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were" (1 Corinthians 10:7). He says again, in our text for today, "My dear friends, flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14). When he writes to the Colossians, he warns them against the "worshipping of angels" (Colossians 2:18). And John closes his first Epistle with the solemn injunction, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). It is impossible not to feel that all these passages imply an expectation that idolatry would soon arise, among professing Christians.

The last passage I will call attention to, is the conclusion of the ninth chapter of Revelation. We read there, in the twentieth verse: "The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk." Now, I am not going to offer any comment on the chapter in which this verse occurs. I know well there is a difference of opinion as to the true interpretation of the plagues predicted in it. I only venture to assert, that it is the highest probability these plagues are to fall upon the visible Church of Jesus Christ; and the highest improbability, that John was here prophesying about the heathen, who never heard the Gospel. And this once conceded, the fact that idolatry is a predicted sin of the visible Church, does seem most conclusively and forever established.

And now, if we turn from the Bible to facts, what do we see? I reply, without a

second thought, that there is unmistakable proof that Scripture warnings and predictions were not spoken without cause, and that idolatry has actually arisen in the visible Church of Christ, and does still exist.

The rise and progress of the evil in former days, we shall find well summed up in the sermon "Peril of Idolatry." To that I beg to refer all Christians, reminding them once for all, how, even in the fourth century, Jerome complains, "that the false doctrine of images have come in, and passed to the Christians from the Gentiles;" and Eusebius says, "We do see, that images of Peter and Paul, and of our Savior Himself are made, which I think to have been derived and kept indifferently by an heathenish custom." There we may also read,

1. How Pontius Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in the fifth century, caused the walls of the temples to be painted with stories taken out of the Old Testament; that the people looking at and considering these pictures might the better abstain from too much excess in their lives. But from learning by painted stories, it came little by little to become idolatry.

2. How Gregory the first, Bishop of Rome, in the beginning of the seventh century, allowed images in the churches.

3. How Irene, mother of Constantine the Sixth, in the eighth century, assembled a Council at Nicaea, and procured a decree that images should be put up in all the churches of Greece, and that honor and worship should be given to the images.

And there we may read the conclusion with which the sermon winds up its historical summary, "that the congregation and the clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sorts, and degrees of men, women and children of whole Christendom, have been at once drowned in abominable idolatry, of all other vices most detested by God, and most damnable to man, and that in the space of 800 years."

This is a mournful account, but it is only too true. There can be little doubt the evil began even before the time just mentioned by the sermon writer. No man, I think, need wonder at the rise of idolatry in the Early Church who considers calmly the excessive reverence which it paid, from the very first, to the visible parts of religion. I believe that no impartial man can read the language used by nearly all the Fathers about the Church, the bishops, the ministry, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the martyrs, and the dead saints, generally—no man can read it without being struck with the wide difference between their language and the language of Scripture on such subjects. You seem at once to be in a new atmosphere. You feel that you are no longer treading on holy ground. You find that things, which in the Bible are evidently of second-rate importance, are here made of first-rate importance.

You find the things of sense and sight exalted to a position in which Paul, and Peter, and James, and John, speaking by the Holy Spirit, never for a moment placed them. It is not merely the weakness of uninspired writings that you have to complain of; it is something worse; it is a new system. And what is the explanation of all this? It is, in one word, that you have gotten into a region where the malaria of idolatry has begun to arise. You perceive the first

workings of the mystery of iniquity. You detect the buds of that huge system of idolatry which, as the sermon describes, was afterwards formally acknowledged, and ultimately blossomed in every part of Christendom.

But let us now turn from the past to the present. Let us examine the question which most concerns ourselves. Let us consider in what form idolatry presents itself to us, as a sin of the visible Church of Christ in our own time.

I find no difficulty in answering this question. I feel no hesitation in affirming that idolatry never yet assumed a more glaring form than it does in the Roman Catholic Church in this present day.

And here I come to a subject on which it is hard to speak, because of the times we live in. But the whole truth ought to be spoken by ministers of Christ, without respect of times and prejudices. And I could not lie down in peace, after preaching on idolatry, if I did not declare my solemn conviction that idolatry is one of the crying sins of which the Roman Catholic Church is guilty. I say this in all sadness. I say it, acknowledging fully that we have our faults in the Protestant Church; and practically, perhaps, in some quarters, a little idolatry. But from formal, recognized, systematic idolatry, I believe we are almost entirely free. While, as for the Roman Catholic Church, if there is not in her worship, an enormous quantity of systematic, organized idolatry, I frankly confess then I do not know what idolatry is.

(a) To my mind, it is idolatry to have images and pictures of saints in churches, and to give them a reverence for which there is no warrant or precedent in

Scripture. And if this is so, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(b) To my mind, it is idolatry to invoke the Virgin Mary and the saints in glory, and to address them in language never addressed in Scripture except to the Holy Trinity. And if this be so, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(c) To my mind, it is idolatry to bow down to mere material things, and attribute to them a power and sanctity far exceeding that attached to the ark or altar of the Old Testament dispensation; and a power and sanctity, too, for which there is not a speck of foundation in the Word of God. And if this be so, with the holy coat of Treves, and the wonderfully-multiplied wood of the true cross, and a thousand other so-called relics in my mind's eye, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(d) To my mind, it is idolatry to worship that which man's hands have made—to call it God, and adore it when lifted up before our eyes. And if this be so, with the notorious doctrine of transubstantiation, and the elevation of the host in my recollection, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(e) To my mind, it is idolatry to make ordained men mediators between ourselves and God, robbing, as it were, our Lord Jesus Christ of His office, and giving them an honor which even Apostles and angels in Scripture flatly repudiate. And if this is so, with the honor paid to Popes and Priests before my eyes, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

I know well that language like this jars the minds of many. Men love to shut their eyes against evils which is disagreeable. They will not see things which involve unpleasant consequences. That the Roman Catholic Church is an erring church, they will acknowledge. That she is idolatrous, they will deny.

They tell us that the reverence which the Roman Catholic Church gives to saints and images does not amount to idolatry. They inform us that there are distinctions between the kinds of worship—that God deserves the “strong worship” and the saints and images get a lesser worship. That there is a distinction between a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of intercession, which clear the church of the charge of idolatry. My answer is, that the Bible knows nothing of such distinctions; and that, in the actual practice of the great bulk of Roman Catholics, there is no distinction at all.

They tell us, that it is a mistake to suppose that Roman Catholics really worship the images and pictures before which they perform acts of adoration; that they only use them as helps to devotion, and in reality look far beyond them. My answer is, that many a heathen could say just as much for his idolatry—that it is well-known, in former days, they did say so—and that in Hindu religion many idol-worshippers do say the same even in the present day. But the apology does not help. The terms of the second commandment are too stringent. It prohibits "bowing down," as well as worshipping. And the very anxiety which the Roman Catholic Church has often displayed to exclude that second commandment from her catechisms, is of itself a great fact which speaks volumes to a candid observer.

They tell us that we have no evidence for the assertions we make on this subject; that we found our charges on the abuses which prevail among the ignorant members of the Roman Catholic Church; and that it is absurd to say that a Church containing so many wise and learned men, is guilty of idolatry. My answer is, that the devotional books in common use among Roman Catholics supply us with unmistakable evidence. Let any one examine that well known Catholic book, "The Garden of the Soul," if he doubts my assertion, and read the language there addressed to the Virgin Mary. Let him remember that this language is addressed to a woman, who, though highly favored, and the mother of our Lord, was yet one of our fellow-sinners—to a woman, who actually confesses her need of a Savior for herself. She says, "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47).

Let him examine this language in the light of the New Testament, and then let him tell us fairly, whether the charge of idolatry is not correctly made. But I answer, beside this, that we need no better evidence than that which is supplied in the city of Rome itself. What do men and women do under the light of the Pope's own countenance? What is the religion that prevails around St. Peter's and under the walls of the Vatican? What is Romanism at Rome, unfettered, unshackled, and free to develop itself in full perfection? Let a man honestly answer these questions, and I ask no more. Let him read such a book as Seymour's "Pilgrimage to Rome," or "Alford's Letters," and ask any visitor to Rome if the picture is too highly colored. Let him do this, I say, and I believe he cannot avoid the conclusion, that Romanism in perfection is a gigantic system of Church-worship, Sacrament-worship, Mary-worship, saint-worship, image-worship, relic-worship, and priest-worship—that it is, in one word, a

huge organized idolatry.

I know how painful these things sound to many ears. To me it is no pleasure to dwell on the shortcomings of any who profess and call themselves Christians. I can truly say, that I have said what I have said with pain and sorrow.

I draw a wide distinction between the accredited dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church and the private opinions of many of her members. I believe and hope that many a Roman Catholic is in his heart inconsistent with his profession, and is better than the Church to which he belongs. I believe that many a poor Italian at this day is worshipping with an idolatrous worship, simply because he knows no better. He has no Bible to instruct him. He has no faithful minister to teach him. He has the fear of the priest before his eyes, if he dares to think for himself. He has no money to enable him to get away from the bondage he lives under, even if he feels a desire. I remember all this, and I say that the Italian eminently deserves our sympathy and compassion. But all this must not prevent my saying that the Roman Catholic Church is an idolatrous Church.

I would not be faithful if I said less. The Church of which I am a minister has spoken out most strongly on the subject. The sermon on the "Perils of Idolatry," and the solemn protest in our own Church of England writings, which denounces the adoration of the Sacramental bread and wine as "idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians," are plain evidences that I have said no more than the mind of my own Church. And in a day like this, when some are disposed to break away to the Roman Catholic Church, and many are shutting their eyes to her real character, and wanting us to be reunited to her, in a day

like this, my own conscience would rebuke me if I did not warn men plainly that the Roman Catholic Church is an idolatrous Church, and that if they will join her they are "joining themselves to idols."

But I will not dwell any longer on this part of my subject. The main point I wish to impress on men's minds is this—that idolatry has decidedly manifested itself in the visible Church of Christ, and nowhere so decidedly as in the Roman Catholic Church.

IV. And now let me show, in the last place, the ultimate termination of all idolatry. WHAT WILL END IT?

I consider that man's soul must be in an unhealthy state who does not long for the time when idolatry shall be no more. That heart can hardly be right with God which can think of the millions who are sunk in heathenism, or honor the false prophet Mohammed, or daily offer up prayers to the Virgin Mary, and not cry, "O my God, when shall the end come of these things? How long, O Lord, how long?"

Here, as in other subjects, the sure word of prophecy comes to our aid. The end of all idolatry shall one day come. Its doom is fixed. Its overthrow is certain. Whether in heathen temples, or in so-called Christian Churches, idolatry shall be destroyed at the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then shall the prophecies be fulfilled:

"The idols will totally disappear" (Isaiah 2:18).

"I will destroy your carved images and your sacred stones from among you; you will no longer bow down to the work of your hands" (Micah 5:13).

"The LORD will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the land. The nations on every shore will worship him, every one in its own land" (Zephaniah 2:11).

"On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more," declares the LORD Almighty. I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land" (Zechariah 13:2).

In a word the 97th Psalm will then receive its fulfillment: "The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory. All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols—worship him, all you gods!"

The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is that blessed hope which should always comfort the children of God under the present dispensation. It is the guiding star by which we must journey. It is the one point on which all our expectations should be concentrated. "For in just a very little while, 'He who is

coming will come and will not delay" (Hebrews 10:37). Our David shall no longer dwell in Adullam, followed by a despised few, and rejected by the many. He shall take to Himself His great power, and reign, and cause every knee to bow before Him.

Till then our redemption is not perfectly enjoyed; as Paul tells the Ephesians, "You were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). Till then our salvation is not completed; as Peter says of Christians, "who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5). Till then our knowledge is still defective; as Paul tells the Corinthians: "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). In short, our best things are yet to come.

But in the day of our Lord's return every desire shall receive its fulfillment. We shall no more be pressed down and worn out with the sense of constant failure, feebleness, and disappointment. In His presence we shall find there is a fullness of joy; and when we awake we will be satisfied with seeing His likeness (Psalm 16:11; 17:15).

There are many abominations now in the visible Church, over which we can only sigh and cry, like the faithful in Ezekiel's day (Ezekiel 9:4). We cannot remove them. The wheat and the weeds will grow together until the harvest. But a day comes when the Lord Jesus shall once more purify His temple, and cast forth everything that defiles. He shall do that work of which the doing of

Hezekiah and Josiah were a faint type long ago. He shall cast forth the images, and purge out idolatry in every shape.

Who is there now that longs for the conversion of the heathen world? You will not see it in its fullness until the Lord's appearing. Then, and not till then, will that often misapplied text be fulfilled: "In that day men will throw away to the rodents and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship" (Isaiah 2:20).

Who is there now that longs for the redemption of Israel? You will never see it in its perfection till the Redeemer comes to Zion. Idolatry in the professing Church of Jesus Christ has been one of the mightiest stumbling blocks in the Jew's way. When it begins to fall, the veil over the heart of Israel shall begin to be taken away (Psalm 102:16).

Who is there now that longs for the fall of Antichrist, and the purification of the Roman Catholic Church? I believe that will never be until the winding up of this dispensation. That vast system of idolatry may be consumed and wasted by the Spirit of the Lord's mouth, but it shall never be destroyed excepting by the brightness of His coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Who is there now that longs for a perfect Church—a Church in which there shall not be the slightest taint of idolatry? You must wait for the Lord's return. Then, and not till then, shall we see a perfect Church—a Church having neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing (Ephesians 5:27)—a Church of which all the members shall be regenerate, and every one a child of God.

If these things be so, men need not wonder that we urge on them the study of prophecy, and that we charge them above all to grasp firmly the glorious doctrine of Christ's second appearing and kingdom. This is the "light shining in a dark place" to which we shall do well to take heed. Let others indulge their fancy if they will, with the vision of an imaginary "Church of the future." Let the children of this world dream of some "coming man," who is to understand everything, and set everything right. They are only sowing to themselves bitter disappointment. They will awake to find their visions baseless and empty as a dream. It is to such as these that the Prophet's words may be well applied: "But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment" (Isaiah 50:11).

But let your eyes look onward to the day of Christ's second advent. That is the only day when every abuse shall be rectified, and every corruption and source of sorrow completely purged away. Waiting for that day, let us each work on and serve our generation; not idle, as if nothing could be done to check evil, but not disheartened because we do not yet see all things put under our Lord. After all, the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Let us wait, I say, on the Lord.

If these things be so, men need not wonder that we warn them to beware of all leanings towards the Roman Catholic Church. Surely, when the mind of God about idolatry is so plainly revealed to us in His Word, it seems the height of infatuation in anyone to join a Church so steeped in idolatries as the Roman

Catholic Church. To enter into communion with her, when God is saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4)—to seek her when the Lord is warning us to leave her—to become her subjects when the Lord's voice is crying, "Escape for your life, flee from the wrath to come;" all this is mental blindness indeed, a blindness like that of him, who, though forewarned, embarks in a sinking ship—a blindness which would be almost incredible, if our own eyes did not see examples of it continually.

We must all be on our guard. We must take nothing for granted. We must not hastily suppose that we are too wise to be ensnared. Those who preach must cry aloud and spare not, and allow no false tenderness to make them hold their peace about the heresies of the day. Those who hear must have the belt of truth buckled around their waist, and their minds stored with clear prophetic views of the end to which all idol-worshippers must come. Let us all try to realize that the last days of the world are upon us, and that the termination of all idolatry is hurrying on. Is this a time for a man to draw nearer to the Roman Catholic Church? Is it not rather a time to draw further back and stand clear, lest we be involved in her downfall?

Is this a time to whitewash Rome's manifold corruptions, and refuse to see the reality of her sins? Surely we ought rather to be doubly jealous of everything of a Roman Catholic tendency in religion—doubly careful that we do not hint at any treason against our Lord Christ—and doubly ready to protest against unscriptural worship of every description. Once more, then, I say, let us remember that the destruction of all idolatry is certain, and remembering that,

beware of the Roman Catholic Church.

The subject I now touch upon is of deep and pressing importance, and demands the serious attention of all Protestants. It is vain to deny that a large party of clergy and laity in the present day are moving heaven and earth to reunite the Protestant Church with the idolatrous Roman Catholic Church. The publication of that monstrous book, Dr. Pusey's "Eirenicon" and the formation of a "Society for Promoting the Union of Christendom," are plain evidence of what I mean.

The existence of such a movement as this will not surprise any one who has carefully watched the history of the Church during the last forty years. The tendency of Ritualism has been steadily moving towards Rome. Hundreds of men and women have fairly and honestly left our ranks, and become Catholics. But many hundreds more have stayed behind, and are yet nominal Christians within our midst. The pompous semi-Roman Catholic ceremonies, which has been introduced into many churches, has prepared men's minds for changes. An lavishly theatrical and idolatrous mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper has paved the way for transubstantiation. A regular process of unprotestantizing has been long and successfully at work. The poor old Church stands on an inclined plane. Her very existence, as a Protestant Church, is in peril.

I hold, for one, that this Roman Catholic movement ought to be steadily and firmly resisted. Notwithstanding the rank, the learning, and the devotedness of some of its advocates, I regard it as a most mischievous, soul-ruining and unscriptural movement. To say that reunion with Rome would be an insult to our martyred Reformers, is a very light thing, it is far more than this: it would

be a sin and an offense against God! Rather than be reunited with the idolatrous Roman Catholic Church, I would willingly see my own beloved Church perish and go to pieces. Rather than become Roman Catholic once more, she would be better dead!

Unity in the abstract is no doubt an excellent thing: but unity without truth is useless. Peace and uniformity are beautiful and valuable: but peace without the Gospel—peace based on a common church government, and not on a common faith—is a worthless peace, not deserving of the name. When Rome has repealed the decrees of Trent, and her additions to the Creed—when Rome has recanted her false and unscriptural doctrines—when Rome has formally renounced image-worship, Mary-worship, and transubstantiation—then, and not till then, will it be time to talk of reunion with her. Till then there is a gulf between us which cannot be honestly bridged. Till then I call on all Christians to resist to the death this idea of reunion with Rome. Till then let our watchwords be "No peace with the Roman Catholic Church! No communion with idolaters!"

Jewell well says in his Apology, "We do not decline concord and peace with men; but we will not continue in a state of war with God that we might have peace with men! If the Pope does indeed desire we should be reconciled to him, he ought first to reconcile himself to God." This witness is true! Well would it be for the Church, if all her leaders had been like Jewell!

I write these things with sorrow. But the circumstances of the times make it absolutely necessary to speak out. To whatever quarter of the horizon I turn, I

see grave reason for alarm. For the true Church of Jesus Christ I have no fears at all. But for the Established Protestant Churches, I have very grave fears indeed. The tide of events seems running strongly against Protestantism and in favor of Rome. It looks as if God had a controversy with us, as a nation, and was about to punish us for our sins.

I am no prophet. I do not know where we are drifting. But at the rate we are going, I think it quite within the verge of possibility that in a few years the Protestant Church may be reunited to the Roman Catholic Church.

Protestantism may be formally repudiated. A Roman Catholic Archbishop may once more preside over the former Protestant Churches. Mass may be once more said at Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's. And one result will be that all Bible-reading Christians must either leave the Established Protestant Church, or else sanction idol-worship and become idolaters! God grant we may never come to this state of things! But at the rate we are going, it seems to me quite possible.

And now it only remains for me to conclude what I have been saying, by mentioning some safeguards for the souls of all who hear this message. We live in a time when the Roman Catholic Church is walking amongst us with renewed strength, and loudly boasting that she will soon win back the ground that she has lost. False doctrines of every kind are continually set before us in the most subtle forms. It cannot be thought unreasonable if I offer some practical safeguards against idolatry. What it is, where it comes from, where it is, what will end it—all this we have seen. Let me point out how we may be safe from it, and I will say

no more.

(1) Let us arm ourselves, then, for one thing, with a thorough knowledge of the Word of God.

Let us read our Bibles more diligently than ever, and become familiar with every part of them. Let the Word dwell in us richly. Let us beware of anything which would make us give less time, and less heart, to the perusal of its sacred pages. The Bible is the sword of the Spirit; let it never be laid aside. The Bible is the true lantern for a dark and cloudy time; let us beware of traveling without its light. I strongly suspect, if we knew the secret history of the numerous secessions from our Church to that of Rome, which we deplore—I strongly suspect that in almost every case one of the most important steps in the downward road would be found to have been a neglected Bible—more attention to forms, sacraments, daily services, primitive Christianity, and so forth, and diminished attention to the written Word of God. The Bible is the King's highway. If we once leave that for any side road, however beautiful, and old, and frequented it may seem, we must never be surprised if we end with worshipping images and relics, and going regularly to a confessional.

(2) Let us arm ourselves, in the second place, with a godly jealousy about the least portion of the Gospel.

Let us beware of sanctioning the slightest attempt to keep back any jot or tittle of it, or to throw any part of it into the shade by exalting subordinate matters in religion. When Peter withdrew himself from eating with the Gentiles, it seemed

but a little thing; yet Paul tells the Galatians, "I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong" (Galatians 2:11). Let us count nothing little that concerns our souls. Let us be very particular whom we hear, where we go, and what we do, in all the matters of our own particular worship. We live in days when great principles are involved in little acts, and things in religion, which fifty years ago were utterly indifferent, are now by circumstances rendered indifferent no longer. Let us beware of tampering with anything of a Romanizing tendency. It is foolishness to play with fire. I believe that many of our perverts and seceders began with thinking there could be no mighty harm in attaching a little more importance to certain outward things than they once did. But once launched on the downward course, they went on from one thing to another. They provoked God, and He left them to themselves! They were given over to strong delusion, and allowed to believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11). They tempted the devil, and he came to them! They started with trifles, as many foolishly call them. They have ended with downright idolatry.

(3) Let us arm ourselves, last of all, with clear, sound views of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the salvation that is in Him.

He is the "image of the invisible God," the "exact representation of His being," and the true preservative against all idolatry, when truly known. Let us build ourselves deep down on the strong foundation of His finished work upon the cross. Let us settle it firmly in our minds, that Christ Jesus has done everything needful in order to present us without spot before the throne of God, and that simple, childlike faith on our part is the only thing required to give us an entire

interest in the work of Christ. Let us not doubt that having this faith, we are completely justified in the sight of God—will never be more justified if we live to the age of Methuselah and do the works of the Apostle Paul—and can add nothing to that complete justification by any acts, deeds, words, performances, fastings, prayers, attendance on ordinances, or anything else of our own.

(4) Above all let us keep up continual communion with the person of the Lord Jesus!

Let us abide in Him daily, feed on Him daily, look to Him daily, lean on Him daily, live upon Him daily, draw from His fullness daily. Let us realize this, and the idea of other mediators, other comforters, other intercessors, will seem utterly absurd. "What need is there?" we shall reply: "I have Christ, and in Him I have everything. What have I to do with idols? I have Jesus in my heart, Jesus in the Bible, and Jesus in heaven, and I want nothing more."

Once let the Lord Christ have His rightful place in our hearts, and all other things in our religion will soon fall into their right places—Church, ministers, ordinances, all will go down, and take the second place.

Except Christ sits as Priest and King upon the throne of our hearts, that little kingdom within will be in perpetual confusion. But only let Him be "all in all" there, and all will be well, Before Him every idol, every Dagon shall fall down. **CHRIST RIGHTLY KNOWN, CHRIST TRULY BELIEVED, AND CHRIST HEARTILY LOVED, IS THE TRUE PRESERVATIVE AGAINST RITUALISM, ROMANISM, AND EVERY FORM OF IDOLATRY. AMEN.**

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Worship of Mary in the Roman Catholic Church Dr. Pusey

(From the January 1866 issue of The Sword and the Trowel)

We have summarized the detailed account of the idolatrous worship of Mary by the Papists as exposed in full by Dr. Pusey in his new work. As his statements are not made at random, but are supported by quotations from Romish writers of recognised authority, they will be valuable to those who are met by the crafty denials of Romanists whenever they expose the genuine doctrines of Popish faith. Amid all the mischief which Pusey has done, it is well to note and acknowledge whatever service he may in this case render to truth. The headings of the paragraphs are ours; the quotations are given as they stand.

Blessings said to be obtained through Mary.—"So, then, it is taught in authorized books, that 'it is morally impossible for those to be saved who neglect the devotion to the Blessed Virgin;' that 'it is the will of God that all graces should pass through her hands;' that 'no creature obtained any grace from God, save according to the dispensation of His holy Mother;' that Jesus has, in fact, said, 'no one shall be partaker of My Blood, unless through the intercession of My Mother;' that 'we can only hope to obtain perseverance through her;' that 'God granted all the pardons in the Old Testament absolutely for the reverence and love of this Blessed Virgin;' that 'our salvation is in her hand;' that 'it is impossible for any to be saved, who turns away from her, or is disregarded by her; or to be lost, who turns to her, or is regarded by her;' that 'whom the justice of God saves not, the *infinite* mercy of Mary saves by her intercession;' that God is 'subject to the command of Mary;' that 'God has resigned into her hands (if one might say so) His omnipotence in the sphere of grace;' that 'it is safer to seek salvation through her than directly from Jesus.'"

Mary worship held up as a cure for trouble.—"F. Faber, in Ms popular books, is always bringing in the devotion to the Blessed Virgin.. He believes that the shortcomings of English Roman Catholics are owing to the inadequacy of their devotion to her. After instancing people's failures in

overcoming their faults, want of devotion, unsubmission to God's special Providence for *them*, feeling domestic troubles almost-incompatible with salvation, and that 'for all these things prayer appears to bring so little remedy,' he asks, 'What is the remedy that is wanted? what is the remedy indicated by God himself? If we may rely on the disclosures of the saints, it is an immense increase of devotion to our Blessed Lady, but remember, nothing short of an *immense* one. Here, in England, Mary is not half enough preached. Devotion to her is low and thin and poor. It is frightened out of its wits by the sneers of heresy. It is always invoking human respect and carnal prudence, wishing to make Mary so little of a Mary, that Protestants may feel at ease about her. Its ignorance of theology makes it unsubstantial and unworthy. It is not the prominent characteristic of our religion which it ought to be. It has no faith in itself. *Hence* it is, that *Jesus is not loved*, that heretics are not converted, that the Church is not exalted; that souls, which might be saints, wither and dwindle; that the sacraments are not rightly frequented, or souls enthusiastically evangelized. Jesus is obscured, because Mary is kept in the background. *Thousands of souls perish, because Mary is withheld from them*. It is the miserable unworthy shadow which we call our devotion to the Blessed Virgin, that is *the cause of* all these wants and blights; these evils and omissions and declines. Yet, if we are to believe the revelations of the saints, God is *pressing* for a greater, wider, a stronger, *quite another devotion* to His Blessed Mother."

The Pope's whole reliance on the Virgin.—In his Encyclical Letter of 1849, Pius IX wrote: "On this hope we chiefly rely, that the most Blessed Virgin—who raised the height of merits above all the choirs of Angels to the throne of the Deity, and by the foot of Virtue 'bruised the serpent's head,' and who, being constituted *between Christ and His Church*, and, being wholly sweet and full of graces, hath ever delivered the Christian people from calamities of all sorts and from the snares and assaults of all enemies and hath rescued them from destruction, and, commiserating our most sad and most sorrowful vicissitudes and our most severe straits, toils, necessities with that most large feeling of her motherly mind—will, by her most present and most powerful patronage with God, both turn away the scourges of Divine wrath wherewith we are afflicted for our sins, and will allay, dissipate the most turbulent storms of ills, wherewith, to the incredible sorrow of our mind, the Church everywhere is tossed, and will turn our sorrow into joy. For *ye know very well*, Ven. Brethren, *that the whole of our confidence is placed in the most Holy Virgin*, since God has placed in Mary the fullness of all good, that accordingly we may know that *if there is any hope in us, if any grace, if any salvation, it redounds to us from her*, because such is His will Who hath willed that we should have everything through Mary."

Mary blasphemously called Co-Redemptrix with our Lord.—"We had heard before, repeatedly, that she was the Mediatrix with the Redeemer; some of us, who do not read Marian books, have heard now for the first time, that she was ever our 'Co-Redemptrix.' The evidence lies, not in any insulated passage of a devotional writer (which was alleged in plea for the language of M. Olier), but in formal answers from Archbishops and Bishops to the Pope as to what they desired in regard to the declaration of the Immaculate Conception as an Article of Faith. Thus the Archbishop of Syracuse wrote, 'Since we know certainly that she, in the fulness of time, was Co-redemptrix of the human race, together with her Son Jesus Christ our Lord.' From North Italy the Bishop of Asti wrote of 'the dogma of the singular privilege granted by the Divine Redeemer to His pure mother, the Co-redemptrix of the world.' In South Italy the Bishop of Gallipoli wrote, 'the human race, whom the Son of God, from her, redeemed; whom, together with Him, she herself co-redeemed.' The Bishop of Cariati prayed the Pope to 'command all the sons of Holy Mother Church and thy own, that no one of them should dare at any time hereafter to suspect as to the Immaculate Conception of their Co-redeemer.' From Sardinia, the Bishop of Alghero wrote, 'It is the common consent of all the faithful, and the common wish and desire of all, that our so beneficent Parent and Co-redeemer should be presented by the Apostolic See with the honour of this most illustrious mystery.' Spain, the Bishop of Almeria justified the attribute by appeal to the service of the Conception. The Church, adapting to the Mother of God in the Office of the Conception that text, 'Let Us make a help like unto Him,' assures us of it. and confirms those most ancient traditions, 'Companion of the Redeemer,' 'Co-Redemptrix,' 'Authoress of everlasting salvation.' The Bishops refer to. these as ancient, well-known, traditionary titles, at least in their Churches in North and South Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, Spain."

A Parallel infamously drawn between Jesus and Mary.—"As our Redemption gained its sufficiency and might from Jesus, so, they say, did it gain its beauty and loveliness from the aid of Mary. As we are clothed with the merits of Christ, so also, they say, with the merits of Mary. As Jesus rose again the third day without seeing corruption, so they speak of her Resurrection so as to anticipate corruption, in some three days;' as He was the first-fruits of them that slept, so is she; as He was taken up into heaven in the body so, they say, was she; as He sits at the Right Hand of God, so she at His Right Hand; as He is there our perpetual Intercessor with the Father, so she with Him; as 'no man cometh to the Father.' Jesus saith, 'but by Me;' so 'no man cometh to Jesus', they say, 'but by her;' as He is our High Priest, so she, they say, a Priestess; He, our High Priest, gave us the sacrament of His Body and Blood; so, they say, did she, 'her will conspiring with the will of

her Son to the making of the Eucharist, and assenting to her Son so giving and offering Himself for food and drink, since we confess that the sacrifice and gifts, given, to us under the form of bread and wine, are truly hers and appertain unto her. As in the Eucharist He is present and we receive Him, so she, they say, is present and received in that same sacrament. The priest is 'minister of Christ,' and 'minister of Mary.' They seem to assign to her an office, like that of God the Holy Ghost, in dwelling in the soul. They speak of 'souls born not of blood, nor of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God *and Mary*;' that 'the Holy Ghost chose to make use of our Blessed Lady to bring His fruitfulness into action by producing in her and by her Jesus Christ in His members;' that 'according to that word, 'the kingdom of God is within you,' in like manner the kingdom of our Blessed Lady is principally in the interior of a man, his soul; that 'when Mary has struck her roots in the soul, she produces there marvels of grace, which she alone can produce, because she alone is the fruitful Virgin, who never has had, and never will have, her equal in purity and fruitfulness.'"

Shameless declaration that Mary is in the Eucharist.—(Oswald.) "'We maintain a (co-)presence of Mary in the Eucharist. This is a necessary inference from our Marian theory, and we shrink back from no consequence.' 'We are much inclined,' he says afterwards, 'to believe an essential co-presence of Mary in her whole person, with body and soul, under the sacred species. Certainly to such a presence in the Eucharist, 1. there is required a glorious mode of being of the Virgin body of the Holy Mother. We are not only justified in holding this as to Mary, but we have well-nigh proved it. 2. The assumption of a bodily presence of Mary in the Eucharist compels self-evidently the assumption of a multi-location (*i.e.* a contemporaneous presence in different portions of space) of Mary, according to her flesh too. 3. One who would receive this must be ready to admit a compenetration of the Body of Christ and of that of the Virgin in the same portion of space, *i.e.* under the sacred species.' The writer subsequently explains that 'the "lac virginale" must be looked upon as that of Mary, which is primarily present in the Eucharist, whereto, in further consequence, the whole Christ the Head, the Blessed Virgin is, as also her soul, would be joined.' 'The Blood of the Lord, and the lac of His Virgin Mother, are both present in the sacrament.'"

Mariolotry to swallow up all other devotion.—"'Assuming that, in and under Christ the Head, the Blessed Virgin is, after her Assumption, as it were, the neck of the Church, so that all grace whatever flows to the Body through her, that is, through her prayers, it might be argued, that, for such as have this belief to ask anything of or through her, is identical in sense, but in point of form better, than to ask it directly of Christ, in like manner as to ask

anything of or through Christ, is identical in sense, but clearer and fuller in point of form, than to ask it directly of the Father. And hence, it might seem that it would be an improvement, if, reserving only the use of the appointed forms for the making of the Sacraments, and an occasional use of the Lord's Prayer (and this rather from respect to the letter of their outward institution than from any inward necessity or propriety), every prayer, both of individuals and of the Church, were addressed to or through Blessed Mary, a form beginning, 'Our Lady, which art in heaven,' etc., being preferred for general use to the original letter of the Lord's Prayer; and the Psalter, the Te Deum, and all the daily Offices, being used in preference with similar accommodation." *Horrid ravings of Faber, whose writings are very popular among Papists.*--"There is some portion of the Precious Blood which once was Mary's own blood, and which remains still in our Blessed Lord, incredibly exalted by its union with His Divine Person, yet still the same. This portion of Himself, it is piously believed, has not been allowed to undergo the usual changes of human substance. At this moment, in heaven, He retains something which was once His Mother's, and which is, possibly, visible, as such, to the saints and angels. He vouchsafed at mass to show to S. Ignatius *the very part of the Host which had once belonged to the substance of Mary.* It may have a distinct and singular beauty in heaven, where, by His compassion, it may one day be our blessed lot to see it and adore it. But with the exception of this portion of it, the Precious Blood was a growing thing, '&c.

Enough! enough! every one of our readers will cry out, and therefore we stay our hand. Surely "for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

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The Roman Catholic Religion Examined

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INTRODUCTION

There are hundreds of millions of Roman Catholics world-wide, yet many are largely unaware of the dramatic differences between the official teachings, practices, and positions of the Catholic Church, and the clear teaching of the Holy Bible. There are multitudes of dedicated Catholics who are spiritually uninformed concerning these differences because of a lack of sound biblical instruction and exposure.

Though many Roman Catholics give unquestioned support to their church and strongly reject any possibility that their church may be in conflict with their own Catholic Bible, there are sincere Catholics who see glaring inconsistencies and contradictions between the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the fundamental truths contained in the sacred Scriptures.

This booklet offers Roman Catholics, who are seeking after truth, a clear-cut comparison between the major teachings of the Catholic Church and the Word of God. The Word of God is the supreme authority from which all Roman Catholics must derive their beliefs and practices. All Scripture references cited in this booklet are taken only from official Catholic translations of the Bible.

A CONCILIATORY COMMENT

While this booklet scripturally challenges many of the teachings within Roman Catholicism, it is not an attack upon the competence, sincerity, intelligence, integrity, or religious dedication of individual Catholics. This booklet doesn't deny the reality that many Catholics possess strong convictions and are deeply devoted to their religious beliefs. Neither do we deny the fact that some Catholics have had a genuine, born-again experience in Christ.

However, this booklet does challenge many of the positions and practices of the Catholic Church by using a point-by-point comparison of its major teachings and the obvious truths of the Word of God. This booklet asks Roman Catholics to carefully examine the Scriptures with an intellectually honest and open attitude (Acts 17:11), and to judge for themselves what the Bible actually says apart from official church censorship, restrictions, warnings, indoctrination, and qualifications. We believe the clear truths of the Catholic Bible will speak for themselves.

THE ROOT PROBLEM

The fundamental problem confronting the average Roman Catholic is the fact that they are almost completely unaware of what the Catholic Bible really teaches. Many sincere Catholics, including laymen and parish priests alike, have never had sufficient cause to question the teachings of their church because they have never been adequately instructed in the Scriptural truths which challenge the principle doctrines of Catholicism.

The tragic reality is that the overwhelming majority of Catholics have either never personally studied the Bible, or have only done so under the strict supervision and scrutiny of their church. Many have not been exposed to the clear, simple truths of the Bible because they have been repeatedly warned to rely on the official interpretations, opinions, and traditions of the church.

Even though Catholic versions of the Bible (Jerusalem Bible, New American, and Challoner-Rheims Version of the Latin Vulgate) encourage Bible reading and study (Deut. 6:7-9; Ps. 119:9-11; Acts 17:11), the tragic historical fact is that Catholicism, with very few exceptions, has repeatedly discouraged Bible reading and study, and even banned or restricted its use, distribution, and possession.

THE BIBLE AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The Roman Catholic Church has traditionally suppressed, opposed, and forbidden the open use of the Bible. It was first officially forbidden to the people and placed on the index of Forbidden Books List by the Council of Valencia in 1229 A.D. The Council of Trent (1545-63 A.D.) also prohibited its use and

pronounced a curse upon anyone who would dare oppose this decree. Many popes have issued decrees forbidding Bible reading in the common language of the people, condemning Bible societies and banning its possession and translation under penalty of mortal sin and death. The Roman Catholic Church has openly burned Bibles and those who translated it or promoted its study, reading, and use (John Hus, 1415 A.D.; William Tyndale, 1536 A.D.)

Though external pressures have caused Rome to relax its restrictions and opposition against Bible reading in America, the Bible is still widely withheld and its distribution and free use discouraged in many countries which are heavily influenced by Roman Catholicism.

A RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF BIBLICAL DISTORTIONS

Roman Catholicism is a system which is comprised of a mixture of truth and error. On the surface, it appears to many to be a brand of Christianity because it staunchly claims to embrace and defend the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. However, a closer examination proves that it is a system which actually nullifies and distorts Scriptural truth by adding erroneous, man-made teachings which openly contradict the Catholic and non-Catholic Bibles.

For example, the Roman Catholic Church claims the inspiration of the Scriptures, but dilutes the Word of God by exalting the authority of its own traditions, councils, and decrees above the Bible. Catholicism teaches the deity of Christ, but places Mary and priests as mediators between God and believers so that free access to Jesus is only possible through them. It teaches the forgiveness of sin, but only through confession to a priest and the absolution given by him. Catholicism teaches salvation, but substitutes a system of grace plus works in which human works are more important. It teaches that Christ established the Church, but exalts a man (the pope) as its head and invests absolute, infallible authority in him and his official decrees. These are just a few of the distortions we will further examine in this booklet.

THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF ROMAN CATHOLIC ERRORS

Before we compare the fundamental teachings of Roman Catholicism with the Catholic Bible, it should be pointed out that the distinctive features of Catholicism originated several hundred years after the early church. Though the Catholic Church argues that its roots can be traced to Christ, the historical facts do not substantiate this claim. Roman Catholic dogma has gradually evolved over the centuries. However, none of its major traditions and doctrines were taught, defended, practiced, or embraced by the apostolic church. The following list will indicate the approximate date when the various doctrines, rituals, decrees, and beliefs were instituted:

1. Prayers for the dead. (A.D. 300)

2. Making the sign of the cross. (300)
3. Wax candles. (320)
4. Veneration of angels and dead saints, and use of images. (375)
5. The beginning of mass as a daily celebration. (394)
6. The worship and exaltation of Mary and use of term "Mother of God"(431)
7. Priests begin to dress differently from laity. (500)
8. Extreme unction. (526)
9. The doctrine of purgatory, instituted by Gregory I. (593)
10. The Latin Language used in worship and prayer Gregory I. (600)
11. Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints and angels. (600)
12. Title of "Pope" or "universal bishop" first given to Boniface III.(607)
13. Kissing the pope's foot, began with Pope Constantine. (709)
14. Temporal power of the popes, conferred by Pepin, King of France. (750)
15. Worship of the cross, image, and relics authorized in (786).
16. Holy water, mixed with a pinch of salt and blessed by a priest. (850)
17. Worship of St. Joseph. (890)
18. College of Cardinals established. (927)
19. Canonization of dead saints, first by Pope John XV. (995)
20. Fastings on Fridays and during Lent. (998)
21. The mass developed as a sacrifice and attendance made mandatory. (11th Century)

22. Celibacy of the priesthood, decreed by Pope Gregory VII. (1079)
23. The rosary, used in prayer. (1090)
24. The Inquisition, instituted by the Council of Verona. (1184)
25. Sale of Indulgences. (1190)
26. Transubstantiation, proclaimed by Pope Innocent III. (1215)
27. Auricular (private) confession of sins to a priest, instituted by Pope Innocent III in Lateran Council. (1215)
28. Adoration of wafer (Host), decreed by Pope Honorius III. (1220)
29. Bible forbidden to laymen and placed on Index of Forbidden Books by Council of Valencia. (1229)
30. The Scapular, invented by Simon Stock, an English monk. (1251)
31. Cup forbidden to the people at communion by Council of Constance. (1414)
32. Purgatory proclaimed as a dogma by Council of Florence. (1439)
33. The doctrine of seven sacraments affirmed. (1439)
34. The Ave Maria (Hail Mary) invented and completed 50 years later. (1508)
35. Jesuit order founded by Loyola. (1534)
36. Tradition declared to be of equal authority with the Bible by Council of Trent. (1545)
37. The Apocryphal books added to the Bible by the Council of Trent. (1546)
38. Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pius IX. (1854)
39. Syllabus of Errors, proclaimed by Pope Pius IX and ratified by the Vatican Council; condemned freedom of religion, conscience, speech, press, and scientific discoveries which are disapproved by the Roman Church; reasserted the Pope's temporal authority over all civil rulers. (1864)
40. Infallibility of the pope in matters of faith and morals proclaimed by the Vatican Council. (1870)

41. Public schools condemned by Pope Pius XI. (1930)
42. Assumption of the Virgin Mary (bodily ascension into heaven shortly after her death), proclaimed by Pope XII. (1950)
43. Mary proclaimed mother of the Church by Pope Paul VI. (1965)

Many other scriptural abuses and irregularities could be added to this list: Monks, nuns, monasteries, convents, forty days of Lent, holy week, Palm Sunday, Ash Wednesday, All Saints Day, Candlemas Day, fish day, meat days, incense, holy oil, holy palms, St. Christopher medals, charms, relics, novenas, and many more. This revealing list represents an overview of the many human inventions which have corrupted, distorted, and perverted the official positions presented as truth by the Roman Catholic Church.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES WE WILL COMPARE THE MORE PROMINENT POSITIONS OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM WITH THE FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS OF THE SCRIPTURES USING ONLY ROMAN CATHOLIC TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE INCLUDING THE CHALLONER-RHEIMS VERSION (C.R.V.) OR THE JERUSALEM BIBLE VERSION (J.B.V.). The New American Bible (N.A.B.) can also be used to substantiate these comparisons.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM AND TRADITION

The church of Rome claims that the Bible is the inspired Word of God but, in reality, they supplant and undermine its absolute authority by exalting church traditions, councils, and decrees above the Scriptures. In fact, the Council of Trent (1546 A.D.) declared that church tradition was of equal authority with the Word of God.

Roman Catholicism places tradition on an equal and often higher level than the Bible. Roman Catholic traditions, commandments, papal decrees, and councils have repeatedly usurped and contradicted the clear teachings of Scripture. The fact is that many of the positions and dogmas of Roman Catholicism rest upon the foundation of human innovations, traditions, and teachings rather than the Bible. For this reason, Catholicism strongly defends its traditions and rigidly regulates any interpretations of the Bible which conflict with its positions. Rome has even added a section of uninspired books to the Bible called the Apocrypha because they provide the only semblance of support for a limited number of their teachings, beliefs, and practices. These books are not found in the Hebrew Old Testament, and were never referred to as Scripture by Christ or His disciples, and were not even sanctioned by the Catholic Church until the Council of Trent in 1546 A.D.

However, Jesus rebuked the usurping and undermining of Scriptures through man-made tradition when He said "The worship they offer me is worthless, the doctrines they teach are only human regulations.

You put aside the commandment of God to cling to HUMAN TRADITIONS. . .In this way you make God's word null and void for the sake of your TRADITION which you have handed down." (MK 7:7, 8, 13, J.B.V.).

Such prominent Roman Catholic doctrines and practices as the mass, purgatory, the priesthood, Transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, indulgences, penance, the worship of Mary, the use of images in worship, holy water, rosary beads, the celibacy of priests and nuns, the papacy, and many others are based totally upon tradition and are without the slightest shred of Scriptural support to substantiate them. In fact, the Bible gives strong witness against many of these teachings and practices.

THE VIRGIN MARY

In spite of the great emphasis upon Mary in Roman Catholicism, the Bible says very little about her. In fact, she is never even mentioned by Peter, Paul, James, or John. Furthermore, none of the New Testament epistles refer to her either. This is significant in light of the elaborate system of Mariology created by Rome with its Mary works, veneration, and devotions. What is even more surprising is the fact that some of the most significant teachings concerning Mary are of fairly recent origin (i.e., the Immaculate Conception, [1854], and the Assumption of Mary, [1950]).

Though the Bible honors Mary as the mother of Jesus and calls her "blessed. . .among women" (not above women, Lk 1:28), it does not teach us to deify her, worship her, or pray to her. The Scriptures recognize Mary as a woman of humility, obedience, and virtue, but reject Rome's adoration of her on the grounds that it is idolatrous worship condemned by the Word of God.

On the following pages we will examine some of the more prominent Roman Catholic teachings concerning Mary in light of the Bible. The information footnoted was written by an individual canonized as a saint, and his book was officially endorsed by the church of Rome.

1. Rome claims that Mary acts as a mediator between sinners and God, and teaches that sinners receive pardon through Mary(1). This is refuted by the Scriptures. "For there is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5, J.B.V.). Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6, J.B.V.).

2. "The Holy Church commands a worship peculiar to Mary"(2), but the Bible rejects this demand on the ground that it is idolatry. The worship of Mary in the form of prayers (Hail Marys), songs to her, and kneeling before her statues is blatant idolatry specifically forbidden by Christ: "You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone" (Matt. 4:10, J.B.V.).

3. Catholicism teaches that Christ is a stern, wrathful judge who cannot be approached by sinners. It

teaches that Mary, on the other hand, is a tender understanding, merciful intercessor who is more sympathetic and compassionate than Christ and will plead our cause to her Son with the forceful persuasion of a loving mother. But the Bible rejects Rome's claim that Mary is an intercessor or advocate who intercedes to God on our behalf in order to obtain grace for the sinner(3). The Bible declares that Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God where "He stands and pleads for us" (Rom. 8:34, J.B.V.),--not Mary and that He is "living forever to intercede for all who come to God through Him" (Heb. 7:25, J.B.V.; see also Heb. 9:24).

4. The Bible rejects Rome's claim that "Mary is the Peacemaker between sinners and God"(4). The Bible states, "But now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart from us have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ. . .For he is the peace between us. . .Through him, both of us have in the one Spirit our way to come to the Father" (Eph. 2:13, 14, 18, J.B.V.). Christ is our peacemaker, not Mary, priests, popes, dead saints, or even the Church.

5. The Bible rejects Catholic claims that Mary is ". . .the gate of heaven because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through Her"(5), that "the Way of Salvation is open to none other than through Mary, and that our salvation is in the hands of Mary."(6) "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, C.R.V.). "Jesus said: I am the Way. . .No one can come to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6, J.B.V.).

6. The Bible gives absolutely no support to the many exalted titles which the Roman Catholic Church has bestowed upon Mary such as, "Queen of the Angels, Prophets, Patriarchs, Apostles, Confessors, Virgins, and All Saints"(7), "The Door of Paradise," "The Gate of Heaven," "Our Life," "Mother of Grace," "Morningstar," "Refuge of Sinners," and "Mother of Mercy". These titles represent Rome's attempts to elevate Mary to a glorified position which is not taught in the Scriptures.

7. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception which teaches that Mary was born without sin is contrary to the Scriptures which stress that "everyone has sinned" (Rom. 5:12, 13 J.V.B.), and "there is no man who does not sin" (1 Kg. 8:46, J.B.V.; see also Ps. 53:3, 1 Jn. 1:8, 10). Even Mary acknowledged that she was a sinner in need of a Savior: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in GOD MY SAVIOR" (Lk. 1:46, 47, J.B.V.).

8. The Roman Catholic doctrine of the Assumption of Mary which teaches that Mary's body was raised from the dead and taken to heaven as "Queen of Heaven" is a teaching which can't find the slightest support in the Bible and was not made an official doctrine in the Catholic Church until 1950.

9. Roman Catholicism's emphasis on Mary's perpetual virginity is clearly refuted in the Bible which plainly states that Jesus had brothers and sisters (Matt. 13:54-56; Mk. 6:3; Jn. 7:5, 6). Though Rome claims that these verses refer to Christ's cousins, the original Greek wording clearly refers to brothers and not cousins. After the virgin birth of Christ, Mary and Joseph lived a normal husband and wife relationship, bearing other children.

1 Bishop Alphonse de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, pp. 82, 83.

2 *Ibid.*, pg. 130.

3 Bishop Alphonse de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, pg. 80; see also pp. 254, 257.

4 *Ibid.*, pg. 197.

5 Bishop Alphonse de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, pg. 160.

6 *Ibid.*, pg. 169.

7 *St. Joseph's Daily Missal*, pg. 1305.

THE PAPACY

The word "pope" comes from the Latin word "papa" meaning father. Most scholars agree that the first real pope was Gregory I (590- 604 A.D.). The pope claims to be the mediator between God and men with the power over souls in purgatory. However, the Bible contradicts this claim by stating that "For there is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus" (I Tim 2:5 J.B.V.). The papacy attempts to usurp the power and authority belonging solely to Christ by claiming the pope as the head of the church, but the Bible declares that Jesus is the head of the Church (Col. 1:18), and that "He has put all things under his feet, and made him, as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church; which is his body" (Eph. 1:22, 23, J.B.V.; see also Col. 2:9, 10).

The pope also claims the titles of "His Holiness" or "The Holy Father" in direct violation of Christ's warnings to His followers: "You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9, 10, J.B.V.).

PAPAL INFALLIBILITY

The doctrine of papal infallibility was ratified in 1870 when the Vatican Council decreed that papal judgments involving faith and morals were infallible when spoken "ex-cathedra," meaning in his official capacity as head of the church while sitting in the chair of St. Peter. However, the concept of the papacy and papal infallibility can find no justification in the Scriptures.

Most Catholics are unaware of the scandalous history of the Roman papacy. The historical record of

papal corruption causes extreme embarrassment to the church in its attempts to defend papal infallibility and its moral authority. For this reason, the church hierarchy endeavors to deny, suppress, and cover-up the historical facts concerning its many doctrinal and moral abuses. What makes the idea of papal infallibility and purity so absurd is its notorious record of papal corruption, contradictions, inconsistencies, and reversals during its history. Though most popes were men of integrity and high moral character, many were wicked and corrupt. What is more, these facts can be easily substantiated by secular, Protestant, and even Catholic sources!(1)

As shocking and unbelievable as it may seem, many popes were guilty of committing nearly every crime in the catalog of sin (2) including rape, adultery, fornication, incest, murder, assassinations, robbery, conspiracy, bribery, fraud, perjury, and the purchase of the papacy with money (3). The corruption and gross immorality of twenty-nine popes was so flagrant that Rome has listed them as "anti-popes" in order to minimize the scandalous testimony of the papacy and erase this notorious blot from their history.

Furthermore, some popes have contradicted each other (Sixtus V recommended Bible reading, while Pope Pius VII condemned it); some popes condemned scientific truth (Paul V and Urban VIII tortured and imprisoned Galileo for teaching that the earth revolves around the sun); many have promoted and defended doctrinal heresies in direct conflict with the clear teachings of Scripture; and some have endorsed massacres, atrocities, torture, imprisonment, and inquisitions against Rome's opponents resulting in the deaths of millions!(4)

1 Ludwig Pastor, History of the Popes (a Roman Catholic historian).

2 H.H. Halley, Halley's Bible Handbook, pp. 767-793.

3 Glen D. Kittler, The Papal Princes (a Roman Catholic author), 358 pages.

4 John Foxe, Foxes Book of Martyrs.

PAPAL DECREES

The following selected examples are only a few of the many abuses demonstrated through papal decrees:

Innocent III (1198-1216 A.D.) claimed the right to dispose of kings, ordered the extermination of heretics, instituted the Inquisition, ordered the massacre of Albigenses, condemned the Magna Charta, and forbade Bible reading in the common language; Innocent IV (1241-54 A.D.) sanctioned torture of suspected heretics to extract confessions; Nicolas V (1447-55 A.D.) authorized war on African peoples and their enslavement; Sixtus IV (1471-84 A.D.) sanctioned the Spanish Inquisition; Leo X (1513-21 A.D.) declared the burning of heretics a divine appointment; Clement XI (1700-21 A.D.) issued a papal bull (pronouncement) against Bible reading; condemned all religious freedom, tolerance, Bible societies,

and Bible translations; Pius IX (1846-78 A.D.) decreed papal infallibility, condemned separation of church and state, denounced Liberty of Conscience, Liberty of Worship, freedom of speech, freedom of press, decreed the Immaculate Conception and deity of Mary, condemned Bible societies, and proclaimed the right to suppress heresy by force; Leo XIII (1878-1903 A.D.) pronounced Protestants "enemies of the Christian name".

MORTAL AND VENIAL SINS

Roman Catholicism divides sins into two categories: 1.) Mortal sins which are defined as serious offenses against God that can damn a soul to eternal punishment, and 2.) Venial sins which are lesser infractions against God and man. Both can subject a soul to an indefinite stay in the purifying fires of a place referred to as "purgatory". There is no uniform agreement among priests concerning which sins are venial or mortal. Mortal sins could include not attending mass, breaking Ten Commandments, sexual offenses, reading a Protestant Bible, or going to a Protestant church.

Venial sins could be anything a priest decides. Only a priest can forgive mortal sins, but both mortal and venial sins must be paid for by temporal penance and inevitable punishment in purgatory.

However, the Bible makes no distinction between mortal and venial sins. Though some sins are worse than others, all unrepented, unforgiven sins will keep a soul out of heaven. It simply teaches that "the wage paid by sin is death" (Rom. 6:23, J.B.V.), and that "The man who has sinned, he. . . shall die" (Eze. 18:4, J.B.V.).

CONFESSION

The Baltimore Catechism defines confession as "the telling of our sins to an authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness." Catholicism stresses that priests have the power and authority to forgive sins without even asking God!(1) Forgiveness involves the assigning of penance, punishments in the form of good works, a certain number of prayers, fastings, or abstinence from certain pleasures as a token of repentance. Priests can forgive the guilt of mortal sins, but cannot remit the penalty which must be paid through the performance of good works which he chooses to prescribe. Under penalty of committing a mortal sin, every Roman Catholic is required to go to confession at least once a year. However, the Bible gives no support for private (auricular) confession to a priest for receiving the forgiveness of sins. Furthermore, this practice didn't originate until the 5th century and wasn't officially made compulsory until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D. Even the Catholic Bible challenges the concept of Catholic confession on the grounds that no mortal man possesses the power to forgive or absolve sins, and clearly reveals that God alone can forgive sins; "WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS BUT ONLY GOD?" (Mk. 2:7, C.R.V.). No priest has the authority to forgive sins but "the Son of Man has

authority on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. 9:6, J.B.V.).

By establishing a priest as the official forgiver of sins, the Catholic Church usurps Christ's exclusive position and authority to act as the mediator between God and man: "For there is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus" (I Tim 2:5, J.B.V.; see also Heb. 8:6; 9:15). The Bible further declares that, "if any one should sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is just" (I Jn. 2:1 J.B.V.).

The Scriptures also teach that each individual Christian has the privilege of going directly to God for forgiveness: "but if we acknowledge our sins, then God. . .will forgive our sins and purify us from everything that is wrong" (I Jn., 1:9, J.B.V.). Even Peter confirmed that men receive the remission of sins directly from Christ not through priests: "all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name" (Acts 10:43, J.B.V.; see also Acts 13:38, 39).

1 Instructions for Non-Catholics, pg. 93.

PENANCE

The sacrament of penance involves the performance of good works which the priest assigns after confession. According to Catholic teaching, God does not cancel out all the punishment due the sinner when he is forgiven, and thus requires works of penance to help relieve the penalty. Those sins which cannot be fully paid by simple penance (such as "The Act of Contrition," the recital of a given number of "Hail Marys," "Our Fathers," or stations of the cross) must eventually be paid for by suffering in purgatory until the debt is cleared.

However, the Scriptures say nothing about penance. God does not demand outward penance but inward repentance, and a turning from sinful practices: "Let the wicked man abandon his way. . .Let him turn back to Yahweh who will take pity on him, to our God who is rich in forgiving" (Isa. 55:7, J.B.V; see also Prov. 28:13) The Bible clearly teaches that our sins are completely cleansed and forgiven through Christ when we repent directly to Him; "but if we acknowledge our sins, then God. . .will forgive our sins and purify us from everything that is wrong" (I Jn. 1:9 J.B.V.). God bases complete, unconditional forgiveness and cleansing upon sincere repentance and a forsaking of sin.

The main error in penance is the false assumption that Christ's sacrifice was insufficient to totally atone for sin and must be supplemented by human works. The Roman Catholic teaching that "penance is necessary for salvation"(1) and "whosoever shall affirm that men are justified solely by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. . .let him be accursed"(2) is a blatant perversion of the biblical teaching of justification by faith apart from works.

The fundamental error of Catholicism is its unscriptural emphasis upon a complicated system of salvation by good works and human effort. Though good works are a natural outgrowth of genuine faith and salvation, they can never save us--they are the result, not the cause of salvation. No man can earn salvation by meritorious works. Only through the justifying grace of God through faith are we saved: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not from yourselves, for it is the gift of God: not as the outcome of works, lest anyone may boast" (Eph 2:8, 9, C.R.V.). Catholicism contradicts the truth that "Man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. . .because by the works of the Law no man will be justified" (Gal. 2:16, C.R.V.; see also Rom. 1:17; 3:21, 22, 28; 5:1; 10:3; 11:6; Gal 2:21; Titus 3:5).

1 The Catholic Almanac, pp. 269, 559.

2 The Council of Trent.

PURGATORY

Rome teaches that when Catholics die in an unperfected state, they must enter an intermediate realm of punishment called "purgatory" before being released to heaven. Those who have accumulated sins which have not been sufficiently atoned for through penance must endure the sufferings of purgatory until the soul is refined and God's justice has been satisfied. The torments of this halfway hell can vary in intensity, severity, and duration depending upon the guilt, impurity, lack of proper penance, or sorrow of the sufferer.

Catholics are kept in fear all their lives by the prospects of going to this imaginary place. But Rome teaches that the period of suffering in purgatory can be shortened by gifts of money, prayers by the priests, and masses. Catholicism also stresses that friends and relatives can help lessen the time that loved ones remain in purgatory and even relieve their suffering by financing masses on their behalf. Rome collects millions of dollars each year from grieving individuals who willingly pay to alleviate the agonies of those in purgatory.

However, this frightening doctrine cannot find a single verse in the entire Bible to support it. Rome has had to rely on ingenious twistings of the Scriptures to defend this terrifying teaching, along with an isolated passage from the apocryphal book of II Maccabees (12:39-45).

The concept of purgatorial sufferings after death challenges the very work of Christ on our behalf. The Bible declares that "Christ himself. . .had died once for sins" (I Pet. 3:18, J.B.V.). There is no more need for further sufferings in purgatory. To demand further suffering and sacrifice is to deny that Christ's sacrifice was sufficient the first time! Jesus said that "he who hears my word. . .has life everlasting and does not come to judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jn. 5:24, C.R.V.). The Bible also teaches

that "if we acknowledge our sins, then God. . .will forgive our sins and purify us from everything that is wrong" (1Jn. 1:9, J.B.V.); that God remembers our sins no more (Heb. 10:17); that to die is gain, not torment (Phil. 1:21, 22); that to be away from the body is to be at home with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8, 9); and that those who die in Christ are blessed and receive rest from their labors and not excruciating pain (Rev. 14:13).

INDULGENCES

An indulgence is "the remission or limited release from the temporal punishments one must suffer in this life or in purgatory for the sins a person has committed." Indulgences can even be granted to souls already in purgatory to shorten their stay. Both penance and indulgences originated during the Middle Ages and have been commonly associated with fraud and corruption. At times, Rome has openly sold indulgences to raise revenues. Money raised from the selling of indulgences by emissaries appointed by Pope Leo X (1513-21 A.D.) helped finance the construction of St. Peter's Basilica. It was the public selling of them by Friar Tetzal who claimed that "a soul is released from purgatory and carried to heaven as soon as the money tinkles in the box" That outraged Martin Luther and helped launch the Protestant Reformation (1517 A.D.).

The whole system of indulgences violates Scriptural truth and cannot be supported by the Bible. Its practice amounts to placing a price tag on salvation and perverting the message of salvation by grace.

THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

The consequence of the doctrines of penance, indulgences, and purgatory is that Roman Catholics can never have assurance or a genuine sense of spiritual security concerning their salvation. All that a dying Catholic can be sure of after death is that he will suffer an indefinite period of excruciating punishment in the flames of purgatory. In fact, the Council of Trent even pronounced a curse upon any who presumed to say that he had assurance of salvation, or that the whole punishment for sin is forgiven along with that sin.

However, the Bible says that "the blood of Jesus. . .purifies us from all sin" (I Jn. 1:7, J.B.V.). It also assures us of our salvation and eternal life. "This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son" (I Jn. 5:11, J.B.V.; see also 5:13). Jesus also guaranteed us that "he who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has life everlasting, and does not come to judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jn. 5:24, C.R.V.), and "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; he who is believing towards the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him" (Jn. 3:36, C.R.V.).

PETER

Roman Catholicism endeavors to defend the papacy by claiming that Peter was the first pope and was personally appointed by Christ. They base this claim upon their interpretation of Matthew 16:13-19 in which Jesus responds to Peter's confession that He is the Christ by declaring that upon this rock He will build His Church and will give the keys of the kingdom to Peter to bind and loose upon the earth. The papacy claims that Peter is the rock, and the keys represent the pope's absolute authority and infallibility over the Church. However, Jesus was not saying He would build His church upon Peter, but upon the simple foundational confession of faith which Peter made that Jesus is the Christ. The church is not built upon Peter, but Christ--Christ is the rock, not Peter (I Cor. 3:11, 12; Eph. 2:20, 21).

The "keys" symbolize the authority to open the way of salvation through the preaching of the gospel to all those who are bound in darkness and sin. Peter was first entrusted with the keys because he was the first to give this confession of faith in Jesus and was instrumental in initially opening the door of salvation to the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2), as well as the Gentiles at Cornelius' house (Acts 10).

However, all true disciples possess the keys when proclaiming the way of salvation to unbelievers and offering them spiritual liberty through Christ (Matt. 18:18).

Furthermore, the Scriptures disprove Catholic claims concerning Peter. Neither the Bible nor Peter ever claim to be a pope, head over the church, or in a superior position over the other apostles. He simply referred to himself as an elder among many (I Pet. 5:1). Peter challenged the dictatorial nature of the papacy by warning ministers not to lord over the flock. (I Pet. 5:3). Peter refused to receive homage from men (Acts 10:25-27). Peter proved he wasn't infallible when Jesus sharply rebuked him for challenging the need of the crucifixion (Matt. 16:23), and Paul scolded him for his vacillation, inconsistency, and spiritual hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-14). Peter was married (Matt 87:14; Lk. 4:38; I Cor. 9:5). When Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans, he greeted many believers but never mentioned Peter (Rom.16); and what is more, apart from Catholic tradition, there is no biblical, historical, or credible archaeological evidence that Peter ever went to Rome or presided as its supreme bishop.

THE PRIESTHOOD

Roman Catholicism has established a priesthood which serves as mediator between God and man to offer blood sacrifices for an individual's sins in the form of the mass. The function and structure of the Catholic priesthood, which includes a sacrificial system (mass), is of Jewish origin and was abolished through Christ. Christians no longer require human priests to serve as mediators by offering sacrifices for them or forgiving and remitting their sins through confession.

The Bible gives no support to Rome's attempt to place the priest between the confessor of sins and the forgiveness of sins, or to exalt the priesthood as mediator between the sinner and God. The Bible declares that "For there is only one God, and. . .one mediator between God and mankind. . .Christ Jesus" (I Tim 2:5, J.B.V.), regardless of the religious title, no man has the power to forgive sins (Mk.2:7). Furthermore, every believer has free, unrestricted access to God's grace through prayer (Rom. 5:2; Heb. 4:16). There is no need to repeat Christ's sacrifice for sins because it has been accomplished once and for all (Heb.9:26; 10:10-14). Any attempts to do so is an abomination before God.

Though the New Testament lists various kinds of ministries and offices within the church (Eph. 4:11, 12; I Cor. 12:28, 29; I Tim 3), it never mentions the Roman Catholic concept of a priesthood. According to Peter, the Christian priesthood is a universal priesthood consisting of all true believers and is not the exclusive privilege of a select few: "so that you too, THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD that offers the spiritual sacrifices. . .you are a chosen race, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, a consecrated nation, a people set apart" (I Peter 2:5, 9, J.B.V.; see also Rev. 1:5, 6).

The Catholic concept of the priesthood is unscriptural and didn't even originate until the 3rd century. Furthermore, there is no reference to such titles as archbishop, cardinal, or pope, and the requirement of the celibacy of the priesthood is an idea condemned by the Apostle Paul (I Tim. 4:1-3). In fact, when Paul listed the qualifications for bishops (elders), he stated that they must "not have been married more than once" (I Tim. 3:2, J.B.V.; see also Titus 1:6).

MASS

The biblical teachings concerning communion are radically opposed to the official Roman Catholic position regarding the mass.(1) While Protestants view communion as a source of spiritual blessing and a symbolic sacrament commemorating Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, Catholics claim that it is the same sacrifice as Christ's death on the cross, and view it as a reenactment of Christ's crucifixion on Calvary in an unbloody manner.(2) Mass is a ritual officiated by a priest in which Christ's body is re-crucified and re-sacrificed for the atonement of an individual's sins. Catholicism further teaches that the physical presence of Christ is in the sacrifice, and that the wine and wafer ("host") are miraculously changed into the actual blood and body of Jesus Christ (the doctrine of Transubstantiation).

The Catholic concept of the mass was unheard of in the early church and was not invented until 831 A.D. by a Benedictine monk named Radbertus. It did not become an official doctrine until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D. The doctrine of Transubstantiation wasn't proclaimed until 1215 A.D. by Pope Innocent the III, and did not become an official creed until 1564 A.D.

The elaborate ritualism associated with the mass is unscriptural in that it stresses that Christ's sacrifice for sins was insufficient the first time. The Bible repeatedly stresses the finality and completeness of Christ's sacrifice and challenges any need for it to be repeated, reoffered, renewed, or perpetuated

through mass: "And every priest indeed stands daily ministering and often offering the same sacrifice which can never take away sins. But Jesus, having offered ONE SACRIFICE for sins, has taken his seat forever at the right hand of God. . .For by ONE OFFERING he has perfected forever those who are sanctified. . .Now where there is a forgiveness of these, there is no longer offering for sin" (Heb. 10:11, 12, 14, 18, C.R.V.; see also 7:27; 9:12, 22-28).

Even Jesus challenged the need for repeating His sacrifice for sins when He declared: "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30, C.R.V.); and Peter confirmed that "Christ himself. . .died ONCE for sins, died for the guilty, to lead us to God" (I Pet. 3:18, J.B.V.).

1 II Vatican Council documents on the mass.

2 John A. O'Brian, *The Faith of Millions*, pg. 382 (Roman Catholic).

RITUALISM

1. Roman Catholic Ritualism can find no basis of support in the Bible. The gorgeous vestments, colorful processions, exotic pageantry, mystifying symbolism, stately music, dim cathedral lighting, flickering candles, tinkling bells, and sweet-smelling incense is contrary to the character, conduct, and spirit of Christianity. The dazzling theatrical display of pomp and pageantry, the splendor of priests arrayed in costly jewels and apparel, and the elaborate spectacle of ceremonies and liturgies associated with Roman Catholicism is hardly in keeping with the purity and simplicity demonstrated by Christ, the apostles, and the early church. Even Peter warned against the wearing of gold, jewelry, or the putting on of rich robes (I Pet. 3:3, 4). The external ritualism of Roman Catholicism is a superficial, religious display designed to impress the natural senses, but lacks the transforming power of the gospel and the Spirit of Christ to change the heart or save a soul from hell.

2. Images, Statues, Shrines, and Pictures—The Roman Catholic Church officially sanctioned the worship of images and pictures in 787 A.D. at the Council of Nicaea. However, the veneration of images, statues, pictures, and shrines of Christ, Mary, dead saints, and angels is nothing more than blatant idolatry strictly forbidden by the Bible: "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of ANYTHING that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. . .Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them" (Ex. 20:4,5, C.R.V.; see also Lev. 26:1). In fact, the Bible pronounces a curse upon all those who do! (Deut. 27:15).

3. The Use of Relics—The widespread use of relics consisting of a piece of bone, a fragment of a saint's body, or some article which a deceased saint touched during his life for the purpose of adoration, worship, or the impartation of blessings and miracles is simply fetishism and rank superstition borrowed from pagan practices. It has no support in the Scriptures. The attributing of supernatural power to such

relics is simply another form of idolatry condemned by the Word of God.

4. **The Use of the Rosary**—The rosary is a device consisting of a chain of beads used in the ritualistic counting of repetitious prayers such as Hail Marys and The Lord's Prayer. It was first introduced by a monk named Peter the Hermit (1090 A.D.), but was not officially sanctioned until the 16th century. The repetitious recital of prayers is a heathen practice specifically condemned by Christ: "In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them" (Matt. 6:7,8, J.B.V.; see also N.A.B.).
5. **The Wearing of the Scapular**—The Scapular is a piece of brown cloth with the picture of the Virgin Mary which is worn over the shoulders next to the skin for the purpose of protecting the wearer from evil and danger. It was introduced by Simon Stock, an English monk, in 1287 A.D. This, like the wearing of St. Christopher medals, is nothing but superstition and fetishism which is practiced by pagan religions and primitive tribes in heathen countries, and condemned as idolatry by the Bible.
6. **The Use of Incense, Candles, and Holy Water in Roman Catholic worship** can find no grounds of support in the Bible. Christians are called to worship the Father in Spirit and truth. This is what the Father is seeking for among believers (Jn. 4:23). Our worship is not to be adulterated with the trappings of pagan idolatry and empty ritualism. The use of none of these elements can be found in the New Testament or the practice of the early church.
7. **Prayers, Masses, and Other Rituals for the Dead**—A common practice among Roman Catholics are prayers for the dead in order to improve their condition in purgatory and eternal destiny. However, these practices are in conflict with the Bible which teaches that the status of the dead, whether they be righteous or wicked, is fixed and irrevocable. The only opportunity men have for determining their eternal destiny is in this present life. All of our ritualism on their behalf after death avails nothing and cannot alter their condition, for "men only die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27, J.B.V.).

CONCLUSION

We have carefully compared the major teachings of Roman Catholicism with the Bible and have shown it is a religious system composed of many manmade practices and teachings which often contradict the clear truths contained in the Word of God. The Scriptural facts should offer a sobering challenge to all Roman Catholics who love God and earnestly desire to follow the truth.

Though this booklet has not attempted to question the religious sincerity, devotion, and dedication of Catholics nor deny that some have had a genuine, "born-again" experience in Christ, it does endeavor to inform Catholics of the Scriptural errors of Roman Catholicism and challenge them accordingly.

We must each recognize that it is difficult to serve God acceptably and be approved by Christ if we willfully continue to condone teachings or participate in practices which violate the Holy Scriptures. Jesus revealed that the true test of commitment and love for God is obedience and loyalty to the truth: "If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15, J.B.V.; see also I Jn. 2:3, 4; II Jn. 9). An important fruit of salvation is obedience to those truths which have been revealed to us in the Bible.

A persistent unwillingness to respond to Scriptural truth is usually an indication that an individual has not fully surrendered his life to Christ's Lordship. Furthermore, the Scriptures clearly caution us that "Everyone who knows what is the right thing to do and doesn't do it commits a sin" (James 4:17, J.B.V.).

The inevitable challenge confronting Catholics is whether they are willing to risk salvation and eternal life by continuing to rely upon a religious system which openly contradicts the Bible. Will you take the steps to embrace God's Word without reservation and follow Christ in absolute obedience? This is a courageous decision which each Roman Catholic must personally settle in his or her own heart. It is a crucial choice which confronts all conscientious Catholics who sincerely desire to embrace the truth and trust solely in Jesus Christ for their salvation. For a more comprehensive treatment of this important subject, we recommend reading Roman Catholicism, by Lorraine Boettner, and Foxes Book of Martyrs, by John Foxe. For a brief overview of the main points covered in this booklet, please reread the boldly printed words on each page.

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The Papacy: Its History, Dogmas, Genius, and Prospects

by Rev. J.A. Wylie, LL.D.

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page.

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Has Roman Catholicism Changed? An Overview of Recent Canon Law

Thomas Schirrmacher [\[a\]](#)

Antithesis, vol. 1, no. 2, 1990

Some observers speak of significant reforms taking place within Roman Catholicism, but an evaluation of recent official pronouncements suggests another course.

I. The Starting Point: Use of term "Tradition" in Scripture

Before discussing the new Catholic Church Law, I wish briefly to make my own presuppositions clear. I intend to examine the teachings and organizational structure of any church according to the divine revelation found in Holy Scripture. This approach can be briefly applied to the notion of "tradition." The word "tradition" (Gr. *paradosis*; Lat. *traditio*), in the New Testament, may refer to the act of "passing on" (delivery); or it may point to the content thereof -- that which was passed on (delivered). Usually, it has to do with the transmission of teachings or instructions. The Biblical use of the term does not in itself imply a valuation: the tradition can be divine or human, true or false.

A. Tradition in the OT

The OT does not have a special word for "tradition." The activity itself however is described by many concepts. Genuine tradition grounded in acts or revelation of *Jahwe* ought to be passed on to the next generation. False tradition, based on man's wisdom, is attacked: "Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments,... [but rather] walk in my statues, and keep my judgments, and do them." (Ezek.20: 18-19) Holding fast to the genuine "tradition" imparts life (Prov.4: 13); it does not stifle (Prov.4: 12).

B. Tradition in the NT

1. Divine or Sound Tradition

In addition to using the term "tradition" in the sense of the *substance delivered*, the New Testament also uses the verb form "deliver," sometimes with the meaning "to surrender [something]." The passages may be divided between those pertaining to the positive transmissions, which are to be held fast, and those dealing with negative ones which are to be eschewed. Luke identifies the oral transmission of eyewitnesses as the source for his gospel account (Lk 1:2). Paul, too, expressly appeals to eyewitnesses to defend the transmitted account of the death and resurrection of Jesus which was consistent with Scripture (I Cor.15:3 ff). The Lord's Supper goes back to the divine transmission which was passed on by men (I Cor.11:23ff; cf.already v.2).

Along with the transmission of historical events is the transmission of special instructions of the Apostles, of the gospel, or of the faith as such. The resolutions of the Jerusalem counsel were transmitted to the congregations as firmly established teachings "to keep" (Acts 16:4).

In 2 Thess.2:15 and 3:6 the traditions are to be held firm, which were passed on "whether by word or our epistle" (2:15). II Pet. 2:21 speaks of holy commands "*delivered* unto them." Defection from these commands is equated to a defection from the very faith itself. Parallel to this, Jude 3 admonishes "...that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." In the NT, then, the positive sense of tradition as transmission encompasses the Scriptures (cf. 2 Tim.3:15 ff.), the gospel, and the faith as a whole as well as the particular historical accounts and instructions of the apostles, the latter being available to us only via the Scripture.

2. Human or False Traditions in NT

To the same extent that the NT portrays the gospel itself as tradition, it opposes other traditions which lay claim to divine authority. According to I Pet. 1:18, redemption is needed from precisely that vain manner of living "received by tradition^[1] from your fathers"! This judgment applies to all human traditions: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men..." (Col.2:8)

Amidst all the variety of evangelists and teachers, Paul does not want anything to go astray from that which is written (I Cor. 4:6), for that would lead to one puffing himself up against another, whereas *that which was transmitted unites* (4:6-7).

Paul's dispute is especially with the Jewish traditions which are added to the Old Testament. Paul explicitly rejects these "traditions of the fathers" for which he himself was so zealous prior to his conversion to Christ (Gal.1:14). The polemic is found especially in the discussions between Jesus and the Scribes and Pharisees. (The Sadducees, for the most part, rejected the oral tradition along with the Old Testament.) In Mt.15:1ff and Mk 7:1ff., traditions are set in sharp contrast to the command and Word of God. To the extent that tradition is observed, the Word of God is made void (Mk 7:13). In this connection Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13: "Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men..." (Mk.7:6-8)

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus uses particular examples to distinguish the law from the traditions of the elders (Mt.5:17-6:18). He doesn't heighten the obligations of the law, but only reminds them of it: Cursing, lusting for a woman (10th commandment), divorce except in the case of unchastity, hatred of one's enemies, etc. is already declared abhorrent in the Old Testament. The Pharasaical traditions do not clarify the Bible, but stand in direct contradiction to the Word of God whenever they lay claim to divine authority (Mk. 7). Surely there will always be certain circumstances relative to the various cultures where innovation is appropriate -- the time of the worship service, seating arrangements, etc. But these may never bind the conscience of all men, unless they are based upon the Bible. Stumbling against such innovations does not mean one stumbles against the eternal and universal doctrine of God. All opinions regarding how a Christian should live, if they lay claim to divine validity, may be tested and questioned in terms of the Bible. This also applies to the new Roman Catholic Church Law, which is the subject of the following discourse.

II. The Essence of Catholic Law

Catholic law does not simply provide legal structuring of the church in the sense in which every organization in time subjects itself.

A. Roman Catholic Church Law in General

1. Claims to be "divine"

The Catholic church law has a totally different character from that of protestants, even if the latter may be criticized in its own right. One dictionary defines church law as "law created by God and the church, for the church." [2]

2. Reflects the essence of the church

Because of its divine character, church law in the Roman church is not an arbitrary factor, but rather reflects the essence of the church; indeed, it determines the essence of the church. The German conference of Bishops explained it like this: "Jesus Christ himself established the fundamental form of this order. The church is of divine origin. Its life flows from the Word of God, the sacraments. The guarantor of its unity is the seat of Peter. Bishops lead their dioceses as followers of the apostles in unity with the Pope. Church law is thus the way of life of the church, the expression of her unity and the thing which defines how to care for souls." [3]

This perspective remains valid even in recent times as the quote shows, and has not been weakened by all the alleged reforms of the Roman Catholic Church in the last decades. In his introduction to the new church law, the chairman of the German Canon Law Translation Commission, Winfried Aymans, writes:

The church law grows, according to catholic understanding, out of the essence of the church itself. It is, according to the teaching of the second Vatican Council, the external side of a complex reality; it is at the same time the human expression of a manifold spiritual reality whose root is in God. [4]

3. Mediates salvation

Catholic church law, according to the Roman Catholic Church, goes back to God and the spiritual authority of the church. Thus, it has the character of mediating salvation. The above-cited lexicon says, "The salvation-mediating function of church law finds succinct expression in the old formula *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church there is no salvation), which in its original understanding referred to the visible, hierarchically constituted church. Its judicial ordinary [b] power plays a decisive role in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ." [5]

Furthermore, "The church law is Holy Law on account of its divine origin and its function of mediating salvation; this was expressed in the early Christian terms for church law, for example *jus divinum, sacrum, poli, coeli* (divine, holy, heavenly justice)." [6]

The jurisdiction of Catholic ecclesiastical law extends therefore far beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church. Certain parts apply to all men, others to all baptized persons of whatever confession. "Catholic church law is the law of the church united under the Pope as her visible head, which understands itself as the church of Jesus Christ; therefore, her judicial order applies fundamentally to all baptized persons.... Though the claim with respect to non-Catholic Christians generally cannot be enforced, yet it still has practical significance whenever the

legal relation to non-Catholic Christians (e.g. the legitimacy of a marriage) is brought before the Catholic forum." [7]

B. The Distinction Between Divine and Human Justice in Church Law

Since there is now a new version of the canon law, clearly not all aspects of it are immutable. In particular, a distinction must be made between divine and human law under the rubric of ecclesiastical law. "The purely ecclesiastical law, like all human law, may change in order to adapt to changing circumstances. The divine law is unchangeable, though it should not be thought of as a fixed quantity. Just as there is progress (doctrinal development) in the course of understanding and unifying the stuff of revelation, so the church also grows in its understanding of positive divine law -- for example, the teaching regarding the papal primacy. This applies above all to the natural divine law." [8] Herman Avenarius explains the distinction more precisely:

Catholic canon law proceeds from the primacy of divine law (*ius divinum*). This is divided into two categories: the positive divine law (*ius divinum positivum*) as revealed in redemptive history, above all in the Scriptures; and natural law (*ius naturale*) based on God's natural revelation in the created order. The *ius divinum* is universal and valid at all times; it cannot be set aside by force, nor be altered. Under this category are included the 10 commandments, the ordinance of the sacraments... and the papal primacy.

Human law stands in contrast to the *ius divinum*, and in turn can be divided into the categories civil law (*ius civile*) and church law (*ius humanum ecclesiasticum*); it is in its essence changeable. Legislative authority for *ius humanum ecclesiasticum*, which is only binding for baptized persons, lies in the Pope for the church as a whole, and in the Bishop at the level of the diocese." [9]

In any new edition of the canon law, the divine law may only be reformulated, while the human law may be completely changed. Still, the former pronouncements continue to have meaning: "the old, cancelled law lives on as to substance in the CIC, [10] and continues to have significance for the ongoing interpretation of it." [11]

One should bear in mind the history of this distinction. In the words of one Catholic canonist, "the distinction between *ius divinum* and *ius humanum* was not consciously recognized until the Reformation." [12]

To the outsider, it may be difficult to distinguish between the divine and human law within the canon law. Even catholic professors of Canon Law have their disputes over this. [13] This is equally true, however, for the doctrines of the catholic church. An infallible dogma is derived from a particular teaching via a complicated ranking process. In the German edition of the most important teachings of the catholic church, the attempt was made to divide the teachings into those that are "infallible" or unchangeable, and those that may be revised. [14] This work recommends itself as a good complement to the study of canon law.

We summarize the characteristics of catholic canon law in the words of Erwin Fahlenbusch, a

teacher of church symbols:

The Roman Catholic Church carries out its worship and its life in the world in disciplined fashion: its organization is judicially structured. The canon law (or Catholic church law) consists of the totality of all rules (law statements; "canon," measure, standard) governing action and institutions of the church.... The necessity for such a law is, for the Roman Catholic Church, not deduced merely from the fact of being a social corporation, and needing, like every other society, binding rules. Rather it sees its possession of discipline as given along with its constitution and mission. In other words, the discipline of the church is redemptive-historically conditioned and is logically and materially prior to the standards necessary for any societal organization. It includes the rules needed for organization and protection, but goes beyond this in that it is essentially related to the mediation of salvation. Canonical law distinguishes itself from every other jurisprudence just as the Church is distinguished from every other community. It is the reflection of the Roman Catholic Church's understanding of its own nature." [15]

III. The New Catholic Canon Law of 1983

A. Church Law as Papal Expression

The church law derives its authority ultimately from the papal office of Peter, as is clear from the quotations above. Aymans writes in the context of presenting the gradual emergence of the new laws: "the work of reform, initiated and assisted by the counsel, and its result in the form of the now promulgated [16] Codex, were only issued forth by means of the authority of the Pope." [17] This state of affairs stands forth clearly in the title of the new canon law: "Code of canon law, promulgated by the authority of Pope John Paul II" (translated from CIC 1984).

B. The Relevance of the Canon Law

The new canon law of 1983 is a superb vehicle for ascertaining the current state of development of the Catholic Church. One who would engage in polemics with the Catholic church law will not need to answer the objection that he is attacking outdated Catholic positions or trying to drag peripheral issues to the center stage. The church law of 1983 is:

- inspired by Vatican II, and claims to take up its reforms and put them into concrete form;
- a century-long work in our own time, and has brought about a flood of new literature commenting on the changes and suggesting practical applications;
- published by the authority of the current Pope;
- like all canon law, tied up with the essence of the catholic church as well as its notion of salvation.

The relevance of the new church law will be even better understood if we look at its historical development.

C. Historical Background of the New Canon Law

Church law always played a big role in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. For centuries, however, it was scattered through many documents, and parts of it were buried within other writings and often only derivable from current practices. In 1917, after many years of effort, the countless scattered laws and determinations were gathered together in the large work "Codex Iuris Canonici", and this remained in force almost without change or correction until 1983.

On Jan. 25, 1959, anticipating the second Vatican Council (1962-65), Pope John XXIII announced a revision of the church law, which was to incorporate especially the changes of the (then) upcoming second Vatican Council. Numerous commissioners worked on it after the council. Pope John Paul II, who took office in 1978, gave the project substantial impetus. On Jan. 25, 1983, after long preparation, John Paul II released the new Catholic Law -- in Catholic terminology he "promulgated" the new law -- setting November 27, 1983 as the date it would come into force. Was it just a coincidence that Martin Luther's 500th birthday, solemnly celebrated by many protestant churches, fell in the same month?

The new catholic law applies to all Catholic Christians in the Latin church. Many of the determinations claim validity for all baptized persons; many others, to all Catholics. Many of the provisions, however, apply only to the Latin, or Roman, Catholics, that is, not to the (mostly very small) orthodox churches that are attached to the Roman Catholic church. The original intention of creating a church law applicable equally to all non-Latin churches within the fold of the Catholic Church failed. So to some extent, other provisions apply to these churches, mostly of orthodox heritage. In terms of numbers, however, these churches are insignificant.

D. Differences Between the Ecclesiastical Laws of 1917 and 1983

Both in structure and contents there are many differences between the laws as published in 1917 and 1983.

Where the church law of 1917 was strongly modeled after the juridical structure of Roman law (*personae/res/actiones*, i.e. persons/things/actions) the new law is oriented more toward personal questions in accordance with Vatican II. After a long introduction, Book I starts with "General Norms." Book II follows with "The People of God." It is considerably more detailed than the first book and contains rights and duties of laymen and the important section on the clerics. It is here that the Roman Catholic ecclesiology (=theory of the church) is unfolded. In contrast, Book III on the "The Teaching Office of the Church" is very short! It is striking that this section also takes up the rules for Catholic schools and universities. The detailed book IV, "Office of Sanctifying in the Church", comprises, significantly, the entire sacramental ordinances. The other sections are V. "The Temporal Goods of the Church", VI. "Sanctions in the Church", VII. "Processes"; these three describe the entire judicial structure of the church along with its court system.

E. General Remarks on the New Church Law

With the new church law, the Catholic Church reveals itself once again as a religion of law. Luther rightly spoke of the "Law of the Pope". The Mosaic law of the Old Testament had a divine origin that the new church law unjustly lays claim to. [c] It distinguishes itself from the Catholic law in that it is short, comprehensive, and simple; for the most part it is expressed in

principles and case examples which can then be applied to concrete situations. The Catholic church law is quite different. The 1,752 Canons along with subparagraphs treat everything from the church's right to exist to processing costs, from the Catholic university to confirmation certificates, excommunication to the sale of relics. In all of this nothing is left to chance; the terms are all precisely defined.

Two examples will show the extent of attention to detail. [\[d\]](#)

The Bishop is instructed as follows: "Except for a serious and urgent reason he is not to be absent from his diocese on Christmas, during Holy Week, on Easter, Pentecost, or Corpus Christi." (Can 395.3)

The definition of an illegitimate child goes: "Children are presumed to be legitimate if they are born at least 180 days after the celebration of the marriage or within 300 days from the date when conjugal life was terminated" (Can 1138.2).

F. Motion Toward the Bible?

One hears promises of a departure in the direction of the Bible in the new law. Many passages do in fact have a new, evangelical ring to them. One reads of "justification by faith" (Apost. Const.15[\[e\]](#)), "rebirth in Christ" (Can 208) and much more. But appearances are deceptive. The words are there, but they mean something quite different. A few examples may show this.

The Bishops work together in a "collegial spirit", (Apost.Const.7,13,20) but their word has no further significance apart from approval by the Pope (ibid.,esp.13, 20). Ecumenicity is advocated (Apost.Const.22; Can 256.2; 383.3; 755.1), but attaches the condition "as this is understood by the church" (Can 383.3). They speak of "continual sanctification," (Can 210) but they mean thereby that the sanctification of believers takes place through the partaking of the sacrament (cf. Book IV "The Office of Sanctifying in the Church" on the sacraments; Can 834; 1253; & esp. 835.1). From modern missiology, they get that the laity participates in the apostolate (Can 225.1), but at the same time strengthen the sacramental precedence of the clerics. They say the "gospel" ought to be proclaimed to all peoples (Can 211; 747.1; 757; 781ff.) but understand this entirely sacramentally and add "in regard to the whole church, the task of proclaiming the gospel is principally entrusted to the Pope and college of Bishops" (Can 756.1). The task can then be delegated to the priests (Can 757).

G. Advancements in the New Church Law?

The new church law certainly contains a series of "advancements." However, they do not move in the direction of a loosening of catholic teaching in favor of a return to the Biblical foundation, but instead add yet more to the same system which has been growing through the centuries.

1.The Development of the papacy

The best example of this advancement is the position of the papacy. In the course of the centuries, the papacy was enlarged ever further. The relation of the Pope to the assembly of Bishops, the counsel, was always an essential point of contention. Finally, the changes reached the point that only the Pope could call a counsel to meet -- yet the counsel in meeting

still could infallibly decide doctrinal issues and stood with equal rights vis-a-vis the Pope. After this, the next step could be taken in the 19th century: in 1870, declarations "ex cathedra" of the Pope were declared to be infallible. The Pope pushed this dogma through the counsel, using methods that were not always transparent, as catholic historian August Bernhard Hasler showed. [18]

Nevertheless, this doctrine remained largely theoretical after the initial test of strength, either because the Pope and counsel were united on the current questions, or as the case may be, no *ex cathedra* decisions were needed. Only after 80 years could the papacy seize hold of the next step: *the application of the dogma of papal infallibility*. The Pope, without a counsel meeting and without being able to refer to the slightest precedent in known church tradition, declared *the dogma of the ascension of Mary*.

After this "step of progress" in the empowerment of the Pope, the next step could be prepared: the juridical disempowerment of the counsel. For until now the counsel had equal rights with the Pope and could itself make infallible decisions.

2. The Disempowering of the Counsel by the Papacy

This disempowering of the counsels was silently and secretly completed by the new Catholic church law (esp. Can 749.2).

In this matter the beautiful word "collegiality" must not delude, as already remarked above. The tension is evident in Can 333.2, which develops the unlimited power of the Pope over the church as described in Can 333.1. "The Roman Pontiff, in fulfilling the office of the supreme pastor of the church is always united with the other Bishops and with the universal church; however, he has the right, according to the needs of the church, to determine the manner, either personal or collegial, of exercising this function."

The Pope, according to this paragraph, works "collegially" only as long as he desires to do so. An appeal to a counsel against the Pope is forbidden (Can 1372). The counsel "together with its head, and never without its head, is also the subject of supreme and full power over the universal church" (Can 336). Thus, decrees of the counsel are only valid with the agreement of the Pope (Can 341.1)!

THE EXPANSION OF PAPAL POWER IN MODERN TIMES

- Papal Dogma 1870: Pope is infallible like the counsel
- Dogma on Mary 1950: Pope is infallible without the counsel
- Church Law of 1983: Pope is lord over counsel

3. Church Law as New Papal Law?

The whole church law appeals to the authority of the Pope (Apost.Const. 13,30). Again and again his supreme authority is established. He is the highest judge, who himself cannot be brought before the court (Can 1404-1405); without him, no counsel can reach decisions or even meet (Can 336-341); he is infallible in his doctrinal decisions (Can 749.1; cf.2). Can 331 says,

The Bishop of the Church of Rome, in whom resides the office given in a special way by the Lord to Peter, first of the Apostles and to be transmitted to his successors, is head of the college of Bishops, the Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the universal Church on earth; therefore, in virtue of his office he enjoys supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the church, which he can always freely exercise.

To be sure, the title "Vicar of Christ" was used before, but is now for the first time anchored in church law. Canons 330-336 very much strengthen the papal office, it being up to him "to determine the manner, either personal or collegial, of exercising this function." The talk about the college of Bishops is only a formality, since both counsel and synod are disenfranchised.

The authority of the Pope, which could scarcely increase any further, is further documented in other quotes:

There is neither appeal nor recourse against a decision or decree of the Roman Pontiff. (Can 333.3)

The Roman Pontiff is the supreme judge of the entire Catholic world; he tries cases either personally or through the ordinary tribunals... (Can 1442)

The students are to be so formed that, imbued with the love for the Church of Christ, they are devoted with a humble and filial love to the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter, and are attached to their own Bishop as his trustworthy co-workers... (Can 245.2)

Clerics are bound by a special obligation to show reverence and obedience to the Supreme Pontiff and to their own ordinary (Can 273).

As regards the universal Church the duty of proclaiming the gospel has been especially entrusted to the Roman Pontiff and to the college of Bishops (Can 756.1).

Generally, one gets the impression that the new church law is in reality a papal law. In all important chapters the absolute precedence of the Pope is stressed before anything else, whether the subject matter is the care of souls, evangelization, the property of the church, judgments, or legislation of the church. All the functions of the church are actually only carried out as commissioned by and in representation of the Pope, and from this derive their authority. (Can 204.2 leadership of the people of God; 377.1-3 appointment of Bishops; 782.1 direction of missions; 1256 authority over all goods; 1273 administration of ecclesiastical goods; etc.)

4. Catholic Criticism of the New Papal Rights

Criticism from the pens of learned Catholics also shows how much the new Catholic church law is a further expansion of papal preeminence. The paper "Diakonia" dedicated an issue (May 1986) to the theme "The Bishop." The Catholic canonist Knut Walf concluded that the post-conciliar development did not deliver what the council had promised with the term *collegiality*.

He writes:

The new "Codex Iuris Canonici" of 1983 may present an invincible obstacle in the way of reducing tensions between the Primate and Episcopacy in the foreseeable future. It cannot too often be repeated: the new Codex does not breathe the spirit of collegiality in its legal, constitutional sections. Rather, it petrifies the papal standing of primacy in a way that is foreign even to the 1917 codex. [\[19\]](#)

As examples, Walf cites the following:

- the "shift in accent to the greater position of power of the Pope" in Can 331, "in which this power of the Pope in the church, but especially also within the college of Bishops, is newly defined in a way that cannot be exceeded, in contrast to which Walf refers to the "modest formulation of the earlier codex."
- the arrogation of the title "Vicar of Christ" in Can 333
- taking over the title used in the Roman Empire for the emperor, "principatus" in Can 333.1 and the implied enlargement from juridical power over the entire church to "ordinary" power, which stretches out over "all particular churches and all groupings of churches" (Can 333.1).
- the relativising of the ecumenical councils. According to Walf, "the council is systematically and by law pinned into a dead corner." While the old church law handled Pope and council, each with equal rights, in their own sections, in the new church law the differences are erased. The council is constituted in the section on the Pope, and the collegiality of the Bishops may be brought to order by mail and by other previously unheard-of methods, always under the leadership of the Pope.

Similar criticism of the new preeminence of the Pope with respect to the council has been published by numerous other catholic authors. The international "Concilium Foundation" devoted an entire issue of its journal "Concilium", which appears in seven languages, to the meaning of the ecumenical counsel. [\[20\]](#) The Italian canonist Giorgio Feliciani [\[21\]](#) criticizes in his contribution the commission which prepared the determinations on the college of Bishops on the grounds that the central role of the counsel was abandoned without offering any justification. American professor of Theology, Joseph Komochak, [\[22\]](#) showed that the new church law distorted the determinations of Second Vatican in favor of a new papal rule. He fears that the Bishops will, in the end, be relegated to "yes-men" for the Pope, no longer having any of their own authority.

Further criticisms include the Pope's string of new titles ("Vicar of Christ") while, at the same time, a list of similar titles for the counsel easily fall by the wayside. [\[23\]](#)

But the Foundation sees in all this a development that has been underway for a longer time, a development leading to a "neutralization of the ecumenical counsel." The counsel "is no longer defined as its own legal institution independent of the primate. On the contrary, there is now the danger that the counsel will be absorbed by the papal primate." [\[24\]](#)

Naturally, I do not intend to save the ecumenical counsel. All this is only to make clear the following:

If there is any sort of "progress" in the new new catholic church law, then it is "progress" in a very definite direction. No progress is to be discovered in the direction of opening up the simple Biblical truths nor toward evangelical teaching. Instead, we find a further expansion of papal power; an expansion that is falling upon sharp criticism even within the catholic church and which is seen as a break with catholic tradition.

H. Examples of the Retention of Catholic Teachings in the New Church Law

Several further examples should show that the Catholic Church in its new Church Law has kept practically all the teachings and practices which protestants criticize [25] and which cannot be reconciled to the Bible; indeed to an extent the church has sharpened them. A refutation of the specific teachings from a Biblical perspective is omitted here, since this is already done in the worthy books by Uhlmann [26] and Buhne [27] as well as other writings.

1. Veneration of Mary and the Saints

The salvation of souls is under the protection of Mary (Apost.Const. 31). Seminarians are to foster especially "devotion to Blessed Virgin Mary", the rosary and other exercises (Can 246.3), which are a means for their sanctification (Can 276.5). The people of God should "cultivate a special devotion to the Virgin Mother of God, model and protector of all consecrated life, including the Marian rosary" (Can 663.4). *Relics are to be found in every fixed altar in all churches* (Can 1237.2), holy images, even if in "moderate number," are to be set up (Can 1188), and should furthermore be venerated as a means of sanctification (Can 1186-1190; cf also can 663.4).

2. Baptismal Regeneration

Baptismal regeneration is firmly anchored by law. Through baptism men are born again and come into the church (Can 11, 96, 11, 112, 204, 205, 217, 787.2; 849ff). "*Baptism, the gate to the sacraments, necessary for salvation in fact or at least in intention, by which men and women are freed from their sins, are reborn as children of God and, configured to Christ by an indelible character...*" (Can 849).

3. Through Confirmation the Holy Ghost is Received

Receiving the Holy Spirit by means of confirmation remains intact: "The sacrament of confirmation impresses a character and by it the baptized, continuing on the path of Christian initiation, are enriched by the gift of the Holy Spirit and bound more perfectly to the Church..." (Can 879).

4. The Eucharist

Moreover, the Eucharist is the central point in the congregation of the faithful (Can 528.2) and is a literal sacrifice (Can 897, 904). The faithful should venerate the eucharistic element "*worshipping it with supreme adoration*" (Can 898). The Eucharist may never be celebrated with other churches (Can 908). Priests must celebrate it daily (Can 276.2; 719.2).

5. Excommunication and Schism

Even if "excommunication as punishment" is restricted to fewer cases than in 1917, they are still heavy-handed enough. Exercising physical force against the Pope (Can 1370) leads to automatic excommunication as does abortion (Can 1398), but especially "*offenses against*

religion and the unity of the church" (Book VI, Part II, Title I). Under this rubric is included the "apostate", i.e. one who has totally repudiated the catholic faith as a whole (Can 1364, 751, 194.1, 694.1); the "heretic," who obstinately doubts certain catholic truths (Can 751, 1364); and the "schismatic" (Can 751, 1364). "Schism is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff or to communion with the members of the church subject to him" (Can 751). To be counted as a schismatic it suffices, therefore, to fail to subordinate oneself to the Pope. Whoever, in addition doubts, Catholic teachings is at the same time a heretic and will easily become an apostate, one who has fallen. So that the notion of "separated brothers" (Can 825.2) as well as other expressions in referring to other Christian churches does not really indicate a change at all. **[f]**

6. Marriage Issues

The rules regarding the invalidity and annulment of marriages are shocking. A marriage with an unbaptized person is plain and simple invalid (Can 1086); the same for impotence (Can 1084). An unconsummated marriage can be annulled by the Pope (Can 1142). Can 1143-1150, especially 1146 deals with the possibility of divorce from an unbaptized partner. A marriage with an unbaptized person who cannot live out the marriage due to imprisonment or persecution can be annulled even if the partner has in the meantime become baptized (Can 1149).

There is such a thing as a secret marriage (Can 1130-1133). The definition of legitimate children already cited above then presumably leaves it to guesswork whether children "born at least 180 days after the celebration of the marriage or within 300 days from the date when conjugal life was terminated" should count as legitimate!?

7. Indulgences and Penance

The subject of indulgences has an entire chapter dedicated to it. (Book IV, chapter IV; Can 992-997). "*An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment for sin the guilt of which is already forgiven, which a properly disposed member of the Christian faithful obtains under certain and definite conditions with the help of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies authoritatively the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints*" (Can 992).

It is clear that the subject of indulgences again divides the spirits. While the Bible only knows one single forgiveness in Jesus Christ, which cancels guilt and satisfies the sentence of eternal punishment, the Catholic Church distinguishes between the cancelling of sin through absolution after the confessional, and the remission of punishment achieved through satisfactions, indulgences, and time in purgatory. *With this, the finished redemptive work of Jesus Christ is placed in question*, in that it is only half-accepted. The atonement of the cross and the prayer for forgiveness does not, for the Catholic Church, also bring about the remission of punishment! Reconciliation is also tied to confession in the confessional (Can 964.2). The sacrament of penance is moreover the only way to forgiveness. "Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the only ordinary way by which the faithful person who is aware of serious sin is reconciled with God and with the Church." (Can 960). Sin is directed not just to God, but against the church as well (Can 959,960). But this is arrogance!

I. Conclusion

One need merely read the new Catholic Church Law to realize where it has defected from the Bible. In the last pages only sections from the new church law have been presented, nothing from other writings. The Catholic Church is cast as always it has been; the writings are only friendlier and more collegial. To know the new catholic church law is enough to know that there is no possibility for ecumenical fellowship for any believer in the Biblical sense of that word. How many people who think they may remain in the Catholic Church haven't long since earned excommunication according to the canon? The protestant state Bishop Eduard Lohse should have read the church law carefully before recognizing the title of Pope and addressing the same as "brother in Christ."

The new catholic church law can therefore be a good help in discussions between Catholics and non-Catholics, to show that in its kernel the Catholic church has not changed. Having reviewed the arguments for the relevance of the church law in section III, one need only examine a copy of the church law in order to become convinced of the state of things in terms of black and white.

Particularly the paragraph on indulgences (Can 992) with its teaching that forgiveness through Christ does not provide redemption from retributive punishment, along with the paragraphs on the Pope (Can 331,333) would provide an outstanding springboard for presenting the Biblical gospel.

IV. Important Sections of the New Church Law.

The following list indicates the more important paragraphs of the new canon law with an abbreviated indication of contents. The most important issues are marked with an asterisk; naturally there is some subjectivity here. The list is designed to be a help for self-study. It can also help to prepare for conversations with Catholics. I suggest marking the key places in a copy of the canon law and also taking a copy of the list along. One might begin with passages which prove that the Catholic conversational partner has long ago defected from the position represented by the church law. In other cases, the best approach may be to start with the subject of the growing power of the Pope. Passages dealing with salvation and the forgiveness of sins are especially good for setting forth, by way of contrast, the Biblical message, perhaps using the epistle to the Romans.

204.1

The faithful = those baptized

204.2

Pope governs the church

210

Sanctification

*212.1

Obedience to leaders as "representatives of Christ"

*218

Freedom of inquiry if respect for magisterium (not Bible) observed

223.2

Ecclesiastical authority regulates rights of faithful

245.2

- Seminarians to be obediently devoted to Pope*
- 246.1
Eucharist the center of life of the seminary
- 246.3
Devotion to Mary and rosary advocated
- *273
Clerics obey Pope and Bishop
- 276.3
Clerics to fulfil liturgy of hours every day
- *276.5
Devotion to Mary a means of sanctification
- 277.1
Celibacy
- *330
Pope + Bishops = Peter + apostles
- *331
Power of the Pope; Vicar of Christ
- *333.1
Pope's ordinary power over all particular churches
- *333.2
Pope leads church by himself or with Bishops
- 334
All offices carry out their tasks in name of Pope
- *336
College of Bishops is never without Pope
- *341.1
Decrees of ecumenical counsel only obligatory if approved by Pope
- 337.1
Bishops in place of the apostles
- 400
Bishops to venerate the tombs of Peter and Paul
- 528.1
Eucharist the center of the "assembly of faithful"
- *663.4
Veneration of Mary and the rosary
- *749.1
Infallibility of papal teaching office
- *749.2
Ecumenical counsel only infallible in connection with Pope
- *750
Scripture and tradition
- *751
Heresy, apostasy, and schism
- *752
Not heartfelt belief, but obedience
- 825.1
Publication of Bible only with papal approval
- 825.1
Publication of Bible only with "appropriate annotations"
- 834.1

Sanctification through holy liturgy

847

How to consecrate holy oils

*849

Baptism frees from sin

*879

Confirmation brings the gift of the Holy Spirit

*897

Eucharist contains Christ and is a sacrifice!

*898

Eucharist to be worshiped with supreme adoration

*899.2

Priests act "in the person of Christ"

*901

Mass for the dead

*904

The Eucharistic sacrifice is work of redemption

932.2

Sacrifice to be performed on a dedicated or blessed altar

947-51

Rules for accepting payments for masses

*959

Sacrament of penance

*959

Reconciliation with God and the Church

*960

Confession only way of reconciliation

964

Confession normally using confessional stall only

978

Father confessor is judge and healer

981

Acts of penance

*992-6

Indulgences

*1084

Marriage with non-baptized invalid!

*1149

Divorce possible if partner becomes imprisoned

*1186

Sanctification through veneration of Mary

1187

Veneration of saints

1188

Sacred images in moderation

1190

Relics

1235-39

Altars

*1237.2

- Every fixed altar erected over relics*
1251
Abstain from meat on Fridays
1251
Everyone to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday
* 1256
Supreme authority of Pope with respect to ownership of all goods
1264
Payments for favors and administrations of sacraments
* 1273
Pope the ruler of all church goods
1365
Forbidden participation in others' services
1367
Automatic excommunication for misuse of eucharistic elements
1370
Automatic excommunication for physical force against Pope
* 1371
Penalty for teaching contrary to any doctrine condemned by Pope or ecumenical counsel
* 1372
No appeal to ecumenical counsel or Bishops' college against Pope
1388.1
Automatic excommunication for breach of confessional privacy
* 1398
Automatic excommunication for abortion
* 1404
Pope can be judged by no court
* 1442
Pope the highest judge
-

*We are pleased to introduce Dr. Thomas Schirmacher to the English-speaking world. Dr. Schirmacher is, among many activities, engaged as editor-in-chief of the German theological journal *Bibel und Gemeinde* (Waldbronn, W. Germany) and teaches ethics and missiology at the *Theologischer Fernunterricht* (Theological Education by Extension) in Bonn/Altenkirchen. The larger version of this article may be ordered from him at:*

*Breite Strasse 16
D-5300 Bonn, W. Germany*

Shorter articles, written by Dr. Schirmacher at the time of the first and second editions of the canon law are:

"Das neue katholische Kirchenrecht", 1. Auflage, Licht und Leben (1984) 9 198-200

"Das neue katholische Kirchenrecht", 2. überarbeitete Auflage, Gemeinde Konkret 3 (1985), 16

Notes

- [a] *Translated by T.J. Harris. Scripture citations are given using AV. Editorial notes will be indicated by lower-case letters; the author's notes are numbered.*
- [1] *This is the only occurrence of the Greek word *patroparadotos* for tradition.*
- [2] *K.Mörsdorf, article "Kirchenrecht" in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (hereafter *LThK*), 2. Auflage, ed. J. Hfer et.al., Freiburg 1986, 6, pp. 245-250*
- [3] *Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 1983 as quoted in W. Aymans, *Einführung in das neue Gesetzbuch der lateinischen Kirche, Arbeitshilfen 31*, (Bonn: 1983), p.5*
- [4] *W. Aymans, op.cit. p.8*
- [b] **"Ordinary" is used here in the technical sense meaning "having immediate (not delegated) jurisdiction"*
- [5] *K.Mörsdorf, op.cit. p.246*
- [6] *ibid.*
- [7] *ibid. p. 245*
- [8] *ibid. p.246*
- [9] *H. Avenarius, *Kleines Rechtswörterbuch*. (Bonn 1985), p.217*
- [10] *CIC is the acronym for *Codex Iuris Canonici* (Code of Canon Law) and indicates the written compilation of Catholic church law.*
- [11] *K. Mörsdorf, article "Codex Iuris Canonici" in *LThK 2*(1986) p.1246*
- [12] *E. Corecco in *Handuch des Katholischen Kirchenrechts*, ed. J. Listl et al., (Regensburg 1983), p.16*
- [13] *e.g. Listl et.al., op. cit.*
- [14] *J. Neuner & H. Roods, *Der Glaube der Kirche in den Urkunden der Lehrverkündigung*, 10.Auflage. (Regensburg 1979).*
- [15] *Fahlenbusch, E., "Kirchenkunde der Gegenwart," in *Theologische Wissenschaft 9*, (1979), p. 73.*
- [16] *"Promulgate" is the official phrase for the ceremonial papal clarification, which gives power to a particular document.*
- [17]

W. Aymens, op.cit. p.9

[c] *Such a claim is made, for example, in Apost. Const. 14, 17.*

[d] *Citations from Canon Law are taken from the English translation as expressed in The Code of Canon Law - A Text and Commentary, New York: Paulist 1985. Note that only the Latin edition is legally binding.*

[e] *The "Apostolic Constitution Sacrae Disciplinae Leges" is a kind of papal preamble to the canon law, which gives the circumstances of its promulgation. Numbers given in references to this section refer to the ordinal paragraph as typeset in the Paulist Press (English) edition.*

[18] *A.B. Hasler, Wie der Papst unfehlbar wurde, (Frankfurt 1981); cf. H. Küng Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage (Frankfurt 1980).*

[19] *K. Walf, "Kollegialität der Bischöfe ohne römischen Zentralismus?", in Diakonia: Internationale Zeitschrift für die Praxis der Kirche, 17(1986) 3/pp. 171-172; cf. examples pp.172-173*

[20] *Concilium 19 (1983) 8/9, pp.499-586*

[21] *ibid., 526-530*

[22] *ibid., pp. 574-579*

[23] *ibid., p.585*

[24] *ibid., p.586*

[25] *By protestant criticism I mean the examination of Catholic teachings in light of the gospel, as was done by the Reformers. Today, there is much that passes as "protestant" that has as little to do with the Bible as many Catholic teachings. The standard must always be the Bible, as I described in the first section. Naturally this applies to the "evangelical" criticism of the Reformers.*

[26] *P.H. Uhlmann, Die Lehrentscheidungen Roms im Lichte der Bibel, Berneck 1984.*

[27] *W. Buhne, Ich bin auch katholisch, Die Heilige Schrift und die Dogmen der katholischen Kirche, (Bielefeld 1988).*

[f] *The subtlety of Dr. Schirrmacher's point needs to be noted. He is not objecting to the notion of excommunication when carried out according to Scriptural principles, but rather to (a) the preposterous pre-determined grounds for R.C. excommunication, and (b) the hypocrisy of claiming to recognize non-Catholics as "brothers" while in another place effectively defining them as heretics and schismatics.*

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John H. Gerstner on Thomas Aquinas as a Protestant

Robert L. Reymond

In his article, "Aquinas Was a Protestant," which appeared in the May 1994 issue of *Tabletalk*, the popular monthly devotional publication of Ligonier Ministries, Inc., edited by R. C. Sproul, Jr., Dr. John H. Gerstner (1) declared that Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) "was a medieval Protestant teaching the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone" (13)—indeed, that he "taught the biblical doctrine of justification" (14) (2) —and that he was "one of Protestantism's greatest theologians" (14).

While Gerstner acknowledged that Augustine did not adequately develop the forensic element in justification, he asserted that Aquinas "was not led astray" but "with Augustine taught the biblical doctrine of justification so that if the Roman church had followed Aquinas the Reformation would not have been absolutely necessary" (14). (3) Gerstner also called the supposition, drawn by both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians alike, that Aquinas was a "modern tridentine Romanist" a "pernicious error" (14). He drew these conclusions because, he said, "Aquinas taught a doctrine of *iustificatio impii*, a justification of the impious" (14). (4)

What is surprising — indeed, quite startling — about Dr. Gerstner's assessment of Aquinas is that in this same article he admits that Aquinas (1) "unfortunately attributed...undue power to the sacraments" (13-14); (2) understood *iustificatio impii* in terms of "remission and infusion of sanctifying grace" (14); and (3) "does not state the 'imputation' of Christ's righteousness" (14). But in spite of these doctrinal deficiencies, Dr. Gerstner believed that Aquinas' teaching on justification is still "essentially the biblical (and Reformation) doctrine" (14).

Far from Aquinas' understanding of justification being rejected "with horror, as Protestant" by the Council of Trent (Gerstner, 52), it was precisely how Rome's counter-Reformation Council of Trent construed justification. (5) If Aquinas' writings erred so "horribly" — in the very area where the Reformers were attacking Romish theology — by siding with the Reformers, it is difficult to understand why the Reformers never claimed him or why Rome raised him in 1567, four years after the close of the Council of Trent, to the dignity of "Doctor of the Church" and regards him to this day as the *Doctor Angelicus*. David S. Schaff's remarks, found in Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, clearly

are more on the mark:

In the teachings of Thomas Aquinas we have, with one or two exceptions [the Protestant doctrine of justification not being one of them—RLR] the doctrinal tenets of the Latin Church in their perfect exposition as we have them in the Decrees of the Council of Trent in their final statement.... [T]he theology of the Angelic Doctor and the theology of the Roman Catholic Church are identical in all particulars except the immaculate conception. He who understands Thomas understands the mediaeval theology at its best and will be in possession of the doctrinal system of the Roman Church.... No distinction was made by the mediaeval theologians between the doctrine of justification and the doctrine of sanctification, such as is made by Protestant theologians. Justification was treated as a process of making the sinner righteous, and not as a judicial sentence by which he was declared to be righteous.... Although several of Paul's statements in the *Epistle to the Romans* are quoted by Thomas Aquinas, neither he nor the other Schoolmen rise to the idea that it is upon the [condition] of faith that a man is justified. Faith is a virtue, not a justifying principle, and is treated at the side of hope and love. (6)

In sum, it is this supernatural and intermediary change in human nature, according to Aquinas, rather than Christ's alien righteousness (*iustitia Christi aliena*), which is the basis of justification.

Dr. Gerstner explained the absence of any mention in Aquinas of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the elect sinner this way: "[The imputation of Christ's righteousness] is *implied* by the infusion of sanctifying grace which would never have been infused into an unjustified soul" (14, emphasis supplied). (7) And he traces the "pernicious error" (8) that everyone (except, apparently, Dr. Gerstner himself) commits about Aquinas being a "modern tridentine Romanist" to the fact that Aquinas "mention[s] infusion *in connection with* justification" (14). "But," Dr. Gerstner declared, "so do Protestants, though they do not commonly use that term *infusion*" (14). Here Dr. Gerstner said in effect that "Protestants do and Protestants don't"—that is to say, that they mention infusion in connection with justification but they do not use the term when they mention it! I say again, all this is quite startling, coming as it did from a renowned Reformed church historian who knew and accepted the Protestant doctrine of justification. (9)

Dr. Gerstner went on to fault in quick succession several Protestant theologians by name for what he represented as their sub-biblical view of justification. He took to task Kenneth Foreman, who wrote in the 1955 "Extension" to *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*, for stressing that justification "does not refer to the state of man, only to his status," and for saying that justification "is nothing done to the man, it is God's way of looking at him." Dr. Gerstner declared Foreman's first statement to be true enough ("True, [justification] does not 'refer to the state of man,'" 15), but then he obviated any real significance in his concession by saying: "but it does not exclude it" either (15). He faulted Foreman's second statement, saying: "If nothing were done to the man, God would not look at him as justified" (15). Now one could agree with Dr. Gerstner here if he had gone on to say that what God did to the sinner in justifying him was to constitute him righteous in His sight by the divine act of imputation, but this is not what he said. Rather, what God does to the sinner, Dr. Gerstner said, is to regenerate him ("He is a *regenerate* man though God 'looks at him' as still among the *impii!*", 15,

emphasis original) — an assertion that is not part of the Biblical definition of justification, and which, if left as is, injects the same confusion into the meaning of justification that the Reformers had to address in the sixteenth century.

Gerstner criticized as illogical J. P. Simpson, who wrote the article on justification in *Hastings Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, for saying that the term *justification* "implies a personal status or relationship, and not a subjective experience," and rejoined by saying: "But what is faith if not a 'subjective experience'?" (15). He then went on to say that it is this "big little slip" on Simpson's part that "throws his whole subsequent historical survey somewhat out of kilter, including Aquinas' view" (15). But it is Dr. Gerstner who is confused here. While faith in Jesus Christ, as a (Spirit-wrought) mental act, is surely a subjective experience, it is not justification *per se* and it is not what the Bible means by justification. Faith is the necessary *instrument* to justification while justification — a constituting and declarative act — is the inevitable divine response to the sinner's faith in Jesus Christ. Dr. Gerstner could not deny that Aquinas wrote in his *Summa Theologica*, ii, 1, question 100, article 12, that

...justification [properly so called] may be taken in two ways. First, according as man is made just by becoming possessed of the habit of justice; secondly, according as he does works of justice, so that in this sense justification is nothing else than the execution of justice. Now justice, like the other virtues, may denote either the acquired or the infused virtue.... The acquired virtue is caused by works; but the infused virtue [of the execution of justice] is caused by God Himself through His grace. The latter is true justice, of which we are speaking now, and in respect of which a man is said to be just before God, according to Rom. 4.2. (10)

If nothing more were to be said in response to this citation, one must surely insist that Aquinas committed grave exegetical error here, for the one thing Paul did not mean in *Romans* 4:2ff. is that the respect in which a man is said to be just before God is that of an "infused righteousness." Rather, the respect in which Paul declares that a man is just before God is through Christ's imputed or "credited" righteousness, which is made clear throughout *Romans* 4 by Paul's sustained employment of the verb *logizomai* ("count, reckon, credit, look upon as"):

Romans 4:3: "What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited [*elogisthe*] to him as righteousness.'"

Romans 4:4: "...when a man works, his wages are not credited [*ou logizetai*] to him as a gift, but as an obligation."

Romans 4:5: "...to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, (11) his faith is credited [*logizetai*] as righteousness."

Romans 4:6: "...the man to whom God credits [*logizetai*] righteousness apart from works."

Romans 4:8: "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count [*ou me logisetai*] against him."

Romans 4:9: "We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited [*elogisthe*] to him as righteousness."

Romans 4:10: "Under what circumstances was it credited [*elogisthe*]?"

Romans 4:11: "...[Abraham] is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited [*logisthenai*] to them."

Romans 4:22: "This is why 'it was credited [*elogisthe*] to him as righteousness.'"

Romans 4:23-24: "The words 'it was credited [*elogisthe*] to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit [*logizesthai*] righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."

But more can be said. It was directly from the Schoolmen, including Aquinas, (12) that Trent derived its teaching of the condign and congruous merit of good works. (13) But whereas Rome, still following Trent today, (14) affirms that it is fitting for God to reward the saints' congruous merit with eternal salvation, Paul and the Reformers (15) taught that the Bible's doctrine of grace puts all talk of human works and merit in any sense of the word, save for Christ's, off limits as worthy of or as earning salvation.

Dr. Gerstner also approved the Roman Catholic scholar Michael Root's faulting of Alister E. McGrath for saying that Protestants understand justification as "'strictly' a legal declaration of righteousness which works no 'real change' in the believer" (52). When Root stated that according to "every Reformation theologian I know, however, coming to faith in the justifying righteousness of Christ constitutes a momentous change in the believer," Dr. Gerstner declared that Root is only demonstrating that he understood "historic Protestant justification" better than some Protestant theologians do, including McGrath apparently (52). But again, this is to confuse coming to faith in the justifying righteousness of Christ with the act of justification itself, which follows logically upon one's coming to faith and which, as McGrath stated, is strictly a legal declaration of righteousness which in and of itself works no "real change" in the believer. It is not McGrath, therefore, who has failed to distinguish carefully the Protestant doctrine of justification from regeneration, faith and sanctification. Regrettably, it was Dr. Gerstner who confused all these doctrines when he wrote:

...when Jesus Christ unites Himself with an elect soul, that person is so united with Him that his regenerated soul trusts Christ for eternal salvation, his sins' guilt is remitted, and divine righteousness received. *In this act* [!] instantly and forever after, the soul believes and obeys Jesus Christ [14].

Dr. Gerstner here described union with Christ, regeneration (which is the Spirit's work), faith in Christ (which while it is produced by the Spirit is nevertheless the sinner's act and is always accompanied by repentance), forgiveness (which is the Father's act), the "reception" of divine righteousness (which is hardly the Protestant definition of justification according to which the sinner does not subjectively

"receive" divine righteousness; rather, God declares it about or reckons it to him), and forever-after-obedience on the saved soul's part, which are six aspects of the Reformed *ordo salutis*, as "this act" — a grave and confusing over-simplification!

Of course, what Dr. Gerstner was concerned to underscore throughout his article — and this is another reason why he is so enamored of Aquinas whom he believed was saying the same thing—is the inseparability of justification and sanctification in the saved person's experience. Dr. Gerstner hoped thereby to combat Antinomianism. His concern about Antinomianism was proper, but the way he made his case (1) sacrificed the Biblical meaning of justification on the altar of sanctification and works; (2) was an erroneous reading of Aquinas; (16) and (3) confused distinct soteriological concepts that must always be distinguished in theological writing for the sake of accurate communication of the redemptive truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

While no sound Protestant theologian would deny that progressive sanctification is the inevitable and immediate concomitant to justification (effected, however, not by the Father's justifying act but by the Spirit's regenerating act) and that in this sense justification and sanctification "can never be separated," I know of no sound Protestant theologian either who would bring the notion, much less the term, of the infusion of sanctifying grace into his definition of justification. Dr. Gerstner did this when he insisted, with Aquinas, that justification includes the state of man, his regeneration, his coming to faith, and his "forever-after-obedience." (17) And to do what Dr. Gerstner did is to commit "pernicious error," for such teaching, against Scripture, means that one can never know in this life whether he is justified, thereby dishonoring the Savior, and thus eliminates the full assurance to which, according to Scripture, justification should lead through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, when Dr. Gerstner concluded his article by urging his readers "forward to the Reformation, to Thomas Aquinas, to the New Testament, to JUSTIFICATION BY CHRIST ALONE BY A FAITH THAT IS NOT ALONE" (52), without also saying that faith is the alone instrument of justification, he fosters the confusion that justification is by faith and works and fails to exhibit the special care the *Westminster Confession of Faith* exhibits when it declares: "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love" (XI/ii).

No, Aquinas was not a medieval Protestant teaching the Biblical and Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone. Rather, Aquinas taught that justification was the making of the sinner righteous by means of the sacraments of baptism and the Mass as well as by acts of penance. Nor was he "one of Protestantism's greatest theologians"—for the reasons already noted as well as for others which could have been. Rather, Aquinas was the Schoolmen's purest and maturest representative of medieval Latin theology and of Rome's sacerdotal system. He stressed the primacy of grace in the movement from sinner to saint, but his explanation of justification (*Summa Theologica*, ii, 1, question 113) continued to rely upon the standard four-part schema which went back to Peter of Poitiers' *Sentences* (III. 2) in which justification is represented as a *processus iustificationis* entailing the infusion of grace, the movement of the soul, arising from grace and free will, from a state of guilt to a state of righteousness, contrition, and the forgiveness of sins.

Dr. Gerstner asserted, as we have already noted, that "if the Roman church had followed Aquinas the Reformation would not have been absolutely necessary" (14). In fact, Rome endorsed the theology of Aquinas (not exclusively, of course), and the Reformation was indeed necessary because it did. G. C. Berkouwer wrote of the "polite aloofness" which exists between Pauline thought and Roman Catholicism:

The neglect of Paul in the middle ages was not the result of a direct denial of his significance. Paul's letters did not go untouched. *Thomas Aquinas has left us a commentary on Romans. But one need only lay this commentary alongside of that of Luther to become aware of the profound difference between them.* The words of Paul were exegeted by Roman Catholic scholars, but they were not allowed to function in their original, radically evangelical power. It was first in the Reformation that the old words of Paul came through again in unprecedented religious clarity. They unleashed a storm over Europe, and yet brought peace and comfort to a generation of restless souls. (18)

With sixteenth-century Rome's doctrine of justification, following as it did the theological thought of Thomas Aquinas (among others), the Reformation was very much a necessity, and every informed Christian thanks God for it. Dr. Gerstner's article, with its confusing representation of justification and how it is obtained, will perplex many who are not prepared to think about these issues discerningly.

(1) In keeping with my habit of permitting living authors, particularly living evangelical authors, to see what I am writing about their scholarly assertions prior to publication, I sent Dr. Gerstner this response to his article and requested that he carefully peruse it and indicate to me any place where he thought I may have misrepresented his view or had betrayed my main objective—to speak the truth in love. However, Dr. Gerstner entered into the presence of his Lord in March 1996 before he had the opportunity to respond. I deeply regret that I and my readers will not have the benefit of his reactions. (An earlier version of this essay appeared in the *Westminster Theological Journal*, Volume 59, 1997, pages 113-121. – Editor.)

(2) The Reformation (and Biblical) doctrine of justification by faith alone is beautifully captured by the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question 33, "What is justification?" : "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

(3) Apparently Dr. Gerstner would have disagreed with Carl F. H. Henry's recent assessment of these two theologians: "Augustine (354-430) conflated the immediate act of justification with the process of sanctification and consequently misrepresented justification as a 'making righteous.' Thomas Aquinas...also viewed justifying grace as a supernatural quality infused into the sinner. Justification he

depicted in terms of operative divine grace transmitted in the sacraments. The Roman Church's elevation of Thomism as its official theology proliferated the view that justification is an inner state dependent upon sacramental observance" ("Justification: A Doctrine in Crisis," *JETS* 38/1 [March 1995] 58).

(4) Aquinas' use of the phrase *iustificatio impii* means nothing in itself; it is the language of the Latin Vulgate at *Romans* 4:5: *qui iustificat impium*. It is what he says "justification of the impious" is that is all-important, and in this area Thomas' theology of justification is defective.

(5) See the "Decree Concerning Justification," particularly Chapters VII-X and Canons 9-12, Council of Trent, Sixth Session.

(6) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960 reproduction of the 1907 edition), V, 662, 675, 754, 756. Alister E. McGrath (*Luther's Theology of the Cross* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1985], 82) also writes: "During the thirteenth century the concept of a created habit of grace [a permanent disposition within the believer, as distinct from the external influence of grace]...had become inextricably linked with the discussion of the mode of man's justification before God. The concept appeared to provide a solution to a dilemma which the theological renaissance of the twelfth century had highlighted: in what manner can God be said to dwell in the souls of the justified?... St. Thomas...located the solution to the problem as lying in the concept of a created habit which, although essentially indistinguishable from God, nevertheless remains an entity created within the human soul by him. Underlying the implication of a created habit of grace in justification is a particular concept of causality. For St. Thomas,...the nature of grace, sin and divine acceptance were such that a created habit of grace was necessary in justification by the very nature of things."

(7) Dr. Gerstner said here in so many words that Aquinas believed that the soul would first have to be justified (in the Protestant sense) before God would infuse it with sanctifying grace. I am unaware of any place in his writings where Aquinas states this. To the contrary, he regularly declares that the infusion of grace and the movement of free choice toward God and away from sin is "in the order of nature" first required for the justification of the ungodly (*Summa Theologica*, ii, 1, question 113, article 8). Rome regularly denies as a matter of course what Dr. Gerstner said here of Aquinas.

(8) These "pernicious errorists" would of necessity include the two great Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin, for neither of them claimed Aquinas for the Reformation cause. Indeed, Luther, with characteristic bombast, spoke of him as "the fountain [*Brunn*] and original soup [*Grundsuppe*] of all heresy, error, and Gospel havoc [*aller Ketzerei, Irrthumb und Vertilgung des Evangelium*], as his books bear witness" (Schaff, *History*, V, 676). It has been argued, as does H. Denifle (*Luther und Luthertum in der erste Entwicklung* [Mainz: 1906, 2nd edition], I.2.535-56), that Luther, being the late medieval Augustinian that he was and educated within the *via moderna*, that is, within Occamism's metaphysical nominalism, knew only the early medieval theology, including Aquinas, from the historical sections of Gabriel Biel's *Collectorium* which had distorted the theology of the earlier medieval period. Thus Luther, Denifle argues, was prejudiced against "catholic" theology in general and the *via antiqua*, that is, Thomism's and Scotism's metaphysical realism, of the thirteen century in particular. But Luther could and did read Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* for himself, as his statement suggests.

Calvin declared that the definition of justification which the Council of Trent proffered at length "contains nothing else than the trite dogma of the schools [of which Aquinas was the most mature representative—RLR]: that men are justified partly by the grace of God and partly by their own works" ("On the Sixth Session of the Council of Trent," *Acts of the Council of Trent with the Antidote* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983 reprint of Calvin's Tracts], 3, 108.

(9) One can only guess at the reason that lies behind Dr. Gerstner's apologetic for a "Protestant" Aquinas in the area of justification, but one who knows of Dr. Gerstner's admiration of Thomistic natural theology cannot help but wonder if it was not his appreciation of the contribution which Aquinas' dichotomistic nature/grace scheme made to his own apologetic system that drove him to try to "save" Aquinas *in toto* for Protestantism.

(10) Cited from *Thomas Aquinas: II*, Vol. 20 in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed., Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 285.

(11) On the basis of Paul's statement here to the effect that God "justifies the ungodly"—the same Greek phrase as is used in the *LXX* in *Exodus 23:7* and *Isaiah 5:23* of corrupt judgments which God will not tolerate—J. I. Packer declared that Paul's doctrine of justification is a "startling doctrine" ("Justification," *EDT*, 595). Not only does Paul declare that God does it but also that He does it in a manner designed "to demonstrate His justice" (*Romans 3:25-26*). Of course, Paul relieves what otherwise would be a problem of theodicy by teaching that God justifies the ungodly on just grounds, namely, that the claims of God's law upon them have been fully satisfied by Jesus Christ acting and dying in their stead.

(12) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ii, 1, question 114, article 3, wrote: "If...we speak of a meritorious work according as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Spirit moving us to life everlasting, it is meritorious of life everlasting condignly." It must also be observed that the very fact that *Summa Theologica*, ii, 1, question 113, in which Aquinas sets forth his doctrine of the justification of the ungodly, is followed immediately by question 114, "Of Merit, Which is the Effect of Co-operating Grace," — is alone sufficient indication that he was thinking about justification as a medieval Schoolman and not as a pre-Reformation "Protestant."

(13) The Council of Trent stated in its Sixth Session, Chapter XVI: "...to those who *work well unto the end* and trust in God, eternal life is offered, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Christ Jesus, and *as a reward* promised by God Himself, *to be faithfully given to their good works and merits*...nothing further is wanting to those justified [in Rome's sense of the word] to prevent them from being considered to have, *by those very works* which have been done in God, *fully satisfied the divine law* according to the state of this life and *to have truly merited eternal life*" (emphasis supplied).

(14) The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) declares: "The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that *God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace*. The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his

collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful...Filial adoption, in making us partakers by grace in the divine nature, can bestow *true merit* on us as a result of God's gratuitous justice. This is our right by grace, the full right of love, making us 'co-heirs' with Christ and worthy of obtaining 'the promised inheritance of eternal life.' The merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness" (paragraphs 2008, 2009).

(15) Luther declared: "These arguments of the Scholastics about the merit of congruence and of worthiness (*de merito congrui et condigni*) are nothing but vain figments and dreamy speculations of idle folk about worthless stuff. Yet they form the foundation of the papacy, and on them it rests to this very day. For this is what every monk imagines: By observing the sacred duties of my order I can earn the grace of congruence, but by the works I do after I have received this grace I can accumulate a merit so great that it will not only be enough to bring me to eternal life but enough to sell and give it to others." Luther wrote further: "There is no such thing as merit; but all who are justified are justified for nothing (*gratis*), and this is credited to no one but to the grace of God." Again Luther stated: "For Christ alone it is proper to help and save others with His merits and works. The works of others are of benefit to no one, not to themselves either; for the statement stands: 'The just shall live by faith' (*Rom. 1:17*)." (*What Luther Says: An Anthology* [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1959], II, 921-922.

(16) Dr. Gerstner was asking us to believe that for seven hundred years no one except the Council of Trent read Aquinas correctly (and that Council, he avers, was "horrified" at what it read and rejected him), and that it is he who was again reading Aquinas aright. Stranger things have happened in church history, I suppose, but I cannot think of one offhand. One may be pardoned were he to conclude that it is far more likely that it was Dr. Gerstner who was misreading Aquinas.

(17) Jonathan Edwards in his "Five Discourses on Important Subjects, Concerning the Soul's Eternal Salvation," the first of which treats "Justification by Faith Alone," writes: "...in truth, obedience has no concern in justification, any otherwise than as an expression of faith" (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974], I, 642).

(18) G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Justification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 64-65 (emphasis supplied).

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Salvation, not in the sacramental system, but in christ alone

Richard M. Bennett

The most important difference between Biblical faith and Roman Catholicism is the issue of what is necessary for an individual's salvation before God. Right through the Scriptures justification is seen to be necessary for salvation and in the New Testament it is the major theme of the Apostles. The Church of Rome proclaims her seven sacraments as necessary for salvation and that justification before God is given through the sacrament of Baptism. Thus she officially teaches,

“Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy.”^[1] And “The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification”^[2]

It is necessary therefore to define justification biblically, and to determine its location.

The teaching of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21 is an example which gives the exact meaning of justification. “*For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*” Christ Jesus was not “*made sin*” by the infusion of vice or sin, nor is the believer “made righteous” by the infusion of holiness. The Lord was personally All Holy; yet as the substitute for the believer's sin, He rendered Himself legally responsible to the wrath of God. The consequence of Christ's faithfulness in all that He did, culminating in His death on the cross, is that His righteousness is credited to the believer. It was God who legally constituted Christ to be “*sin for us.*” He was “*made sin*” because the sins of all of His people were transferred to Him, and in like manner, the believer is made “*the righteousness of God in Him*” by God's reckoning to the believer Christ's faithfulness to the precepts of the law. Quite

clearly, therefore justification is a judicial and gracious act of God whereby a believing sinner has legal right standing in Christ.

Justification is taught by contrast

The precise import of the term “to justify” is also seen in that it is the exact opposite or contrast to the term “to condemn.” *“It is God that justifieth who is he that condemneth?”* (Romans 8:33-34)^[3] Condemnation is not a process by which a good man is made bad, but rather is the verdict of a judge declaring a man blameworthy. Now just as to condemn a man is not to infuse evil into him, but declares him guilty, so justification does not infuse goodness into a man, but declares that he has right standing. Justification is that formal sentence of the Divine Judge whereby He pronounces the believer before Him righteous. This contrast of justification to condemnation is plainly taught in Romans 5:18, 19, *“Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”* In this passage the “disobedience” of Adam is set over against the “obedience” of Christ. Adam’s disobedience brought condemnation; Christ’s obedience brings justification. Both are quite real legal declarations either in Adam or in Christ. Justification is right standing in Christ wherein His righteousness is credited to the believer. The consequence of Christ’s obedience is so great that the Apostle Paul declares that such righteousness is manifested and that it is *“upon all them that believe.”* Romans 3:21-24

²¹ *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;* ²² *even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference:* ²³ *for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;* ²⁴

Purpose of the Justification: to reveal Christ’s righteousness

What is declared is not human works righteousness of any kind, but rather it is God's righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ that is revealed. The Gospel is the demonstration, in concrete historical fact, of the perfect satisfaction which

Christ rendered to all the demands of the law, and which God places to the credit of every true believer in Him. Before God's all Holy nature, sin had to be punished and true righteousness established. This has been accomplished in the faithful obedience of the Lord Christ Jesus and His propitiatory sacrifice. Thus Christ's faithfulness is proclaimed in v. 22, "*even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ*". When the Bible declares that justification is God's gift to the believer, it also shows in few words what this justification is. Justification is found in and of Christ. It is the demonstration of the faithfulness^[4] of Jesus Christ, even unto death. Such perfect rectitude is of God, and from God, "*even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ*" (v. 22). The great news is that this absolute righteousness is "*unto all and upon all them that believe.*"

Legally what is shown is the true believer's identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. God has provided Christ's righteousness to sinners who believe. There are several passages in which the faithfulness of the Lord is mentioned. In each case, the name of Jesus Christ is in the genitive case indicating that faithfulness is a character quality that He possesses. Galatians 2:16 is an example of the contrast between man's attempted faithfulness in the works of the law and the faithfulness of Jesus Christ that justifies, "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.*" Knowing that the law must be fulfilled for God to declare a person righteous, the faithfulness of Christ must be understood as applying specifically to this context.

Grace freely and directly given

According to verse 23, "*for all have sinned, [past tense] and come short [present continuous tense] of the glory of God.*" The human predicament is precisely that no one has rendered an obedience that would make him worthy of justification. Because of man's sinful nature, no one will ever be acceptable to God on the basis of his performance. Being justified is in no sense a human attainment; it is not a reward for a sanctified life nor is it through anything that man does. God is shown to work directly in verse 24, "*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*"

The design of God is highlighted by the adverb “freely”. This excludes all consideration of anything in man or from man that could be the cause or condition of justification. “*The redemption that is in Christ Jesus*” was the ransom paid by Christ Jesus by which God is able in true justice to justify the believing sinner. The Word of God is the instrument of the Spirit, “*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*” The believer’s right standing before God is in the ransom paid, the everlasting righteousness brought in by the Christ Jesus. In this verse, as continually repeated by the Apostle Paul, a person’s right standing with God and all the blessedness of grace comes to him is because he has been placed in Christ. The hallmark of Biblical truth, is that the righteousness of God that is credited to the believer is in Christ and not in himself and not in any man made ritual. Thus “*being justified freely by his grace*” is through the sacrificial payment made by Christ Jesus alone and nothing contributed by the believer or anything or anyone else. Only the Lord Christ Jesus is declared to be, and actually is the Righteousness of God. God’s grace is in found in Him and in Him alone. The Romans 3: 21-24 passage completely negates the whole teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that God's grace is in her sacraments that she proclaims are necessary for salvation.

Rome’s necessary physical Sacraments

In spite of clear Biblical teaching, the Catholic Church claims that the actions and rituals of men are the effective means of grace. The sacraments are declared to be **necessary for salvation and the means of grace**. This teaching is so emphatic that Sacramental grace through their physical sacraments is declared to be the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Church of Rome officially teaches,

“The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant **are necessary for salvation**. ‘**Sacramental grace**’ is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament.”^[5]

“The whole liturgical life of the [Roman Catholic] Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments. There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.”^[6]

The Lord's Grace

In Scripture, however, “*the God of all grace*”^[7] by means of His Word directly and personally, seeks, finds, and saves His people. Salvation is God's gift to the believer. It is credited to him based on Christ's finished work on the cross,^[8] “*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”^[9] God's direct action shows His Graciousness to us, so that our eyes of faith are fixed on Him. “*For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*”^[10] Looking to physical signs to give “sacramental grace” and calling that “the grace of the Holy Spirit” is literally a blasphemy against the all Holy God. It not only denigrates the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, but it presupposes that His power can be controlled and confined within in the Church of Rome's seven sacraments.

The claimed Sacramental System

The format of Rome's sacraments is sevenfold; she calls them, Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders.

1. Baptism

The Roman Catholic teaching on Baptism is given in her *Code of Canon Law* and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (1994). Rome officially declares in Canon 849,

“Baptism, the gate to the sacraments, necessary for salvation in fact or at least in intention, by which men and women are freed from their sins, are reborn as children of God and, configured to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated in the [Roman Catholic] Church, is validly conferred only by washing with true water together with the required form of words.”^[11]

In her *Catechism*, she states,

“...The [Roman Catholic] Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude...” (Para. 1257)

“By Baptism *all sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin.” (Para. 1263)

“...The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.” (Para. 1250)

“The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the [Roman Catholic] Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole ‘households’ received baptism, infants may also have been baptized.” (Para. 1252)

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Biblical Response

In contrast to the statements of Rome, the words of the Risen Christ in giving the Gospel are crystal clear. “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.*”^[12] Faith is the key of saving grace, and unbelief is the chief damning sin. Faith is what is absolutely necessary for salvation, baptism is an ordinance that follows faith and testifies simply to it. Proof of this is found in the fact of the omission in the second half of the verse: it is not “he that is not baptized shall be damned,” but rather “*he that believeth not.*” Faith is so indispensable that though one be baptized yet believes not, he shall be damned. The sinner is condemned because of his sin nature and his personal sin. God’s divine justice is upon him, nothing can propitiate God’s justice but saving faith in Christ. This faith by God grace brings instantly God’s act of justification. The sacramental power promises of Rome only deceive people and mock the justice and grace of the Lord God. According to the Bible, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.^[13] The household of the jail keeper had the word spoken to them first, in order that they might believe and be baptized, “*And they [Paul and Silas] spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.*”^[14] Clearly, the official teaching of Rome on baptism is a spurious counterfeit of true saving faith.

2. Confirmation

The Roman Catholic teaching on “Confirmation” is given in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Rome officially declares,

“Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, **strengthen our bond with the [Roman Catholic] Church.**” (Para. 1316)

“...For ‘by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized]^[15] **are more perfectly bound to the Church.**” (Para. 1285)

“The imposition of hands is **rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation**, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church.” (Para. 1288)

Biblical Response

The idea of using a ritualistic physical sacrament, such as confirmation, to complete Baptism and to seal the individual with the Holy Spirit is a deceitful tradition in conflict with the Lord’s written Word. It is through hearing, understanding and responding to the Gospel that an individual is incorporated or sealed into Christ and becomes a true Christian. Once the believer trusts on the Lord, he is sealed with the Holy Spirit. *“In whom [Christ] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”*^[16] The simplicity of this truth is such that the Scripture proclaims, *“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*^[17]

The intent of Rome as stated in her teaching, is to make people “more perfectly bound to the Church”. The claim to perpetuate the grace of Pentecost is an offence against the divine Holy Spirit. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”*^[18]

3 Eucharist

True believers have the New Testament ordinance called “The Lord’s Supper” or

“Communion”. This ordinance is the pledge to all the blessings of Christ confirmed to them by His blood. As His words declare, *“This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”*^[19] The purpose is clearly given: it is to show forth Christ's death, to proclaim and publish it. It is not merely a remembrance of Christ, of what He has done and suffered, but also a time of deep living active fellowship between the Lord and the believer. *“The communion of the blood of Christ”*^[20] is that real togetherness that the believers have with the Lord in the celebration of His Supper. The Lord introduced the meal with His longing expressed as follows; *“With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you... This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”*^[21] Likewise with desire ought the believers to desire to share this meal with Him. This communion with Him is of the essence of the New Covenant, in His declaration it is the New Testament in His blood. In the context of true and false worship the Lord teaches of those one to whom He looks, *“to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”*^[22] To truly wish to worship Him worthily the believer ought to thirst for His communion at the table of the Lord. When he does, he will by grace realize ever more deeply the words of the Lord, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”*^[23]

Rome's Eucharist

In sharp contrast to the ordinance the Lord left His People, the Church of Rome portrays the dying Christ, “the sacred victim” in her Eucharist. Using as her center of worship the ritual of the Mass, which all the faithful on pain of mortal sin are required to attend, Rome teaches and dramatizes the claim that the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of her Eucharist are one single sacrifice. Moreover she teaches that in the round white wafer is contained the physical Christ, including His soul and divinity. Thus she states her *Catechism*,

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: ‘The victim’^[24] is one and the same: the same now offers through

the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.’ ‘In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner.’” (Para. 1367)

Since the Eucharist is central to Catholicism, Bible believers ought to have real compassion for Catholics who are taught the doctrine documented here. To try to appease God with an ongoing sacrifice is *de facto* a denial of the all-sufficiency of Christ’s work on the cross. The Lord Jesus is the sole sacrificial Priest of the New Testament. He finished the work of our salvation by one sole offering. The Scriptures repeatedly establish this truth. The substance of this is found in the Lord’s declaration from the Cross, “*It is finished.*”^[25] The unique oneness of Christ’s sacrifice is in this very fact, that it was one offering, once made. The truth of the excellence of Christ’s sacrifice is highlighted by the word “once”, as for example when the Scripture declares, “*For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*”^[26] and “*Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*”^[27]

The Church of Rome does more than claim His Sacrifice to be hers. She also teaches that in her “blessed sacrament” is contained the physical Christ and His soul and divinity. Thus she states,

“In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist ‘the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially* contained.’” (Para. 1374)

Catholics are thus taught that in the bread the whole Christ is present. Catholics look to this Christ, “*substantially* contained”, they are told, in the bread. This is flagrantly deceitful and culminates in idolatry. From this, causative effects are claimed from the bread. Thus Rome teaches,

“*Holy Communion separates us from sin.* The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is ‘given up for us,’ and the blood we drink ‘shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins.’ For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us

from future sins;...” (Para. 1393)

“By the same charity that it enkindles in us, the Eucharist *preserves us from future mortal sins.*” (Para. 1395)

In these teachings the “Eucharist” is looked upon as uniting a person to Christ and at the same time cleansing from sin. To attempt to claim causative effects for that which was given to testify to the Lord’ Himself is divination, as one’s hope centers on the physical object. The official rite of the Mass shows such divination at each Mass the priest does and says the following.

“The priest genuflects. Holding the host elevated slightly above the paten the Priest says: This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Happy are those who are called to his supper.”[\[28\]](#)

The people are to look to the actual physical substance as if it were indeed the Lamb of God. This is both gross idolatry and a false gospel.

Such teachings as these come under the eternal curse of perverting the Gospel of Christ.[\[29\]](#) Christ’s words are spirit and life, “*It is the Spirit that quickeneth.*”[\[30\]](#) To propose an oral ingesting of Christ’s flesh is bad enough, what is asserted is much more. As seen in her official teaching, Rome holds that “the Eucharist *preserves us from future mortal sins.*”[\[31\]](#) These are enticing words of human philosophy teaching the age-old worship of an idol in order to procure life. What makes the doctrine all the more repulsive is that the very teaching that speaks of preserving from serious sin, is itself a gross sin against the All Holy God and Christ’s perfect sacrifice and this ordinance to be carried out in remembrance of Him.[\[32\]](#)

4. Penance (Confession)

Sins are forgiven, as souls believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, “*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.*” [\[33\]](#) In believing on the finished work of the Lord Christ Jesus, one has one hundred percent right standing with God credited to him and the forgiveness of sins. “*But now the righteousness of God without the law is*

manifested.”^[34] “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”^[35] Thus the Gospel is the power of God to salvation as the Apostle Paul proclaimed. If one does sin after salvation, it is a relationship problem with the Father in heaven to be resolved, as one directly confesses his sin to God. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”^[36]

Rome’s confession

The Roman Catholic Church has a totally different way of defining forgiveness of sins. Her doctrine on this topic is seen in her *Catechism*,

“One who desires to obtain reconciliation with God and with the Church, **must confess to a priest all the unconfessed grave sins** he remembers after having carefully examined his conscience.” (Para. 1493)

“Like all the sacraments, Penance is a liturgical action. The elements of the celebration are ordinarily these: a greeting and blessing from the priest, reading the word of God to illuminate the conscience and elicit contrition, and an exhortation to repentance; the confession, **which acknowledges sins and makes them known to the priest**; the imposition and acceptance of a penance; the priest’s absolution; a prayer of thanksgiving and praise and dismissal with the blessing of the priest.” (Para. 1480)

“The formula of absolution used...God, the Father of mercies, /through the death and the resurrection of his Son/has reconciled the world to himself/ and sent the Holy Spirit among us/ for the forgiveness of sins;/ through the ministry of the Church/ may God give you pardon and peace,/ and **I absolve you from your sins/in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**” (Para. 1449)

The Scriptural backing claimed by Rome for the priest purportedly being able to absolve others of sin is found in Para. 1485 of her *Catechism*,

“‘On the evening of that day, the first day of the week,’ Jesus showed himself to his apostles. ‘He breathed on them, and said to them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you

retain the sins of any, they are retained.’ (John 20:19, 22-23).”[\[37\]](#)

Biblical Response

A study of the actual words of John 20:23, “*Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained,*” confirms that rather than anything judicially enacted through any “sacrament”, the forgiveness spoken of is that which is proclaimed by the Gospel. Here, unquestionably, the Lord has declared, in a few words, the sum of the Gospel. The Lord gave authority to his disciples to declare forgiveness to those whom God had already forgiven. The commission given in this passage in John is a parallel to similar passages such as Luke 24:47, Matthew 28:18-20, and Mark 16:15-16. This is the way the apostles understood and obeyed the commission, as evidenced throughout the Acts of the Apostles, for Christ did not appoint confessors to probe intimately into each sin of people in whispers. Rather He commissioned preachers of his Gospel and He shall cause their voice to be heard. He through the Holy Spirit shall seal on the hearts of believers the grace of the atonement obtained through Him alone. The manner of forgiving sins in Scripture is the proclamation of the Gospel, not the whispering of sins committed, into the ear of a man in a confession box.

5. Anointing of the Sick

The Roman Catholic teaching on Anointing of the Sick is given in her *Catechism*. There Rome officially declares,

“The special grace of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has as its effects: the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church; the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age; the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of Penance; the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul; the preparation for passing over to eternal life.” (Para. 1532)

“Union with the passion of Christ. By the grace of this sacrament the sick person receives the strength and the gift of uniting himself more closely to Christ’s passion:...Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes **a participation in the saving work of Jesus.**” (Para. 1521)

“In addition to the Anointing of the Sick, the Church offers those who are about to leave this life the Eucharist as viaticum. Communion in the body and blood of Christ, received at this moment of ‘passing over’ to the Father, has a particular significance and importance. It is the seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection....” (Para. 1524)

Biblical Response

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded two ordinances for His people. The essential ingredient of these is that they are from Him and testify to Him. The prayer and anointing recommended in the letter of James 5:14-16 is just that, “the prayer of faith”. The conclusion in verse 16 summarizes the passage, *“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* Rome takes this recommended prayer for elders and weaves it into her Sacrament to be performed by her sacrificial Priest. She ends up by deceiving the elderly, those in great pain, and the dying. Her accursed message is that their suffering can be a union with the passion of Christ as stated in paragraph 1521 of her Catechism. This message of “a participation in the saving work of Jesus” is a damnable lie to be spoken into the ears of those who are sick and dying. Christ’s redemptive work is His and His alone. The doctrine of “a participation in the saving work of Jesus” is utterly perverse in that it holds out a false hope to trust in one’s own suffering as adding something to that of the Lord. Such a concept is an utter lie as it denies the repeated statements of God’s truth in Scripture. The work of redemption is “*by Himself,*”^[38] “*without the deeds of the law,*”^[39] “*not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast,*”^[40] “*not by works of*

righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...”^[41] To teach Satan’s lie to those that are dying, that you can cooperate in saving yourself, is truly an abomination.

Rome claims also in her sacrament, “the forgiveness of sins.” The priest in performing the ritual says, “May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.” Forgiveness of sin is the graciousness of God for those who look to Christ in faith and for the believer who directly confesses his sins unto the Lord. The addition that the Church of Rome makes to this ritual, is to declare that the Eucharist given with this sacrament, is a “viaticum” for the dying.^[42] She declares that this special Eucharist is “the seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection”. Again, this is a damnable lie in the ears of those who are about to pass over into the next life. Such a horror is hard even to visualize, as the daily performances of this so-called sacrament are a curse on those who are dying. To claim that there is a special Eucharist for the dying as “the seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection” is to speak against the very Person of Christ. He is the Seed of Life and the Power of the Resurrection to the believer. Christ Jesus alone is the One who perfects an individual’s faith. Instead of looking to a piece of bread, the believer is “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*”^[43]

Since the Garden of Eden, Satan has always delighted in the twisting of God’s Word. Praying for the sick is indeed something to be commended and upheld. Rome has taken James 5:14 and turned it into a dramatized curse on the sick and the dying. The compassion of Christ is needed for those who dwell under the cruelty of this so-called sacrament. May the true Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation, be delivered in the compassion of Christ both to sick and elderly Catholics. For it is only by this means they will find eternal life in Christ alone.

6. Matrimony

Marriage is a creation ordinance of God and not a Christian ordinance instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The Roman Catholic Church, because of a mistranslation of Ephesians 5:32, holds that marriage is a great

sacrament. The words in Ephesians 5:32 read, “*This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church...*” The Latin Vulgate translated the word “mystery” as “sacrament”. This is the origin of Roman Catholic tradition. As a consequence of this erroneous translation, the Church of Rome has attempted to control everything pertaining to marriage. It gives her great power over the lives of her faithful. The Church of Rome dictates just what makes a marriage, what breaks a marriage and how a marriage can be annulled. The celibate clergy of Rome shape the conscience of the laity on just what marriage sexuality is to be, and what it is not to be. All of this is totally contrary to the Word of God. A couple ought to live their marriage in the Lord and according to His written Word. A pastor or elder can counsel according to the Word of God, but there is no church system that can take absolute authority over the marriage bed. Rome claims such authority deciding whether or not the marriage is “valid”, and claiming to herself the power to declare a marriage null and void. This is seen in her procedural laws, beginning in Canon 1671 of the *Code of Canon Law*, “Marriage cases of the baptized belong to the ecclesiastical judge by proper right.” All of this is done because Rome claims in Canon 1055, “...this covenant between the baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.”

On the assumption that Christ made a sacrament out of the creation ordinance, Rome claims power over the most intimate aspect of humanity human life. Here again, the true compassion of Christ is needed for those who dwell under this terrible system. In this context also, true Bible-believers must be warned regarding marriage with Roman Catholics. In marriages between Catholics and others, the Roman Church claims the right that all children born of the marriage must be brought up in the faith and practice of the Roman Church. This is declared emphatically in her *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 1124 and 1125. In this way Rome increases in numbers, both because of the multitude of people inside her own system and the fact that in her strict application of her law, she demands that all children born of the union of a Catholic and another person, must be brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. The Bible-believer is to be conscious of the warning in the Lord’s Word not to be unequally yoked. “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with*

unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” [\[44\]](#)

7. Holy Orders

The Catholic Church claims for her Bishops and Priests a sacramental identification with Christ Himself. The Catholic priest, it is claimed, is truly made like unto Christ the High Priest, possessing His authority and power. Catholics are taught that the Bishop is the living image of God the Father. Both priest and bishop, it is claimed, share in the **one identical priesthood and ministry of Christ**. These assertions are proclaimed in Rome’s official teaching in her Vatican Council II Documents,

“The priest offers the Holy Sacrifice *in persona Christi*; this means more than offering ‘in the name of’ or ‘in the place of’ Christ. *In persona* means in specific **sacramental identification with ‘the eternal High Priest’...**” [\[45\]](#)

“In fact, from tradition, which is expressed especially in the liturgical rites and in the customs of both the Eastern and Western Church, it is abundantly clear that by the imposition of hands and through the words of the consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, and a sacred character is impressed in such wise that **bishops, in a resplendent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself**, teacher, shepherd and priest, and act as his representatives (*in eius persona*) [i.e., in His person].” [\[46\]](#)

“All priests share with bishops **the one identical priesthood and ministry of Christ**. Consequently the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical union with the order of bishops.” [\[47\]](#)

In a similar way Rome teaches in her *Catechism*,

“Now the minister, **by reason of the sacerdotal consecration** which he has received, **is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself** (*virtute ac persona ipsius Christi*). Christ is the source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ.” (Para. 1548)

“Through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the

community of believers. In the beautiful expression of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop is *typos tou Patros*: **he is like the living image of God the Father.**” (Para. 1549)

Biblical response

In contrast, the Scripture teaches that no elder takes Christ’s place as priest. All believers have immediate access to God in the Lord Christ Jesus; all share in the royal priesthood of praise.^[48] Rome’s sacrament of “Holy Orders”, which claims to pass on Christ’s sacrificial priesthood by “sacerdotal consecration”, is a tradition of men that contradicts Scriptural truth. In the Bible, Christ’s unending priesthood cannot be transferred to any other person, as stated in Hebrews 7:24, “*But this man [Jesus Christ], because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable*^[49] *priesthood.*” Rome does not have Christ’s New Testament sacrificial priesthood ^[50], let alone any higher grade of Bishop, yet she claims her priesthood to maintain her seven physical sacraments. The whole life of the Church of Rome revolves around her Bishops and Priests and the sacraments that they perform.

Even a leading Catholic Biblical scholar, Raymond E. Brown clearly admitted the lack of any Biblical teaching to support Rome’s position when he wrote,

“When we move from the OT to the NT, it is striking that while there are pagan priests and Jewish priests on the scene, no individual Christian is every specifically identified as a priest. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the high priesthood of Jesus by comparing his death and entry into heaven with the actions of the Jewish high priest who went into the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle once a year with a blood offering for himself and for the sins of his people (Heb. 9:6-7). But it is noteworthy that the author of Hebrews does not associate the priesthood of Jesus with the Eucharist or the Last Supper; neither does he suggest that other Christians are priests in the likeness of Jesus. In fact, the once-for-all atmosphere that surrounds the priesthood of Jesus in Hebrews

(10:12-14) has been offered as an explanation of why there are no Christian priests in the NT period....”[\[51\]](#)

Later in the same chapter, Brown argues for a priesthood in Christian ministry from tradition when he states,

“In fact, one may doubt that the theology of Hebrews had much influence even in the late NT period; for, as we shall see, shortly after Hebrews was written we begin to find in the sub-apostolic literature our first instances of the term ‘priest’ and of the imagery of priesthood being applied to the Christian ministry.”[\[52\]](#)

The biblical organizational structure of the bride of Christ is utterly different. In the true body of Christ, those ordained as elders and deacons are still only brothers within the same body and there is only One Master, One Priest, and One Lord, “*For one is your master even Christ and ye are all brethren.*”[\[53\]](#) From a sub-apostolic tradition the Roman Priestly class claim an identical priesthood with Christ. Christ’s priesthood, like His offices of Prophet and King, are uniquely his own “*who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.*”[\[54\]](#) Nonetheless Rome entices young men with an idealism and zeal to be partakers of the Priesthood of Christ. The power and the privileges of the priesthood are put before them. Some of these are hearing confessions, forgiving sins, and bringing Christ down as a sacred victim on the altar at Mass. This temptation is like unto that of Satan in the Garden of Eden when he said, “*ye shall be as gods*” (Gen 3:5). The Scripture speaks of such haughtiness as being a mark of “*false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.*” [\[55\]](#)

Conclusion:

Biblically, the believer’s salvation is in Christ and His righteousness alone.[\[56\]](#) An individual’s faith begins and ends in Christ himself and not in the ordinances that He has given. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper bear witness to the Lord’s finished work of salvation but these ordinances are neither

the Lord Himself nor His power. As an individual believes on *“the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,”*^[57] he knows that *“of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.”*^[58] Such fullness of grace is Who he is. It is not delegated to any church or any ceremony of a church. The Roman Catholic Church’s teaching of physical signs as necessary for salvation is a futile exchange of her sacraments for Him, the Lord and giver of life, and at the same time a blasphemous denial of Him and His perfect finished sacrifice. Calling *“sacramental grace”,* the *“the grace of the Holy Spirit”,* is soul damning and a sacrilege against the All Holy God. What is declared in Scripture is not rituals as power sources, but rather God’s righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is justification, necessary for salvation in God’s plan and purpose. Because God is a Spirit, so worship of Him, including the Lord’s two ordinances, must be in spirit and in truth. *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”*^[59]

The merchandise of Rome in her sacramental system is of a most serious matter on two counts. First *“our God is a consuming fire”*^[60] and second it involves commerce with the souls of men.^[61] The Holiness of God demanded the perfect satisfaction of Christ Jesus in His absolute faithfulness and His perfect blood sacrifice. The Gospel in which finished work of the Lord is proclaimed is such as not to be spoken against without dreadful consequences.^[62] Both Christ's perfect sacrifice and His gospel are manifestly and blasphemously denied in Rome's teaching and practice. His Divine Person is denigrated in Rome’s purporting to offer His sacrifice daily, and, the Grace of God in Christ made a means of human power by presuming to absolve sins in His name. All this divination of the flesh is contrary to the Word of the Living God; *“I am the LORD thy God, Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”*^[63] No one can take the Lord’s power and authority onto himself. *“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another.”*^[64] The Church of Rome masquerades herself as a personification of Christ in His Priesthood and in His sacrifice. Both are flagrant lies and worthless substitutes.

In Rome's ritually usurping His place and sacrifice, she has become His greatest contradiction. The supreme enemy of Christ and His Gospel is not the materialism, lust, and pride of men, but this monstrous spiritual apostasy that pretends to stand in His place. *"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God."* [65] As we fear the All Holy God, so we should fear His final judgment on this system of Rome. *"For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."* [66]

Secondly the merchandise of Rome in her sacramental system is with the souls of men. Men, women, and children are made to believe that salvation begins in Baptism and is sealed in Confirmation. The souls of men are told to desire a Priest's absolution after grave sin, and crave for "Holy oils" at the very gates of death. Young men are lured and enticed into a counterfeit "priesthood" through excitation of spiritual pride and flattery of the flesh. They vainly aspire to be clothed with Christ priestly robes in an unnatural celibate state that soils the very raiment of the soul with presumption and vainglory. The intimacy and wonder of marriage is bound to the control of celibate Bishops under the absurd pretence of it being a sacrament of the Roman Church.

All these unholy lying rituals are substituted for the simple act of faith in the Lord of glory. So the Apostle Paul described the performance of the Man of Sin in II Thessalonians 2:9 *"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. Satan's design is to replace Christ and His gospel with man's efforts to save himself with rituals and devotion. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."* [67] So momentous is this merchandise in the souls of men that the Lord commandment in Revelation 18:4 must be solemnly repeated, *"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."*

[1] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), Para. 1992.

Hereafter referred to as the *Catechism*.

[2] *Catechism*, Para. 1266.

[3] For a detailed study of the term see texts such as Deuteronomy 25:1, Job 9:20, Job 32:2, Proverbs 17:15, Matthew 12:37, Luke 7:29, 1 Timothy 3:16 Psalm 143:2. Isaiah 50:7, 8.

[4] Greek *pistis*. There are many contexts where this is necessarily translated faithfulness Matthew 23:23, Romans 3:3, Galatians 5:22, Titus 2:10, etc. There are several passages in which faithfulness of the Lord is mentioned. In each case, name of Jesus Christ is in the genitive case indicating that faithfulness is a character quality which He processes (Galatians 2:16, 3:22; Ephesians 3:12, Philippians 3:9).

[5] *Catechism* Para 1129

[6] *Catechism*, Para 1113.

[7] 1 Peter 5:10.

[8] Romans 4:5-8, II Corinthians 5:19-21, Romans 3:21-28, Titus 3:5-7, Ephesians 1:7, Jeremiah 23:6, I Corinthians 1:30-31, Romans 5:17-19.

[9] Romans 3:24.

[10] Romans 5.17.

[11] *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-English Ed. (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983), Canon 849 All canons are taken from this work unless otherwise stated. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

[12] Mark 16:16.

[13] Romans 10:17.

[14] Acts 16:32.

[15] Square brackets are in the original text.

[16] Ephesians 1:13.

[17] Romans 8:9.

[18] John 3:6.

[19] I Corinthians 11:25-26.

[20] 1 Corinthians 10:16.

[21] Luke 22:15, 20.

[22] Isaiah 66:2.

[23] Matthew 5:6.

[24] Christ was never a victim and the idea of His being victimized is nowhere in Scripture. Rather it was of His own free will that He chose to go to the cross. See John 10:15, 18 and elsewhere. The use of the term, victim, in this context makes clear the erroneous doctrinal base

from which the Roman Catholic theology proceeds.

[25] John 19:30.

[26] Romans 6:10.

[27] Hebrews 7:27.

[28] *New Saint Joseph People's Prayer Book*, Rev. Francis Evans, Ed. (New York: Catholic Book Publ. Co., 1980) Page 104.

[29] Galatians 1:6-9.

[30] John 6:63.

[31] *Catechism*, Para 1395, italic in the original.

[32] A fuller study of this topic is done in our paper, *Communion: Spiritual Fellowship with the Lord, And the Roman Catholic Mass*. (This is on www.bereanbeacon.org)

[33] Acts 13:38-39

[34] Rom3:21

[35] Eph 1:7

[36] I John 1:9

[37] The present day Roman Catholic *New American Bible* does not make such a glaring mistranslation of the John 20:23 passage as Para 1485 of the *Catechism*. In the *NAB*, while the "if" clause is missing, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained", the footnote on the verse states "The Council of Trent defined that this power to forgive sins is exercised in the sacrament of penance." *New American Bible*, The Catholic Study Bible Edition, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1990).

[38] Hebrews 1:3.

[39] Romans 3:28.

[40] Ephesians 2:8-9.

[41] Titus 3:5.

[42] *Catechism*, Para. 1524.

[43] Hebrews 12:2.

[44] II Corinthians 6:14.

[45] No. 77, *Dominicae Cenaе*, 24 February 1980, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, O.P., Editor (Northport, NY: Costello Publ. Co., 1975) Vol. II, Sec. 8, p. 74.

[46] *Ibid.*, No. 28, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, Vol. I, Sec. 21, pp. 373-374.

[47] *Ibid.*, No. 63, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7 December 1965, Vol. I, Sec. 7, p. 875.

[48] I Peter 2:9.

[49]. Aparabatos (Greek) meaning: not transferable, not passing on to others. In the New Testament, no sacrificial priests are mentioned, only elders and pastors. In Christ Jesus, all believers are part of the royal priesthood.

[50] See our article on the “The Priesthood” on our WebPage.

[51] Raymond E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York, NY 10019: Paulist Press, 1970) p.13.

[52] Ibid., p.14

[53] Matthew 23:8.

[54] Hebrews 7:24

[55] 2 Cor 11:13-15

[56] Psalm 32:2, 71:15-16, 130:3; Isaiah 45:24-25, 54:17, 61:10; Jeremiah 23:6, 33:16, 51:10; Daniel 9:24; Luke 18:14; Romans 1:17, 3:21-22, 4:6, 11, 5:18-19; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:10, 3:3; II Peter 1:1, and elsewhere.

[57] John 1:14

[58] John 1:16

[59] John 4:24

[60] Heb 12:29

[61] Rev 18:12-13

[62] Rev 21:8

[63] Exod 20:2

[64] Isa 42:8

[65] Exod 20:5

[66] Rev 19:2

[67] 2 Tim 3:5

The Reformers on the Necessity for Repentance and Sanctification

A Refutation of the Misrepresentations of the Teaching of the Reformation by Roman Catholic Apologists

By William Webster

It has been the consistent assertion of Roman Catholic apologists from the time of the Reformation up to the present day that the Reformation teaching of faith alone (*sola fide*) means the repudiation of the works of sanctification. This is a complete misrepresentation and a clear indication of either profound ignorance of Roman Catholic apologists of Reformation teaching or of purposeful misrepresentation. While the Reformation teaching of *faith alone* means a repudiation of all works as necessary for meriting justification, it is not a repudiation of works in general. The Reformers unanimously insisted on the necessity for the forsaking of sin and a commitment to the works of love, holiness of heart and obedience as part of the overall work of salvation. They *never* taught that a person could be justified and not be sanctified. There is not one Reformer or any Protestant theologian who has been true to the teaching of the Reformers who has denied the necessity for the new birth and the works of sanctification as a fruit of faith. They have consistently affirmed in the strongest possible terms the necessity for regeneration, repentance and sanctification as part of the overall work of salvation. They clearly state that if there is no repentance from sin and the ongoing reality of obedience and good works in a person's life there is no salvation or justification. The professed faith is a dead faith. The following quotations from the major Reformers and Reformed theologians are provided as documentation of this truth as a means of setting the record straight and of aiding those individuals who are sincerely interested in truth in developing an accurate understanding of what the Reformers and Reformed Protestantism have historically taught. These quotations first of all list statements from major Reformers followed by the comments of major Reformed theologians on the subjects of Repentance and Sanctification.

The Necessity for Repentance

John Calvin:

Even though we have taught in part how to possess Christ, and how through it we enjoy his benefits, this would still remain obscure if we did not add an explanation of the effects we feel. With good reason, the

sum of the gospel is held to consist in repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31). Any discussion of faith, therefore, that omitted these two topics would be barren and mutilated and well-nigh useless...Surely no one can embrace the grace of the gospel without betaking himself from the errors of his past life into the right way, and applying his whole effort to the practice of repentance. Can true repentance stand apart from faith? Not at all. But even though they cannot be separated, they ought to be distinguished (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), Volume XIX, Book III, Chapters 1, 5, pp. 592-593, 597).

The Hebrew word for ‘repentance’ is derived from conversion or return; the Greek word, from change of mind or of intention. And the thing itself corresponds closely to the etymology of both words. The meaning is that, departing from ourselves, we turn to God, and having taken off our former mind, we put on a new. On this account, in my judgment, repentance can thus be well defined: it is the turning of our life to God...When we call it a ‘turning of life to God,’ we require a transformation, not only in outward works, but in the soul itself. Only when it puts off its old nature does it bring forth the fruits of works in harmony with its renewal. The prophet, wishing to express this change, bids whom he calls to repentance to get themselves a new heart (Ezek. 18:31).

Outward uprightness of life is not the chief point of repentance, for God looks into men’s hearts. Whoever is moderately versed in Scripture will understand by himself...that when we have to deal with God nothing is achieved unless we begin from the inner disposition of the heart (emphasis mine). (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), Volume XIX, Book III.3. 5-6, 16, pp. 597-598, 609-610).

Huldrych Zwingli (the Swiss Reformer):

The second part of the gospel, then, is repentance: not that which takes place for a time, but that which makes a man who knows himself blush and be ashamed of his old life, for one reason because he sees it ought to be altogether foreign to a Christian to waste away in those sins from which he rejoiced to believe that he had been delivered...Therefore when Christ and John and the Apostles preach, saying, ‘Repent,’ they are simply calling us to a new life quite unlike our life before; and those who had undertaken to enter upon this were marked by an initiatory sacrament, baptism to wit, by which they give public testimony that they were going to enter upon a new life. (*Commentary On True and False Religion* (Durham: Labyrinth, 1981), pp. 131–132)

Martin Bucer:

It is a quality of the Kingdom of Christ that in it the repentance of sinners must always be preached. Hence where the kingdom of Christ has truly been received, there it is necessary that the sins of all be severely rebuked, that men may give themselves up completely to the kingship of Christ in order to be cleansed from their sins and endowed with the spirit of righteousness...Thus it is a hollow mockery that those who do not make a wholehearted effort to do the things that are pleasing to the heavenly Father should declare themselves citizens and members of the Kingdom of Christ. (*On the Kingdom of Christ*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), Volume XIX, p. 219)

Reformed Theologians:

Thomas Watson (seventeenth century puritan theologian):

Repentance is of such importance that there is no being saved without it...It is a great duty incumbent upon Christians solemnly to repent and turn unto God...That religion which is not built upon this foundation must needs fall to the ground.

Repentance is a grace required under the gospel. Some think it legal; but the first sermon that Christ preached, indeed, the first word of his sermon, was 'Repent' (Matt. 4.17). And his farewell that he left when he was going to ascend was that 'repentance should be preached in his name' (Luke 22.47)...Repentance is not arbitrary. It is not left to our choice whether or not we will repent, but it is an indispensable command. God has enacted a law in the High Court of heaven that no sinner shall be saved except the repenting sinner, and he will not break his own law.

Some bless themselves that they have a stock of knowledge, but what is knowledge good for without repentance? It is better to mortify one sin than to understand all mysteries. Impure speculatists do but resemble Satan transformed into an angel of light. Learning and a bad heart is like a fair face with a cancer in the breast. Knowledge without repentance will be but a torch to light men to hell. (*The Doctrine of Repentance* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1987), pp. 12–13, 59, 77)

The Westminster Confession of Faith:

Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ. By it a sinner, out of sight and sense, not only of danger, but also of filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments. (*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter XV, Sections I and II. Cited in A.A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1958), p. 210)

R.L. Dabney:

The manner in which faith and repentance are coupled together in Scripture plainly shows that, as faith is implicitly present in repentance, so repentance is implicitly in faith. (*Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), pp. 606-607)

John R. DeWitt:

Repentance is the first conscious step in a person's experience of the divine grace, the entrance for all believers into life, hope, and salvation...Repentance—the repentance of which the Scriptures speak as a godly sorrow, the repentance which is unto life—is not only a persuasion of sinfulness, but it is also, and very distinctly, a turning from sin...Everywhere the Word of God reminds us that repentance is not simply honesty with oneself, or even the open confession of one's sins; it must also lead to a forsaking of

them. If it does not do that, if it is only the fear of punishment and of hell, only a trembling before the just judgment of God, without at the same time the purposing to turn away from sin and to undertake a new obedience to God, then it is not repentance at all. (*Amazing Love* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1981), pp. 66,74-76)

A.A. Hodge:

The essence of repentance consists...in our actual turning from all sin unto God. This is that practical turning or 'conversion' from sin unto God, which is the instant and necessary consequence of regeneration. It is a voluntary forsaking of sin as evil and hateful, with sincere sorrow, humiliation, and confession; and a turning unto God as our reconciled Father, in the exercise of implicit faith in the merits and assisting grace of Christ...Repentance unto life can only be exercised by a soul after, and in consequence of, its regeneration by the Holy Spirit. God regenerates; and we, in the exercise of the new gracious ability thus given, repent...If genuine, it infallibly springs from regeneration and leads to eternal life. (*The Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1958), pp. 212–213)

Charles Hodge:

Hence it is that repentance is the burden of evangelical preaching...Repentance...is the great, immediate, and pressing duty of all who hear the gospel. They are called upon to forsake their sins, and return unto God through Jesus Christ. The neglect of this duty is the rejection of salvation. For, as we have seen, unless we repent we must perish...Though repentance is a duty, it is no less the gift of God. (*The Way of Life* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1959), pp. 153, 166-169)

Jonathan Edwards:

The apostasy of man summarily consists in departing from the true God, to idols; forsaking his Creator and setting up other things in his room...The gods which a natural man worships, instead of the God that made him, are himself and the world...When we say that natural man are not willing to come to Christ, it is not meant that they are not willing to be delivered from hell; for without doubt, no natural man is willing to go to hell. Nor is it meant, that they are not willing that Christ should keep them from going to hell. Without doubt, natural men under awakenings often greatly desire this. But this does not argue that they are willing to come to Christ: for, notwithstanding their desire to be delivered from hell, their hearts do not close with Christ, but are averse to him...They are not willing to take Christ as he is; they would fain divide him. There are some things in him that they like, and others that they greatly dislike; but consider him as he is, and he is offered to them in the gospel, and they are not willing to accept Christ; for in doing so, they must of necessity part with all their sins; they must sell the world, and part with their own righteousness. But they had rather, for the present, run the venture of going to hell, than do that...He is a Savior appointed of God; he anointed him, and sent him into the world. And in performing the work of redemption, he wrought the works of God; always did those things that pleased him; and all that he does as a Savior, is to his glory. And one great thing he aimed at in redemption, was to deliver them from their idols, and bring them to God. (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1974), Volume 2, *Discourse: Men Naturally are God's Enemies*, pp. 132, 138-139)

John Owen:

The repentance which, in any case, God requireth absolutely, is that which is internal and real, in sincere conversion unto himself, accompanied with the fruits meet for such repentance...A new heart and a new spirit, or real internal conversion unto God, by the grace of the covenant, is required in this repentance, as the renunciation and relinquishment of all iniquities must be the fruit of it. (*The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1967), Volume 8, pp. 635–636)

Charles Spurgeon:

Evangelical repentance is repentance of sin as sin: not of this sin nor of that, but of the whole mass. We repent of the sin of our nature as well as the sin of our practice. We bemoan sin within us and without us. We repent of sin itself as being an insult to God. Anything short of this is a mere surface repentance, and not a repentance which reaches to the bottom of the mischief. Repentance of the evil act, and not of the evil heart, is like men pumping water out of a leaky vessel, but forgetting to stop the leak. Some would dam up the stream, but leave the fountain still flowing; they would remove the eruption from the skin, but leave the disease in the flesh. (*Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1970), Volume 35, p. 127).

B.B. Warfield:

By repentance we are to mean, not merely sorrow for and hatred of sin, but also the inward turning away from it to God, with full purpose of new obedience. By original sin we are to mean not merely adherent but also inherent sin, not merely the sinful act of Adam imputed to us, but also the sinful state of our own souls conveyed to us by the just judgment of God. When so understood, it would seem sufficiently clear that we must ‘repent of original sin.’ The corruption that is derived by us from our first parents comes to us, indeed, as penalty; but it abides in us as sin, and must be looked upon as sin both by God and by enlightened conscience itself...And thus it appears, that so far from its being impossible to repent of original sin, repentance, considered in its normative sense—not as an act of turning away from this sin or that sin, but of turning from sin as such to God—is fundamentally just repentance of ‘original sin.’ Until we repent of original sin, we have not, properly speaking, repented in the Christian sense at all. For it is characteristic of heathen thought to look upon sin atomistically as only so many acts of sin, and at repentance also, therefore, atomistically as only so many acts of turning away from sinning; the Christian conception probes deeper and finds behind the acts of sin the sinful nature and behind the specific acts of repentance for sins the great normative act of repentance for this sinful nature. He only, then, has really repented who has perceived and felt the filthiness and odiousness of his depraved nature and has turned from it to God with a full purpose of being hereafter more conformed to his image as revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. (*Selected Shorter Writings - 1* (Nutley: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1970), pp. 279-280)

Louis Berkhof:

The most common (Old Testament) word for conversion, means to turn, to turn about, and to return...The

word clearly shows that, what the Old Testament calls conversion, is a return to Him from whom sin has separated man...True conversion is born of godly sorrow, and issues in a life of devotion to God, II Cor. 7:10...Conversion marks the conscious beginning, not only of the putting away of the old man, a fleeing from sin, but also of the putting on of the new man, a striving for holiness of life. In regeneration the sinful principle of the old life is already replaced by the holy principle of the new life. But it is only in conversion that this transition penetrates into the conscious life, turning it into a new and Godward direction. The sinner consciously forsakes the old sinful life and turns to a life in communion with and devoted to God...(Conversion is) a conscious turning from sin unto God...In the case of adults...conversion is absolutely essential (for salvation)...Conversion is necessary in the case of adults in the sense that its elements, namely, repentance and faith must be present in their lives. If we take the word conversion in its most specific sense, it denotes a change that takes place once and cannot be repeated...Conversion consists in repentance and faith, so that faith is really a part of conversion...There is no doubt that, logically, repentance and the knowledge of sin precedes the faith that yields to Christ in trusting love. (*Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), pp. 480-481, 483, 485, 491-492)

The Necessity for Sanctification

Martin Luther:

Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ's righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours; rather, he himself becomes ours. Therefore the Apostle calls it 'the righteousness of God.' in Rom. 1:17: For in the gospel 'the righteousness of God is revealed...as it is written, "The righteousness man shall live by faith." '...This is an infinite righteousness, and one that swallows up all sin in a moment, for it is impossible that sin should exist in Christ. On the contrary, he who trusts in Christ exists in Christ; he is one with Christ, having the same righteousness as he...Therefore this alien righteousness, instilled in us without our works by grace alone—while the Father, to be sure, inwardly draws us to Christ—is set opposite original sin, likewise alien, which we acquire without our works by birth alone. The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness. This is the manner of life spent profitably in good works, in the first place, in slaying the flesh and crucifying the desires with respect to the self, of which we read in Gal. 5:24: 'And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.' In the second place, this righteousness consists in love to one's neighbor, and in the third place, in meekness and fear toward God...This righteousness is the product of the righteousness of the first type, actually its fruit and consequence...This righteousness goes on to complete the first for it ever strives to do away with the old Adam and to destroy the body of sin. Therefore it hates itself and loves its neighbor; it does not seek its own good, but that of another, and this its whole way of living consists. For in that it hates itself and does not seek its own, it crucifies the flesh. Because it seeks the good of another, it works love. Thus in each sphere it does God's will, living soberly with self, justly with neighbor, devoutly toward God. (*Two Kinds of Righteousness*. Taken from Martin Luther's *Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), pp. 156–158)

From all this it is easy to perceive on what principle good works are to be cast aside or embraced, and by what rule all teachings put forth concerning works are to be understood. For if works are brought forward as grounds of justification, and are done under the false persuasion that we can pretend to be justified by them, they lay on us the yoke of necessity, and extinguish liberty along with faith, and by this very addition to their use they become no longer good, but really worthy of condemnation. For such works are not free, but blaspheme the grace of God, to which alone it belongs to justify and save through faith. Works cannot accomplish this, and yet, with impious presumption, through our folly, they take on themselves to do so; and thus break in with violence upon the office and glory of grace.

We do not then reject good works; nay, we embrace them and teach them in the highest degree. It is not on their own account that we condemn them, but on account of this impious addition to them and the preverse notion of seeking justification from them. It is not from works that we are set free by the faith of Christ, but from belief in works, that is from foolishly presuming to seek justification through works. Faith redeems our consciences, makes them upright, and preserves them, since by it we recognise the truth that justification does not depend on our works, although good works neither can nor ought to be absent...(*Concerning Christian Liberty*. Found in *Luther's Primary Works* (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 1896), Henry Wace and C.A. Buchheim Ed., , pp. 275-277, 288)

Philip Melancthon:

Paul is here (1 Corinthians 12–13)...demanding love in addition to faith. This is what he does elsewhere in all his letters, demanding good works from believers, i.e. the justified...And when he says that he who has all faith but no love is nothing, he is right. For although faith alone justifies, love is also demanded...But love does not justify because no one loves as he ought. Faith, however, justifies...There is also the passage in James 2:17: 'So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.' He did well to say this, for he was reprimanding those who thought that faith is merely a historical opinion about Christ. For just as Paul calls one type of faith 'true,' and the other 'feigned,' so James calls the one kind 'living' and the other 'dead.' A living faith is that efficacious, burning trust in the mercy of God which never fails to bring forth good fruits. That is what James says in ch. 2:22: 'Faith was completed by works.'...Therefore, the whole point that James is making is that dead faith...does not justify, but a living faith justifies. But a living faith is that which pours itself out in works. For he speaks as follows (v. 18): 'Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.' But he does not say: 'I will show you works without faith.' My exposition squares most harmoniously with what we read in James: 'So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.' Therefore, it is obvious that he is teaching here merely that faith is dead in those who do not bring forth the fruit of faith, even though from external appearances they seem to believe. (*Love and Hope*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), Volume XIX, p. 112)

Christianity is freedom because those who do not have the Spirit of Christ cannot in any way perform the law; they are rather subject to the curse of the law. Those who have been renewed by the Spirit of Christ now conform voluntarily even without the law to what the law used to command. The law is the will of God; the Holy Spirit is nothing else than the living will of God and its being in action (agitatio). Therefore, when we have been regenerated by the Spirit of God, who is the living will of God, we now will spontaneously that very thing which the law used to demand...Those who are in Christ are led by the

Spirit to do the law and they really act by the Spirit. They love and fear God, devote themselves to the needs of their neighbor, and desire to do those very things which the law demanded. They would do them even if no law had been given. Their will is nothing else than the Spirit, the living law. (*Loci Communes Theologici*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), Volume XIX, p. 123)

Thomas Cranmer (the English Reformer):

The first entry unto God, good Christian people, is through faith; whereby...we be justified before God. And, lest any man should be deceived for lack of right understanding thereof, it is diligently to be noted that faith is taken in the Scripture two manner of ways. There is one faith which in Scripture is called a dead faith, which bringeth forth no good works, but is idle, barren, and unfruitful. And this faith by the holy apostle St. James is compared to the faith of devils, which believe God to be true and just, and tremble for fear, yet they do nothing well, but all evil. And such manner of faith have the wicked and naughty Christian people; 'which confess God,' as St. Paul saith, 'in their mouth, but deny him in their deeds, being abominable and without the right faith and in all good works reprobable...This dead faith therefore is not that sure and substantial faith which saveth sinners...The true, lively, and unfeigned Christian faith...is not in the mouth and outward profession only, but it liveth, and stirreth inwardly in the heart. And this faith is not without hope and trust in God, nor without the love of God and of our neighbours, nor without the fear of God, nor without the desire to hear God's word, and to follow the same in eschewing evil and doing gladly all good works. (*A Short Declaration of the True, Lively and Christian Faith*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), Volume XXVI, pp. 272–273)

All Holy Scripture agreeably beareth witness that a true lively faith in Christ doth bring forth good works; and therefore every man must examine himself diligently, to know whether he have the same true lively faith in his heart unfeignedly or not; which he shall know by the fruits thereof...A man may soon deceive himself, and think in his own phantasy that he by faith knoweth God, loveth him, feareth him, and belongeth to him, when in very deed he doeth nothing less...Some peradventure phantasy in themselves that they belong to God, although they live in sin; and so they come to the church, and shew themselves as God's dear children. But St. John saith plainly: 'If we say that we have any company with God, and walk in darkness, we do lie.' ...Deceive not yourselves, therefore, thinking that you have faith in God, or that you love God, or do trust in him, or do fear him, when you live in sin; for then your ungodly and sinful life declareth the contrary, whatsoever you say or think. It pertaineth to a Christian man to have this true Christian faith, and to try himself whether he hath it or no, and to know what belongeth to it, and how it doth work in him...Let us therefore, good Christian people, try and examine our faith, what it is: let us not flatter ourselves, but look upon our works, and so judge of our faith, what it is. Christ himself speaketh of this matter, and saith: 'The tree is known by the fruit.' (*A Short Declaration of the True, Lively and Christian Faith*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), Volume XXVI, pp. 277, 280–281)

John Hooper (English Reformer):

It is no profit to say sole faith justifieth, except godliness of life follow, as Paul saith: 'If ye live according to the flesh, ye shall die. (*A Declaration of Christe and His Offyce*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), Volume XXVI, p. 206

John Calvin:

Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we grasp Christ's righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also. For he 'is given unto us for righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption' (1 Cor 1:30). Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond, so that those whom he illumines by his wisdom, he redeems; those whom he redeems, he justifies; those whom he justifies, he sanctifies. But, since the question concerns only righteousness and sanctification, let us dwell upon these. Although we may distinguish them, Christ contains both of them inseparably in himself. Do you wish, then, to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess him without being made partaker of his sanctification, because he cannot be divided into pieces (1 Cor. 1:13). Since, therefore, it is solely by expending himself that the Lord gives us these benefits to enjoy, he bestows both of them at the same time, the one never without the other. Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), Volume XIX, Book III, Ch. XVI.1, p. 798)

To prove the first point—that God justifies not only by pardoning but by regenerating—he (Osiander) asks whether God leaves as they were by nature those whom he justifies, changing none of their vices. This is exceedingly easy to answer; as Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable—namely, righteousness and sanctification. Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption [Rom. 8:15], by whose power he remakes them to his own image...The grace of justification is not separated from regeneration, although they are things distinct. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Found in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), Volume XIX, Book III, Chp. XI.6,11; pp. 732, 739)

Huldrych Zwingli:

When, therefore, Divine Majesty formed the plan of redeeming man, it did not intend that the world should persist and become inveterate in its wickedness. For if this had been the plan, it would have been better never to have sent a redeemer than to have sent one under such conditions that after redemption there should be no change from our former diseased state. It would have been laughable if He to whom everything that is ever to be is seen as present had determined to deliver man at so great a cost, and yet had intended to allow him to immediately after his deliverance to wallow in his old sins. He proclaims, therefore, at the start, that our lives and characters must be changed. For to be a Christian is nothing less than to be a new man and a new creature (II Cor. 5:17). (*Commentary On True and False Religion* (Durham: Labyrinth, 1981), p. 120)

The Scottish Confession of Faith from the mid sixteenth century represents the views of **John Knox** and the Protestant Church on the necessity for sanctification:

So that the cause of Good works we confess to be, not our free will, but the Spirit of the Lord Jesus who, dwelling in our hearts by true faith, brings forth such good works as God hath prepared for us to walk into: for this we most boldly affirm, that blasphemy it is to say that Christ Jesus abides in the hearts of such as in whom there is no spirit of Sanctification. And therefore we fear not to affirm that murderers, oppressors, cruel persecuters, adulterers, whoremongers, filthy persons, idolators, drunkards, thieves, and all workers of iniquity, have neither true faith, neither any portion of the spirit of Sanctification, which proceedeth from the Lord Jesus so long as they obstinately continue in their wickedness. For how soon that ever the spirit of the Lord Jesus (which God's elect children receive by true faith), takes possession in the heart of any man, so soon does He regenerate and renew the same man; so that he begins to hate that which before he loved, and begins to love that which before he hated...But the Spirit of God, which giveth witnessing to our spirit, that we are the sons of God, makes us to resist the devil, to abhor filthy pleasures, to groan in God's presence for deliverance from this bondage of corruption; and finally, so to triumph over sin that it reign not in our mortal bodies...The sons of God...do fight against sin, do sob and mourn, when they perceive themselves tempted to iniquity; and if they fall, they rise again with earnest and unfeigned repentance. And these things they do not by their own power, but the power of the Lord Jesus (without whom they are able to do nothing) worketh in them all that is good. (*The Confession of Faith*, Cap. XIII, *The Cause of Good Works*. Found in John Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland* (New York: Philisophical Library, 1950), Volume II, p. 263)

Reformed Theologians:

The Westminster Confession of Faith:

The principal acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace. (*The Westminster Confession of Faith*. Found in A.A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1958), p. 204)

A.A. Hodge:

Now, every Christian who really has experienced the grace of Christ must, unless very greatly prejudiced, recognize the fact that this work of sanctification is the end and the crown of the whole process of salvation. We insist upon and put forward distinctly the great doctrine of justification as a means to an end. It is absolutely necessary as the condition of that faith which is the necessary source of regeneration and sanctification; and every person who is a Christian must recognize the fact that not only will it issue in sanctification, but it must begin in sanctification. This element must be recognized as characteristic of the Christian experience from the first to the last. And any man who thinks that he is a Christian, and that he has accepted Christ for justification when he did not at the same time accept Christ for sanctification, is miserably deluded in that very experience. He is in danger of falling under the judgment of which Paul admonishes when he speaks of the wrath of God coming down from heaven

upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and with special reference to those who ‘hold the truth in unrighteousness. (A.A. Hodge, *Evangelical Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1976), p. 297)

John Flavel:

Sanctification notes a holy dedication of heart and life to God: Our becoming the temples of the living God, separate from all profane sinful practices, to the Lord’s only use and service. (*The Works of John Flavel* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1968), Volume II, Sermon I, The Method of Grace, p. 19)

Martyn Lloyd–Jones:

Justification is only one step, an initial step, in a process. And the process includes not only justification but regeneration and sanctification and ultimate glorification. Justification and forgiveness of sins are not ends in and of themselves; they are only steps on a way that leads to final perfection...Some Christians persist in isolating these things, but they are not isolated in the Scriptures...We cannot divorce justification and forgiveness from other parts of truth...God does not justify a man and leave him there. Not at all! If God justifies a man, God has brought that man into the process...And unless we are giving evidence of being in the process and of being perfected by it, there is but one conclusion to draw—we have never been in the kingdom at all, we must go back to the very beginning, we must repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17-5:17* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), pp. 350-351, 353)

R.C. Sproul:

Technically the term justification does refer to the declarative judicial act of God and not to the person who receives the benefit of this declarative act and is said to be justified. The declaration changes the status of the believer and not his or her nature. However, as John Gerstner relentlessly points out, it is not a declaration about or directed toward people who are not changed in their constituent nature. God never declares a change in the status of people who are unchanged in nature...The antinomian error (assumes) that God justifies people who are and remain unchanged. All who are justified possess faith. Faith abides as a necessary condition for justification. All who have faith are regenerate. Reformed theology sees regeneration as a necessary condition for faith. All who are regenerated are changed in their natures. It is not change in our nature wrought by regeneration or our faith that flows from it that is the ground of our justification. That remains solely the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. But that righteousness is not imputed to unbelieving or unregenerate persons. (*Justification by Faith Alone*, Don Kistler, Ed. (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), The Forensic Nature of Justification, pp. 43-45)

John Gerstner offers the following clarification of the Protestant teaching in light of Roman Catholic misrepresentations:

Romanists have always tried to hang antinomianism on Protestantism. They seem incapable even of understanding ‘justification is by faith alone, but not by the faith that is alone,’ though that formula has been present since the Reformation. If this were a true charge it would be a fatal one. If Protestantism

thought that a sinner could be saved without becoming godly, it would be an absolute, damning lie. His name is 'Jesus' for He saves His people from their sins, not in them. And He saves His people not only from the guilt of sin but from its dominating power as well. If a believer is not changed, he is not a believer. No one can have Christ as Savior for one moment when He is not Lord as well. We can never say too often: 'Justification is by faith alone, but NOT by a faith that is alone.' Justification is by a WORKING faith. Why does Rome continue to make that centuries-long misrepresentation of justification by faith alone? Because:

First, she knows that faith without works is dead.

Second, she hears Protestantism teach justification by faith alone 'apart' from works.

Third, she doesn't listen when Protestantism explains that 'apart from works means 'apart from the merit of works,' not 'apart from the presence of works.' Fourth, she hears some Protestants, who also misunderstand Protestantism, teaching 'easy-believism.'

Fifth, she knows 'easy-believism' is an utterly overwhelming argument against Protestantism (which it would be if it were true).

Let me explain, therefore, once again what the Protestant biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from works means. Justification with God is apart from the merit of works. That does not mean that justification is apart from the existence of works. Christianity teaches justification apart from the merit of works. Easy-believism teaches justification apart from the existence of works. Faith without the existence of works is dead...Faith with the merit of works is legalism. (*Justification by Faith Alone*, Don Kistler, Ed. (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), John Gerstner, *The Nature of Justifying Faith*, pp. 113-115)

These quotations should be sufficient to dispel the false assertions and misrepresentations of Roman Catholics of the teaching of the Reformers and the Reformation on the meaning of *sola fide*. Such quotes could be multiplied many times over. These given are just a sampling. Let the misrepresentations cease. The Reformers affirmed what Scripture itself teaches: Salvation includes not only the truth of the imputed righteousness of Christ Himself for justification, but also the necessity for regeneration, repentance and the works of sanctification.

"Considering Roman Catholicism"

1 John 4:1-3

January 4, 1998

(Introduction of Series on Roman Catholicism)

Today we begin a series of Lord's Day morning sermons unlike our usual fare. As you know, it is the custom of this pulpit, for reasons I have given you from time to time, to preach consecutively through books or parts of the Bible. I deviate from that plan from time to time for sermons apropos of Advent or Lent or Easter or Pentecost, but, by and large, I preach the Bible to you, Lord's Day by Lord's Day, in its own order and proportion. But the Bible also shows us preachers who respond in their preaching to events that are unfolding around them, to the spiritual crises of the people of God, and to the needs of the hour. And I have come to feel that there is need for me to address directly a situation that has been developing before our eyes over the past ten years or so, a movement within American evangelical Christianity that, while still small in absolute terms, seems to be gaining some momentum. I am speaking of the new attraction that evangelicals seem to be finding in Roman Catholicism or, if not attraction, the growing sense among many evangelicals that the differences that have separated evangelical Protestantism from Roman Catholicism over the centuries since the Protestant Reformation are not as significant as they were once thought to be. The attraction is not for Rome only. There is also a movement toward the Orthodox Church or, as it is also known, the Eastern Orthodox Church. What I will have to say in this series will, in the largest part, apply as well to the one as to the other, necessary changes being made. But the Roman Catholic church is clearly the center of this new interest among American evangelicals, and so I will concentrate my attention on her.

Some of you may be less aware of this development than others, but for students of American evangelicalism -- that is, Bible-believing, historic Protestantism -- the new interest in Roman Catholicism is nothing short of a dramatic change. I don't want to overstate the situation. Surely it continues to be true even today that more Catholics leave Roman Catholicism for Protestant Christianity in any given year than Protestants join the Roman Catholic church. But, through centuries until very recently, there was nothing like the sort of shift toward Rome that we have seen of late.

We have seen it among such prominent evangelicals as Thomas Howard, the well-known evangelical author, the brother of Elizabeth Elliot and former English professor at Wheaton College. He left the evangelicalism of his upbringing and of the rest of his family for Rome some nine years ago and wrote a book explaining his move which he entitled *Evangelical is not Enough*. He has recently published a second book entitled *On Being Catholic*, his reflections after nine years a Roman Catholic. Just this past year, another prominent evangelical, Thomas Reeves, an Episcopalian layman, a college history professor, and the author of a widely circulated book describing and condemning the theological relativism of mainline Protestant churches, left for Rome. In his book, *The Empty Church*, Reeves had summoned the mainline Protestant churches to a recommitment to historic Christianity, but he didn't wait to see whether anyone would heed his call. And these are not the only such men. Most of you are aware that Frank Schaeffer, the son of Francis and Edith Schaeffer, has joined the Orthodox Church and now both edits a magazine devoted to Orthodox Church opinion and offers his services as a speaker on behalf of Orthodoxy. Some of you are no doubt familiar as well with the writings of Peter Kreeft, now a professor of philosophy at Boston College, but formerly a member of the Christian Reformed Church and a professor at Calvin College.

But, far more interesting and far more relevant to our own interests in this church is the fact that over the past ten years or so the Presbyterian Church in America has lost some ten ministers or more to either Roman Catholicism or to the Orthodox Church. Perhaps ten does not seem a very large number when we are speaking of thousands of ministers, but it is larger than it may seem when one remembers that in the decades, perhaps

even in the century before, conservative Presbyterians may not have lost a single man to the Roman church, and if they lost one, they certainly didn't lose ten. And what has happened to conservative Presbyterians has happened to Lutherans, Methodists, and Baptists!

I have a college classmate, a very bright fellow and an earnest and devout believer, who, after graduating from Covenant College and from various graduate schools, taught for some eight years at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. He is now a Roman Catholic and teaches the history of the philosophy of science at the University of Indiana. Scott Hahn, a former PCA minister, who now teaches at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, is now very well-known in Roman Catholic circles for the tapes of his lectures explaining why he left the conservative Presbyterian ministry for Rome and why he now believes various Roman Catholic doctrines he once would have repudiated with all his heart. In fact, if you consult the catalog of Ignatius Press, a conservative Catholic publishing house, you will find an entire page devoted to Scott Hahn tapes defending Roman Catholic doctrine and practice from the criticisms brought from the Protestant side. This is, practically speaking, the PCA's gift to the Roman Catholic church.

As if, on cue, to confirm the reality and significance of this new development, there arrived in the church office this week the most recent New Horizons, the magazine of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, a sister church of our own Presbyterian Church in America. In the column devoted to keeping track of the church's ministers -- those who have changed pastorates, or retired, or died -- I read this: "William O. Rudolph Jr., formerly the pastor of Westminster OPC in Westchester, Ill., has renounced the jurisdiction of the OPC and joined an Eastern Orthodox church." [New Horizons, Jan. 1998, p. 22]

And we have had evidence of new thinking about Roman Catholicism on the part of evangelicals also in the publication of the document entitled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" and its recent successor, "The Gift of Salvation" a more explicit attempt to discuss what certain evangelicals and Roman Catholics perceive they believe in common about Christ and salvation. These two papers are collaborative efforts on the part of evangelicals and conservative Roman Catholics. The latter document was signed by such evangelical luminaries as Bill Bright, Harold O.J. Brown, J.I Packer, and a friend of mine and PCA minister, T.M. Moore.

But, it is not only on the large landscape of evangelical--Catholic dialogue that we hear this new thinking or in the public utterances of prominent evangelicals. I know that at least one of our own PCA congregations in this presbytery has lost a member to the Roman Catholic church and conversations continue with another member on the same theme. Indeed, as I will point out later, I think that Presbyterians are perhaps more vulnerable to the attractions of Rome in our day than other evangelicals may be.

Now, from what comes this new interest in Roman Catholicism, this new willingness to consider the Roman Catholic church as a superior expression of Christianity than Protestant evangelicalism? What has changed to open up to evangelicals the possibility of union with Rome either for themselves personally or in hopes eventually of entire groups and churches of Christians ecclesiastically?

Well, many things no doubt.

From the Roman Catholic side there have been many changes in the last thirty years, dramatic changes with all manner of intended and unintended consequences.

1. Vatican II, the Church Council of the early 1960s, opened the way to a new place for the Bible, the reading of the Bible and the study of the Bible in Roman Catholic circles. One of the results of this has been many Catholics gaining a biblical orientation in their faith they did not have before. In this they came closer to what

Protestants had long understood to be the nature and the ethos of genuine Christian faith and life. One now meets people who will refer to themselves as "born-again Catholics" and the like, in a way one did not before. I suppose most of us know Roman Catholic folk we believe are real Christians, that is, people who have a living trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and who see their lives as a matter of walking with that same Jesus Christ, present through his Holy Spirit. Few of us would have known such people in a previous generation. When I was in seminary, it was still widely forbidden in Roman Catholic St. Louis for Catholics to pray with Protestants. Nowadays, of course, many Catholics will pray with Buddhists and Jews and Muslims in inter-faith services -- that too is the result of Vatican II -- but many are also praying with evangelicals because of a sense on the part of both that they share the same faith taught in the Bible, which the Catholics too now are reading and studying. The charismatic movement has further served to assimilate Roman Catholics and Protestants. For good or bad, the charismatic experience has bound them more tightly together than their theological or liturgical differences -- so far as they even understand them -- can keep them apart.

2. What is more, the pro-life movement especially, and some other socio-ethical issues have brought conservative Catholics and Protestants together in the street and marketplace and prison. They have found that they share a common ethic, at least in many respects, and have won one another's admiration and confidence by a willingness to fight for right and against wrong and even to suffer in that fight. Steve Wood, a former PCA minister, now a Roman Catholic, says in his account of his pilgrimage to Rome, that it was meeting Roman Catholics in prison, where he had been thrown for his part in a pro-life "rescue," that is, civil disobedience on behalf of the unborn, that overcame some of his final objections to Roman Catholicism.

It is, by the way, important to say that the Roman Catholics we are speaking about, and will be speaking about in these weeks to come, are, as I said, "conservative Roman Catholics." These are not the nominal folk who fill up Roman Catholic churches, the typical American Catholics, for example, who follow the teaching of the Pope so long as he agrees with them, but dispense with his teaching as soon as it crosses their own opinions or desires. These are the real believers who take supernatural Christianity seriously and their Roman Catholicism seriously. The former Protestants we have mentioned who have now joined Rome were serious Protestants and have become serious Catholics and are all quite ready to believe that many Catholics are not serious as they should be.

From the Protestant side there have also been many changes that go a long way to explain why more North American Protestants are attracted to Rome today than in any time since the discovery of the New World.

1. Their co-belligerency with Roman Catholics in the pro-life movement has opened them up to think well of Catholics and to admire their morality and their commitment as Christians.

2. In some cases, certain Protestants having been galvanized ethically and morally by the pro-life movement, the moral collapse of our culture, and the recent socio-political involvement of churches in moral crusades, have been attracted to Roman Catholicism by what they take to be the high moral ground it has staked for itself. For example, Steve Wood, the former PCA minister, was finally attracted to the Roman Catholic church by its doctrine of the indissolubility of the marriage vow, its refusal to countenance divorce after remarriage, and its prohibition of contraception. He says in his account of his pilgrimage to Rome that at one point he might well have been as attracted to Eastern Orthodoxy as to Rome, but the Orthodox allow remarriage after divorce and do not forbid the use of contraception. For him, now zealous for these positions, that decided the matter in Rome's favor.

3. But there have also been a number of developments in the evangelical Protestant world that have made

Rome more appealing simply because they made Protestantism seem so much weaker, uninspiring, and less admirable. For example, the continued atomization of the Protestant world has led many of these men to think that a Christian world that is constantly splitting itself into ever smaller parts cannot be what the Lord Jesus had in mind when he prayed that his disciples might be one! What is more, the decline, if not the effective death of denominationalism within Protestantism has created a vacuum of authority and of institutional loyalty. The Protestant denominations no longer speak for their people, even the conservative ones, at least not as they once did. They are a loose amalgamation of Christians who share certain things -- and not necessarily even the most important things -- in common.

Let's be honest. The Presbyterian Church in America, which is the denomination to which this congregation belongs, does not determine very much about us and many churches that belong to this same denomination are very different from us. The fact is, we have folk who leave us for other parts and do not end up worshipping in PCA churches where they now live, even if there are PCA churches in the area, because those churches do not represent or adorn, so they think, their own convictions. And, since we are speaking frankly, there are PCA folk who move to the Tacoma area, take one look at us and worship with other Presbyterians or Baptists or Independents or Charismatics. The fact that they came from a PCA church matters little. Protestants who want to belong to something larger, to belong with enthusiasm and loyalty to something large enough to seem like a real expression of the Christian church in the world, find in Roman Catholicism what they are no longer finding in their own Protestant churches; that is, a real Church, a real Church as institution and authority, a church that has an unbroken history of unity stretching back a thousand years and more, a church that connects us to Christianity's past and to the generations of the church in the world, a church that exists in visible unity everywhere in the world, a church that is, in other words, not just a loose and not very meaningful association of independently minded American Christians. The Roman Catholic church seems to convey to them a timelessness appropriate to the eternal truth of the gospel in contradistinction to the ephemeral faddishness of American evangelicalism. G. K. Chesterton explained his embrace of Catholicism by saying he sought a church that would free him from the degrading slavery of being a child of his time. Well, we say, "Amen to that!" When we find ourselves, when I find myself, in closer sympathy to Christians outside of my own Presbyterian church, than I do to many who belong to my same denomination, a way has been made for me to begin thinking about finding a more congenial home elsewhere. And, if you add to this the phenomenon of "church-hopping," so much a feature of Protestant evangelicalism in the second half of the 20th century, Christians who've gone from church to church to church, looking for one they liked, that satisfied them, there is not too much that is strange in making one more hop. I don't mean to suggest that that is the case with the men whose names I have mentioned. It is not. But in regard to the general evangelical population, such hopping about makes an occasional landing in a Roman Catholic church virtually inevitable.

Further, as the American Protestant world has increasingly lost interest in theology and has more and more defined itself in terms of the "feeling" or "psychological state" that people want to have about their lives, in terms of present happiness rather than future bliss, in terms of "helpfulness" rather than in terms of "truth," the reasons why Protestants who find attractions in the Roman Catholic church should not pursue them there grow less and less clear and persuasive and important. American protestants -- American Catholics too for that matter, of course -- are not used any more to thinking theologically about their lives. That has made much less important the sort of issues that once separated Protestants and Catholics.

You have now a movement like Promise Keepers, for example, that in hopes of being "helpful" to the maximum number of men, minimizes as much as possible discussion of theological issues. They want men present and involved irrespective of their theological views and Roman Catholic men are flooding to their events. So it is not hard to see why, if in churches and Christian ministries, these doctrines that have so divided Protestants and Catholics in the past, are now passed over in silence, more and more would draw the conclusion that such doctrinal differences are not that important and so should not keep me from becoming a Roman Catholic if

there are other reasons why I should want to do so.

And that is very important because there are some reasons why many people might very well want to leave Protestantism for Roman Catholicism. I've mentioned some of them already. But I haven't mentioned the chief reason why so many have chosen to leave the Protestant world for the Roman Catholic world. It is the liturgical philistinism of Protestant Christianity that has done more to destroy loyalty to Protestant doctrine than anything else. Now, this too must be put in perspective. Many more protestants **love** the new "worship." Many catholics are leaving their churches to find it in the new Protestant services. But, many thoughtful Protestants simply cannot take the worship services of their Protestant churches any longer: the banal and childish choruses, a Sunday morning meeting that has all the reverence and divine seriousness of a sales convention, the "seeker-friendly" concentration on all that reduces Christianity to something anyone would like and no one would find offensive, the further diminishment of an already diminished sacramental life, lacking all serious attention to aesthetics and beauty in music, architecture, and art, and all sense of man as a sensual being, and so on. I read and I hear the folk who tell their stories and I hear this over and over again. They went to Rome because they thought there they could find the worship of God that was in keeping with the true character of God and the best understanding of the Christian ages. What they had in their own churches was a late 20th century creation concocted for those who took their cue from Madison Avenue and the television culture.

You may feel that I am being too hard on contemporary evangelical worship. Well, these are not my opinions I am sharing with you, but those who have left American Protestant churches for Rome. The fact that I share those opinions only makes it easier for me to state them with conviction.

And so, I propose in coming weeks to consider the challenge of Roman Catholicism, issue by issue, doctrine by doctrine. I think that, in some ways, I am uniquely fitted for this study, because I feel the attraction myself in certain ways. It will not surprise you, of course, that I will not defend distinctively Roman Catholic viewpoints as faithful to Holy Scripture, but I know and can feel myself the pull that others have found too strong to resist. As I said, I think serious Presbyterians are perhaps more vulnerable to this attraction than other evangelical Protestants. Our high view of the church renders us both more dismayed by contemporary Protestantism's virtual lack of an ecclesiology or doctrine of the church and practice of its unity and at the same time more enamored of the notion of the institutional expression of the one, holy, catholic church of Jesus Christ. Our high view of the OT as the living Word of God renders us more susceptible to serious engagement with the issues of worship forced upon us by the developments in modern evangelicalism, and our respect for Church History, the sovereignty of God in historical action, makes us hungry and thirsty for a church that connects us to the past, to the great stream of Christian faith in the world. All of this makes me take more seriously than others might the attractions of Rome.

Now, let me tell you, I want and I certainly intend to attempt to be fair and honorable in my treatment of Roman Catholicism. I want to deal with its doctrines in such a way that a loyal Roman Catholic hearing me would feel that his doctrine had been correctly presented and presented in its best construction. Protestants have not always done that, of course. And it is easy enough to put Roman Catholicism in a bad light. It contains many viewpoints within itself -- from the purest superstition to Marxist/feminist chic. The conservative Catholics I read find themselves much closer to evangelicals in many ways than to Jesuits. But I'm going to consider only the views of the conservative, devout, Roman Catholics. Indeed, I want to try to communicate to you something of the passion and the ardor that a Scott Hahn or Steve Wood or Thomas Howard communicate on behalf of their new Roman Catholic faith. It will be good for you to hear them in this way, perhaps a challenge to your own zeal, certainly an education. Steve Wood, in a tape I have listened to, challenges Protestants who criticize Roman Catholicism, by asking whether they have ever read a book that presents Roman Catholic thinking positively? Or have they only read Protestant diatribes against it? Well, I am reading such books and have before. I am listening as carefully as I can to Thomas Howard and Scott Hahn and Steve Wood. And, you know

how often I have commended to you the thinking of a Roman Catholic like G.K. Chesterton or the living and spiritual example of a Francis or Bernard or Teresa of Avila. You have heard me say that there are many Christians in the Roman Catholic Church and many who are better Christians than I am.

But, at the last, we are here, where we began, with the command of the Holy Spirit, through John the apostle, to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God." I chose that text not only for the obvious reason, but because v. 2 prepares us in a way not immediately obvious for the careful thinking that we are going to have to do in these coming weeks. For, you see, John was writing against Cerinthus. And Cerinthus would not necessarily have denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. He would have certainly denied what John meant by saying that Christ had come in the flesh, but he could have used those terms himself. What is more, Cerinthus would certainly have denied that he did not acknowledge that Jesus was from God. He would have said that Jesus was from God, just not in the sense that John meant that. That is why the spirits need to be tested, because it is not always immediately obvious what is being said or what is being meant or how that deviates from the truth. We could illustrate that in so many ways in Protestant theology. Calvinists and Arminians both speak of salvation by grace, but they mean something very different by that phrase.

So, not only will this study give us a window on contemporary American Christianity, it will teach us something more about thinking deeply and carefully about our faith and the teaching of the Bible. That is why, finally, I make no apology for some weeks in this study because it will prove a fine opportunity for us all to go over the ground of our faith once again. What do we believe in regard to these fundamental matters? Why do we believe as we do? What difference does it make? Surely we ought all to know the answers to those questions and love the truth that lies in those answers. God help us both to know the truth and to love it.

"Roman Catholicism: Trusting the Tradition" (2nd in Series)

Matthew 23:25-39

January 11, 1998

Text Comment

We pick up our text in the middle of the Lord Jesus' terrible accusation of the teachers of the law and Pharisees, who are identified as his subject in v. 2.

One thing becomes very clear if you listen carefully to the Protestant evangelicals who have converted to Roman Catholicism. They are passionate about this; it comes near to the heart of what led them to Rome. They feel that in returning to Roman Catholicism, they have "come home." That is the language they use. The Catholic is the true church, this church and this alone is the mother of the faithful. In her bosom a man or woman can find the wisdom, the security, the solid foundation for life that the Protestant churches are all looking for but cannot find or provide their followers. They see the contrast in terms of the solid, lasting, permanent, central and universal tradition of Christianity in the world -- that is, the Roman Catholic Church -- and the individualistic, temporary, contradictory fashions of the Protestant sects.

Scott Hahn, for example, speaks passionately about the defects, the weaknesses of his former life and work as a PCA pastor, of pastor-centered churches, and sermon-centered services -- where the people meet who happen to agree with that pastor and those sermons, at least at that moment, but who might not agree with him next year and find themselves in some other church as a result. No, not for him, any longer, he says, with what is clearly a deep feeling. Not for him any longer just individualistic experiences of salvation and individual opinions running in every different way. Now he has found the family of God and has his feet planted on that deposit of eternal truth and life that Christ gave to his apostles and preserved through the church to this day, that is, he means, through the bishops of the Roman Catholic church to this day. Protestants differ over and separate over every conceivable issue, but in the Catholic Church, he says, we've had one voice throughout the ages, the voice of Christ speaking in his church. [Tape on "Church is One" 2nd side]

Now, it will not surprise you that Protestants will take serious issue with that last statement, as a statement of fact. That the Roman church, even the church as it is conceived by Roman Catholics, has spoken with one voice throughout the ages, we would of course dispute. The Roman Catholic church today, including the present Pope, teaches things touching the most fundamental questions -- such as what is necessary for salvation -- that were not taught in the Catholic church itself a generation ago! But that is not my concern this morning.

I want to begin our study of the question of Roman Catholicism by engaging this most fundamental perspective that animates the enthusiasm of these loyal Catholics. I want to raise the issue of the Roman Catholic church as the representative of the central tradition of the Christian church in the world, as the body of Christ in the most complete sense as being not only the invisible and spiritual body of Christ, but as well the visible and physical successor of the generations of Christian life following the Apostles. This is how they see it: the Roman church as the highway, the Protestant sects as just so many detours leading nowhere.

We will, of course, have to return to this question of the Roman Catholic Church as the true Christian church, the real, the authentic Christian church in connection with such issues as apostolic succession, the Pope, and the unity of the church. But I want to raise a more fundamental issue this morning.

I want to begin to explain why Rome has always had so much trouble persuading biblically oriented Christians

that she is the true church and that Protestant churches are not. That she is the mother and that all the Protestant sects are simply rebellious children living their lives outside of the family of God. I used the term "biblically oriented," that is, Christians who decide things on the basis of the Bible's teaching. Scott Hahn calls such people "Bible Christians." Such people consider the Bible alone to be a sure guide to religious truth. They do not accept the authority of the church, any church, to produce teaching about God, salvation, and the Christian life, that is not first in the Bible. They do not recognize the Church as a second authority alongside the Bible. They might have a very high view, as we do in this church, of the voice of the church as the voice of spiritual wisdom and maturity, of the church as having real authority to interpret the Bible, but that authority is always subject to the Bible, it does not exist on its own and it is not equal to the authority of the Bible. The church can err, the Bible cannot. I am going to speak next Lord's Day morning about why we ought to take that point of view, a viewpoint taught in Holy Scripture itself.

But this morning I want to begin by placing this entire question and this issue of the Roman church's claim to be the only true Christian church in a larger perspective, a most important perspective, because one that is verified and validated by the teaching of the Bible itself.

Let me say, first, however, that much of what Scott Hahn says about the Protestant church is completely true and ought to be regarded by all sincere Christians as a genuine shame and embarrassment. In the same way that, I suppose, a loyal Roman Catholic would be embarrassed by the fact that so many Popes through the ages have been an embarrassment to Christianity or that so many Catholics pay so little attention to what the church teaches and feel completely free to follow their own opinions, even when those opinions are the reverse of the authoritative teaching of the church. It is nothing to be proud of that Protestants can't agree about the Bible or the work of Christ, or the Lord's Supper, or the spiritual gifts, or the ethics of divorce and remarriage. It is nothing to be proud about that Protestant Christianity has created a cult of private judgment that has individual believers who know virtually nothing making up their own minds about everything in disregard of the collective teaching of the best men of the church through two thousand years. It is demoralizing and humiliating to see church after church split into small pieces rather than to find a way to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace and a mutual loyalty to the faith once and for all delivered to the saints.

I long for a larger visible church, a greater church for all the world to see, a church of unity and harmony and of fidelity to the truth of God's Word. I hope you long for the same. You want, as I do, the visible church to embody the one, holy, catholic church of Jesus Christ and to be an adornment and demonstration of the kingdom of God in the world.

Why, then, if this is our heartfelt desire, are Bible Christians not more seriously tempted by the lure of Rome's size and unity, her very impressive presence all around the world? After all, it is not difficult to understand why the Roman Catholic church has come to stand for the Christian church in many different contexts. In the movies, when a minister figure is needed, he is usually a Catholic priest; when a church is needed, it is usually a Catholic church, when a church service is needed, it is usually a Catholic service. The visibility, the universality of the Roman Catholic Church is a large part of the reason for that. And no one can deny that that visibility and universality are to Rome's credit and contribute to her strength. We wish the same for ourselves!

But, here is the problem. Here is the reason why Bible Christians do not accept Rome's claim. Indeed, here is the reason why you could agree with the apologists for Rome that she is, as they say, the bearer of the central tradition of the church of God, and still not believe that you should belong to her.

For, as our Savior taught on many occasions, and the prophets before him and the apostles after him, the visible church of God in the world is not often, and certainly not usually, a true adornment of the gospel of God

and is not a safe haven for the faithful children of God.

From the moment an institutional church existed in the world, with Israel organized under priests and elders, that institutional church revealed herself as more often an enemy of the gospel than the mother of the faithful. She was a largely unbelieving community in the wilderness; after the death of Joshua, she almost immediately succumbed to the temptations of the surrounding paganism and superstition; she was revived somewhat under Samuel and more so under David, but began her irrevocable slide into unbelief and idolatry in the later years of Solomon's reign. After that, through the following centuries, the Lord sent prophets to her time and again, but their preaching and their threats of judgment never produced more than short-lived reform. Generally the prophets suffered at the hands of the church for condemning her for her sin and unbelief and for proclaiming in God's name that those who belonged to Israel were not Israel and that those who were God's people in an institutional, visible sense were, in fact, not his people in the invisible, spiritual sense. This is not a minor feature of biblical teaching, this is the great center of the ministry of the biblical prophets. The faithful, the true people of God, were through all these centuries only a remnant, a small portion of the total population of Israel. In Elijah's day, only 7,000 remained among the several millions of Israel.

Finally, sunk into irrevocable apostasy, the church was judged, first the northern tribes sent into an exile from which they would never return, and then the southern kingdom sent to Babylon. Once again, the people of God are hardly settled again in the Promised Land when the old problems of unbelief and disobedience begin to surface. Not, this time, in the overt pagan idolatry that so captivated Israel before, but in other forms of legalism, worldliness, and self-assertion before God.

And, in the years from Malachi to John the Baptist that process of spiritual, theological, and ritual corruption continued until, by the time of Jesus himself, the verdict of the Gospels is unmistakable that few among the Jews had a living faith in God, the terrible proof of which was finally provided by the fact that it was the church of God that murdered the Son of God. Only a remnant welcomed him, only a remnant mourned his death.

This is the terrible point that the Lord Jesus is making in the text we read. He is not only saying, what he has said so often in the Gospel, that the Jewish religious leadership had hidden the gospel behind a wall of traditions of men and had promoted a false view of justification based on ritual observances and obedience to the law -- now mostly conceived of as a host of man-made regulations governing every aspect of life -- but he is linking the Jewish leaders and their religious system to that of OT Israel, apostate Israel, the Israel that murdered God's prophets. They are the spiritual successors of Ahab and Jezebel, of Jeroboam and Mannaseh, and of the priests who poured scorn on Jeremiah and his message and sought, on more than one occasion, to have him killed.

Now, we hear the Lord Jesus expose the hypocrisy of these teachers of the law and Pharisees, hear him speak of their "greed and self-indulgence" and the difference between their splendid outside and their rotting inside, and we think very low thoughts of these men. We think of them as nearly beasts. We imagine them as the type who would foreclose on the poor and kick dogs and refuse to help little old ladies across the street.

But, of course, that isn't what Jesus meant and that was not the case. These men were devout men, serious men, earnest men. They thought what they were doing was not only right, but in the purest tradition of ancient Israel. They thought of themselves as keepers of the flame. They spoke warmly of how old their church was, how far back into ancient days they could trace their religious life and institutions. These were folk who had a deep reverence for the Bible, gave themselves in many cases to a lifetime study of the Scriptures. They believed in God, in the sovereignty of God, in the law of God, in the judgment of God. They believed in the history of salvation as it was revealed in Holy Scripture, the exodus, the wilderness, the conquest of the

Promised Land. They thought, they really thought, they earnestly believed that they were the faithful sons and daughters of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, but, **in fact, so blind were they to the creeping errors that had destroyed a true faith in God** that they were, in fact, the enemies of all that was true and good, so much so, that when Goodness and Truth itself came among them, **they thought they were serving God by killing him!**

Like the mainstream of Israel before, the Jews -- that is the church (for that is what they were outwardly) -- in Jesus' day expressed their infidelity to God in terms not of overt unbelief -- absolutely not! the farthest thing from it! -- but in the overlaying of the pure gospel with man-made traditions, practices, and doctrines that obscured the gospel and injected into its pure principle of grace an additional principle of attainment and merit. It did not deny the grace of God, not at all, or reject the law of God, not at all! But the Jews had devised new forms of piety -- which they thought were only consistent applications of the Word of God -- that replaced the true burden of God's holy law -- the submission of the heart and life, in love, to God and thus to other men -- with an elaborated casuistry, an unending list of regulations that **could not help** but devalue sin and suggest a principle of self-salvation. And, if anyone feels that this is too harsh a judgment, that, in fact, the elaborate regulations did not obscure the true message of the grace of God, let him explain why it was the church of God that crucified the Savior of the world!

In fact, an effort is being made in biblical scholarship to do just that, to repair and restore the image of first century Judaism. Scholars such as E.P. Sanders have argued in a number of books that Judaism was not legalistic as Christian scholarship has always supposed. In fact, Sanders says of Judaism what defenders of Roman Catholicism say about it. That Roman Catholics believe in salvation by grace through faith. And, no doubt, that is true, so far as it goes. Judaism knew very well of the grace of God and the electing love of God and the necessity of faith in God for salvation. It spoke of merit, sure, but it did not understand that merit apart from the grace of God that made it all possible. You had to have God's grace to earn merit. The rabbis say that. (It is, by the way, almost uncanny, how much a Scott Hahn or a Thomas Howard speaking about Rome sounds just like an E.P. Sanders speaking about first century Judaism. Merit yes, but only in the context of grace and faith.) And, to be sure, you can find all of that in the rabbis. You can. They talk about the grace of God and about faith in God, as well as about merit and the accumulation of righteousness through good works of various kinds.

But we have the Lord's own witness and that of his apostles that Judaism was, as a whole, corrupted by the changes that it had introduced to the true biblical faith and that corruption extended so deep that it led the church of God to execute her Head when he came to her.

Now, what has all of that to do with the modern Roman Catholic Church? Just this: what was true of Israel's spiritual history, from the wilderness to the time of Jesus Christ, was true because of the basic bent and tendency of the human heart. As Charles Simeon said of the rebellious human heart, "it is very fond of fetters, and is apt to forge them for itself." And so what happened over and over again through those long years of OT history, happened again once the church was sent out on her conquest of the world. Before long errors began to surface, sometimes they were beaten back, sometimes they left a permanent mark, sometimes, whole sections of the church were corrupted by them. And gradually the church succumbed to the same errors that had bedeviled her in the ancient epoch. The pure doctrine of grace and of salvation by grace was corrupted with the reassertion of man's place in his justification before God -- ritualism increased, legalism replaced loving gratitude as the principle of law-keeping in the Christian life, just as it had so often before. The "traditions of men" that Jesus so summarily rejected as false and contrary to the gospel, came back again in virtually identical forms! Prayers for the dead; purgatory; concepts of personal merit leading to righteousness with God; the Jews in Jesus day had all of that. Those were all part of that faith that led the church to murder its Savior! These traditions of men, so much like what Israel of old had embraced in her various flirtations with paganism around her, produced the same effect, a corruption of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

God sent prophets to his church, in much the same way he had before -- though these were not inspired men, their message was the same. They warned the church that it was no longer the church of God; they warned those who belonged to the institution of the church that those who denied the Bible's teaching of the gospel and did not practice the Bible's doctrine of the Christian life were not Christians in truth. It was the same message that Isaiah had brought and Jeremiah and Jesus and Paul. They said that all the rituals and all the regulations not only contributed nothing to a sinner's peace with God, but actually stood in the way of a right understanding of justification. And they warned that the church, in many ways, and that the leadership of the church was in some cases living wickedly and in other cases was unfaithful in its teaching of the Word of God and was, in these ways, bringing down upon the heads of those who thought themselves God's people the wrath of God. And the same fate befell them as befell the prophets of old. They were killed as was John Huss in 14:15 -- burned by the Council for proclaiming what anyone can read in his own Bible -- as the Italian priest Savonarola was in 1498 for preaching against the moral corruption of the Roman priesthood and the Pope, a moral corruption that was so vicious and so thoroughgoing, that if you can believe this the **Christian Church** not only hung that good man Savonarola, but tortured him on the rack first. The same would have happened to Luther, had the Church been able to arrest him. And it is all the more interesting because Luther never intended to begin a general Reformation, never intended to separate himself from the church. He just raised objections to common corruptions in the church -- such as selling the forgiveness of sins for money, which is what the people thought indulgences were, and what the church encouraged them to think, even if the theologians never admitted as much. It was the church's fury at his criticism of her corruptions and the pent up desire to see the church reformed and revived that led to the Reformation. And all through the years since, the Roman church has resisted all efforts to return her to the Scripture, as Judaism resisted those efforts in Jesus' day and as Israel had resisted them in Jeremiah's day. Jansen and Pascal in the 17th century made no more progress than Luther and Calvin had in the 16th. It is important to remember, the Protestant church exists not because of some mass exodus from Roman Catholicism, but because Rome cast out her reformers.

Are there and have there been through the centuries Christians in this Roman church? Of course there are and have been. There were also believers among the Pharisees -- Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea among them. There were 7,000 believers in the dark days of Ahab and Jezebel. In their case the corruptions had not overturned their grasp of the free grace of God, and that has been true of folk in the Roman church through the ages. But the church as a whole cast away those who refused to accept and embrace the corruptions. The Christians didn't leave Judaism -- they were thrown out!

And so it remains the case that the reason Bible Christians are not enticed by the lure of Rome, even with its antiquity and its size and its universality, is that **we have seen this church before**. We have seen it in Israel in the ancient epoch and seen it in Judaism in the days of the Lord Jesus and we have seen it ever since. We have, to be sure, seen it just as much in Protestantism. The great Protestant churches that glory in their age and size and impressive appearance, are like Israel in the Lord's day -- for all the individual believers who may be still found within them, the churches themselves are dead within. And they too have cast out their reformers. Machen didn't leave the Presbyterian Church in 1936, he was thrown out for believing it wrong to spend the money Christian folk had given to foreign missions to send out missionaries who didn't believe that Jesus was God or that sinners needed to trust in him for their salvation. We would all prefer to be in one single Presbyterian Church. Indeed, we would all prefer still to be in one Christian church -- by reason of that church having been reformed and revived in accordance with the truth faith of Jesus Christ. But it has not happened; it was not possible to remain and to remain faithful to the Word of God. There is the rub. It wasn't possible in the Apostle's day to remain in the old church and it wasn't possible in the 16th century.

Scott Hahn speaks very passionately about coming home to the Roman Catholic church, about its universality, and visibility, and antiquity. He speaks with a deep enthusiasm about the single deposit of truth and life that

Christ gave to his apostles which has been preserved in the one, holy, catholic, church -- the church of Rome and about Rome's single voice.

But, we Bible Christians must speak with an equal passion. We have seen this church before. Deeply as we grieve over our own sins and our own shameful failures in Protestantism, we cannot align ourselves with the Israel that murdered the prophets or the Judaism that murdered the Lord Christ or the church that murdered Huss, and Savanrola, and Tyndale, and Ridley and Latimer and all the rest.

The serious Catholic will admit the immorality of many Popes and cringe over the atrocities committed in the name of the church against the earnest Christian Waldensians in the Piedmont, but the problem is much greater than that. It is a thousand years of doing what Israel did, of what Judaism did in Jesus' own day, the overlaying of the faith taught in Holy Scripture with the traditions of men and the persistent refusal to reform itself according to the Word of God. Everywhere in the Bible we are taught to expect this of the church, that she will constantly fall and need to be reformed, that she will fall by adding to the faith as well as by subtracting from it, and that she will slide into the deepest corruptions absolutely certain of the rightness of her views and, indeed, that she alone knows what is right. We have seen it in our own Protestant churches, but we have seen it longer in Rome.

If to be a Roman Catholic means I must repudiate Huss and Savonarola and Tyndale and Luther and Calvin, and the Puritans and the great preachers of the Awakenings, and the missionaries, then it means that I must also repudiate -- this is exactly what it means -- Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Jesus himself and Paul -- who condemned and rejected a church that is in general and specifically virtually indistinguishable from Roman Catholicism. A Roman Catholic thinks that being a part of the oldest and longest-lived section of the church is a great proof that Roman Catholics are in the true church. The Bible, however, teaches unmistakably, that, by and large, people who are at home in **that** church, that church that glories in its institutional antiquity, that has maintained itself through many generations by refusing to be reformed, are away from God himself! When Jesus said that "many are called, but few are chosen," when he said, "Broad is the gate and broad is the way ... and narrow..." he was not speaking to the nations, he was speaking to the church! And that is why Bible Christians are not as a rule much tempted to become Roman Catholics!

"Roman Catholicism: The Sufficiency of Scripture"

2 Timothy 3:10-17

January 18, 1998

There can be no doubt as to the core issue separating Protestants from Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians. It is the sufficiency of Holy Scripture. Roman Catholics and the Orthodox both impute to the church an authority that lies, at least beside, if not underneath the authority of Holy Scripture. It is, they believe, the very authority of Christ's apostles, continued in the church, which is held by the bishops of the church. They speak of the apostolic tradition and of the church as its custodian and herald. And so, for Roman Catholics, and, in a similar way for the Orthodox, there are two sources of theological and spiritual authority in the world: the Lord speaking through the Scriptures and the Lord speaking through his bishops and his church. The Bible by itself is not sufficient. We need this second voice.

This is a vital addition, of course, because the Roman Catholic system, as we know it, cannot be accounted for by the teaching of the Bible alone. There is much, of course, that devout Catholics believe that is found in the Bible -- the doctrine of the trinity and the incarnation and so on --, but there is a mass of teaching, distinctive of Roman Catholicism and forming the center of Roman Catholic piety and worship, that is nowhere found in the Bible. The veneration of Mary and the various beliefs about her sinless conception, perpetual virginity and bodily assumption to heaven, prayers to the saints, a treasury of merits of the saints from which the church might draw for blessings for the living, the practice of confession to a priest as part of a developed penitential system, penance as a sacrament, extreme unction as a sacrament, the practice of indulgences, belief in purgatory, the doctrine and practice of apostolic succession, the existence of the papal office and the primacy of Rome, are all essential features of the Roman system and all of them are nowhere taught in the Bible. Many less major, but still important features of the Roman Catholic version of Christianity, similarly, owe their authority in Catholic thinking not to the Bible but to what is believed to be the voice of Christ speaking in and through the church. A celibate priesthood would be such a feature.

Now, it is important to realize that Roman Catholics heartily admit this. It is no embarrassment for them to admit that some of the teaching that most profoundly shapes their spiritual world cannot be found in the Bible. The new converts to Rome from Protestantism seem to be a bit more sensitive on this point. Scott Hahn, for example, tries manfully to find a basis for purgatory in the Bible, but, at the last, he does not claim that the Bible ever actually teaches the whole doctrine that lies at the heart of the Catholic penitential system. He perhaps would admit that educated Protestants would not even be much impressed with his effort to find the doctrine in the Bible -- I wasn't. I think he would probably admit that one must believe it first to see it there, and he believes it not because he reads it in Holy Scripture, but because the church has told him it is the truth. And that is what the church teaches, in fact. Here is the opening sentence of the Decree of the Council of Trent -- the definitive statement of Roman doctrine -- on purgatory: "Whereas the Catholic Church instructed by the Holy Ghost, has, from the Sacred Writings and the ancient tradition of the fathers, taught in sacred councils, and very recently in this ecumenical Synod, that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar..."

Steve Wood, a former PCA minister, says in one of his tapes that if you restrict yourself to the evidence of the Bible alone you should be a Presbyterian in your view of church government. But, he is no longer a Presbyterian because the church has taught him a different view.

That is, I think, an interesting and important admission, by the way. It is not only that Christ may teach his church, through her bishops, truth that he did not communicate to her in Holy Scripture; it also seems to be the case that he may communicate truth through the church that seems to be at odds with what one would conclude is the truth from Holy Scripture alone. That is not the **teaching** of the Roman Catholic church, but it is

the, perhaps unwitting, admission of Roman Catholics and is certainly the observation of many Protestants. It is not only that the Bible teaches nothing about a purgatory, for example. The problem is that the Bible **does in fact** teach, and one would have thought unmistakably, that death ushers the believer into the immediate presence of Christ and the joy of life in the company of the spirits of just men made perfect. "Today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise." "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" and "to depart is to be with Christ."

In any case, truth comes to us in two different ways and from two different sources in the Roman Catholic thinking -- or, better, from one voice speaking in two places: Christ's voice speaking through the Bible and through the Church. Indeed, **that** doctrine itself is never actually taught in the Bible. As we shall see, Roman Catholics think there are suggestions of it, but obviously the debate would disappear if we read anywhere in the Bible that God would communicate some of his truth in Holy Scripture and some of it through the church by means of an apostolic tradition preserved by the bishops under the authority of a Pope in Rome. Indeed, nowhere in the NT is it ever suggested that more doctrine or divine law will be forthcoming or will be necessary beyond what the apostles themselves proclaim and publish to the church. [Bavinck, GD, I, 522]

Now the argument that Roman Catholics use against the Protestant doctrine that the Bible alone is the authority for faith and life and that the church must measure the faithfulness of its teaching solely by its conformity to the teaching of the Bible, is that this is, in fact, an impossible and hopeless position.

I just read this week an example of this reasoning by Thomas Howard, Elizabeth Elliot's brother. He asks the question zealous Roman Catholics always put to us Protestants, an embarrassing question, to be sure. You say that the Bible alone is your authority, but you don't agree among yourselves about what the Bible in fact teaches. In fact, you don't agree among yourselves about **anything** the Bible teaches. And so, at last, it comes down to this: the Bible is the only authority as it happens to be understood by your little group of people over where you are. What good, what significance is an authority like that? This is the way Thomas Howard puts it [Touchstone, 10:4, Fall, 1997, pp. 19-20]:

"[You say] '...we get it straight out of the Bible...' The great difficulty here is that Eutychius and Sabellius and Arius got **their** notions straight out of the Bible as well. Who will arbitrate these things for us? Who will speak with authority to us faithful, all of us rushing about flapping the pages of our well-thumbed New Testaments, locked in shrill contests over the two natures of Christ, or baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or the mystery of Predestination. This question formed itself in the following way for me, a twentieth century Christian: who will arbitrate for us between Luther and Calvin? Or between Luther and Zwingli, both appealing loudly to Scripture, and each with a view of the Lord's Table that categorically excludes the other's view? And who will arbitrate for us between John Wesley and George Whitefield -- that is, between Arminius and Calvin? ... Or between the dispensationalists and the Calvinists on the question of eschatology? A piquant version of this situation presented itself to us loosely affiliated Evangelicals, with all of our independent seminaries and Grace Chapels and Moody Churches, and so forth. When a crucial issue arises -- say, what we should teach about sexuality? -- who will speak to us with a finally authoritative voice? The best we can do is to get Christianity Today to run a symposium, with one article by J.I. Packer plumping for traditional morality, and one article by one of our lesbian feminist Evangelicals (there are some), showing that we have all been wrong for the entire 3,500 years since Sinai... The trouble here is that J.I. Packer has no more authority than our lesbian friend, so the message to the faithful is, 'take your pick.'"

Now that is a real argument and it has a certain plausibility. How are we to answer it? Many things might be said and at very great length. Let me reduce my reply to three points, all-too-briefly put. The first a rebuttal of

the assumptions that underlie Mr. Howard's enthusiasm for the authoritative voice of Rome, second, an examination of Scripture itself on the question of the source of authority for Christians, and, finally, the Bible's own witness to the authority of church tradition.

I. Let me begin then with the argument that the church provides an authoritative interpretation of the truth that is destroyed by Protestant individualism and sectarianism and begin by saying, in effect, "says who?"

The great problem with this Roman Catholic argument, from a logical point of view, is that it amounts to the commission of the fallacy of "petitio principii" or "begging the question." That is, as an argument, it assumes what must be proved. Of course, if the church speaks with a single voice and that voice is the voice of Christ speaking through the bishops, then we do have such an authoritative interpretation of the Bible and sure foundation for thinking and living that the Catholics believe they have and Protestants do not. But that is, of course, exactly what is in dispute.

It is an entirely too-simple view of the church in its earliest centuries that leads the advocates of Rome to speak of the church's single voice and clear witness to fundamental things. Fact is, if you had asked the church, the Christian church and its bishops, in the fourth century whether Arius or Athanasius was right about the deity of Jesus Christ, most of the time, most of the bishops would have sided with Arius. Later on, most of the bishops of the medieval period would have sided with the semi-Pelagians against Augustine. Why should we assume that the church that produced the Canons of the Council of Trent is the one pure voice of Christ speaking in the world and not the Protestant Reformers, whose lives and ministries were, in many respects, so much like those of Athanasius in the fourth century, who was also drummed out of the church, by the church, for his loyalty to what, later, Christians accepted was the true teaching of the Bible? Why do we assume, for example, that the Roman bishop speaks for all bishops. The Orthodox don't think so. The Protestants don't think so. Two-thirds of the Christian world, for a thousand years, hasn't swallowed that argument. [Indeed I read a lengthy account of the Roman Catholic church's Doctrine of Tradition this week and its historical development, and all the differences within the church concerning it, and changes in its conception through the years -- enough to make the idea seem altogether more human than Divine -- but also all together too complicated a story to tell here!]

And, what is perhaps even more telling, why should we suppose that we should take the Roman church to be the church that speaks with Christ's clear voice on matters of doctrine and still feel free -- as even devout Roman Catholics do today -- to dispense with what it once taught and enforced, with all of its impressive and sometimes brutal authority, with regard to the practice of Christian life and worship? This too was the church's teaching, or, shall we say it, the voice of Christ speaking in the church. Whether we are speaking of warring Popes, or a refusal to provide Christians with the Bible in their own language, or to permit them to worship God in their own language -- think of it! Century after century, Christian folk in Roman churches, by church law, couldn't understand what was being said in the worship! -- something the early church never allowed or contemplated allowing --, or burning of Bibles to keep them from the hands of the laity, or, and this is a more dogmatic or doctrinal issue, believing that folk outside of the Roman Catholic church could not be saved.

You should read Thomas Howard's glowing tribute to the piety and spirituality and love for Christ that animated the life of the evangelical home in which he was raised. This is true of all these men, the former PCA men as well. They have no hesitation in affirming the spiritual life and salvation and love for Christ of the devout Protestants they knew and worked with before they became Roman Catholics. But that is not what their new church used to teach!

Here is the conclusion of the famous Papal Bull "Unam Sanctam" (one of the most historically significant in

Roman Catholic history): "Further, we declare, say, define, and pronounce it to be altogether necessary for salvation for every human creature that he be subject to the Roman pontiff."

This too was the voice of the Roman church but she does not herself listen to that voice today. And these are not trivial matters. They strike at the vitals of her entire system and, I should say, at the vitals of biblical Christianity -- as a message about salvation --, when Roman bishops teach, as now they do, that salvation can be found not only out of the Roman Church but out of the Christian church altogether!

You see, if you had appealed to "the church," or "the voice of the church" in Jeremiah's day -- or for most of the 500 years before his day -- for the authoritative interpretation of the Bible, you would have received a defense of "pluralism" and "syncretism," a mixture of Moses and the Prophets with the paganism round about. We know that is true for that was the reason God sent his prophets to the church in that day. And if you asked the church in Jesus' day, you would have been led astray again. Jesus tells us that himself. And if you asked Boniface VIII if you could be saved without being subject to the Pope he would have said -- he did say -- you couldn't, though the present Pope doesn't agree. If you had asked some of the renaissance Popes if you could purchase forgiveness with money they would have said "yes," or, some, perhaps, would have said "no" with a wink. But were they Christ's voice when they spoke so? Devout Roman Catholics don't think today that they were Christ's clear voice, at least, if they do, they do not think it necessary to agree with that voice.

You see: who says Rome is **the** church of Christ, and that Rome **now** is speaking the truth? Sometimes it has spoken the truth; often it has not. And much of what it now says, it has continued to say in defiance of reformers who have arisen within her and been cast out from her as was always the case in biblical times and has been ever since. You see, like it or not, Rome is really in just the same spot that we are in. They think that they see the truth, they think that they are the biblical Church. So do we, though our sense of the church is broader. But no historical argument can solve this disagreement. Rome is old, but so is the eastern church, both stretch back in some form or another to the early centuries of Christianity after Pentecost, -- but each believes she is the true church of God, but equally ancient are some of the doctrines and practices that the Protestant church holds over against both Rome and the East. Thomas Howard, understandably, wishes for a "recognizable church," those are his words, but you couldn't recognize the true church in Elijah's day -- for it was 7,000 knees that had not bowed to Baal hidden among the homes, the priests and the sanctuaries of Israel.

What is the touchstone? How can we decide? Where can we discover how to discover and recognize the church?

II. My second point is that the Bible teaches itself to be that touchstone and that unerring source of truth and light.

I chose to read 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is God-breathed and...thoroughly equips the man of God for every good work." We could begin by pointing out that that statement is not entirely true from a Roman Catholic perspective. A man is not **thoroughly equipped** for **every** good work by the Bible, for there are a great deal of works of piety that Catholics think are right and even essential that the Bible does not teach. The Bible only partially equips a Christian, the church must teach the rest of the truth that is not in the Scripture. But where are we given to think this, or expect this, or believe such a thing in the Bible itself?

Always we are taught to think and to speak about the Bible in this transcendent, utterly unique way that Paul uses here: "God-breathed," that is, "coming directly out of God's mouth." As Paul puts it in Romans 3:2: the Bible is "the oracles of God" or "the very words of God" as the NIV has it. The Lord told Jeremiah that he would

put his words in Jeremiah's mouth. But he never said that about the church. The church is given the Word of God to hold and to proclaim and to defend and to live by, but she is not the source of that Word.

Roman Catholic apologists typically refer to John 16:12 where the Lord says to the apostles, "when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth," which speaks about the equipment of the apostles -- which is not in dispute -- and says nothing about the continuation of some apostolic authority in the hands of the church's bishops enabling them to formulate new doctrine and law -- which is the point in dispute. Or they refer to 1 Timothy 3:16, where the church is described as the "pillar and foundation or bulwark" of the truth. But in the context there, Paul himself declares what the truth is that the church is the pillar and foundation of -- truth already revealed -- and, in any case, Paul says nothing about the discovery and publication of new truth, but, in the context, is concerned with the church's proclamation and defense of the truth once and for all revealed to the saints. Besides, once again, we are back to the original question: who says that Rome is **the** Christian church? Two-thirds of Christendom doesn't!

The Bible's viewpoint is, I make bold to say, the Protestant viewpoint. The Word of God, Holy Scripture, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. The only voice in the world that can with certainty be identified as the very voice of God, the *ipsissima verba Dei*, the very words of God himself.

III. And this point is confirmed, in the third place, by the fact that the Bible directly addresses itself to the question of church-originated traditions in theology and practice and uniformly condemns them and recalls the church to the sure Word of God.

Never do you find in the Bible what you find in Roman Catholic thinking, viz. an appeal to the church and the authority of the church and the voice of Christ speaking in the church in addition to or apart from or over against the voice of God in his Word. To be sure, you find that word in biblical times in the oral form that it had in the actual ministries of prophets and apostles, but, even then, it is as the Word of God not as the church that their voices bear divine authority.

It seems to me one of the strange quirks in the Roman viewpoint that it seems to require that the church begin after Pentecost, as if there were not those thousands of years of history already behind her and revealing to us the nature and character of her life in the world. Fact is, the church developed traditions -- both doctrines and forms of piety and faithful living -- over and over again in her history. But -- and here is the problem for the Roman viewpoint -- these developments are uniformly rejected in the Bible, are condemned as corruptions, and are condemned precisely because they do not meet the standard of God's Word. The fact that many of the traditions specifically rejected in the Word of God, even by the Savior himself, are very similar to Roman Catholic ideas and practices is only the more striking: whether we are speaking of the repetition of set prayers, the codification of the practices of fasting and penitence, or the development of elaborate customs of ritual washings. These were among the practices which the Jews referred to as "the traditions of the elders", very much like what the Catholics call "the traditions of the fathers", but, as a matter of fact, Jesus himself condemned them, however innocent, however well-intentioned they may have been when they originated.

The Jews by Jesus' day had overlaid the pure revelation of God with layers of traditional interpretations and practices, which Jesus summarily rejected, citing in Mark 7 Isaiah who had addressed the same problem in a different form 700 years before: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." But the Jews didn't think so! They thought their traditions were from God and were the law and truth of God! Jesus said they weren't. In fact, as I have said in previous messages, I can very well imagine pious Jews of the first century defending their traditions in much the same way that devout Catholics defend theirs today. But the Lord pronounced on those traditions,

however well meant. "You have let go," he said, "of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." And again and again he corrected them in their reverence for these traditions of men by appeal to the Scriptures. And that is what the prophets did before him. When Isaiah faced teachers who claimed to be getting other messages from God, what was his reply? **"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn"** [8:19-29].

I do not say that there are no traditions in the Christian church. Of course there are. What our churches look like, what ministers wear, at what time on Sunday we worship, on what day we celebrate Christmas and Easter, and so on. But all of this is simply the exercise of that liberty conferred upon the church by her Savior to perform in some specific way the general obligations laid upon her in the Word of God. But, this is hardly what Rome claims for the apostolic tradition she claims to convey through the ages. She claims an authority for the church to define the truth of God.

But the Bible places no such confidence in "the church", nor does it teach us to invest our confidence in the church's teaching office such as it is construed by Roman Catholicism. It is too aware of how often and how profoundly the church has corrupted the truth and how invariably it is the case that once corrupted it can be recovered only by a return to the pure Word of God, and nothing else. As Paul writes in Ephesians 2:20: the church, God's people, God's household is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, that is, on the revelation that came through them, with Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone. There are not two foundations and, certainly, the church, which is the house, is not under the foundation!

When two voices are given to speak to the church, one will always speak with the loudest voice, and human nature and church history conspire to teach us that it will always be the human voice not the divine voice speaking in the Bible. It is so in much of Protestantism today, indeed. The voice that carries the day is the voice of so-called individual revelations and communications from heaven that a particular Christian or minister has received, or the impression that a believer has about one thing or another. But so it is, we believe, with Rome. The defining shape of Roman Catholicism is not biblical but traditional, the traditions of men that have supplanted the pure Word of God. [Cf. Bavinck, GD, vol. 1, pp. 512-527]

"Roman Catholicism: Penance"

John 20:19-23

February 1, 1998

I chose this particular text to introduce a discussion of the Roman Catholic sacrament of penance and the practice of penance in Catholic spiritual life because of the reference to it in this anecdote told by, John Haas, a Roman Catholic theology professor.

The man sitting next to me on the plane was pleasant enough. He was well dressed, had a kind face, and showed a surprisingly friendly concern for me as a total stranger. So when he finally revealed that he was a Protestant minister, I was not surprised. He spoke openly and easily of his faith and of the joy he had found in his relationship with the Lord.

He continued to be courteous to me even when he learned that I was Catholic. He said that he was pleased to learn that I, too, knew and loved the Lord Jesus. But as the conversation progressed, he eventually could not avoid giving expression to a frustration he had with the Catholic Church.

"You know," he said, "I just cannot understand why you Catholics engage in these practices which have no basis in Scripture!"

"Oh?" I responded, a bit surprised. "What particular practices did you have in mind?"

"Well, for example, this practice of men presuming to forgive other men's sins! This practice of confession," he replied.

"But that **is** based on Scripture," I insisted. "After Our Lord's resurrection, He appeared to His disciples in an upper room, He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit! Whose soever sins you forgive are forgiven, whose soever sins you retain are retained!'"

"Well, that may be in your Bible," he responded. "It's not in our Protestant Bible."

"Do you have a copy of your Bible with you?" I asked.

"Of course I do," he responded reproachfully, as though I thought he might travel without it.

I took the worn, black leather-bound King James bible he handed me, turned to the twentieth chapter of John, and read the passage aloud in its eloquent Elizabethan prose.

A look of astonishment and confusion came over the man's face. "I never noticed that before," he said. After a moment's silence, he went on, "I'm going to have to think about this." Of course that kindly minister had undoubtedly read the passage many times before. But he had never done so in the light of Catholic practice. [First Things (Aug/Sept 1995) 12]

Well, the Protestant minister should have known better. And he needs very carefully to consider why the Bible speaks about the authority of the church in a way that Protestant practice rarely confirms. But, it needs also to be said that the Catholic theologian would have done well to admit that it is a great leap one must take to get

from John 20 to the Catholic practice of auricular confession, that is the confession of sins **ad auriculam**, into the ear, of a priest, a confession Catholics regard as a sacrament and as a system of penitence by which justification is preserved and renewed. The Baltimore Catechism defined Confession this way: "Confession is the telling of our sins to an authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness."

The practice rests on the Roman Catholic doctrine of the priesthood. The argument runs like this: when Jesus was on earth he forgave sins; this power he bestowed on his apostles and on their legitimate successors, namely Roman Catholic priests (here is where John 20:23 becomes so important); this power to forgive sins is not merely the power of preaching the gospel, of speaking the Word of God, as the Reformers understood it, but the actual power to remit sins, so that the priestly act of absolution is a real judicial act; that being so, the judicial act requires a knowledge of the facts of the case, and, therefore, the priest must be informed of those facts, hence private confession into the ear of the priest. [J. Stott, *Confess your Sins*, pp. 55-56]

You are somewhat familiar with the Roman Catholic system of penance. You have seen it in many movies or television shows. Some of you who were once Catholics have vivid memories of confession. "Father bless me for I have sinned; it has been two months since my last confession." And then you enumerated the sins that you were most conscience stricken about or, perhaps, the sins you felt it would be best to confess seeing you had to be at confession. The priest would then absolve you, forgive you your sins, and assign certain acts of penance for you to perform -- a certain number of recitations of the rosary -- that is, a set of prayers including the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Gloria Patri --, or the like. The priest can remit the guilt of sin but he cannot remit the temporal penalty and these acts of penance are the believer's own "satisfactions," or undergoing of the penalty for their sins. That is, while the eternal guilt of sins committed after baptism could be met only by the redemption of Christ it came to be believed that there was a temporal guilt or penalty attached to those same sins and that it could be met, in part, by actual penances, acts of contrition, repentance, and obedience that served as payment, and which thus lessened or mitigated the expiation demanded after death in purgatory. But let it be clear: in historical Roman Catholic theology and practice, this private confession is essential to salvation. As the celebrated defender of Catholic theology in the era of the Reformation, Robert Bellarmine wrote, Christ has "ordained his priests judges in such a way that no man who sins after baptism can be reconciled unto God except by their sentence." [Cited in Hooker, VI, vi, 2]

Now the well-versed Roman Catholic would admit that there is nothing like this anywhere in the Bible. Even in the OT sacrifices, where we do find an act of confession, it is not made to the priest. Nowhere is there a sacrament of penance such as we find in Roman Catholicism. Nowhere are believers commanded to confess their sins to a priest and nowhere do we find them doing so. The tax collector in our Lord's parable, standing head bowed in the temple, had no priest and used no confessional. He confessed his sins to God directly and, the Lord says, that he went to his house justified (Luke 18:9-14). Neither do we find any such practice as the imposing of religious acts as penalties for sins committed.

There are, to be sure, the three texts (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; and our text, John 20:23) where the Lord bestows upon the apostles (or in the case of Matthew 18) the church in general the power to bind or loose, or forgive or not to forgive sins. But in the context of the Gospels and of the entire NT, we cannot take these statements in the way in which they are taken in Roman Catholic theology. One of them, Matthew 18:18, certainly refers to acts of church discipline, by which men and women are given entrance into the membership of the church or cast away from it. The others, especially in the case of John 20:23 and its parallel in Luke 24:46-49 are best taken as the teaching of a ministerial authority not a magisterial or judicial authority, that is, that ministers and elders, just as the apostles before them, have the authority to speak what Christ has spoken, to declare what he has declared, that is, their authority to bind and loose is the authority they have as ministers of the Word of God and the gospel of Christ.

And the proof of that is that this is the way we see them binding and loosing in the NT. They never did what Roman Catholic priests do, but they did undertake the ministry of reconciliation, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, by proclaiming reconciliation in Christ's name. They declared with authority the terms on which God granted forgiveness of sins and then admitted penitent believers into the membership of the church. [Stott, 61-62] Their authority was to preach the promises and warnings of the gospel and to apply them in cases of public scandal. That is all we ever see them do. There is not a verse anywhere in the NT that even alludes to such a practice as private confession leading to absolution. In the NT it is God who forgives always and only; never the minister. The minister and elder with him merely proclaim Christ's gospel and apply its laws in the public life of the church.

Perhaps the knowledgeable Catholic would be a bit more troubled by the fact that this practice is not found in early Christianity either. You cannot find in the writings of Origin, or Tertullian, or Athanasius, or Chrysostom, or Augustine any word about either the practice of believer's confessing his or her sins to a priest or priests imposing punishments to satisfy the temporal penalty of our sins. There are indeed public confessions of sin in the case of those disciplined by the church, but nothing remotely resembling the Roman Catholic practice of private confession, nothing for centuries. [J.T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls*, 97-99] Indeed, the doctrine of an obligation of confession (at least annually) and the doing of penance for one's sins did not become the teaching and practice of the church until the Fourth Lateran Council in A.D. 1215.

As the great 16th century Anglican theologian, Richard Hooker, wrote of the practice of private confession to a priest, "No, no, these opinions have youth in their countenance; antiquity knew them not: it never thought nor dreamed of them." [*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, VI, iv, 3, 6, 13]

So where does the problem lie with this practice? Could we not well imagine a spiritually minded person finding the practice of private confession an aid to penitence and humility of heart before God and, as well, might we not expect him or her to gain from that practice a lively sense of peace with God? Would it not be possible for a person, who knew full-well that his forgiveness came from God alone and that a priest had authority only to tell him over again what God had already said, to profit from the exercise of telling one's sins and receiving the promise of God's forgiveness? I have read Roman Catholics who -- I will admit seem somewhat to ready to ignore certain parts of the Catholic **doctrine** of penance -- but who seem to want confession to mean little more than that. Might it not be that a good idea has simply been abused.

After all, devout Catholics are just as willing to admit that the confessional has been subject to terrific abuse through the ages, has been far too often the occasion of sin -- for both priest and penitent -- rather than the means to its removal, and that it has as well far too often sunk into a bare formality that has confirmed many users of the confessional in chronic hypocrisy. The Catholic doctrine is that only the one who comes with a true sorrow for sin, a sorrow for the offense he has committed against the love and majesty of God himself, and who confesses his sins with a genuine intention not to commit them again, profits from the exercise and receives a true absolution. However many would admit that the practice itself has often led multitudes of people to precisely the opposite state of mind, viz. the idea that sins can be committed with impunity because they can be removed in the confessional. Further, the Catholic doctrine is that all sins must be confessed. But, of course, that is impossible and this has led, many would admit, to either a very superficial view of sin as only those particularly outward violations of the ten commandments that are easily remembered and reported or to a particularly superficial view of confession, a bare acknowledgement of sin rather than a searching, honest, heart-felt laying bare of the heart and life before God.

I say, might it not be that this is simply a good idea that has been abused. After all, even the Reformers maintained the need occasionally for private confession to a minister in the case of a person whose conscience could not be quieted either by his own private confession of his sins to God or that public confession of sin

made in the church and followed by the absolution or assurance of God's pardon. I have in my own ministry on a number of occasions heard the sins of the members of this congregation and promised them, in Christ's name, the forgiveness of those sins. They could not find peace by themselves; that is what ministers are for, the more authoritative deliverance of the Word and gospel of Christ.

And do we not live in a day, in our American, individualistic, democratic, egalitarian society, in which the authority of the church and of its ministry needs very much to be renewed and restored. Does not the Scripture indicate that the Word of God as pronounced by the ministers of the church has a special authority in the hearts of God's people and a special power of working? It does, surely it does.

Both ministers and people know this.

Here is Charles Simeon, the great Anglican preacher of the later 18th and early 19th centuries speaking of the authority of the benediction he pronounced at the end of the worship service at Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge, England through those fifty years of his ministry. "I feel that in pronouncing it, I do not do it as a mere **finale**, but that I am actually dispensing peace from God, and at God's command. I know not the individuals to whom my benediction is a blessing; but I know that I am the appointed instrument by whom God is conveying the blessing to those who are able to receive it." [Moule, *Charles Simeon*, 85-86] I will go further. My late sister, whose husband as many of you know, is a PCA chaplain serving in the U.S. Army, had met a Roman Catholic army chaplain whose faith she found very much like her own. Indeed, he had told her that he felt a greater kinship with them and their beliefs than with those in his own church. On the very day that she got the word that she had cancer -- the disease that would take her life two years later -- this priest knocked on her door on Staff Row at Fort McPherson, Georgia in the middle of the day. He was obviously in a hurry and had no time to talk. She came to the door and, without another word, he pronounced the Aaronic benediction over her -- "The Lord bless you and keep you..." -- and then left without so much as a "hello" or "goodbye." He had no idea of the news she had just received; no one knew but God! But it was a tremendous blessing to her; she felt God had given his peace to her. Was she wrong? Was that minister not dispensing God's peace in that way? Well, in a similar way, could we not then put a more positive construction on the Roman Catholic practice of confession? Could we not make an evangelical use of it?

Well, I suppose you could. After all, we know from the gospels that some Pharisees used the traditions as an expression of their true and living faith in God. But, **the problem is, the Lord rejects the traditions anyway**. Even if someone might use them wisely and well, someone might make an evangelical use of them, they are not to be followed for the interference they make in the true embrace and practice of the gospel. Jesus did not say that they should use their traditions with the right spirit and with a proper theological understanding, he said that they were human traditions and were contrary to the Word and the Gospel of God, because they inevitably interfered with a pure practice of the faith.

The fact is, we are here at the very center of human existence, at the great issue of human life: peace and acceptance and forgiveness with God. This is the point that Calvin made in his *Institutes* when he considered the practice of private confession and its effect upon faith and religion.

"...if there is anything in the whole world of religion that we should most certainly know, we ought most closely to grasp by what reason, with what law, under what condition, with what ease or difficulty, forgiveness of sins may be obtained!" [III, iv, 2]

How much more, then, at this point, at this place, we must listen most closely to and stand most firmly on the teaching of the Bible. Here is a place, of all places, traditions cannot be permitted to intrude and so obscure or,

much worse, corrupt the truth. For at this point we are talking about what is the most important thing of all -- the forgiveness of our sins that we might be at peace with God.

And here is the great problem with the Roman Catholic practice of confession: it inevitably, it cannot help but distract the soul from that upon which it must be putting its confidence, viz. the mercy of God in Christ; it places emphasis on what you do in a way the Bible never does and so displaces emphasis on what the Bible says is crucial to any forgiveness with God. The entire history of Jewish traditions, as they are judged and rejected in the Bible, teaches us that holding fast to the pure gospel is no easy matter: the entire drift of the tendency of our sinful hearts, of the influence of the world, and of the temptations of the devil is against us. The reintroduction of our works, the reassertion of our selves in the matter of our salvation is so natural, so inevitable, that even the slightest encouragement will guarantee the corruption of the gospel. Biblical history and church history has demonstrated this times without number. So, we are taught in Holy Scripture to resist the traditions of men in matters of the gospel and to resist them with might and main.

The Roman system of confession and penance is a system that cannot help but corrupt the gospel by encouraging and promoting a place for our pious works that the Bible never assigns to them: a pure contrition of the heart as a requirement for forgiveness (that is impossible in obtaining forgiveness with God. They are, must be, futile for this purpose!); a complete confession of sins (that is impossible! -- Catholic theologians know that, of course, and introduce all manner of subtleties -- for example, the distinction between mortal and venial sins -- to get round that problem, the kind of subtleties you have so many of in Jewish theology of Jesus' day and none of in the Bible); and acts of penance that are actually said in Catholic theology "to redeem" sins [Conc. Trid., Sess. 14, "On Penance" Can. xiv; Schaff, II, p. 168]. A way of speaking so foreign to the Bible and so categorically foreign to the Bible's proclamation of the gospel as to confirm every Protestant's suspicion that something very sinister is at work here.

In the Bible we are told to confess our sins to God, each of us. And we are given countless illustrations of believers doing just that and receiving, in turn, the forgiveness of their sins. Think of David in Psalm 32:

"I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord' and you forgave the guilt of my sin. **Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found...**"

Or, in the NT: 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, **he** is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

We are taught to confess the sins we have committed against other to those others themselves. We are taught to confess the sins we have committed against the church to the church. The church is taught to confess her sins in the worship she offers to God on the Lord's Day. But always our sins against God are to be confessed **to God**. For this is the very nature of the gospel -- that God himself stands ready to forgive those who come to him in faith.

"For this is what the high and lofty One says -- who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.'" (Isaiah 57:15)

Christ paid the price for our forgiveness, no further price need be or can be paid for any guilt or penalty attached to our sin. Because of him, there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared and that forgiveness is offered to all that come to God begging for it. What did Jesus say, "Come to me, all who are weary and

burdened, and I will give you rest."

To place anything or anyone in between that Savior and the sorrowing and believing man or woman mistakes the freeness of that forgiveness -- given to those for no other reason than their need -- and the ground of it, Christ's work entirely and alone. And to mistake those things is mistake indeed! To add to that message or to take from it poses as great a danger as human traditions ever can or do. It was exactly the error the Jews made, to place pious works between themselves and God's forgiveness, and it led them to crucify the Savior when he appeared among them.

In Holy Scripture we receive forgiveness by asking God for it with faith in Christ, and our penitence and our conviction of sin is preserved and cultivated by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and through the Lord's Supper. And that man or woman who with faith and love applies his or her heart to the Word of God and seeks forgiveness from God's hand, bringing nothing but his need, is assured that the Lord says to you from heaven, "My Son, My daughter, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you!" That is as close to the essential core of the Christian faith as you can come!

"Roman Catholicism: Mary"

Luke 1:26-38

February 8, 1998

"No talk of Catholic [practice] can advance very far without coming upon the topic of the Virgin Mary. And there is no topic, not the papacy, not the Mass itself, that arouses greater consternation, not to say scandal, among non-Catholics." So writes former Protestant evangelical and now Roman Catholic, Thomas Howard. [On Being Catholic, 179]

And, surely, that is so. Protestants have the greatest difficulty understanding or showing sympathy for the doctrines of Mary that Catholics teach (that she herself, and not only her son, was born and lived without sin ["The Immaculate Conception"]; that she remained a virgin all her life ["The Perpetual Virginity"]; and that, shortly after she died, Mary's body was raised, reunited with her soul, and then she was taken bodily to heaven ["The Assumption of Mary"]). Where, we ask, is any of this taught in Holy Scripture? Where is there the barest suggestion of such teaching? Is not the simple, artless teaching of the Bible, and of Mary herself that she, like all the elect, was a sinner saved by grace in the same way that all sinners are and must be saved?

Still more, Protestants have the greatest difficulty understanding how Catholics can justify saying prayers to Mary, a mere human being. Why, Protestants point out, Mary is mentioned only a few times in the Gospels after the accounts of the Savior's birth and is never mentioned again after Acts 1, where we read only that she was together with the Apostles in the Upper Room in Jerusalem after the Lord's Resurrection. Paul never mentions her, Peter never mentions her. There is nothing, not one word in the Bible about any special place she occupies in the life of Christians. But Catholics have their reply.

First, they say, to pay this honor to Mary, to believe these special things about her, and to pray to her, was the universal teaching and practice of the ancient church, what Catholics often refer to as "the unanimous consent of the fathers." Now, we have already dealt with the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition as a source of Christian doctrine and practice alongside the Bible. Catholics are not troubled, as we are, by the fact that the Bible contains nothing of their doctrine of Mary, for they believe that doctrine was handed down to the church in another way: not in the Bible, but in the teaching of the Apostles handed down through the bishops of the church. I am reading a new biography, a magisterial study of the life of John Henry Newman, the 19th century's most prominent example of a Protestant -- he was a member of the Church of England -- who left his Protestant church to become a Roman Catholic, indeed to become eventually a Cardinal in the Catholic Church. Newman said what "made me a Catholic [was] the visible fact that the modern Roman Catholic Communion was the heir and the image of the primitive Church." [Ker, 611] That is, Newman felt that the Roman Catholic Church believed and worshiped as the early Christians did. That was, for him, the proof that Catholicism was right and true.

We have already said why we cannot accept this argument, or the Catholic doctrine of tradition, or its claim faithfully to represent the practice of earliest Christianity, and we have already said why we must rest our doctrine and our practice on the Bible alone. But Catholics, of course, think differently.

And we Protestants must admit that there is a great deal about Mary and her place in the Christian life in the materials of early Christianity, much more than there is in the Bible. Last week we pointed out that the practice of confession of sins to a priest, so much a part of the Catholic understanding of salvation, cannot be found in the teaching of the church fathers or of the church councils for a thousand years after the apostles. But the same cannot be said for the special place that Catholics assign to Mary.

By the later fourth century you find both exalted views of her and of her sinlessness, if not her immaculate conception, and the practice of prayers addressed to her and veneration, even worship, given to her. Gregory Nazianzen tells of one Justina

who prayed to the Virgin Mary to protect her virginity because she had come under the spell of a youthful lover --who happened, interestingly, to be Cyprian before his conversion, the man who would later be the celebrated North African bishop--. You also begin to find the proliferation of titles by which Mary would be known: especially, "Mother of God" and "Queen of Heaven." In the fifth century, when the worship of saints appeared in full bloom, Mary, by reason of her unique relation to the Lord, was placed at their head, the Queen of the heavenly host. Much later, Catholic theology would draw a distinction between latria, the worship due to God alone, dulia, the veneration which is due to all saints and angels, and hyperdulia, the highest degree of veneration below latria, which was reserved for Mary. In the centuries following, the place of Mary in belief and piety continued to develop. The practice of prayer to her often overshadowed prayer to God himself, she was believed to have performed miracles, and became almost coordinate with Christ as a joint or co-mediator invested with most of his attributes and powers. Like him she was conceived sinlessly, lived without sin, was raised from the dead, and ascended into heaven, though these beliefs became doctrines only very slowly and against much opposition. Indeed, the last of these Marian doctrines, her bodily assumption to heaven, did not become the official dogma of the Roman Catholic Church until 1950! The Greek church also followed this pattern and in some of its collects, that is, short formal prayers in the liturgy, substitutes the name of Mary for the name of Jesus.

But Protestant Christians, and Protestant theology have always been much less impressed by this historical argument. First, there were forces unquestionably at work in those early centuries that made virtually inevitable such a development as we see happening in the growing veneration given to Mary. For example, in the apocryphal gospels of the third and fourth centuries -- writings that even the Catholic church regards as spurious -- there are all manner of fantastic tales told of Mary. In other words, there was a great temptation in that age to extrapolate from the sober and reliable history of the Bible fables and legends that exalted the biblical characters far beyond the facts. What is more, in that culture at that time, there was a predisposition to believe in the mothers of gods, the heathenism of that time, which had worked itself profoundly into the culture, was well used to female deities, to a hierarchy of lesser deities leading up to the great God or gods, and was also accustomed to worshipping heroes -- as the Greeks and Romans did. It was inevitable that, in that culture, there would be a strong temptation to attribute to Mary the kind of place the mothers of gods occupied in the other faiths and, in that highly ascetic age, to begin to prefer to believe in her perpetual virginity. Christian history demonstrates a thousand times that the church's thinking is always susceptible to influences from the philosophies and religions round about, is always succumbing to those influences, always having to be purified from them. [Schaff, III, 411, 413-414]

But, in addition to this, the entire development of the doctrine of Mary and the practice of veneration for her and prayer to her is much more complicated than is suggested by such a phrase as "the unanimous consent of the fathers." There is, as a matter of fact, a slow development of this doctrine with a great deal of disagreement along the way. The Immaculate Conception of Mary, for example, was not brought forward as the formal teaching of the church until 1140 at Lyons and, when it was, it was opposed by no one less than Bernard of Clairvaux himself. From that time on, the doctrine of the immaculate conception was a matter of dispute between the Franciscans and the Dominicans until it was pronounced church dogma by a papal bull in 1854. Early fathers, such as Tertullian, did not hesitate to teach that Mary had other children by Joseph after the birth of Jesus, the brothers and sisters who are mentioned in the Gospels, or that she sinned, even that the Lord rebuked her on several occasions in the Gospels. Prayers to Mary do not appear in the evidence until late in the 4th century, and there is no mention of such prayers in the voluminous writings of Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, and Augustine 400 years after Pentecost. Some fathers specifically condemn the practice as blasphemous [Schaff, III, 423 n.].

Take another example. The famous Catholic prayer, the "Hail Mary" or "Ave Maria" is composed of three parts. The first part is the salutation of the angel which we read in our text, "Hail Mary, full of grace" -- so read the Latin translation; the NIV has the meaning more accurately, "you who are highly favored" --. The second part is Elizabeth's greeting in Luke 1:42: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus." The last part -- "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of our death," is the controversial part, obviously. It used to be claimed that this part of the prayer went back to the 5th century. It is now widely admitted that it originates in the 16th century and the closing words, "now and in the hour of our death," are even later. Even the first two parts of the "Hail Mary," did not come

into general use as a prayer until the 13th century. In other words, the development of Marian devotion in the church happened as we might have expected it to happen in such a religious culture as the culture the early church found herself in, and, even then, it was a development in fits and stages that came only gradually and much later into the form in which it is now known.

But in the second place, the Catholics argue that their practices in regard to Mary are really but an extension of principles of great importance taught in Holy Scripture. This was the particular emphasis of the teaching on Mary that I have studied over these past weeks, that is, the teaching about Mary given by former Protestants who are now Catholics, such as Thomas Howard and Scott Hahn. They want us to hear them say with great emphasis, for example, that they are not praying "to" Mary, as if they believe that she can, in her own strength and by her own virtue, hear and answer prayer. They are asking her to pray with us and for us as she is there is the very presence of her Son our Lord. And so with prayers to other saints. Thomas Howard is quite willing to admit, indeed, that this point is often missed in Catholic practice and that many "an ill-instructed peasant supposes that Mary somehow is more approachable than her Son" [191] Those are his words. Or, he says, "multitudes of poorly instructed Catholic faithful have not altogether grasped the distinction between what they are doing at this image of St. Anthony or St. Lucy [or, we might add, this image of Mary] and what they do when they kneel in the Lord's presence" [161]. That is, of course, true. I saw an interview with Catholics about Mary and one woman was happy to say that she felt that, as a woman, Mary understood her better and was more approachable than the Lord Christ himself.

But, he goes on. We Christians ask one another to pray for us all the time. Why would we not ask those brothers and sisters, and the chief among them especially, who are now gone on from us and are among the spirits made perfect, to pray for us? We do not cast any aspersion on the power of Jesus' intercession for us when we ask others to pray for us, do we? Of course not. So, why should it be thought some kind of diminishment of Christ to ask Mary for her prayers? And, then, he appeals to the tradition of the church and the practice of such prayers for prayers already in early church history. The problem is that the fine distinctions that these modern writers wish to maintain are not so easily demonstrated in the tradition. Mary is prayed to; she is asked herself for blessings. It is not the case that only her prayers to Christ himself are sought. She is given a role that is not only utterly absent from the teaching of the Bible, but which is utterly foreign to the teaching and practice of the Bible, where, from Genesis to Revelation, the saints call upon God himself and directly!

A grand illustration of the problem was furnished for us some years ago when Pope John Paul II, the present Pope, was shot in St. Peter's square. This Pope is known for his Marian devotion. After he was shot he was placed still conscious in an ambulance and rushed to a hospital. From the time he was wounded to the time he lapsed into drug induced unconsciousness on the operating table he is reported to have uttered but one word, and that word over and over again: "Madonna." Not, "Lord," not "God," not "Christ," not "Savior" or "Redeemer," but "Madonna." When his life was in the balance, he lifted up his heart not to the Prince of Life but to the Lord's mother. Are we not right to think that something fundamentally unbiblical is at work here? Not simply extrabiblical, but unbiblical. Something has been placed between the soul and the Savior himself that is never placed between by the Bible itself. In the Bible people do not pray so. For the thousands of years covered in Holy Scripture no one prayed so. It was the glory of their faith that they were given immediate access to God who was willing to hear their prayers and answer them.

But, finally, the Catholics respond, when we venerate Mary we are entering into that spirit of faith and humility that she demonstrated so magnificently in the way in which she undertook the astonishing service that was granted her to perform. And by looking to her we are seeking to put ourselves in her place and to respond to the Lord with the same faith, the same submission, the same devotion, his grace working in and through us as it did in her. Thomas Howard and Scott Hahn particularly have some beautiful and moving things to say of Mary's example as a perfect example of all that Christians aspire to be. And that, surely, is true. Absolutely true. Listen to these words.

"As mother of the Savior of the world, the Virgin Mary unquestionably holds forever a peculiar position among all women, and in the history of redemption. Even in heaven she must stand peculiarly near to Him whom on earth she bore

nine months under her bosom, and whom she followed with true motherly care to the cross. It is perfectly natural, nay, essential, to sound religious feeling, to associate with Mary the fairest traits of maidenly and maternal character, and to revere her as the highest model of female purity, love, and piety. From her example issues a silent blessing upon all generations, and her name and memory are, and ever will be, inseparable from the holiest mysteries and benefits of faith. For this reason her name is even wrought into the Apostles' Creed, in the simple and chaste words, 'Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.'" [Schaff, III, 410]

Those words were written by a Protestant, a Reformed Christian. And surely we can give our assent to them with all our hearts. Let no Roman Catholic take our crown in the reverence in which we hold the mother of our Lord. It is in saying more than this that we face the problem. Here Thomas Howard and Scott Hahn fail to persuade us. Faithful she was, wonderfully! Humble and submissive to God, she was, as we must be! But the Bible, and the Lord himself, seem to treat her as other Christians, seem to place her with the rest of us, who must live by faith, die in faith, and await the resurrection of the dead.

Indeed, in a most interesting passage, perhaps a text that has always bothered us a little, the Lord Jesus seems to be even a bit dismissive of his mother (as many have also thought, at first glance, he was at the wedding at Cana in John 2). He was not dismissive of her in either case, of course. But, he does not take the opportunity provided in Matthew 12:46-50, to exalt his mother above the others who trust in him and walk with him. This has always stuck in my memory. My father was reading this text at family worship one evening when I was a boy. And he wondered aloud why the Lord spoke as he did. Why he spoke in such a way as might be taken by some as not properly respectful of his mother. You remember: the Lord was teaching the crowds and his mother and brothers appeared on the outskirts wanting a chance to speak with him. Someone told the Lord that they were there wanting to see him and he replied, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" And, then, pointing to his disciples around him he said, "here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." To Protestant ears, that sounds almost as if the Lord was anticipating mistakes that would be made about Mary in ages to come! I should say, as an aside, the Lord's reference to his brothers, again, would naturally be understood, as the other references to them in the Gospels, as a reference to his younger siblings, the other children of Joseph and Mary [remember he is described as her firstborn son, and the Scripture says that she had no relations with Joseph until she gave birth to a son (Matthew 1:25).], which, of course, would contradict the claim that she remained a virgin all her life -- an idea that is completely without support in the Bible, or good reason in the Bible, but would have been increasingly attractive a few centuries later as the church took from the surrounding world the notion that a sexless life, an ascetic life was a superior and more holy life.

Why does the Bible say nothing of her in those ways in which Catholics think of her and pray to her? When it describes the life of faith, when Jesus taught that life and Paul and Peter, for whom Catholics have a special reverence, why do they say nothing about Mary or seeking her prayers. Why do they describe a life and a piety without mentioning any of this? Thomas Howard can only say that the Bible's silence may be "the veil shrouding a mystery worth guarding from profane eyes" [185]. But who is to say? Why should we believe any of this system of prayer to Mary or the practice of devotion to her and, all the more, given its slow, fitful, and controversial development even within the Roman Catholic tradition?

You see, I do not doubt that Scott Hahn and Thomas Howard believe that God alone can answer prayers and that the purpose of Mary in the Catholic system is really simply to confirm gospel principles that are taught in Holy Scripture. But, what the Catholic system of theology and piety has done in extrapolating from the biblical account of Mary this entire set of beliefs and practices that are utterly unknown in the Bible, utterly foreign to the teaching of the apostles themselves, is to place something between the soul and the Savior. There is our fundamental objection. I do not doubt that some Catholics are not fundamentally confused by this interposition of Mary and the other saints between themselves and the Lord. Thomas Howard admits that multitudes of Catholics have been so confused and misled. But the question is: are we to believe that the place given to Mary in this system is faithful to the truth as it is taught in Holy Scripture.

And here I answer as I have answered in regard to other such questions in our examination of Roman Catholic belief and

practice. The way they extrapolate from the Bible and build an entire edifice of practice that cannot itself be found in the Bible, is precisely what the Jews did in the days of Jesus Christ, and before and after. They too were intensely interested in the faith and serious about their practice of it. They too developed traditions, both of doctrine and of the practice of piety, that they felt would help them be more faithful. Some of those traditions were very much like Roman Catholic practices, such as the rosary. I can very easily imagine a devout Jew arguing for the worth and value of their practices in virtually identical language to that used by Thomas Howard or Scott Hahn as they argue for Catholic devotion to Mary and the like.

But those traditions, Jesus himself said, actually got in the way. The stress they placed upon those traditional ideas and practices drove a wedge between the soul and God himself and created a sense of dependence upon the believer's works, even pious works, for his salvation instead of concentrating all attention upon the faith that a believer is to place directly in the Lord and his mercy. And that was a crucial, a fatal error, and led eventually to such a different conception of salvation, that it was loyal members of the church of God who crucified the Savior of the world when he came among them. Their traditions and traditional practices had hidden the Savior himself from their eyes.

No, what is at stake here is finally something terribly immense. What Christianity offers is the very knowledge of God. You, yourself, you pipsqueak, you inconsequential and sinful human being, you can know God, can know God personally in his love and tender mercy, in his fatherly interest and provision, in his kingly protection. You, your very own self, can speak to him with the knowledge that the Almighty will hear and answer, can love him and be loved in return. Christ came among us in part to prove this to us: that the Creator of heaven and earth and the King of Kings would really stoop to know and be known by us.

But in our sinful rebellion, and in our craven fear of a holy God on account of our sins, we are always wanting to put a greater distance between ourselves and God, to put something in between, to manage, to make safe and predictable, this otherwise so personal and so intimate relationship with the living God himself. After all, whenever, in the Bible, someone comes face to face with God, it is no casual affair; it is devastating, terrifying, at least at first. So we are always tempted to domesticate this Christian faith, to make it more predictable and to place it once again under our control. It isn't just Roman Catholics that do this. Oh no. Don't anyone take that away from this message. What concerns us in their practice of Marian devotion should concern us as well in our own Protestant, Presbyterian, Reformed practices and our own approach to our life of faith. We too are always tending to make our relationship with God more comfortable for ourselves by placing something between ourselves and him, by giving ourselves a little distance as it were. We place our works, our pious acts of worship, or intermediaries like Mary and the saints, between ourselves and God. We turn our faith into a lifestyle, or an ethic, or a set of practices until, before we know it and without our realizing it, it is no longer a personal relationship with God, a walking with God through this world. Now we are dealing with a distant God, a more remote deity according to a set of rules or procedures. We are more comfortable with that.

But, in that we lose the glory and splendor and power of the gospel, which brings us directly to God and gives us to know him and be loved and ruled by him. It is not always easy to have your life open entirely to God and to have to deal with Him directly regarding your days and your nights, your choices, your sorrows, your disappointments, your failures, and your sins. But that is what God requires.

And what he promises is that if you come to Him, directly, lay your soul, your life at his feet, as Mary did, look to him for your salvation, not only in the world to come but day to day, and live your life in active dependence upon his living presence with you, as Mary did, He will give you rest, the forgiveness of your sins, the promise of eternal life, his love shed abroad in your heart, his Spirit to support, comfort, and encourage you, his law to guide you, his hand to direct your steps, and he will give you the longings, the delights of your heart, as you trust in him. Nothing can come between you and Him. That is the secret of all life and all truth: God himself may be known by us as our Father in heaven, Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. But sinful little creature that you are, you will struggle all your life to believe that and to act upon that truth. Whether it frightens you, the prospect of facing God, or whether you believe it too good to be true, you will struggle to accept. But you must for, as the Lord Jesus himself said, "he who comes to me, I will never drive

away!"

"Roman Catholicism: The Papacy"

Matthew 16:13-20

February 15, 1998

In our consideration of the contemporary challenge of Roman Catholicism we have come to the Roman Catholic doctrine and institution of the Papacy, the office of the Pope. Let no one mistake the tremendous claim that is made for this office in Roman Catholic theology and practice. It may be that many American Catholics, for example, feel perfectly free to ignore what the Pope says and teaches. But a serious-minded Catholic would worry more about the souls of those church-members than about the institution of the papacy itself. Here is a Roman Catholic catechism on the Pope:

"The Pope takes the place of Jesus Christ on earth.... By divine right the Pope has supreme and full power in faith and morals over each and every pastor and his flock. He is the true Vicar of Christ [a vicar is one who acts in the place of, a deputy], the head of the entire church, the father and teacher of all Christians. He is the infallible ruler, the founder of dogmas, the author of and the judge of councils; the universal ruler of truth, the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one, God himself on earth." [*The New York Catechism*, cited in Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, 127]

We Protestants are well used to dismissing this whole idea of the papacy as a vast but obvious blunder. But it is a striking thing to hear these new converts to Rome from our own evangelical and Presbyterian churches wax so enthusiastic about the Pope and the blessing and importance of this papal office and authority.

Now, in dealing with these claims for the Pope made by Roman Catholics and in evaluating the arguments offered for the papacy, I will use arguments that you have heard me use before in this series of sermons.

I'm going to say that the Roman Catholic doctrine is both without biblical warrant and actually **unbiblical**, that the Roman Catholic appeal to the tradition of the early church is not nearly so impressive as they claim; and that the appeal that Catholics find in this distinctive feature of their system is illusory and dangerous. I have argued similarly in regard to the place they give to Mary or concerning their practice of confession and penance. If I were to take ten more subjects, ten more distinctive features of the Roman Catholic system or the Catholic version of the Christian faith, my argument would be, by and large, the same. Whether we spoke of prayers for the dead, or prayers to the saints, or the existence of purgatory, or their sacraments of holy orders or last rites, or their particular view of marriage, the argument would be the same: that these beliefs and practices lack Scriptural support, and are, in any case, positively **unscriptural**, that the evidence of early Christian practice does not nearly so well demonstrate the apostolic origin of these practices and beliefs as Catholics argue it does, and, finally, that the benefits they claim these practices, these institutions, and these beliefs, confer on the church are illusory and imperil the pure gospel of Christ.

What this illustrates, I want you to see, is that everything in this debate reduces to the same fundamental issue: how do we know the will of God? We have, on the basis of the Word of God itself, already taken our stand on Holy Scripture as the sole infallible rule of faith and practice and as a perfectly **sufficient** rule of faith and practice. Our historical studies, in connection with various issues separating Protestants from Catholics, have confirmed that commitment to our own satisfaction. That is, when one draws one's beliefs from another well, one immediately begins to water a system of faith and life that grows to be not only **extra-biblical**, but **un- and anti-** biblical. I say again, I look at this question as someone who was trained professionally in the study of the NT and whose training included a great deal of study of first century Judaism. I see an almost universal parallelism between first century Judaism and Roman Catholicism: each is an example of the same phenomenon, viz. what happens when tradition is allowed to rework biblical revelation. The

changes are all of the same type and character and they produce the same general result theologically, liturgically, and spiritually. The new converts to Rome speak of us as "Bible Christians." I'm entirely happy to wear the title and hope and pray that all of you will likewise wear it as a crown.

However, this being so, I am concerned that we not become repetitive in these studies, or that I weary you by taking too many issues and saying, effectively, the same things about each one. Nevertheless, I decided we could not omit the question of the papacy in our study of Roman Catholicism, because it is so basic to the entire system. On it rests the Catholic doctrine of the priesthood and so the Catholic system of salvation.

Now, let me begin by saying that there are bad reasons for rejecting the papacy and these reasons often figure too largely in Protestant thinking about the Pope. For example, there are Christians who have been so deeply influenced by American ideals of democracy and egalitarianism that, to them, because the papacy smacks of monarchy and authoritarianism they reject it. But the Catholics get the better of that exchange, for the Christian Church is **not** a democracy, it is a manifestation of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are his subjects and he rules over us through officers, which he appoints to exercise that rule. Only the most attenuated and emasculated forms of congregational church government deny the real authority held by the officers of Christ's church.

But there are other, very good reasons for rejecting the Roman Catholic claims for the Pope and they begin where the Catholics themselves begin, with the Lord's statement to Peter in Matthew 16:18-19. From this text, far and away the most important Catholic proof-text for the papacy, Catholics argue that Peter was appointed by the Lord as the Head of the Church with a special and unique authority, that the Pope, who is the successor of Peter, therefore holds that primacy among all Christian bishops and,

therefore, that same authority that Christ bestowed upon Peter, and that a necessary consequence of that papal primacy and authority is the Pope's infallibility when he speaks as the Holy Father, the Universal Teacher of the Christian Church. I listened to a long lecture on this text by Scott Hahn this past week and he claimed to find all three of these assertions in Matthew 16:18-19.

Now, be clear. They do not claim that the Pope can't make mistakes; he is not impeccable or unable to sin. The current Pope, apparently, confesses his sins at least weekly. Nor are they saying that there can't be, from time to time, a rotten scoundrel who somehow becomes Pope. Protestants, of course, are quick to point out the horrific abuses and corruptions of the Borgia popes, but Catholics acknowledge these. There was a Judas among the twelve apostles they say. [My own view is that the bad Popes are a greater difficulty for the doctrine of the papacy than Catholic thinkers think they are, but I will leave that aside. Catholics admit there were terrible popes.] But, when the Pope is acting as Christ's deputy on earth and, particularly, when he is sitting in Peter's chair as the Teacher of all Christians, Christ prevents him from uttering wrong opinions. Scott Hahn took the position that Christ prevented the Borgia Popes from ever exercising this authority. Tell that to Savanarola! But, that is not the main point.

The argument from Matthew 16:18-19 goes like this. The Lord Jesus distinguishes Peter from the other apostles and confers upon him personally the keys of the kingdom -- the power to teach, to forgive sins, and to discipline --. This bestowal of the keys included a dynastic succession by reason of which Peter himself bestowed on his successor the same authority that Christ had bestowed on him.

Now it would take too long to repeat the arguments that Scott Hahn and others use to persuade us that all of this is in fact to be found in the Lord's remark to Peter. I can only say that I was not impressed by those arguments. They amounted to a succession of doubtful inferences the

combination of which did not come near to establishing that doctrine of the papacy that, one naturally thinks, if Christ intended what the Catholics believe he did, would have been so clearly taught and revealed that one who runs might read. After all, the Catholics argue that Jesus did teach their doctrine here, but he certainly didn't make that doctrine obvious! But how do we reply to this interpretation of Matthew 16?

First, we do not reply, as Protestants have long replied by denying that Jesus did in fact say to Peter that he would be the rock on which the Lord would build the church. Protestants, from the Reformation onwards, have typically taken the Lord here to mean that Christ was the rock or that it was Peter's confession that was the rock, but not Peter himself. Actually, there was nothing new in those interpretations. They can be found in the early fathers, as a matter of fact. Indeed, Augustine, who at first took "this rock" in v. 18 to be Peter, later, in his *Retractions* argued that "this rock" should be taken as a reference to Christ himself. But, in reaction to Roman claims, the Reformers preferred interpretations that did not identify Peter with "this rock."

Now, however, it is widely admitted, as it should be, that the Lord's reference is to Peter. He is the rock upon which he will build his church. There is no reason to evade the simple force of the words. But, having admitted that, what have we admitted? Two chapters later, in Matthew 18:18 the same authority devolved on Peter in 16:19 is bestowed on the church as a whole, and in John 20:23 the same authority again is explicitly bestowed upon all the apostles. In other words, the Lord cannot be made in the context of the Gospels to be intending that Peter have an authority the other apostles do not have, except perhaps, that natural prominence that made him *primus inter pares*, the first among equals.

So, when Paul writes in Ephesians 2:20 that the church, God's household, is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, he is saying again and in only a slightly different way, what Jesus said on those three occasions in the Gospels. Peter is singled out in Matthew 16 because he

happened to be the one who uttered the clear confession of Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God.

And, the rest of the NT absolutely confirms this picture of things. In Mark 9:33-35, you remember, when the disciples were arguing among themselves as to which of them was the greatest, -- this is after the Lord had said what he said to Peter in Matthew 16 -- the Lord said nothing of any special status for Peter, but rather that he who would be first must be the servant of all. And this is exactly the tone that Peter himself takes in the rest of the NT. In his two letters there is nothing of any special claim on his part to the leadership of the church. He refers to himself as an apostle and, strikingly, as an elder among all the other elders, but never as someone with supreme authority in the church. Nothing remotely like that from Peter anywhere.

In Acts we do not find Peter operating as Pope, but as one of the apostles. He is certainly prominent in the first half of Luke's early church history, but gives way to Paul halfway through the book and is not heard of again. Strikingly in Acts 15, in the account of the first church Council in Jerusalem, Peter plays a prominent role as one of many who speaks, but not the decisive role. That belongs to James, the Lord's brother, who by this time was the most influential leader of the church in Jerusalem. He spoke last, and even said, as he came to his conclusion, "It is **my** judgment that..." and even at that, emphasis falls in that text on the membership of that council as "the apostles and elders...." It was the presbytery that came to a decision and published it to the church, not Peter as the first Pope.

As our own Dr. Harris wrote, years ago [cited in Boettner, 130-131]:

The fact is that the early church had no head on earth. Christ was their head and they all were brothers. They did have an organization, however... There was a doctrinal question at Antioch. What should the church do to settle it? Should they write a letter to Peter asking his decision? This would be the [Roman Catholic] position. But they did not. Should they write a letter to the "college of Apostles"? This is the Episcopal position that the bishops by apostolic succession have the whole authority in the church. But Antioch did not do that. Should they call a congregational meeting of the church at Antioch and have the matter decided by a vote of the congregation? That would be the independent theory of church government. But they did not do this either. Rather they sent representatives to a synod meeting held at Jerusalem where the apostles and elders came together to consider the matter. They considered it carefully with prayer and Scripture study. Finally the apostles and elders decided on a policy and gave out decrees to which all the churches were expected to submit.... There was no primacy of Peter or anyone else.

This was certainly Paul's outlook. He shows no deference to Peter in his work; he even rebukes him publicly on one occasion. He understood and often wrote that his authority as an apostle came directly from Christ himself and he conducted his ministry independently. When he refers to Peter, as he does in Galatians 1 and 2 and 1 Corinthians 9, he refers to him as a colleague in the ministry and as one of the apostolic band, never as someone in whom Christ had invested the supreme authority of the church.

So, we do not find in Matthew 16:18-19 anything like the proof the Catholics find for the primacy of Peter or a dynastic succession from Peter down through the succession of popes. But we have a second large question. How do we get from Matthew 16 to Rome? Where do we learn that Peter's successor, should there supposed to be one, is to be the bishop of Rome?

Here the argument shifts entirely to early church tradition. There is no doubt that the Roman church became preeminent among the churches of the early Christian world. This was due largely to the fact that Rome was the capital of the world of that day. It is very difficult to avoid the impression that Rome's place in the Christian world owes itself almost entirely to Rome's place in the imperial world. Or as Herman Bavinck put it [*Dogmatiek*, vol. IV, 385]: "The papal power of the bishop of Rome rested a great deal on the political prestige of the city."

But, even given that fact, the development of the power and supreme authority of the Roman see, or bishopric, came very slowly, in fits and starts, and was never recognized by the Eastern part of the church. In the early centuries, while great respect was shown the Roman church and then, later, the Roman bishop, it was always respect paid to a *primus inter pares*, the first among equals. Many statements were made by the early fathers expressing the equality of the bishops of various cities of the Mediterranean world. And, later, when Rome began asserting its privileges, over against other prominent metropolitan bishops, those bishops refused to recognize Rome's claimed supreme authority. Indeed, even the decisions of ecumenical councils, which otherwise the Roman Catholic church recognizes as invested with a special authority, such as Chalcedon in AD 451, confirm that the great city bishops of the world of that day were co-equal, Rome possessing a precedence only in honor.

Indeed, the materials of early Christianity, especially the first five centuries, really support the claims of the Eastern or the Orthodox church -- which recognizes several supreme bishops -- far better than they do the Roman Catholic claims for the Bishop of Rome's authority over the entire church.

But, the fact is, the historical materials simply do not confirm that Peter was ever the bishop of Rome or that the church ever saw that office as possessing a supreme authority in the Christian church. The historical fact

remains, the Pope has never been the leader of all of Christendom. At the most he was the head of Western or Latin Christianity from the beginning of the medieval period to the Reformation and, since the Reformation, only of that part of Christendom that remained loyal to him. So we say, neither the Scripture nor church history supports the interpretation of Matthew 16:18-19 placed upon it by Roman Catholic thought.

But it remains to ask: what is the charm, the attraction, the appeal of this office? Why do its advocates wax so eloquently in its defense? Perhaps there are many answers to that question, but the chief of them seems clearly to be that in the Pope and his office and his authority we find a means of preserving the unity of the church.

Scott Hahn, in his lecture, uses this as his peroration, his rhetorical climax. Look at the Protestant world without a Pope. What do you see? You see thousands of denominations and churches and sects, becoming more numerous every day. You see every Christian producing his own interpretation of Christian doctrine and giving his own account of Christian ethics. In the Protestant world, the household of God, the church of Christ has disintegrated into innumerable bits and pieces. If Christ prayed that his church might be one, well, his prayer was not heard so far as the Protestants are concerned.

But, look at the Roman Catholic Church. Sure there is diversity. Catholics in Latin America worship differently in many ways and live differently than Catholics in the U.S. or Catholics in China or Africa. There is a rich diversity. But they all belong to the same church; their bishops are all related to a single government; they all have one head and all of them -- despite their private, even sometimes raucous disagreements -- accept that there is but one voice of the church, one doctrine, one teaching, one law, one position. Is that not much better? Is that not what Christ had in mind? Is that not the outworking of the great emphasis paid in the NT to the unity of the church: one faith, one Lord, one baptism?

Now, I will speak to you candidly. There is nothing that troubles me more about my Protestant faith than just this objection raised by Roman Catholics. I hear Steve Wood, a former PCA minister, speaking of his once holding up before his congregation the *Handbook of Christian Denominations in the United States* -- identifying all the thousands of different Protestant churches now existing in the United States -- and telling them that this cannot be what the Lord had in mind that night when he prayed that his disciples might be one. I feel the force of that argument! I want you to feel the force of it as well. Don't underestimate the importance of this brothers and sisters. Humanly speaking, which is the only way we can speak, there are multitudes of people who remain unsaved and multitudes of folk in the church who remain unsaved and multitudes of Christians who live impoverished and far too disobedient Christian lives **precisely because the Christian church shows such an unimpressive face to the world and so little inspires confidence in its message or adorns that message and makes it beautiful and appealing. How will folk take the gospel, the truth of the Scripture seriously when it produces such an utterly pedestrian, natural, and, in all too many cases, positively unattractive result?** This is, a powerful argument for the papal office -- just the way it unifies the church and makes one a church composed of people from every culture and every nation, speaking every language in the world. I certainly find that immensely attractive and desirable. Must not every Christian who has the Lord's own heart and interest?

But, having said all that and admitted all that, at the last, I cannot accept that it means that the papacy is a divine institution simply because it does effect this certain unity in the church. For, attractive as that result is in certain ways, it is man's solution to the problem, not God's! And man's solutions, as we have already learned in previous messages, always carry with them devastating results, however unintentioned. The early Pharisees only wanted to be faithful to God's holy law. But, the fateful steps they took, led the church at last to crucify the Lord of glory!

You see, finally, the unity the Pope confers on Catholic Christendom is a unity in error, a unity that has been preserved throughout the ages by her rejection time and again of reformation on the basis of Holy Scripture. In Scott Hahn's lecture he made what was perhaps a Freudian slip! He spoke of the time "when Luther left the church." But, of course, Luther didn't **leave** the church. He was thrown out. The Pope regarded Luther as a troubler of Israel in just the same way that Ahab regarded Elijah to be a troubler of Israel, and Elijah's response to Ahab was exactly the same that Luther made to Pope Leo: "It is not I that troubles Israel, but you, you who has abandoned the Lord's commands." Indeed, in a striking paradox, the Pope is, in fact, a cause of great **disunity** in the church -- keeping Protestants and Orthodox Christians away, because they cannot accept submission to the Pope as right.

A fractured Protestantism is nothing to boast about. It is something to mourn, over which to grieve, something about which every Christian with Christ's mind ought to be ashamed. But finally, the Lord's solution to that disunity is not the Pope, but the work of his Spirit in the hearts of men and the faithful following of God's Word. No other unity but that of true faith, hope, and love, of loyalty to Christ and his gospel is of any interest to our Father in heaven. In fact, to place the emphasis on the Pope in discussions of Christian unity places the emphasis in exactly the **wrong** place -- outward form instead of inward graces drawing men and women together! And if that should mean that, once again, there is but a remnant chosen by grace, and that that remnant, scattered in the world, can be detected only by faith, well, such is God's mysterious will. It is not the first time it has been so.

"Roman Catholicism: Assurance of Salvation"

1 John 5:1-13

February 22, 1998

A few years ago now, one of you invited me to dinner at your home and gave me an assignment. Also at the meal would be a University Professor who was contemplating conversion to Roman Catholicism. He was an evangelical, an earnest Christian, a Lutheran since his conversion. Having been born and raised a Lutheran, it was natural for him to seek out a Lutheran church when he finally became a follower of Christ as a young adult. My job was to talk him out of becoming a Catholic. I did not succeed, as it happened.

He was attracted to Roman Catholicism, as I discovered in conversation with him, for the same reasons that other intelligent Christians these days find it attractive. As G.K. Chesterton put it, the Roman Catholic Church freed him from the degrading slavery of being a child of his time. Catholicism seems to these people to connect them to the great, central tradition of Christianity in the world, to something much larger than themselves, something much more impressive than what American evangelical protestantism seems to be in our day. It bequeaths a sense of identity, of belonging, and, in its worship, a sense of transcendence and the glory of God. So this man thought. He was attempting to argue a few of the Roman Catholic positions, on tradition and the like, but I didn't gather that these were the real attraction for him.

But at one point in the conversation we got to talking about practical matters. I told him that he would certainly find that regularly many, if not most, of the people he worshipped with in Catholic churches were not serious Christians, as he understood Christianity. He knew that and agreed with that. He further admitted that the preaching would usually be pathetic, often atrocious, and frequently unbiblical. I told him that he seemed to me a man committed to the gospel, with a grasp of salvation by grace and justification by faith in Christ, and so I did not worry so much that his own soul would be put in jeopardy by his converting to Rome, but I was not so confident that his young children would survive the journey. He admitted to me that this was his own greatest worry. Should he bring up his children in a church where so many paid only lip-service to Christian faith and life, where perhaps most of the parishioners would not genuinely believe in Christ or follow him, and where it would be so easy, almost inevitable for children to associate the Christian faith with a bare outward conformity, a perfunctory attendance on certain sacred acts, and an undemanding, half-hearted, commitment to the Christian life?

Now Roman Catholics would take great umbrage, no doubt, that someone so seriously considering joining them, would have such a low opinion of Catholic commitment and sincerity. But, the fact that someone so attracted to Catholicism should nevertheless be so pessimistic about the average Roman Catholic's spiritual life is perhaps as powerful a commentary on the state of that church as can be given.

For, you see, it has never been doubted by Protestants that there are and have been devout believers, earnest Christians in the Roman Catholic church. No doubt the total number of such believers is large, given the size of that church and its existence through the centuries. Luther, who did not agree in many crucial points with Bernard of Clairvaux's theology, did not hesitate to say of him that he loved Jesus as much as anyone can. Alexander Whyte, who had nothing but contempt for John Henry Newman's Catholic doctrine of justification, had the highest admiration for him as a Christian, as he did for Teresa of Avila and Father John of the Orthodox Church. The Lord covers many sins in all of his children, sins both of the mind and the life, and Protestants have always been ready to admit that the sins of particular Roman Catholics are as susceptible to forgiveness as they hope their own great sins will be. I know Roman Catholics who, I believe, are earnest followers of Christ and I certainly consider Scott Hahn and Thomas Howard brothers in Christ as, apparently, they would me.

But, that has not kept Protestants from charging that Rome's peculiar set of errors -- especially the cluster of those errors that form Rome's idea how salvation comes to a person -- make what is already very difficult, the salvation of a soul, much more difficult, humanly speaking and biblically speaking, much less likely. That is, Rome's unbiblical approach to salvation precisely exacerbates those harmful tendencies to which the sinful soul is already subject, namely, to look in the wrong place for the assurance of its salvation. It encourages people to concentrate on the wrong things and distracts them, thereby, from those things that, according to the Bible, finally separate the saved from the lost. This is not only the Protestant criticism of Catholic theology, this is the Protestant observation of Catholic preaching and life. And the same could be said of Orthodox preaching and life.

The typical Roman Catholic is not used to hearing powerful sermons warning of the danger of false assurance. She does not grow up being urged to make her calling and election sure; he remembers no conversations with a priest who urged him to examine himself to see whether he was in the faith. The doctrine of the "fewness of the saved" so powerfully taught by the Lord Jesus -- his parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins or his contrast of the broad and the narrow way are not the staples of Catholic spirituality. There is in developed Roman Catholicism nothing like the emphasis on personal evangelism that you find in Protestant evangelical churches and there are, as a rule, no solemn warnings to people already in the church, such as Jesus gave to Nicodemus, that a church member or not, you must be born again. The entire Roman Catholic system concentrates attention on the rites of the church and the participation of the parishioner in those rites as well as on some measure of conformity to Christian ethics -- though often a miserably low measure of conformity.

It is interesting that the new converts to Rome almost all, to one degree or another, concede that Roman Catholic churches are full of folk who are participants in the life of faith only mechanically. These are folk who do not understand Christian doctrine and often could not give any account of the gospel by which, presumably, they think themselves saved. The 25 folk who were interviewed coming out of a Sunday service at St. Patrick's Cathedral were, it is not too much to say, a typical cross-section. All but one utterly failed to explain how sinners are saved, even by official Roman Catholic standards. Scott Hahn admitted in his lecture on purgatory that many Catholics think, for example, that purgatory is a second chance. If one didn't do what he was supposed to in this life, God will let him do it in the next. And so these Catholics pay little serious personal attention to the Word and will of God while living in this world. Now Scott Hahn would say, "Shame on the Catholic church for permitting a single one of its members to believe such a thing," but the fact is, vast multitudes of Roman Catholics, most of the Catholics evangelical Protestants know and have known, betray an almost invincible ignorance of the gospel and hold views that cannot be harmonized with any serious reading of Holy Scripture. What is worse, their church does virtually nothing to disabuse them of those views. Indeed, the modern Catholic church, as opposed to historic Roman Catholicism, lays less and less stress on the importance of being a Christian or a Catholic at all. Ordinary Catholics, in vast numbers, comfort themselves with the hope of salvation, simply because they do what the church tells them to do, and no one in their church urges them to take care lest they found themselves numbered at last among that vast multitude of church members whom the Lord says he will refuse to welcome to his banquet.

I chose for my text this representative passage from 1 John because it concerns the subject of the entire letter, viz. the assurance of salvation. How does one know that he is saved, really saved? That when he awakes he will awake with Christ's likeness and not find himself, like the rich man in the Lord's parable in Luke 16, surprised to find himself in hell and in misery?

It is a real question, an important question, a pressing question in the New Testament, indeed in the entire Bible. It is not enough to say that you are a Christian, because many who say that are not saved. Jesus made a great point in his preaching of warning us about that! It may be that in one sense no one can call Jesus "Lord" except by the Spirit of God, but the Savior himself said "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter

the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you, away from me you evil doers!' [Matthew 7:21-23] It isn't enough to be faithful upon the rites and ceremonies of the church. The great message of the OT prophets, taken up by Jesus and Paul and the author of the letter to the Hebrews, was precisely the warning against such a confidence. Israel was sure that because she had the temple and the sacrifices God would spare her. But through his prophets he warned Israel over and over again that without a true faith in God that produced a true holiness of life, the rites and ceremonies of Israel's worship would not help, rather they offended God for the hypocrisy of those who used them without intending to express in them and with them any true love for God or submission to him. Nor is it enough to **have been** a professing Christian. For there are many who seemed to begin but did not continue in faith, hope, and Christian love. But as Jesus taught and Paul and Peter and James and the author of Hebrews, the only true and living and saving faith is the faith that carries a man or woman from the beginning of the Christian life to the moment of death.

John in his first letter is concerned to teach his readers how they might know they were saved, on what grounds a sure hope of salvation might rest. That is what he says he has been about in the letter in 5:13. "**...that you might know!**" God does not change a person's outward appearance when he is saved; he does not speak from heaven; you cannot see sins being forgiven. Many people, whom we think are Christians, prove themselves not to have been Christians at all. John refers to this in 2:19. So how can you and I know that we are Christians in truth, not hypocrites? How can we know that we will be there, still faithful to Christ, at the end? And all the more when even true Christians remain so sinful, so frail, so foolish in so many ways. How can we know whether we are the genuine article and are not only kidding ourselves? This is a question the Bible cares to take up and answer, over and over again.

In First John as a whole the tests that Christians are taught to use on themselves, by which to examine their faith and life, are such things as true belief in Christ as the Son of God and Savior, an active resting of one's life and salvation upon him, a spirit of penitence that leads to the confession of sins to God, a true love for God and for his people -- which is what the Holy Spirit produces in those who are being saved--, a life of obedience to God's commandments, a love of God's law and way and will. You have all of this again in summary in the verses we have read: right doctrine in v. 1 and vv. 5-12, and godly living in vv. 2-4. This, John says, is how you know! It isn't right doctrine or right living that **saves** you. God's electing love, Christ's death and righteousness in your place, the Holy Spirit at work within -- these are what **save** you, but the **evidence** of those things in your life: that is what we are after, and John says you find that evidence in faith, in penitence, in love, and in obedience.

Now this is very interesting, because when John sets out to answer the question how may I know that I am truly saved, he does not say anything about ecclesiastical rites or participation in them, he says nothing about baptism, or acts of penance, or the Mass, or anything else that figures so largely in the average Catholic's peace of mind. Nor does he place the emphasis on any particular kind of spiritual experience, such as American revivalist Arminianism has for so long. In many evangelical circles, one knows he is a Christian because he had a conversion experience in church or at a camp meeting or at an evangelistic crusade. But that is not what John says. No, people who proved themselves finally unbelievers sometimes had powerful experiences that everyone thought at the time were evidence of their conversion and new life in Christ. Jesus warned about placing too much weight on experience; so did Paul. And John places little weight on it in his letter.

His emphasis falls instead on the testing of attitudes and commitments by the fruit they produce in one's character and life. When God comes into a life, he comes to produce certain results; the presence of those results -- faith, hope, love, obedience and all in Christ -- that is the main proof, the most reliable demonstration

of the presence of God's salvation.

But Catholics, as a rule, do not consider these things, do not take care about them, do not pray about them and do not study to find them in themselves that they might know they are walking the narrow road that leads to life and not that broad road that so many church members through the ages have walked happily and comfortably to hell. This is not a Roman Catholic problem only, of course. Liberal Protestants do not worry over such questions and even certain evangelicals don't either. Whenever the Word of God is not taken with full seriousness as the guide to faith and life, human beings find ways to think less seriously and more comfortably about their salvation.

After all, think about this. One might have supposed that Roman Catholic theology would make Catholics scrupulous about the matter of personal assurance of salvation. In Catholic thought, one is justified at baptism, but must preserve that justification by good works and pious acts -- what Catholics will even call "merits" -- through the course of one's life. Justification can be lost at any time and must then be won back. The spiritual situation of a person at any moment is tenuous and susceptible to fundamental change. One might well think that this view of things would keep Catholics up at night worrying about maintaining their place among the saved. But, in general, it is not so.

It is never so. It wasn't so with legalistic Jews in the first century whose eternal salvation rested on their own performance, and it is not so with Arminians who likewise believe that you can lose your salvation. In every case in which the human element is reintroduced to justification, in which theories of merit or free will are inserted as conditions of one's standing with God, the result is a relaxation of standards such that people, instead of becoming more concerned about pleasing God, become less. The simple principle is this: when human beings begin to reinvent the Bible's doctrine of salvation, when men take back the matter of their salvation into their own hands, they do not do so to make salvation more difficult for themselves, but more easy. Men do not make their standing with God rest on their works unless they lessen the difficulty of those works that are required.

"Woe to those who are at ease in Zion," said the prophet to a community of people who had come to think that a very low standard of conformity to outward requirements and a certain regularity in the performance of pious acts of worship would keep them safe and in God's good graces. "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven," Jesus said to a community accustomed to think that heaven was theirs in exchange for a relatively undemanding commitment to largely outward rules and for the embrace of a religious routine.

In Roman Catholic theology, assurance is actually impossible. No one can know for sure that he is the object of divine grace. There is too much uncertainty in any system in which human works are key to maintaining one's place in the family of God. Whatever one has today, can be lost tomorrow. As one Catholic apologist put it, in one of the debates I listened to, when Paul says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to the man who is in Christ Jesus," he means only "at this present moment." There might be condemnation tomorrow! But, the result of that is not a church full of Christians fearful of losing their peace with God or very zealous to protect and maintain that peace. The result is a church full of people who are fast asleep, certain that the most undemanding and external routine will be sufficient to get them in.

But lest you think I am merely venting my Protestant prejudices against Roman Catholic thinking and living, let me repeat the account of a Roman Catholic priest, a thoughtful, vigorous defender of Catholic theology and practice, but one who is, as well, the editor of a magazine that seeks to foster unity among serious minded Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians [*Touchstone* 10.4 (Fall, 1997) 5].

"Just a few weeks ago I became aware that Sam [Moses] had been admitted to the Veterans' Hospital here in Butler. He was about 80 and had relatives in the New Castle congregation. Making inquiries, I learned that no one could remember when, if ever, he had been to the Sacraments, not even folks whose adult memories stretched back before World War II. Indeed, for a while, I was not sure Sam was a Christian; for all I knew, he could be a Moslem. So I paid Sam a brief visit, at the end of which I asked if he wanted me to pray for him. He assented, and when I blessed him, he crossed himself. That settled it.

When I came back some days later, I brought the Holy Eucharist and the Extreme Unction with me. This time it was clear that the man was dying. I looked down at him and said, 'Sam, you're getting pretty close, aren't you.' He nodded. 'What are we going to do about that?' I asked. He shrugged. 'Well,' I said, 'I tell you exactly what we're going to do; we're going to get you back into the Church, that's what we're going to do, and we're going to do it right now.'

'Okay,' he answered. I took out a four-inch crucifix and told him to keep his eyes on it while I explained it to him, reminding him why Someone was hanging there on that cross and what he was paying for by doing so. Then I took Sam through each of the Ten Commandments in detail, and in detail he made a full confession of all the sins of his life. I told him what things he was to tell God in his heart while I covered his head with my ample stole and absolved him of all those sins. This activity was very hard on Sam, for the man was tired. I anointed him with the Extreme Unction and mixed the Holy Communion in the Chalice. On that day, and two more times, Sam received the Body and Blood of our Lord, the Holy Viaticum, literally 'traveling food,' in preparation for the journey he was about to make.

This past Wednesday I came back to Butler once again took the Holy Eucharist from the altar and headed for the hospital. Sam was too weak to receive however. His very labored breath told me he was near the end.... I suspected that this might be my last time with Sam. I anointed and absolved him again and recited the Trisagion prayers. Then, following a custom that I have used for decades, I slowly and carefully read the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel out loud. This is a very ancient Irish custom -- to die, if possible, during the proclamation of the opening verses of St. John... Anyway, I have always strictly adhered to it. I have no idea, after all these years, how many people have died listening to me announce those awesome lines: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.'

Sam did not last another day. I informed the clergy at St. Elias Church in New Castle that I had re-admitted a lapsed Christian back into their fold, and Sam will receive an Orthodox burial tomorrow. It is a marvelous thing to watch a Good Thief steal heaven like that, at the last minute, as it were, getting in just under the wire and right before the quittin' bell rings. It causes the heart nearly to burst with gratitude and joy and love for the divine compassion for us sinners. After all, when I ministered to Sam in those God-ordained ways during those closing days, it was just one sinner doing what he could for another. The only thing that counted was the 'copious redemption' that the Psalmist sings of. Anyway, Blood-bought Sam will be laid to rest tomorrow. Israel has gone forth from Egypt, and the house of Jacob from a folk of alien tongue."

Now, I used **that** anecdote in keeping with my plan to deal with Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy in the best light and not the worst. Here is a priest who cares more about the Bible than many priests do, is more careful to elicit a full confession than many priests would be, and takes care to emphasize that salvation rests

on divine grace to an extent that is not characteristic of the ministry of many in those churches. That is why, after all, so many multitudes of people through the ages have claimed to have found the grace of God and salvation in Christ and the true experience of faith **only upon leaving the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches!** Even the new converts to Rome were ready earnest Christians before they got there; Rome did not make them so.

But, at the last, I think you see the problem with this priest's viewpoint. It is not the Bible's viewpoint. It is not the way the Bible speaks. It is not the way the Bible confers on anyone the assurance of salvation. Now, I cannot say that Sam Moses did not repent at the very end of his life and make his peace with God by a true and living faith in Christ and in the mercy offered him in the gospel. I hope he did! It is always possible. But one would never know that such were the case in the way this priest imagines that he knows! Not by a priestly absolution, not by a taking of the Holy Eucharist, not by a performing of pious acts while lying in a hospital bed. All of this can be done; all of this has been done in cases without number; and the people were no more saved after than before. Generally it remains true: God will not be mocked; whatsoever a man sows in his life, that shall he reap. A true and living faith, a genuine and searching repentance, a love for God and Christ for their saving mercy, a crying out to God to be merciful to me a sinner -- all of these things, yes, even on a deathbed, even at the very last moment, as the thief on the cross learned to his eternal joy, are the evidences of eternal life in Christ! But none of that is known, none of that is proved, none of that is determined by what that priest did in that hospital room.

The most he could have said, the Scripture teaches, the most he could have said is "having heard the fervency of his confession of sin and seeing in his face what I took to be a true sincerity in confessing Christ his Savior, I have hopes that the man may truly have been renewed by the Holy Spirit and justified by the Father in heaven. The fact that he did not speak that way, but implied that such acts as were performed actually produced the hoped for result, demonstrates how far from the teaching of the Bible itself this view of the assurance of salvation really is and why it is so dangerous and how, through the ages, it has put so many sinners to sleep who, it is greatly to be feared, awoke in hell!

Not for us, brothers and sisters. The only safe Christian and the only one who can lay claim with confidence to the love of God and the righteousness of Christ is the man or woman who is walking with God, turning from his sins, resting in Jesus Christ, seeking the honor of God in his life, serving the Lord, and giving evidence that the Spirit of God is producing holy fruits in his or her life. The problem with the Roman Catholic doctrine of Holy Orders for example -- celebrate priests, monks, and nuns, -- is not that there should be men and women who devote themselves and their chastity to the service of Christ and his church -- that is biblical and wonderful. The problem is rather the impression, so widely given, that those without such orders are not equally required to live a devout, consecrated, holy life of Christian faith, love, devotion, prayer, and service to God and man. Every Christian is under "holy orders," and true assurance of salvation requires us to know, believe, and practice that fact!

The terrible fact is, the saddest road to hell is that road that passes down the aisle of a Christian church, past a font and a table or altar, and right underneath a Christian pulpit, and, through the ages, as the Scripture itself teaches us, more folk have traveled that road to hell than to heaven! That simple fact ought to make us more hungry and thirsty for the Bible's true evidences of salvation in our own hearts and lives than for anything else in all the world.

And any church that does not exert itself to urge upon you that concern, with all the holy solemnity that the Christian Church **can** bring to bear, if only it will, is a church gone far astray, and, is no church for anyone who loves his own soul or the souls of his children.

"Roman Catholicism: The Mass, No. 1"

Mark 14:17-26

March 1, 1998

This morning we begin to consider the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper or what they call "the Mass." I have been preaching sermons that are somewhat longer than my norm during this series because the subjects being considered are so vast and because I did not want to say so little as either to seem to misrepresent the Catholic position or provide an inadequate response to it. But the Mass or Eucharist is so a large subject that I realized I could not do this justice in but one sermon. If I tried, I was bound to confuse, to misrepresent, and to say too little to be really useful.

So, this morning I want to consider from the Bible general perspectives that ought to control our thinking about the place of the Lord's Supper in the life, the worship, and the salvation of God's people. Next Sunday, Lord willing, we will consider the particular claims of the Roman Church for the Eucharist and the place that they assign to it in the way of salvation.

I want to begin by saying that, I believe very firmly, that at this point there is a great deal that we can ignore. One of the problems the ordinary Christian faces in attempting to satisfy himself or herself as to the proper way of thinking about the Lord's Supper, its manner of working, and its efficacy, what it produces in a believer's life, is that the history of debate on these questions in the church is very complex and confusing. I daresay that even the bright seminarian, who studies the various controversies and learns the competing vocabularies with which various groups speak about the Supper and its way of working, hardly understands what he is talking about when he discusses these questions.

It is a very difficult part of theology that takes us into a set of very complicated questions, most of which are never discussed directly in the Bible. The terminology is mysterious, interpretations of that terminology abound, scholars continue to argue today as to what a particular church father or Protestant reformer actually thought about the Lord's Supper, and ordinary Christians are supposed, somehow, to make sense of this?

You cannot discuss the Supper in this detail without raising the most complicated historical and theological issues, but you can be sure the ordinary Christian does not need to become expert in such issues in order to understand the Supper in a biblical form. The Bible was not written for theologians but for believers, and the Lord's Supper was appointed not to give theologians something to debate but as a meal to feed the children of God!

We can safely leave much of the controversy to one side. And I say that because I am sure that if only certain basic biblical perspectives were maintained in regard to the worship of the Lord's Supper, these other questions and debates would become more interesting than important and would not stand in the way of believers receiving the blessing of the Supper as our Savior intended when he instituted this sacrament the night of his betrayal.

So let us begin, this morning, with some fundamental perspectives.

I. The first is that biblical religion, biblical Christianity is sacramental.

However one defines that term, precisely, we understand that from the very beginning, God has communicated his favor and blessing to his people and they have sought him and his blessings through rites and ceremonies which God designed and appointed to convey spiritual effects. We find animal sacrifices and other sacrifices stretching back to the very headwaters of human life in the world and to the very headwaters of the salvation of sinners in the world. We find them in some form, apparently in Genesis 3 immediately after the fall, when the Lord himself kills the animals so that he might clothe his people, and we find them certainly a part of the worship of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. We have circumcision as a sign of God's covenant as early as Genesis 17 and Passover instituted as an annual feast in the early chapters of Exodus. Leviticus is full of the various sacrifices of Israelite worship by which God's redeeming grace was communicated to his people and by which they were to be renewed in faith, hope, love, and joy, i.e. in their relationship with him. They were called signs and seals and were said in many different ways to mark, to cultivate, to express, to sustain, and to communicate the relationship of love and grace that existed between God and believers in the covenant that God had made with his people.

You see, that relationship itself is invisible and inaudible, it cannot be experienced by the senses, though God has made us sensual creatures. And so God has given it a sensible form, a form that can both appeal to our sensual nature and link that nature to the invisible world of the spirit where God is known, touched, heard, and tasted. That intersection between the invisible world and the visible is what we mean by the sacramental character of our faith. It is all the ways in which our faith is embodied, sensualized, for the sake of beings such as ourselves who must know God but cannot see him, must respond to God but cannot hear him. In the larger sense it is the book we have been given to read, the voice of ministers by which God chooses to speak to us, the taste of bread and wine, the sight and feel of pure water on the head, and so on. So, from the beginning onwards, true faith has always been, has needed to be sacramental.

In the NT the specific rites of the Israelite church, the sacraments *per se*, were transformed into the rites of the International and largely Gentile church, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper. What is unmistakable is that God's grace and our faith are practiced, nurtured, expressed, preserved, and communicated "sacramentally," by means of these rites that God appointed for the use of his people.

It is true that there is not a great deal of comment about the Lord's Supper in the NT, nothing like as much as there is concerning the sacrifices and feasts of OT worship, but there is enough to demonstrate that believing life and worship in the new epoch bears the same sacramental character that it always had in the old.

It is my private opinion that this fact has been but dimly seen by our American evangelical and our own American Reformed Christianity for too a long time. I have hopes that the challenge of Roman Catholicism being felt again in our day may serve the very happy purpose of causing us to think more carefully and deeply about the place of the Lord's Supper in our common life. For, clearly, no one took the Lord's Supper four times a year in apostolic Christianity or for centuries thereafter, as I did in the churches in which I was raised. Biblical Christianity is much more sacramental than that!

II. The second fundamental perspective we bring to this question of the place of the Lord's Supper in the Christian faith and life is that its role is "instrumental," it is only a means by which God's grace operates, it is not the grace itself, and it is only one of a number of such instruments that God uses by which to dispense his grace and his salvation to his people. What is more, among the "instruments" of divine grace, it belongs in the second tier, not the first.

What I mean by all of that is this. Faith is also an instrument. Faith does not save us in the sense that it was not our faith that was crucified for us, it was not faith that rose to life again, it is not faith that sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts to make us new in Christ Jesus. Faith is the instrument by which we lay hold of those blessings, of that salvation that God has chosen to give us, that Christ has purchased for us with his own blood, and that the Holy Spirit is sent to work in our hearts and lives. Faith [trust] is simply the way that has been appointed for us to be united to Christ; Christ is the one who gives us the blessings of his salvation. We don't have Christ **because** of our faith, we have faith because of Christ. And so the love of God, the working of the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, and all the rest. Faith is the instrument, the means God has chosen by which to

put **his salvation, which he has accomplished through his Son** into our hands. He gives us faith as the means by which he gives us Christ.

Well the Lord's Supper is, in a similar way, an instrument, a means by which God works his salvation in us, preserves it, applies it, communicates it, expresses it, and cultivates it. But it is one step further removed from the actual salvation itself. For, one must have faith for the Supper to serve his salvation in any way. The Lord's Supper certainly doesn't save anyone by itself, without faith it is powerless to do anyone any good at all, but, by God's grace, in God's hands, and accompanied on our part by faith, it becomes a means of our blessing and of our communion with God.

We know this is so for several reasons written large over the Bible from beginning to end.

One is that the same things that are said about the Lord's Supper, the same role that is ascribed to it, is ascribed to other things as well. The Word of God -- whether the reading of it or the preaching of it, baptism, prayer, Christian fellowship, the rest of Christian worship, even the life of obedience -- all of these things are also said to be both a means by which God communicates to us his salvation and himself and the means by which we practice, preserve, express, and deepen our communion with Him. All of these things are said to be the means by which our sins are forgiven, our hearts are made clean, our faith is preserved and strengthened, Christ is brought near, God's blessings are obtained, and so on. Indeed, there is considerably more attention paid in the Bible to some of these other means than to the Lord's Supper or the sacraments in general. In Paul it is preaching that "saves" much more than the Lord's Supper. In the entire Bible it is a willing submission of one's life to God in obedience that "saves" more than the sacrifices. It is, for example, the man who calls the Sabbath his delight who will ride on the high places and feed on the inheritance of his father Jacob.

It is for this reason that we cannot agree with Scott Hahn, the former PCA minister, now a Roman Catholic, who says in one of his lectures on the Eucharist that it is "the very center of the Faith." That is to say too much, more than the Bible ever says or implies. It is certainly striking, for example, that while the role of prayer and of the Word of God are front and center in Paul's "pastoral epistles," those letters full of general instructions for the life of the church and prescriptions for her health and spiritual safety, the Lord's Supper is not mentioned at all. Public worship is alluded to in respect to corporate prayer and the preaching of the Word but nothing specifically is said of the Eucharist. The same may be said, in fact, of most of the books of the New Testament.

We may not draw from that the conclusion that the Lord's Supper is of little consequence, for the Bible teaches us otherwise, but we would be hard pressed to prove that the

Eucharist is "the very center of the Faith." Rather, it shares an important role in the life of faith and the communication of God's grace with several other equally important means. As an aside, I will say at this point, that the wresting of the Eucharist from its biblical place among the several means of grace and elevating it above these other divinely appointed helps to faith, explains why the Word of God has never played the same role in Catholic faith and living that it has in Protestant Christianity, and, to be candid, why for the generality of Catholics the life of prayer, prayer as it is defined and described in the Bible as earnest and familiar talking with God, has not either. That has been a terrible loss to Catholic Christians and they have paid a high price for it. And, it is not too much to say that the greater presence of the Bible in Catholic life since Vatican II in the early 1960s has had a profound effect on many Catholics in just the way in which they think about these "other" parts of the Christian faith.

Another proof of this secondary place of the sacrament in the salvation of God's people is that the Scriptures always emphatically represents the role of the sacrament as secondary to faith and repentance and dependent upon them. When for example David says to God in his great penitential psalm:

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and
a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

He is not saying that the sacrament has no use or value, only that its place is after faith and repentance. The sacrament -- whether sacrifice or the Lord's Supper -- does not create faith, it depends upon faith for its virtue and efficacy and significance.

After King Saul sinned against God by sparing the choice flocks of the Amalekites, the flocks he had been ordered by God to destroy and then compounded the sin by telling the lie that he had spared the animals in order to sacrifice them to God, Samuel said to Saul:

Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. [1 Samuel 15:22]

The sacrament is useful only as an expression of a faithful, obedient heart. It cannot make up for the lack of faith or obedience and it does not create faith or obedience, rather it depends upon them.

The Spirit of God by the new birth **creates** faith in a soul. Faith makes the Lord's Supper a true instrument of communion with God. But you cannot reverse that order. The Supper cannot create faith and it cannot be an instrument of true communion without faith. The sacrament is dependent, not independent, in its working. With faith the Lord's Supper is very useful, without it, it is worse than useless! That is why, as we said last week, the Bible never tells a believer to look to such things as the Lord's Supper for the assurance of his salvation, as if the Lord's Supper **by itself**, or participation in the worship of the church **by itself** meant anything or proved anything.

It is possible to say, in a fashion true to Holy Scripture, that the Lord's Supper "saves" or "has saving power." But you could say that only in the same way you would say that about the Word of God, baptism, prayer, obedience, and the Christian fellowship of love -- which the Bible says covers a multitude of sins. All of these things are "saving" in the sense that God uses them to work out our salvation, to communicate and preserve it. But none of these things is the ground or the reason or the basis of our salvation. That is God's love, Christ's redemption, and the Holy Spirit's work within us. Another way of putting it is that it is possible to be saved without the Lord's Supper so long as one is united with Christ. Little covenant children, some godly Quakers, and the like. But it is in no way possible to be saved with the Lord's Supper without a real union with Christ!

III. The third fundamental perspective to bring to thinking about the Lord's Supper is that the error of confusing sacramental participation with salvation is the great mistake to which sacramental religion is subject and to which the sinful heart always tends.

In a sense, this is to say the same thing we just said, but in another way. Just as faith without works is dead, so the Lord's Supper without living faith and living good works is dead. The sacrament is the expression of a living, working faith in Jesus Christ or it is nothing.

The reason I felt it right to make this a separate point is because **this is the chief and most emphatic teaching about the sacraments given in the Bible.** We might well suppose that God having appointed the sacraments to express, to nurture, and to communicate his saving relationship to us and our dependence upon him, to embody his relationship to us and our knowledge of him -- the invisible God -- the Bible would spend most of its energy telling us what to think about the sacraments, but, in fact, it says more and with a greater passion about what **not** to think about them. You might have thought the Bible would spend most of its time telling us what the sacraments are for, but, in fact,

it gives more attention to warning us what they are **not** for!

The great writing prophets of the OT are always hammering away at this point. Isaiah begins with this: a warning against what Isaiah sees as the monstrous idea that a mere outward participation in the sacrifices and other acts of worship without a true and living faith in God and love for him and his law will avail to remove guilt, take away sins, and keep one in God's good graces.

"The multitude of your sacrifices -- what are they to me?" says the Lord. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings... I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! I cannot bear your evil assemblies." (So we read in Isaiah 1.)

Why? Because they had not real faith in God nor any intention of submitting their lives to his rule. They thought that in the temple of God they could purchase for themselves the freedom to live as they pleased. Jeremiah has sermons devoted to the same message; so does Hosea; so does Amos; so does Malachi. And the NT is no sooner well and truly underway when the same message has to be preached again: by Paul to the Corinthians, by the author of the letter to the Hebrews, and by John to the church in Laodicea.

Indeed, you read these prophets and apostles heap scorn on the sacraments of the church -- they are speaking of them divorced from Christ and used without faith -- "weak and beggarly" the author of Hebrews calls them, completely unable to remove guilt or cleanse the conscience, he says -- and it startles you. Some liberal scholarship actually concluded earlier in the century that the prophets were against the sacrifices they spoke of them so harshly. But, all they were saying was, that without living faith in Christ and love for him and hunger for his nearness, his work within you as the motive and the principle of their use, these things not only do not help you with God, they make matters worse, for, of course, he can see into the heart and spy out the hypocrisy of someone who on Sunday is paying a bit of attention to God so that God will leave him alone the rest of the week.

Now, it is hardly the Roman Catholics alone who are susceptible to this tendency to replace a living, personal faith in Christ and following him with attendance upon the Lord's Supper. Everyone is susceptible to this error, which is why the Bible warns against it so often.

Let me conclude this introduction this way. Taking the Bible as a whole, it is a certainty that the Christian church was bound to struggle all its life with this tendency to replace Christ himself with the sacramental action. To turn the sacramental rituals of the Bible into a ritualism that replaced a personal relationship of faith and love with Christ with a set of outward performances supposed to placate God. Israel did this over and over again in her life. She returned to this error right after returning from exile in Babylon. Jesus protested against this error in his preaching in his day. And no sooner had the church begun its outward expansion under the apostles when this same ritualism began to surface in the new churches: Paul had to address it in Corinth and in Galatia, and the letter to the Hebrews is really a long sermon on the mistake of confusing Christ with the rituals he appointed, of allowing Christian ritual to become a ritualism.

So, it is surely not at all surprising that we should find the church after some centuries succumbing to this same temptation in some comprehensive way. The great problem, the great scandal of Roman Catholic Christianity in regard to the Mass or the Eucharist, then, is precisely its historic failure to take with real seriousness this temptation to ritualism against which the Bible warns us so repetitively, so emphatically, so urgently. It simply didn't put up the fight Isaiah did, and Amos, and Paul!

Indeed, I will go so far as to say that if the Roman Catholic church, in its history, had made a great practice of teaching its people that the Eucharist and the other rites of the church would do a worshipper no good at all, would, in fact be a positive offense to God, if that worshipper did not have a true faith in Christ, a real relationship with the living Christ, loving him and demonstrating that love with his faithful and obedient life, his devotion, his prayer, his submission to God's Word and Law, I say, if the Roman Catholic church had preached that message with some passion **there never would have been a Protestant Reformation**. All of the questions that have been raised about the real presence -- how is Christ present in the Supper? -- or the efficacy of the sacrament, exactly how it works and what it does -- all of this would have been discussed **within the church**. But what the Reformers encountered was a church that was teaching its people to believe that ritual acts by themselves availed to make peace with God, exactly what the Bible warns us **not to believe, never to think!** And, in the centuries since, the Roman Catholic church has utterly failed to convince biblically minded Christians that it does not still encourage its people in the same fatal error.

Let the Roman Catholic church stand up and say that no Mass, no Eucharist does a church member any good, rather it stores up for them the wrath of God, unless in that man or woman's participation a true faith in Christ is being expressed, unless in that worship a true love for God that will show itself in a life of Christian devotion, obedience, and service to God and man is being offered up to heaven, and unless in that worship a

true hunger for Christ himself in the soul is being brought to the table of the Lord. Let them shout that message from the rooftops of their churches as Isaiah did and Amos and Paul. Let them warn their people that there is and can be no hope of heaven and eternal life based on the Eucharist or baptism or attendance at church. Those things are but ways in which a true faith in Christ, a true submission to him, a true hunger and thirst for his rule in our lives, and a true longing to be with him can be expressed, sought, and fulfilled. Let them preach that! Then Protestants and Catholics will have something to talk about indeed!

"Roman Catholicism: The Mass, No. 2"

John 6:43-59

March 8, 1998

We are picking up this morning where we left off last Lord's Day morning. In last Sunday's introduction to our consideration of the Roman Catholic doctrine and practice of the Mass, we said that if only Christians would hold fast to certain fundamental perspectives and emphases of Holy Scripture we could not go far wrong, however much we might continue to debate certain questions and theories. We mentioned three such fundamental perspectives. The **first** was that biblical Christianity is sacramental, that God does communicate his favor, blessing, and grace through such things as the Lord's Supper. True faith is practiced, nurtured, expressed, and communicated in this way and lays hold of Christ and his blessings in this way. The **second** was that the role of such rites and activities is instrumental and, even, secondarily instrumental. That is the Lord's Supper is a means God employs, along with other means, to work his saving grace in those who are being saved, but it depends upon faith for its virtue and efficacy. The **third** was that the error of confusing sacramental participation -- in this case participation in the Lord's Supper -- with salvation itself is the great mistake to which sacramental religion is always subject and to which the sinful heart always tends. That is why disabusing people of a confidence in the rites and ceremonies of the church themselves, as if mere participation in them would keep them in God's good graces, is one of the major themes of both OT and NT preaching.

Now, as you may know, there are two major, fundamental objections that Protestant and, especially, Reformed Christianity has with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist, or Mass. There are many things that are entirely unobjectionable. Because of the origin of this rite in the biblical account of the last supper and the practice of early Christianity, all Christian churches have much in common in their celebration. Bread and wine are used according to Christ's appointment. The words of institution as Jesus and then Paul gave them in the NT are spoken. There is a prayer offered by the minister or priest. The elements are distributed to the congregation in some way and the members of the church partake by eating the bread and drinking the wine. The elements turn our attention to Christ our sacrifice. And so on.

Indeed, if you read Thomas Howard's account of the Roman Catholic liturgy of the Mass, an account I found both beautiful and wonderfully suggestive and illuminating, you would find very little objectionable. In fact, you might discover some things that you like very much that are missing from the typically spartan Protestant liturgy of the Lord's Supper.

For example, on a minor point, but not insignificant one, I liked very much his reflection on the Catholic name for the Supper, "the Mass." It is generally supposed, as you may know, that the term "Mass" as a name for the Eucharistic service originated in the phrase with which the liturgy of the Supper concluded in earlier centuries of the church: "Ite, missa est." "Go, it is finished." Here is Thomas Howard [*On Being Catholic*, 89-90]



- "Go. That would seem to strike a somewhat peremptory note. Can we not tarry here in the presence of the Divine Love? Must we now go out into the world, back to monotony, routine, stress, and fatigue? Yes, says the Church (and Yes, says the Divine Love). The whole point of what you have been doing here just now is that you be nourished and thus fortified by the sacrament. Besides this, by the whole liturgy you have had your vision clarified.... So when we refer to the Church's worship as the Mass, we remind ourselves that from it we must 'go' -- out, now, into the routines of the day, fortified by what we have received here and instructed, by every gesture, response, and act, in the ways of that Kingdom of which we are citizens." "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord" as the Anglicans say.

Well, we do not call our worship at the Lord's Table "the Mass," but what believing Protestant Christian does not immediately recognize the truth of that and want his or her worship always to be that and to have that effect. Yes, for us too, there is, there must be at the end a "Go, it is finished."

But, somewhat typically, Thomas Howard passes over the great issues that divided Christianity at the Reformation and that have been forever the offense that Protestants find in the Roman Catholic Mass. If you read his two chapters on the Mass you might not know there were such controversies, but, of course, there are. There are two in particular. The first is the real presence -- that is the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, that at the consecration of the elements the bread and wine become really, physically the body and blood of Jesus -- and the second flows from that, that the Mass, or the Eucharist is actually a sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Here, for example, is the statement of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

- "The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: 'The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.' 'In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner.'"

That is, Christ is actually, physically present in the mass, in the bread and wine, and he is offered up to God to take away our sins in that sacrifice that is made every time the Eucharist is celebrated, God's wrath is appeased, guilt is removed, and sins forgiven. These are things Protestants do not believe to be true and do believe to represent a serious corruption of the gospel as it is revealed in Holy Scripture.

This was a key issue in the time of the Reformation. One's standing either with or against the Roman church was, in many cases, defined by whether he joined in the rejection of these two doctrines of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass.

I just got in the mail this week a major new biography of Thomas Cranmer, by an Oxford University historian. Cranmer, as you may remember, was one of the architects of the Reformation of the English church in the 16th century, the principle author of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, and, finally, one of the martyrs of the Reformation under Mary Tudor, the infamous "Bloody Mary." When Mary came to power after the death of the Protestant King, Edward VI, Cranmer, still the Archbishop of Canterbury, was arrested, along with Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer, who would also be burned in due time. Then, in a formal proceeding, in the University Church in Oxford, they were, in turn, presented with three questions about the mass -- questions which, if answered in the negative, would prove them heretics and justify their execution:

- 1. Was the natural body of Christ really in the elements by virtue of the words spoken by the priest?

2. Did any other substance remain after the words of consecration?

- 3. Was there a propitiatory sacrifice [that is, a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God] in the mass for the sins of the quick and the dead? [MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 564]

You remember the remarkable end of that story. How in the last days of his life, under great pressure and

having been made to witness the agony through which Ridley had passed when he was burnt and the flames were slow in killing him, Cranmer recanted and signed his name to documents in which he repudiated his Protestant doctrines and pledged his allegiance to the Pope and to the Roman doctrine of the Mass. And, because his recantation was so abject and so complete, he was given the opportunity, the morning of his death, to address a great congregation assembled for the occasion in the University Church. The authorities were willing to have him do so, for they had a prepared text of his remarks!

The great church, you can imagine, was stirred and excited by what was happening -- the execution of the long-serving and so influential Archbishop of the English church, an event that represented an extraordinary revolution in the affairs of the nation. There were Protestants there and Roman Catholics. Now, I want to let the biographer tell the tale, and I will read it in some completeness precisely because we do need in our a-theological, undoctrinal day to remember that these very issues we are discussing so calmly once convulsed the church and the nations, wise men saw how profoundly different the views of the faith were that were represented in these different doctrines and practices. They saw these questions as raising immense issues bearing on one's salvation and loyalty to Christ. I wish I had time to introduce Cranmer to you, so that you might love him and admire him -- for all that he did and gave to the church, for his genius, for his life as a Christian, a friend, a family man, and also that you might pity him for all that he had suffered and for the sins by which he stumbled and over which he so terribly grieved in his last hours. But, we must hurry on.



- [Cranmer] opened by asking the spectators to pray to God for forgiveness of his sins, but mysteriously added that 'yet one thing grieveth my conscience more than all the rest, whereof, God willing, I intend to speak more hereafter'. The speech proceeded conventionally; even on this last day of his life, Cranmer was still exercising his literary skill in the composition of his prayers. One curiosity occurred early on: Cranmer had been due to recite the Angelus after the Lord's Prayer, but it did not appear. Still, by itself, that need not especially worry the authorities: perhaps this omission of the angelic salutation to Our Lady was an oversight. There followed exhortations to three forms of love: of God, Crown, and neighbour. These ended with an elaborated plea to the rich to avoid covetousness. It was far from a formal recitation; Cranmer bowed low when he mentioned the King and Queen, and his tears welled up again when he spoke of the contemporary situation, in which the poor were starving as food prices soared. After a recitation of the creed, and his affirmation of the basics of the faith...he finally embarked on explaining 'the great thing, which so much troubleth my conscience'. The authorities had the text, so they knew what was coming: a denunciation...of his 'untrue books and writings, contrary to the truth of God's word,' which...he had explained as 'the books which I wrote against the sacrament of the altar [since] the death of King Henry the eight'; there would then follow a declaration of his belief in transubstantiation. But suddenly they realized that this was not what they were hearing. The 'writing', which Cranmer had said was written contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death', consisted of 'all such bills and papers which I have written or signed with my hand since my degradation' [the act, a few weeks before, by which he had been divested of his office as Archbishop and priest].

Commotion (joy and rage) was breaking out in the church; yet through the hubbub, Cranmer preserved in shouting; it was vital to get two more messages across. He was deadly pale, but a surge of energy had taken away his tears. 'As for the Pope, I refuse him...with all his false doctrine...and as for the sacrament, I believe as I have taught in my book...' He was pulled from his stage...and hurried out to the stake.

You remember that immortal scene with which this grand drama closed.



- The crowd arrived at the place where Latimer and Ridley had suffered six months before. Fire was put to the wood. In the flames, Cranmer achieved a final serenity; and he fulfilled the promise which he had made in his last shouts in the church: 'forasmuch as my hand offended, writing contrary to my heart, my hand shall first be punished there-for.' He stretched it out into the heart of the fire, for all the spectators to see. He repeated while he could 'his unworthy right hand', 'this hand hath offended', and also while he could, the dying words of the first martyr, Stephen, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit...' It was said that in the ashes of the fire his heart was found unburnt, and the [rival] Catholic [history of the event] could do no more to destroy the story than to suggest that its condition was thanks to some form of heart disease. [MacCulloch, 603-604]

Now, you listen to the Catholics on the Eucharist and they are very decided that the Lord's Supper of the Protestants is an empty rite, reduced to nothing that matters very much. It's just a remembrance of something past, a symbol. Whereas they claim actually to feed on the body and blood of Jesus himself and, by so doing, to receive the forgiveness of their sins and the abeyance of the penalty those sins deserve. Theirs is a rite of power and effect, the Protestant rite is of such little consequence, they point out, that it was largely displaced by the sermon and no wonder that so many Protestants have, through the centuries, come to the Supper only very infrequently. [That charge, of course, many Protestants would agree is well-taken, but they would be quick to point out that for centuries on end, the Roman practice was very infrequent communion, and that the church insisted on no more than once per year.]

But, you listen to the story of Cranmer's death and you realize at once that something very momentous, something very sacred and very precious, something touching the very heart of the gospel is at stake here. Cranmer certainly thought the issue of the Lord's Supper was one of tremendous consequence! He died for his repudiation of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the sacrament.

No matter how long the sermon, I could not do justice to these great questions and bring out the arguments that have been made on both sides. But I can give you a summary that indicates where the very heart of the dispute is located and why we Protestants cannot go along with the Roman Catholic church and cannot accept that their view of the Supper is either faithful to the Scripture or consistent with the gospel of salvation in Christ.

We read these few verses from John 6. We did so because they are the verses upon which the Roman Catholic church almost entirely bases its doctrine of transubstantiation, that the bread and wine become actually and physically the body and blood of Christ so that Christ's body is actually on the altar being sacrificed, just as really as he was sacrificed on the cross, but in a different manner.

But, surely, you see the problem with this. The Lord Jesus doesn't say that he is talking about a sacrament that he would later institute or that the eating and drinking he is speaking of is a sacramental eating and drinking, or, still more, the Lord doesn't he say anything about bread and wine **becoming** his body and blood by the utterance of a priest. Nothing here at all about that! What is more, it is clear enough how these words of our Lord, striking and potent as they are, function in his address to the Jews.

The Jews found Jesus statement in v. 51 offensive and had begun to grumble. In v. 53 Jesus went on to say that they must also drink his blood, which made matters worse, for the law of Moses forbade the drinking of blood, and even the eating of meat with the blood still in it. [Carson, *John*, 296] In the Bible, of course, blood in such contexts refers not to life but to violent death, especially life that is ended sacrificially, life that is killed for the purpose of making a sacrifice. The point is unmistakably a reference to Christ's cross, to the sacrifice of

himself, his own life, that he would offer for the sins of his people. But what of the eating and drinking? It is a metaphor as the Lord himself indicates here. Compare v. 54 with v. 40. They are almost precise parallels. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood..." is parallel to "everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him..." The one is the same as the other in regard to the result: in each case, "he shall have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day." The one is a metaphorical way of saying the other. This is why Augustine wrote in his commentary on this passage, a statement very damaging to any claim that the early church generally understood that the bread and wine became the actual, physical body and blood of Christ, Augustine said, "Believe and you have eaten." What is more, the language is so unqualified in both cases that, if Jesus is really referring to transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the Mass, he would seem to be teaching that simply to take the Mass would be to gain salvation, which even Catholic theology does not teach. No one denies that v. 40 should be taken absolutely. Anyone who believes in Christ **shall have everlasting life**. Why not v. 54, then? **Anyone** who eats his flesh and drinks his blood **shall have everlasting life!** What is more, what he says here, is clearly, in the context, already true. As in v. 56. It was already so as Jesus spoke these words, that those who ate his flesh and drank his blood were abiding in him and he in them. Nothing suggests that what he means will only be true after he has instituted the Lord's Supper. In fact, taking John and the NT together, there is no way, finally and substantially, that **we** eat and drink Jesus Christ that David and Abraham did not also who also believed in him, loved and walked with him, and were saved by him, and given an inheritance among those whom he will raise up at the last day.

Jesus is talking about his sacrifice for sin and the believer's confidence in that sacrifice. He is talking not first about the Eucharist but about that to which the Lord's Supper points. He is talking not about sacramental participation, but about a living faith in Christ in the first place.

And the same is true when we turn to the Catholic idea of the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper as an actual sacrifice of Christ that continues his work of redemption -- which is how Vatican II put it. [J.R. White, *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, 165]

The entire emphasis of Holy Scripture falls on the "once-for-all" character of Christ's redemption.



- "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people..." [9:27-28]

Four times in Hebrews it is said that Christ offered up himself as a sacrifice once for all and so accomplished redemption once for all! He took away our sins! In fact, in Hebrews this sacrifice once-for-all is made a demonstration of the perfection of Christ's work and why it is so superior to the sacrifices that were required in the Law of God given to Moses. They had to be offered over and over again, says the author of that letter in 10:1-4, which proves the point: they could not in any ultimate way take away sins. They had their use as pointers to the true, the real, the once-for-all redemption the Messiah would bring, but sacrifices that have to be offered repeatedly are **precisely not like his sacrifice**. Indeed, the Lord's Supper is exactly like those ancient sacrifices in that same way and it is for that reason why we can never confuse the Lord's Supper with the Cross or participation in the Lord's Supper, with participation in Christ. It is only if we are joined to Christ in his once-for-all death and resurrection that we have hope of the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life.

And there is the issue. Try as Catholic apologists might, and they try very hard indeed, especially the new converts to Rome from our Reformed and Evangelical churches, you cannot construe the Lord's Supper as a continuing sacrifice of Jesus Christ without colliding with what seems to be the most straight-forward and emphatic teaching of the Bible that his sacrifice was once-for-all and, by it, he took the sins of his people away once and for all so that no further sacrifice is needed. And, that being so, you cannot construe the Lord's

Supper as a continuing sacrifice without altering in fundamental ways the nature of the believer's relationship to Christ and to Christ's salvation. Given the teaching of the Bible about the once-and-for all sacrifice of Jesus, any such teaching as that of transfiguration and the sacrifice of the Mass **must result in ritualism**, the substitution of participation in rites for the actual faith of the soul in the person and work of Jesus Christ himself. That is everywhere the warning of the Bible.

The ardent Catholic protests that their view of the Eucharist doesn't mean they believe less in Christ, why, they say, it means they believe in him more. They are depending upon him for their salvation week by week, upon his continuing sacrifice for sin. No, we say, it is not so. The Scripture says it is not so. The most devastating attacks on the supremacy of Christ in salvation, on the glory of the cross as the means of our salvation, are always the subtle reconfigurations that folk within the church itself propose. Gospel truth rests on a knife edge. It takes very little to make it topple to left or right. Why would Christ's sacrifice have to be repeated and continued **except** his sacrifice on the cross was not sufficient and could not, by itself, take our sins away? But is that not exactly the theory of the Judaizers in Galatia. Christ's cross, yes, of course, but **also**, in addition, my pious works for my peace with God.

Even to ask that question is to define the problem and the importance of the issue. We see the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Mass as an assault on the supremacy of Christ and the perfection of his work as our Redeemer. And, therefore, it is an assault on the Bible's doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's finished work and not by our works, however religious they might be.

All the rhetoric in the world cannot convince us that these ideas of a continuing sacrifice of Christ's body and blood do not fundamentally misconstrue our redemption and mislay the emphasis that must be placed and then forever kept on the work Christ our Savior performed for us, when, without our involvement, encouragement, permission, or participation, he offered himself for our sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

I say again, why would Christ's sacrifice have to be repeated and continued except that his death and resurrection -- contrary to everything the Bible says, is an insufficient basis for our peace with God. And, then, that peace with God now rests, at least partly, on acts in which I have a part, a say, a place.

It was precisely against such a theory that Paul wrote in Galatians, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." The cross, period. Not the cross and, but the cross alone! Any "and" after cross, means that his once-for-all work has been diminished in a way that the Bible does not allow **and**, what is even more important, **he has been diminished as the sole, the entire object of our faith**. That is the issue. These are doctrines not taught in the Bible, that is clear to us and decisive as a reason for rejecting them, but these are doctrines -- transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the Mass -- that dislocate our faith in Christ, place our interest and attention in some continuing works in which we are involved, works that must -- the Scripture says -- also place our attention less on him and his work for us and more on what we do, however much we may intend or claim to "do" what we do in his name. And that, however Christian sounding, the Bible says, is a fatal step.

The history of Holy Scripture and of the Christian church is the history the church's understanding of her relationship to God and the way of salvation being corrupted by theories and practices the Bible does not teach. This is the Protestant charge and complaint about the Roman Catholic Mass. It does not produce, it takes away from that view of Christ and the way of salvation taught in the Word of God. It cannot help but produce a ritualism that substitutes pious acts for the redemption of Christ. This is the testimony of multitudes of Christians who were raised in the Roman Catholic church and left it when they found true faith in Christ who redeemed them from their sin and guilt by the sacrifice of himself on the cross **once-for-all**.

"Roman Catholicism: Purgatory"

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

March 15, 1998

We are coming to the end of our series of studies of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. My plan is to conclude the series next Lord's Day morning, not with the examination of one more feature of Catholic teaching but with a summation, a drawing together of the lessons of the whole series. I had thought I might do that this morning, but I felt, at the last, that purgatory was too important an element of Catholic teaching to leave unnoticed. In a certain way, I feel, it serves, better than almost any other part of the teaching of the Roman Catholic church, to demonstrate how different is the Catholic concept of salvation and the spiritual ethos or atmosphere produced by it.

You are probably broadly familiar with the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, though, Catholics themselves will tell you, many Catholics themselves have only a vague notion of the doctrine. Scott Hahn complains, for example, that many Catholics think of purgatory as a second chance, which it is not. What is more, in some Catholic circles today, and especially in American Catholicism, it has fallen into positive neglect, even disfavor. Nevertheless, it is an essential, integral part of the Roman system and modern, official accounts of Catholic doctrine confirm this.

Here is the doctrine. The souls of the damned (those who die outside the love of God) are, at death, committed to hell. The souls of those who are perfectly pure at death go immediately to heaven to enjoy the sight and presence of God, but those who are not perfectly cleansed -- the vast majority of believers as it turns out -- who are still burdened with the guilt of venial sins and have not borne the full temporal punishment due them for those sins, must undergo a process of cleansing so that they can become pure and fit to enter heaven. Souls in purgatory are assured of an eventual place in heaven, but they must make satisfaction for their sins first, the affliction of their souls purifies them. The length of their stay in purgatory cannot be known ahead of time, nor can the intensity of the sufferings that will be required to purify them. But, those sufferings can be mitigated and shortened by the prayers and good works of the faithful still alive on earth and, especially, by the sacrifice of the Mass. The Pope is supposed to have some jurisdiction over purgatory.

Upon this doctrine of purgatory rests the Catholic practice of praying for the dead, saying masses for the dead, and of the Pope's granting indulgences for the sake of those in purgatory.

Here are some modern and official Roman Catholic statements of the doctrine.

"Sin must be expiated. This may be done on this earth through the sorrows, miseries, and trials of this life and, above all, through death. Otherwise the expiation must be made in the next life through fire and torments or purifying punishments.... The reasons for their impositions are that our souls need to be purified.

"The doctrine of purgatory clearly demonstrates that even when the guilt of sin has been taken away, punishment for it or the consequences of it may remain to be expiated or cleansed.... In fact, in purgatory the souls of those 'who died in the charity of God and truly repentant, but who had not made satisfaction with adequate penance for their sins and omissions' are cleansed after death with punishments designed to purge away their debt." [*Indulgentiarum Doctrina* (1967), cited in J.R. White, *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, 187]

It is interesting that the new converts to Rome typically make very little of the idea of indulgences -- that there is a treasury of merits, filled up by the good works of Christ, Mary, and the saints, from which the Roman hierarchy can dispense remissions of punishments for those in purgatory. For certain works, on certain days, Catholic folk, it is taught, can do

things that will lessen the punishment of their loved ones now in purgatory.

Now, to be sure, there are bits and pieces of the Roman Catholic doctrine that can be found rather early in some church fathers. But nothing resembling the developed doctrine of purgatory and indulgences, etc. It is interesting that the Orthodox church does not hold to purgatory, a church that also claims the authority of the fathers and to rest its doctrine on the consensus of their teaching as an infallible authority.

Roman Catholic writers have tried to argue for purgatory from a few biblical texts, but those arguments are contrived and even they put little weight on them. The fact is, the entire doctrine is without biblical warrant. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray and what to pray for, he mentioned nothing about prayer for the dead. He said nothing, nor did the prophets and apostles about purgatory, about indulgences, or about the church's authority to remit punishments being suffered by the righteous dead in purgatory. All of this is completely lacking from the Bible and that, surely, is important. For these are not small matters to have been omitted from Holy Scripture.

The Protestant Reformation, as you know, rejected purgatory root and branch as unscriptural and as a doctrine that contradicts the grace of God and the redemption of Christ as revealed in the Bible.

The Reformers' arguments were these. **First**, they said, the Bible always describes the state of the dead in terms of two conditions not three. The Bible knows of heaven and hell, the place of the righteous and of the wicked after death, bliss and torment, but of no third place. In the Lord's parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus in Luke 16, again the beggar is in paradise and the rich man in torment. This is the alternative. If there is a third it is astonishing that the Bible never says anything about it.

Second, they said that the Bible often openly and emphatically asserts the glorification of the Christian's soul at the moment of death. Lazarus the beggar is carried to Abraham's bosom in the Lord's parable. To die is gain says Paul, to depart is better by far, for to die is to be with Christ. Later, at the end of his life, he said that he had "finished the course" -- a strange thing to say if years of punishments still awaited him. But, perhaps he was one of the very righteous who went straight to heaven. But in that same place he says, "Now there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me, **and not to me only, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.**" The fact that death will bring them to Christ and bliss is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthian Christians (4:22) that "death is yours." And in 1 Corinthians 15: the sting of death and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Could Paul possibly have meant that Christ has removed the sting of death, but that death ushers the believer into perhaps centuries of suffering for his sin?

But, especially, we have our text this morning, from the pen of the Apostle Paul. All the more powerful for its context. [What follows is drawn from B.B. Warfield, "The Christian's Attitude toward Death," reprinted, BOT 77 (Feb. 1977) 1-11] Paul has described in the opening chapters of his second letter to the church in Corinth the trials and afflictions that he endured as an ambassador of Christ. He had recently suffered intense persecution in Ephesus. He had also been torn by anxiety about his churches, especially the church in Corinth concerning which he had heard such distressing things.

But, he says, amidst all of these trials he was upheld by two things: the sense he has of the greatness of his work and of the greatness of his hope in Christ. Though the outward man is wearing away with toil and worry, the inward man is being renewed, because heavy as life's burdens may be, they are incomparably light in comparison with the eternal weight of glory that is his in Christ. Like Moses he looks to his reward and endures seeing the Invisible One. Like Abraham, he is content to dwell in tents because he looks for a city that has foundations. That is how he ends chapter 4.

And that is the thought with which he begins chapter 5. What are earthly sufferings to one who looks upon his own body as a tent in which he sojourns for a time and expects that the laying of it aside will be the step by which he enters into the

mansion prepared for him by Christ his Savior who has gone before him?

The Apostle then contemplates the wearing away of this body of his. Now, to be sure, it is not death exactly that he longs for. He is weary here and carries many burdens. But he shrinks from death. He wishes he could be alive when the Lord returns. Why? Because, as he says in vv. 3-4, he does not wish to "found naked," that is, to be without his body. Death is very unnatural and it is only because the Lord Jesus stands on the far side of it, ready to welcome us, that we can bear it. For death brings a separation of what was never to be separated, the "life-long companions" of soul and body. Interestingly, Paul seems to care less for the deserted body than for the naked soul. It is an unnatural and sin-caused nakedness the believer encounters at death, this is what Paul recoils from. This is not the believer's final state, it is not his or her perfect state, it is not the completeness and fullness and consummation of salvation for which we long. That will be, he says, in v. 4, when we are, at the resurrection, clothed with our heavenly body, our immortal selves will be entire and complete and the life of eternity will begin. Our redemption is incomplete, unfinished until the resurrection. How important to say that. The Bible always lays stress on this fact, that salvation is not full and complete salvation until the body has been reborn, made immortal, and joined again with the soul.

But, don't you see how he hurries on, there in vv. 6-8. For Paul, even in the light of what he has said about the unnatural separation of soul and body, knows very well that imperfect as the condition of believers after death may be, much as they may long to be clothed with their eternal bodies, it is still a state better "by far" than that state in which he then lives in the world and in which we now live, because to be away from the body is to be at home with the Lord! It is better to be together -- soul and body-- than to be apart, soul separated from body. But it is better to be separated, soul from body, in the presence of the Lord, than to be together, soul and body, away from the Lord, even away as we are away from him who walk with him in the world. There, in death, the believer is so much more "**with**" the Lord than he is in this world that it can be described as being "present with" or "at home" with the Lord. Or, as he puts it in v. 7, the difference between believing life here and after death is the difference between living by faith -- hard, hard work -- and living by sight!

The Roman Catholic notion of purgatory stands this argument on its head and so many other statements of Holy Scripture that are designed precisely to console the believer in the face of death with the thought that to die is to be with Christ, to die is to finish one's course, to die is to go home, to die is better by far, to die is to be brought into the number of the spirits made perfect, to die is to be made like Christ for we shall see him as he is, to die is gain. Purgatory is not gain -- it is, at best, more of what we had in this world as trouble and sorrow, at worst it is a still greater measure of suffering. But the Bible says, for the believer to die **is gain**.

And, as Calvin writes in his *Institutes* [III, v, 10, p. 684], "[if all godly men, after their death, enjoy blessedness in the very presence of God], what, I beg of you, will our prayers confer upon them?"

Third, the Reformers argued that the notion that we must satisfy for our sins by paying the price for them, enduring punishment for them, was an insult to the perfection of the redemption of Christ, of his sufferings for our sins, and assumed the fundamentally erroneous notion that we **could** pay for our sins -- even their temporal penalties -- if we had to. It is crucial to the entire biblical teaching of salvation and of Christ's redeeming work to understand that for the man or woman who is in Christ by faith, "there is, therefore, now **no condemnation**." As the author of Hebrews puts it in 1:3: "After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the Right Hand of the Majesty in heaven!" The work was finished. Or, as the same author has it later, "Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." [10:13-14] As the Scripture says it in a hundred different ways, we are healed by his stripes, not ours; the chastisement of our sin fell on him, not us. There is no sense in which the afflictions of believers, in this life, "pay" for their sins in the sense that they remove the guilt or penalty of those sins. They are only chastisements by which we are taught to love and fear God. They are discipline not satisfaction. They have no virtue to remove guilt or to remit penalty. Christ alone, the infinite and infinitely perfect sacrifice, can do that!

The notion that there are some souls pure enough to go straight to heaven but most are not perfect illustrates the terrible problem we find here. Our purity before an infinitely holy God does not consist in anything we have done or suffered, nor could it. The only suffering adequate to pay for any part of our sin is infinite suffering; and the only works adequate to earn entrance into heaven are perfect works with no mixture of sin whatever. But we have no such sufferings or works to offer God. That is why Christ alone can be our Savior; he alone can meet the standard of God's justice on our behalf so that God can be both just himself and the justifier of sinners. And that is why, in regard to entrance to heaven, all Christians stand on precisely the same footing!

We have talked before of the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification. Here is the grand illustration of how far removed from the biblical doctrine the Catholic doctrine actually is. It understands some who are justified as having earned direct entrance to heaven by their own merits, but many others, most others, still have more to do when they die. No, Christ is not then our only way to God, he is not alone and entirely the one who brings us to God, as the Scripture always says he is.

And, still more, how foreign the idea that the good works of other men could merit a speedier entrance into light than Christ himself has won for all his people. The fathers will have nothing of that! As Augustine put it, "Even though we as brethren die for our brethren, no martyr's blood is shed for the forgiveness of sins. This Christ has done for us, and he has bestowed this upon us not for us to imitate him, but for us to rejoice." And Leo I the same. "The righteous have received, not given crowns; and from believers' fortitude have come examples of patience, not gifts of righteousness." [Calvin, III, v, 3, p. 672]

All through the ages, the godly have taken indescribable consolation and strength from the Bible's teaching that death is the end of their sufferings and their entrance into the very presence of God, the sight of their Savior himself. Were they wrong? Can anyone read the Word of God and say they were wrong?

Daniel Rowland, the leader of the Great Awakening in Wales in the 18th century, had a godly grandfather who, as he was dying, sensing his entrance into the next world, said to those around his bed, "I am now in the air among the chariots..." Was he wrong?

Roger Youderian was one of the five young missionaries speared to death in the jungles of Ecuador, January 8, 1956. He had been discouraged in the months leading up to that final trip into the interior and had, at one point, not long before, decided to give up missionary work and go home. He thought himself a failure. On December 19 he wrote in his diary, "I will die to self. I will begin to ask God to put me in a service of constant circumstances where to live Christ I must die to self. I will be alive unto God. That I may learn to love Him with my heart, mind, soul, and body." Just before he left to join the other four men, he penned these two verses:

There is a seeking of honest love,
 Drawn from a soul storm-tossed,
 A seeking for the gain of Christ,
 To bless the blinded, the beaten, the lost.

Those who sought found Heavenly Love
 And were filled with joy divine,
They walk today with Christ above

.....

The second verse needed a fourth line but he couldn't find it. As he put down his pencil he told his wife, "Barb, I'll finish it when I get home." Is he not home? And is not the verse finished? Does he not walk today with Christ above? Is it not repugnant to the Scripture's entire presentation of the glory of Christ as our Redeemer, who has saved us to the uttermost,

to believe anything less?

Alexander Whyte once, late in his fifty year long ministry at Free St. George's in Edinburgh, reminisced about the first pastoral visit he made many years before after coming to St. George's as Dr. Robert Candlish's young assistant. It was to one of the elders of that congregation and the man was on his deathbed.

"And I see the thing as if it had been yesterday. There lay open on his pillow -- what book do you think? His Bible? No. *The Pilgrim's Progress*? No. *The Saints' Rest*? No. *Rutherford's Letters*? No. I will tell you what it was, for you would never guess. It was the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and it was open at the great chapter on justification. 'I am dying on that Gospel chapter,' he said. And I had no sooner finished it to him than he fell asleep in Christ his Righteousness."

There is the issue, brothers and sisters. There is the issue for you too, those of you who are here without Christ this morning. How will you get into heaven? Do you think that God will do his part but that you must do your part as well? Do you think that Christ is the Savior but you have your contribution to make as well? Or do you know, as the Spirit of God teaches every soul that is being saved, that you have nothing in your hand to bring, nothing at all. Naked you come to Christ for dress, helpless you look to him for grace, foul you fly to that fountain that he and he alone has opened from which to wash our sins away.

Not the labors of my hands can fulfil thy law's demands;
 Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow,
 All for sin could not atone; thou must save and thou alone.

There are many kinds of deaths. [Brookhiser, *Founding Father*, 198] The death of irreverent, irreligious wits. "What? The flames already?" quipped Voltaire, when a lampshade by his deathbed caught fire. There is the death of tyrants: Hitler shooting himself and his gasoline-soaked body burning in a pit in the bomb-pocked yard of the chancellery, or Stalin making convulsive motions with his arms as if to fend off God or wolves. There is the death of heroes. Men charging the guns or diving on a grenade. But there is also such a thing as a Christian death. The death of someone who knows of a holy God, and of a great guilt, and of the hope of forgiveness -- full and free -- in Jesus Christ who offered himself an infinite sacrifice for the sins of his people.

And when the time comes for you to die, that time that comes to all of us sooner rather than later, which death will be your death? What will be in your heart and mind to say to God? What will be the truest and deepest conviction of your entire life at that moment? When you feel the life force leaving your body, when you recognize that the separation of body and soul is now upon you and cannot be avoided any longer, when all around you -- your loved ones, the furniture, the bedclothes, even the room itself -- begin to slip away, what will you think of Christ then, what will be your hope then?

Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to the cross I cling!

"Roman Catholicism: The Challenge"

Psalm 137

March 22, 1998

This morning we conclude our series on the contemporary challenge of Roman Catholicism. We began our study by noting that thoughtful evangelicals -- ministers and laypeople alike -- were abandoning their Protestant churches, including the Presbyterian Church in America, in unprecedented numbers. We considered some of the reasons why that was so, none of which reflected very well on the present condition of evangelical Protestantism in America. Then, in the following weeks, we considered some of those aspects of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice that have historically separated Protestants from Catholics. We considered the Catholic doctrine of an extra-biblical apostolic tradition that serves as an additional authority for faith and life, the Catholic doctrine of justification, their practices of penance and the veneration of and praying to Mary, the office of the Pope, their doctrine and practice of the assurance of salvation, of the Mass, and, finally, last week, their doctrine of purgatory, with its related practices of prayers for the dead and indulgences.

It has been a polemical series, one argument after another seeking to demonstrate why the Roman Catholics are mistaken in their views, dangerously mistaken, and why no Protestant ought to join himself to Rome no matter how disgusted he may be with the state of Protestantism. I do not apologize for the polemic. The Bible says that it is necessary to expose and contradict false teaching. We read that in the OT and emphatically in the NT. Indeed, a great deal of the Bible is devoted to precisely this polemical work -- pointing out what is wrong in the teaching of folk **within the church** who are quite sure they are right and doing the will of God. Polemics was a large part of Jesus' ministry, as it was of Paul and the author of the letter to the Hebrews. The Bible is a book of truth; Christianity is a religion of truth. And, in a world of falsehood, in the Devil's world, the world of the Father of Lies, truth must be fought for and defended.

And it must be fought for negatively as well as positively, as it is in the Bible. Heresies must be exposed, the error in them demonstrated, the dangers inherent in these views explained. You have that too in the Bible, very often. In one of Augustine's writings fully one hundred Christian heresies are mentioned. We have hundreds more now, many of which are enshrined in various Christian sects or denominations. But, we live in a day that is increasingly uninterested in polemics, in truth itself, an age increasingly doubtful that questions of truth and error are really all that important. Years ago now, J. Gresham Machen, fighting a losing battle for the truth in the Presbyterian Church wrote:

"Presenting an issue sharply is, indeed, by no means a popular business at the present time... The type of religion which rejoices in the pious sound of traditional phrases regardless of their meanings, or shrinks from 'controversial' matters, will never stand amid the shocks of life. In the sphere of religion, as in other spheres, the things about which men are agreed are apt to be the things that are least worth holding; the really important things are the things about which men will fight." [*Christianity and Liberalism*]

Well, what was true in Machen's day is only the more true today.

But controversy, necessary as it is, must at the same time be well managed, carefully practiced, or little good will come from it and much harm. The truth, rather than being defended and upheld, will be defamed and besmirched. In particular, the negative principle -- the pointing out of error -- may never be allowed to overwhelm the positive, the assertion of truth. The negative work is necessary, the Bible makes that clear enough, but it is all too possible for the negative, the denunciatory to begin to take the chief place in teaching about the Christian faith, and the results of that are never profitable. [Murray, *Lloyd Jones*, ii, 680]

John Newton described this danger in a more personal and homely way when he wrote, "There is a principle of self, which disposes us to despise those who differ from us." To give too much place to criticism, even theological criticism, is, therefore, an invitation to a hateful approach to those with whom we disagree, and hateful folk have never advanced the interests of the gospel, never protected the church from the inroads of error, and never persuaded others to abandon their errors to come home to the truth.

I do not want any of you, ever, to become a Roman Catholic. Over these last weeks I have told you why. But it will be an altogether pyrrhic victory if all we succeed at doing is making ourselves more anti-Catholic. As one old Reformed writer put it, "Faith is not the negation of errors, but the affirmation of the truth." [Francis Burman, in Sepp, ii, 181]

After all, at the end of the day, as we said repeatedly over these past weeks the errors we believe we have demonstrated in the Roman Catholic system are, in kind, the same errors it would be easy enough to find in Protestantism, and, indeed, always lurking in our own hearts. To know a certain idea to be a mistake is not the same thing as embracing the truth and living by it.

C.S. Lewis, in a famous quotation, reminded us of the prevalence of error in all its parts and of the relative unimportance of the different shape the errors took depending upon what part of Christendom was under view.

"When Catholicism goes bad it becomes the...*religio* [religion] of amulets and holy places and priestcraft: Protestantism, in its corresponding decay, becomes a vague mist of ethical platitudes. Catholicism is accused of being too like all the other religions; Protestantism of being insufficiently like a religion at all. Hence Plato, with his transcendent forms, is the doctor of the Protestants; Aristotle, with his immanent forms, the doctor of Catholics."

We were treated in the last few days to the account of a United Methodist heresy trial in which a minister who had "married" two homosexuals was exonerated of any wrongdoing. "A vague mist of ethical platitudes" has it just right. What finally does it matter, after all, on what road one chooses to walk to hell? The Catholic road or the Protestant road?

So, let us finish our study of Roman Catholicism with the affirmation of truth, by setting before ourselves what great gospel truths we have reminded ourselves of in our study of Roman Catholicism and must recommit ourselves both to live by and to proclaim to the world.

I want to say there are five. There are many more, but these five above all; these five to which we have returned over and over again in our studies of the Christian faith from the vantage point of an examination of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice.

I. The first is the full sufficiency of the Word of God.

I will not repeat the case we made nor the arguments we used to refute the Roman Catholic notion that there is another authority for faith and life besides the Word of God. I will only remind you that for a long time, if you can believe it, the Bible, Holy Scripture, by the actions of Popes and Councils was on the official *Index of Forbidden Books* for Roman Catholics, and, for centuries, the Catholic laity was not permitted to read the Bible in their own language. We are glad that things are better now, that more Roman Catholics are reading the Bible. But, let that former error be recognized for the monstrous evil that it was -- to keep the Word of life out of the hands and so out of the minds of the people of God. Paul wrote his letters, Isaiah preached his sermons, Luke wrote his church history, not for the priests and the theologians, but

for the people of God. The Bible was put directly into the hands of God's people. It is our inheritance, the inheritance of the whole world to have this book in our hands and to be able to read and know its truth.

Think of what it is called: the Word of God; the oracles of God, God-breathed writings, Holy Scripture. No wonder the great Dutch reformed scholar, Greijdanus, should have said, "Apart from the Word I am nothing and can do nothing and know nothing." We say that if only the Roman Catholic church loved the Bible more it would be less threatened by its errors. But, it is no use complaining about Roman Catholic extra-biblical traditions unless we ourselves love and live by that Word of God we say is the sole and infallible rule of our faith and our living.

Thomas Goodwin, the great Puritan preacher and theologian, tells of going, sometime in the 1620s, to hear John Rogers, one of the most powerful of the early Puritan preachers.

"Mr. Rogers was...on the subject of...the Scriptures. And in that sermon he falls into an expostulation with the people about their neglect of the Bible;...He personates God to the people, telling them, 'Well, I have trusted you so long with my Bible; you have slighted it, it lies in such and such houses all covered with dust and cobwebs; you care not to listen to it. Do you use my Bible so? Well, you shall have my Bible no longer.' And he takes up the Bible from its cushion, and seemed as if he were going away with it and carrying it from them; but immediately turns and personates the people to God, falls down on his knees, cries and pleads most earnestly, 'Lord, whatever thou dost to us, take not thy Bible from us; kill our children, burn our houses, destroy our goods; only spare us thy Bible, only take not away thy Bible.' And then he personates God again to the people: 'So you say? Well, I will try you a while longer; and here is my Bible for you. I will see how you will use it, whether you will love it more...observe it more...practice it more, and live more according to it.' By these actions...he put all the congregation into so strange a posture that...the place was a mere Bochim, the people generally...deluged with their own tears..." [In Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 97-98.]

The new converts to Rome call us Bible Christians. Let's you and I prove them more right than they know!

Think of it carefully,
Study it prayerfully,
Deep in your heart let its oracles dwell.
Ponder its mystery,
Slight not its history,
For none ever loved it too fondly or well.

II. The second of these great gospel truths is the Majesty of Divine Grace.

We have said that Rome's killing error is that it allows much to interfere with the heart's grasp of the grace of God, it overlays that message of an omnipotent and sovereign love with so many layers of human performance in pious works that grace is finally buried out of sight, reduced to merely the availability of salvation for those who will avail themselves of

the opportunity to do what must be done to go to heaven. The startling, the surprising, the heart-breaking, the humbling, the enthralling, the thrilling character of this wonderful love is so diminished as usually to be lost altogether. The converts to Rome will protest it is not so, but generation upon generation of catholic life, in comparison with both Scripture and Protestant evangelical spiritual experience, proves it is. This deafness to God's almighty and sovereign grace is one reason why you don't find revivals in Roman Catholic history, outpourings of the grace of God by which hundreds and thousands of people are swept up into salvation in a short period of time.

The one thing that cannot be permitted is for Christianity to be reduced to the level of every other religion, each in its own way teaching that God will save those who do this or that, perform this or that, fulfill this or that pious obligation. In this Catholicism is exactly, as Lewis said, far too much like every other religion.

Listen to Max Muller, in his time, a century ago, perhaps the most knowledgeable expert in world religions that there was in the Western world.

"I may say that for forty years now, in the fulfillment of my obligations as Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Oxford, I have dedicated as much of my time to the study of the holy books of the East as any other man in the world. And I venture to say of this collection that what I have found to be the fundamental accent, the unity of all these so-called holy books, be it the Veda of the Brahmins, the Purana of Siva and Vishnu, the Koran of [Islam], the Zend Avesta of the Persians, and so on, the fundamental accent, the unity which runs through all of these, is salvation by works. They all teach that salvation must be bought and that the purchase price is one's own works and merits. Our own Bible, our Holy Book from the East, is from beginning to end a protest against this doctrine. Good works are, to be sure, also required in this Holy Book from the East, and indeed more strictly required than in any of these other holy books; but they are only the outflow of a thankful heart. They are only a thankoffering, only the fruit of our faith. They are never the ransom price of the true disciple of Christ. Let us not close our eyes to what is noble and true and sound in those holy books. But let us teach the Hindus, the Buddhists, and the Muslims that there is but one Holy Book from the East in which they can put their trust in that most serious hour in which they must cross over into the invisible world. [In Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, III, 553n.]

This is the only message in all the world worth being a champion of: the grace of God by which alone sinners can be saved!

III. The third of these gospel truths is that of glory of Jesus Christ as the Savior of Sinners, and their Savior to the uttermost.

We have argued that, whatever their intention, Roman Catholics with their doctrines of salvation and the works by which people are to merit their peace with God have displaced Jesus Christ from the place where he belongs in the hearts of all Christians, as the **sole and only** object of their faith and their hope of eternal life. Whether it is the pantheon of saints and, especially Mary, to whom they also pray and from whom they also seek salvation or whether it is the pious works by which they seek to complete the work that Christ did which by itself is not sufficient to save them, such traditions diminish Christ in the heart and in the faith of the church. Christian living is no longer an active, personal trust in a present Savior,

but the employment of a technology of salvation of which Christ, at most, could be said to be the inventor or, perhaps even better, the administrator. But there is not nearly so much glory in that as the Bible is always lavishing on the Lord Christ as our Redeemer, King, Prophet, and Priest.

However clearly or dimly one understands all the doctrinal disputes, this is the key point: it is essential that the teaching about salvation places it beyond doubt that salvation comes from Christ and Christ alone and that ours is but to reach out to lay hold of him, never to add to what he has already done.

I will remember this day until I die. We were in Holland in 1984 and my folks had come to visit. They had first visited the Taitts in England and had been treated to a church-historical tour of Devonshire where the Taitts were then living. Among their stops was the parish church in Brixham where Henry Lyte had been the pastor. This is Henry Lyte the great hymn-writer, the author of "Abide with Me" and "Praise my Soul the King of Heaven." Engraved on a tombstone in that churchyard Dad had found this poem and had copied it down on the spot. He read it over to me in our rooms in Laren and his voice caught as he read it.

What shall we write on this memorial stone?
Thy merits? Thou didst rest on Christ alone;
Our sorrow? Thou wouldst blame the selfish tear;
Our love? Alas it needs no record here.
Praise to thy God and ours? His truth and love
Are sung in nobler strains by thee above.
What wouldst thou have us write? A voice is heard,
'Write, to each reader write, a warning word;
Oh bid him look before him and within.
Talk to his heedless heart of death and sin,
And if at these he trembles, bid him flee,
To Christ and find him all in all, like me!'

From beginning to the end of the Christian faith and the Christian life, and at every point along the way, that is the Christian mind, that is what it means to be a Christian, nothing more, nothing less! God forbid that I should boast save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ!

IV. The fourth of the gospels' truths is the supremacy of faith.

I will hurry over this point, because it is simply another way of saying what we just said about grace and about Christ and his work being our salvation and in no sense our works for him. What is faith, after all, but the way appointed for us to appropriate Christ and what he has done for us.

In the Bible faith is represented as receiving Christ (John 1:12), as coming to Christ (Matt. 11:28), as looking to Christ (Heb. 12:2), as trusting in Christ, believing in Christ, holding fast to Christ. As Bishop Ryle used to put it, faith is the 'hand' of the soul by which we take hold of Christ, the 'eye' of the soul by which we look to him, the 'mouth' of the soul by which we feed upon him, and the 'foot' of the soul by which we run to him.

"Faith in Jesus Christ," our Shorter Catechism tells us, "is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for

salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel." To say that justification is by faith alone, to say that faith is the principle of our salvation is simply to say in other words that our salvation is by grace alone and Christ alone. **Sola fide** means **sola gratia** and **solus Christus**.

V. And then the fifth and last of these gospel truths is the honor all believers are to pay to the church of God as the kingdom of their Lord and Christ and as his own body.

The Roman Catholics have a very high view of the church. A higher view than many Protestants, alas, who ought to know better. But one does not have to have a Pope, or to claim an apostolic succession of bishops, or to rest the hope of everlasting life on the priesthood or its rites and ceremonies of the house of God in order to have a high view of the church.

And, by church, I do not mean simply the company of God's elect, the invisible church. For that is not the church about which the Bible usually speaks and that is not the church about which the author of Psalm 137 speaks in vv. 5-6. No that is the church in the world; the gathering of the saints, the church of ministers and elders and deacons and the people of God gathered in congregations, the church of the sacraments and the Lord's Day worship, the church of preaching and fellowship and discipline. This church is the body of Christ, this church is the Lord's means of his working in the world.

But it is always the church as needing to be faithful to the Word of God, needing always to be revived according to that Word and by the Spirit of God working within her. It is the remnant church, as well, as it has almost always been in the world. The church that is in the world but every definitely not of the world.

The Jerusalem that this man holds his highest joy is the visible church in the world. It is Christendom as we know it today. But it is precisely because he loves the church for Christ's sake that this man cares also that her fortunes be restored. The church this psalm writer knows has been scattered to the four winds on account of her sins. But he prays and works to see her faithful to God and enjoying his blessing once again.

It is not enough to be a private Christian. Every faithful Christian, every gospel Christian must as well be a Churchman or Churchwoman. For Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. We Protestants are often amazed at the power the Roman Catholic church seems to have over her people, the way folk who were raised Catholic, even nominally so, continue to consider themselves Catholic all their lives. Well, every Christian who reads the Bible and Psalm 137 among other texts in the Bible should have that same fierce loyalty to the Church of Jesus Christ. She is, Paul says, our Mother. She is the apple of God's eye. And she is the means by which God works his will in the hearts and lives of his children in the world. I feel strongly that one reason for the attractiveness of the Roman Catholic church to Protestants today is that they know, both instinctively because they are the children of God and from their reading of God's Word, that the church ought to be greater to Christians and hold a higher place in their hearts and lives than it does in most Protestant circles. In this they are right. But the correction of that error cannot be the embrace of others. We must repair the Protestant indifference to the church rather than embrace the errors of Rome.

There we are, then. And there we are to remain. We are to be people committed to and full of the Holy Word of God, the glory of divine grace, and the Lord Christ as our only Redeemer. And we are to be people who live by faith and for the church of God. People of the Bible, of divine grace, of Jesus Christ, of faith, and of the Christian church. That is what we have reminded ourselves to be, so long as we are in this world. And if this series of studies in Roman Catholicism has done us any good, it will be in deepening our commitment to those fundamental principles of truth and life: church, faith, Bible, grace, and Jesus Christ. Those are truths worth fighting for, worth defending with our blood, and worth proclaiming from the rooftops, for they and they alone are the truth that set men free.

Nicholas Ridley, the English Reformer died for these very truths in the middle of the 16th century. And he died,

remember, at the hands of a Roman Catholic Christian church which had lost sight completely of these basic tenets of the biblical faith. Ridley wrote in his quaint old English:

"...in the quarrel of Christ our Savior, in the defense of his own divine ordinances, by the which he giveth us life and immortality, yea, in the quarrel of faith and Christian religion, wherein resteth our everlasting salvation, shall we not watch? Shall we not go always armed, ever looking when our adversary...shall come upon us..."

And our adversary will come upon us and he will always be seeking to dislodge the great truths of our religion from our hearts and minds. And you and I must be as determined that he shall not succeed.

There is a story told in an English General's Memoirs, entitled *Recollections of a Military Life* [cited in Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings*, ii, 215].

"An English soldier coming on duty was heard to say to his comrade, 'Well, Jim, what's the orders at this post?' Jim replied, 'Why, the orders is you're never to leave it till you're killed, and if you see any other man leaving it, you're to kill him.'"

It is a perfect picture of our duty in regard to the truth of grace and Jesus Christ that has been revealed to us in Holy Scripture. We are to defend these truths to the death -- for they are life itself to us -- and to show no mercy to any force or influence that would seek to dislodge them from our hearts or from the church of God.

The Patristic Exegesis of the Rock of Matthew 16:18

Compiled by William Webster

*The Most Extensive Documentation of the Patristic
Understanding of the Rock of Matthew 16 in the
English Language, Spanning the Third to the
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Numerous Quotations Given for the First Time from the Original Latin and Greek

Documentation from the writings of the following Church fathers and theologians:

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Augustine

Remember, in this man Peter, the rock. He's the one, you see, who on being questioned by the Lord about who the disciples said he was, replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' On hearing this, Jesus said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you'...'You are Peter, Rocky, and on this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of the underworld will not conquer her. To you shall I give the keys of the kingdom. Whatever you bind on earth shall also be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall also be loosed in heaven' (Mt 16:15-19). In Peter, Rocky, we see our attention drawn to the rock. Now the apostle Paul says about the former people, 'They drank from the spiritual rock that was following them; but the rock was Christ' (1 Cor 10:4). So this disciple is called Rocky from the rock, like Christian from Christ.

Why have I wanted to make this little introduction? In order to suggest to you that in Peter the Church is to be recognized. Christ, you see, built his Church not on a man but on Peter's confession. What is Peter's confession? 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' There's the rock for you, there's the foundation, there's where the Church has been built, which the gates of the underworld cannot conquer.¹

You see, it was by this human form that the Lord—that is, the form of a servant: he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant (Phil 2:7); so it was by this form of a servant that Peter's affection was also held captive, when he was afraid of the one whom he loved so much having to die. He loved the Lord Jesus Christ, you see, as one human being loves another; as being of flesh loves a being of flesh, not as spiritual being loves the divine majesty. How can we be sure of this? Because when the Lord had been questioning his disciples about who he was said to be by the people, and they had given the opinions of others as they recalled them, that some said he was John, others Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets, he said to them, You, though, who do you say that I am? And Peter, one speaking for the rest of them, one for all, said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mt 16:15-16). Excellent, couldn't be more true; rightly did he deserve to receive a reply like this: Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, because you have told me; you have said something; hear something; you have made a confession, receive a blessing; so: And I tell you: you are Peter; because I am the rock, you are Rocky, Peter—I mean, rock doesn't come from Rocky, but Rocky from rock, just as Christ doesn't come from Christian, but Christian from Christ; and upon this rock I will build my Church (Mt 16:17-18); not upon Peter, or Rocky, which is what you are, but upon the rock which you have confessed. I will build my Church though; I will build you, because in this answer of yours you represent the Church.²

In a passage in this book, I said about the Apostle Peter: 'On him as on a rock the Church was built.'...But I know that very frequently at a later time, I so explained what the Lord said: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church,' that it be understood as built upon Him whom Peter confessed saying: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and so Peter, called after this rock, represented the person of the Church which is built upon this rock, and has received 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' For, 'Thou art Peter' and not 'Thou art the rock' was said to him. But 'the rock was Christ,' in confessing whom, as also the whole Church confesses, Simon was called Peter. But let the reader decide which of these two opinions is the more probable.³

But whom say ye that I am? Peter answered, 'Thou art the Christ, The Son of the living God.' One for many gave the answer, Unity in many. Then said the Lord to him, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonas: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.' Then He added, 'and I say unto thee.' As if He had said, 'Because thou hast said unto Me, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God;" I also say unto thee, "Thou art Peter." For before he was called Simon. Now this name of Peter was given him by the Lord, and in a figure, that he should signify the Church. For seeing that Christ is the rock (Petra), Peter is the Christian people. For the rock (Petra) is the original name. Therefore Peter is so called from the rock; not the rock from Peter; as Christ is not called Christ from the Christian, but the Christian from Christ. 'Therefore,' he saith, 'Thou art Peter; and upon this Rock' which Thou hast confessed, upon this rock which Thou hast acknowledged, saying, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, will I build My Church;' that is upon Myself, the Son of the living God, 'will I build My Church.' I will build thee upon Myself, not Myself upon Thee.

For men who wished to be built upon men, said, 'I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas,' who is Peter. But others who did not wish to be built upon Peter, but upon the Rock, said, 'But I am of Christ.' And when the Apostle Paul ascertained that he was chosen, and Christ despised, he said, 'Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' And, as not in the name of Paul, so neither in the name of Peter; but in the name of Christ: that Peter might be built upon the Rock, not the Rock upon Peter. This same Peter therefore who had been by the Rock pronounced 'blessed,' bearing the figure of the Church, holding the chief place in the Apostleship, a very little while after that he had heard that he was 'Peter,' a very little while after that he had heard that he was to be 'built upon the Rock,' displeased the Lord when he had heard of His future Passion, for he had foretold His disciples that it was soon to be. He feared lest he should by death, lose Him whom he had confessed as the fountain of life...Peter said to Christ, I am not willing that Thou shouldest die; but Christ far better said, I am willing to die for thee. And then He forthwith rebuked him, whom he had little before commended; and calleth him Satan, whom He had pronounced 'blessed.'...Let us, looking at ourselves in this member of the Church, distinguish what is of God and what of ourselves. For then we shall not totter, then we shall be founded on the Rock, shall be fixed and firm against the winds, and storms, and streams and temptations, I mean, of this present world. You see this Peter, who was then our figure; now he trusts, and now he totters; now he confesses the Undying, and now he fears lest he should die. Wherefore? because the Church of Christ hath both strong and weak ones; and cannot be without either strong or weak; whence the Apostle Paul says, 'Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.' In that Peter said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' he represents the strong: but in that he totters, and would not that Christ should suffer, in fearing death for Him, and not acknowledging the Life, he represents the weak ones of the Church. In that one Apostle then, that is, Peter, in the order of Apostles first and chiefest, in whom the Church was figured, both sorts were to be represented, that is, both the strong and weak; because the Church does not exist without them both.⁴

We recognize in heretics that baptism, which belongs not to the heretics but to Christ, in such sort as in fornicators, in unclean persons or effeminate, in idolators, in prisoners, in those who retain enmity, in those who are fond of contention, in the credulous, in the proud, given to seditions, in the envious, in drunkards, in revelers; and in men like these we hold valid the baptism which is not theirs but Christ's. For of men like these, and among them are included heretics also, none, as the apostle says, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. Nor as they to be considered as being in the body of Christ, which is the Church, simply because they are materially partakers of the sacraments. For the sacraments indeed are holy, even in such men as these, and shall be of force in them to greater condemnation, because they handle and partake of them unworthily. But the men themselves are not within the constitution of the Church, which increases in the increase of God in its members through connection and contact with Christ. For that Church is founded on a rock, as the Lord says, 'Upon this rock I will build my Church.' But they build on the sand, as the same Lord says, 'Everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.' But that you may not suppose that the Church which is upon a rock is one part only of the earth, and does not extend even to its furthest boundaries, hear her voice groaning from the psalm, amid the evils of her pilgrimage. For she says, 'From the end of the earth have I cried unto Thee; when my heart was distressed Thou didst lift me up upon the rock; Thou hast led me, Thou, my hope, hast become a tower of courage from the face of the enemy.' See how she cries from the end of the earth. She is not therefore in Africa alone, nor only among the Africans, who send a bishop from Africa to Rome to a few Montenses, and into Spain to the houses of one lady. See how she is exalted on a rock. All, therefore, are not to be deemed to be in her which build upon the sand, that is, which hear the words of Christ and do them not, even though both among us and among you they have and transmit the sacrament of baptism. See how her hope is in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, not in Peter or in Paul, still less in Donatus or Petilianus.⁵

But take Peter too, my brothers and sisters; from where did he get it that he could say out of love, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God? Where did he get it from? Really from his own resources? Perish the thought! Its just as well that this same passage of the gospel shows both things, what Peter got from God's, what from his own resources. You've got them both there; read; there's nothing you should be waiting to hear from me. I'll just remind you of the gospel: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And the Lord to him: Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona. Why? Blessed from your own resources? No. Because flesh and blood has not revealed it to you; that, after all, is what you are. Flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven (Mt 16:16-17). And he goes on to say more things which it would

take too long to mention.

Shortly afterward, after these words of his in which he approved of Peter's faith and showed that it was the rock, he began there and then to show his disciples that it would be necessary for him to come to Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the scribes and the priests, and be killed, and on the third day rise again.⁶

So the Lord will repay his faithful followers who are so lovingly, so cheerfully, so devotedly carrying out these works, to the effect that he includes them in the construction of his own building, into which they hasten to fit as living stones (1 Pt 2:5), fashioned by faith, made solidly firm by hope, cemented together by charity. This is the building in which that wise architect the apostle placed Christ Jesus as the foundation (1 Cor 3:10-11), also as the supreme cornerstone (Is 28:16); one which, as Peter also reminds us from the prophetic scripture, was rejected indeed by men, but chosen and honored by God (1 Pt 2:4; Ps 118:22). By adhering to this stone we are joined peaceably together; by resting on it we are fixed firmly in place. You see, he is at one and the same time the foundation stone, because he is the one who regulates us, and the cornerstone, because it is he that joins us together. He is the rock on which the wise man builds his house, and thus continues in utter security against all the trials and temptations of this world, neither collapsing when the rain pours down, nor being swept away when the river floods, nor overthrown when the winds blow.⁷

Peter then was true; or rather was Christ true in Peter? Now when the Lord Jesus Christ would, He abandoned Peter, and Peter was found a man; but when it so pleased the Lord Jesus Christ, He filled Peter, and Peter was found true. The Rock (Petra) made Peter true, for the Rock was Christ.⁸

Now then seeing it hath been set forth what we ought to do, let us see what we are to receive. For he hath appointed a work, and promised a reward. What is the work? 'If ye shall continue in me.' A short work; short in description, great in execution. 'If ye shall continue.' What is, 'If ye shall continue'? 'If ye shall build on the Rock.' O how great a thing is this, Brethren, to build on the Rock, how great is it! 'The floods came. The winds blew, the rain descended, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.'⁹

This then is the sight which ravishes every rational soul with desire for it, and of which the soul is the more ardent in its desire the purer it is; and it is the purer the more it rises again to the things of the spirit; and it rises the more to the things of the spirit, the more it dies to the material things of the flesh. But while we are away from the Lord and walking by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:6), we have to behold Christ's back, that is his flesh, by this same faith; standing that is upon the solid foundation of faith, which is represented by the rock, and gazing at his flesh from the security of the lookout on the rock, namely the Catholic church, of which it is said, And upon this rock I will build my church (Mt. 16:18). All the surer is our love for the face of Christ which we long to see, the more clearly we recognize in his back how much Christ first loved us.¹⁰

And yet, while the issue about the Church is one thing, the issue about persons another, and they are quite distinct from each other, we aren't afraid of facing the issue of persons either, whom they have accused, and been unable to convict. We know they were cleared, we have tread the documentation of their being cleared. Even if they hadn't been cleared, I would never set up a Church because of them, and build one on sand, and pull down one built on rock; because on this rock, he said, I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld shall not overcome it (Mt. 16:18). Now the rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). Was it Paul that was crucified for you? Hold on to these texts, love these texts, repeat them in a fraternal and peaceful manner.¹¹

And this Church, symbolized in its generality, was personified in the Apostle Peter, on account of the primacy of his apostleship. For, as regards his proper personality, he was by nature one man, by grace one Christian, by still more abounding grace one, and yet also, the first apostle; but when it was said to him, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,' he represented the universal Church, which in this world is shaken by divers temptations, that come upon it like torrents of rain, floods and tempests, and falleth not, because it is founded upon a rock (petra), from

which Peter received his name. For *petra* (rock) is not derived from Peter, but Peter from *petra*; just as Christ is not called so from the Christian, but the Christian from Christ. For on this very account the Lord said, 'On this rock will I build my Church,' because Peter had said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' On this rock, therefore, He said, which thou hast confessed, I will build my Church. For the Rock (*Petra*) was Christ; and on this foundation was Peter himself built. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus. The Church, therefore, which is founded in Christ received from Him the keys of the kingdom of heaven in the person of Peter, that is to say, the power of binding and loosing sins. For what the Church is essentially in Christ, such representatively is Peter in the rock (*petra*); and in this representation Christ is to be understood as the Rock, Peter as the Church.¹²

So what does all this symbolism mean? That receptacle signifies the Church; the four lines it was hanging from are the four quarters of the earth, through which the Catholic Church stretches, being spread out everywhere. So all those who wish to go apart into a party, and to cut themselves off from the whole, do not belong to the sacred reality signified by the four lines. But if they don't belong to Peter's vision, neither do they do so to the keys which were given to Peter. You see, God says his holy ones are to be gathered together at the end from the four winds, because now the gospel faith is being spread abroad through all those four cardinal points of the compass. So those animals are the nations. All the Gentile nations, after all, were unclean in their errors and superstitions and lusts before Christ came; but at his coming their sins were forgiven them and they were made clean. Therefore now, after the forgiveness of sins, why should they not be received into the body of Christ, which is the Church of God, which Peter was standing for?

Its clear, you see, from many places in scripture that Peter can stand for, or represent, the Church; above all from that place where it says, To you will I hand over the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall also be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Mt. 16:19). Did Peter receive these keys, and Paul not receive them? Did Peter receive them, and John and James and the other apostles not receive them? Or are the keys not to be found in the Church, where sins are being forgiven every day? But because Peter symbolically stood for the Church, what was given to him alone was given to the whole Church. So Peter represented the Church; the Church is the body of Christ.¹³

The blessed Peter, the first of the apostles, the ardent lover of Christ, who was found worthy to hear, 'And I say to you, that you are Peter.' He himself, you see, had just said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Christ said to him, 'And I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church' (Mt. 16:16, 18). Upon this rock I will build the faith which you have just confessed. Upon what you have just said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,' I will build my Church; because you are Peter. Peter, Rocky, from rock, not rock from Rocky. Peter comes from '*petra*', rock, in exactly the same way as Christian comes from Christ. Do you want to know what rock Peter is called after? Listen to Paul: 'I would not have you ignorant, brothers,' the apostle of Christ says; 'I would not have you ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized in Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the rock that was following them, and the rock was Christ' (1 Cor 10:1-4). There you have where Rocky, Peter, is from.

Before his passion the Lord Jesus, as you know, chose those disciples of his, whom he called apostles. Among these it was only Peter who almost everywhere was given the privilege of representing the whole Church. It was in the person of the whole Church, which he alone represented, that he was privileged to hear, 'To you will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 16:19). After all, it isn't just one man that received these keys, but the Church in its unity. So this is the reason for Peter's acknowledged pre-eminence, that he stood for the Church's universality and unity, when he was told, 'To you I am entrusting,' what has in fact been entrusted to all.

I mean, to show you that it is the Church which has received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, listen to what the Lord says in another place to all his apostles: 'Receive the Holy Spirit;' and straightway, 'Whose sins you forgive, they will be forgiven them; whose sins you retain, they will be retained' (Jn 20:22-23). This refers to the keys, about which it is said, 'whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven' (Mt 16:19). But that was said to Peter. To show you that Peter at that time stood for the universal Church, listen to what is said to him, what is said to all the faithful, the saints: 'If your brother sins against you, correct him between you and himself alone. If he does not listen to you, bring with you one or two; for it is written, By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every matter be settled. If he does not even listen to them, refer him to the Church; if he does not even listen to her, let him

be to you as a heathen and a tax collector. Amen amen I tell you, that whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Mt 16:18). It is the dove that binds, the dove that looses, the building built upon the rock that binds and looses.

Let those who are bound fear, those who are loosed fear. Let those who are loosed be afraid of being bound; those who are bound pray to be loosed. 'Each one is tied up in the thread of his own sins' (Prv 5:22). And apart from the Church, nothing is loosed. One four days dead is told, 'Lazarus, come forth in the open' (Jn 11:43), and he came forth from the tomb tied hand and foot with bandages. The Lord rouses him, so that the dead man may come forth from the tomb; this means he touches the heart, so that the confession of sin may come out in the open. But that's not enough, he's still bound. So after Lazarus had come out of the tomb, the Lord turned to his disciples, whom he had told, 'Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,' and said, 'Loose him, and let him go' (Jn 11:44). He roused him by himself, he loosed him through the disciples.

Furthermore, the Church's strength and courage is supremely presented to us in Peter; because he followed the Lord as he went to his passion; and also something of its weakness is to be observed there, since when he was questioned by a maid, he repudiated the Lord.¹⁴

We should each of us faithfully recall, too, an example offered us in that first people. The apostle says, you see, All these things were our models (1 Cor. 10:6), when he was talking about such things. I mean, what had he just said? For I would not have you ignorant, brothers, that all our fathers were under the cloud; and all were baptized in Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that was following them. Now the rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). The one who said that these things were our models, is one whom no believer has ever contradicted. And while he mentioned many things, he only explained one of them, saying, Now the rock was Christ. In explaining a single item, he left us the others to be inquired into; but to save inquirers from going astray by departing from Christ, and to enable them to seek surely, founded on the rock, The rock, he said, was Christ. He said those things were our models, and they are all obscure. Who could unpack these well wrapped models? Who could open them up, who would dare to shake them out? In these densest possible thickets, so to say, and these thick shadows he has hit a light: The rock, he says, was Christ.

I also want to say something about the doubts the servant of God, Moses, felt...In this case too, you see, he was representative of the saints of the Old Testament. Moses had his doubts about the water; when he struck the rock with his rod, so that water flowed out, he doubted...Moses doubted when the wood came into contact with the rock; the disciples doubted, when they saw the Lord crucified. Moses figuratively stood for them; he stood for that Peter with his threefold denial. Why did Peter doubt? Because the wood approached the rock. When the Lord himself was foretelling the kind of death he would die, that is his cross, Peter was horrified: Far be this from you, Lord; this shall not happen. You doubt, because you see the rod hanging over the rock. That's why the disciples then lost the hope they had placed in the Lord; it had somehow been cut off when they saw him crucified, when they mourned him slain. He came upon them after his resurrection talking to one another about this matter, in sad conversation. He kept their eyes from recognizing him, not to remove himself from believers, but to put them off while they were still doubters, and he joined in their conversation as a third party, and asked them what they were talking about. They were astonished that he should be the only person not to know what had happened-to the very one, in fact, who was inquiring about it. Are you the only stranger, they said, in Jerusalem? And they went over all that had happened to Jesus. And straightway they proceed to open up all the depth of their despair, and albeit unwittingly they show the doctor their wounds: But we, they say, were hoping that with him there would be redemption for Israel (Lk 24:13-21). There you are, doubt arose, because wood had come into contact with the rock. What Moses figuratively stood for was fulfilled.

Let's take a look at this text too: Climb the mountain and die (Dt 32:49-50). The bodily death of Moses stood for the death of his doubting, but on the mountain. What marvelous mysteries! When this had been definitely explained and understood, how much sweeter it is to the taste than manna! Doubting was born at the rock, died on the mountain. When Christ was humbled in his passion, he was like a rock lying on the ground before their eyes. It was natural to have doubts about him; that humility was not holding out hopes for anything very great. His very humiliation naturally made him into a stone of offense (Is 8:14; 1 Pt 2:8). But once glorified by his resurrection he was seen to be great, he is now a mountain. So now let that doubt, which was born at the rock, die on the mountain. Let the disciples recognize where their salvation lies, let them summon up their hope again. Notice how that doubting dies, notice how Moses dies on the mountain. Let him not enter the

promised land; we don't want any doubting there; let it die. Let Christ now show us how it dies. Peter trembled and denied three times. The rock you see was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). He rose again, he became a mountain; he even gave Peter courage.¹⁵

By loving the sheep, show the love you have for the shepherd; because the very sheep themselves are members of the shepherd. In order that the sheep might be his members, he was prepared to be a sheep; that the sheep might be his members, like a sheep that was led to the slaughter (Is 53:7); that the sheep might be his members, it was said of him, Behold the lamb of God, behold the one who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29)...

So let us love him, let there be nothing dearer to us than he. So do you imagine that the Lord is not questioning us? Was Peter the only one who qualified to be questioned, and didn't we? When that reading is read, every single Christian is being questioned in his heart. So when you hear the Lord saying 'Peter, do you love me?' think of it as a mirror, and observe yourself there. I mean, what else was Peter doing but standing for the Church? So when the Lord was questioning Peter, he was questioning us, he was questioning the Church. I mean, to show you that Peter stood for the Church, call to mind that place in the gospel, 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld shall not conquer her; to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 16:18-19). One man receives them; you see, he explained himself what the keys of the kingdom mean: 'What you all bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what you all loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Mt 18:18). If it was said to Peter alone, Peter alone did this; he passed away, and went away; so who binds, who looses? I make bold to say, we too have these keys. And what am I to say? That it is only we who bind, only we who loose? No, you also bind, you also loose. Anybody who's bound, you see, is barred from your society; and when he's barred from your society, he's bound by you; and when he's reconciled he's loosed by you, because you too plead with God for him.

We all love Christ, you see, we are his members; and when he entrusts the sheep to the shepherds, the whole number of shepherds is reduced to the body of one shepherd. Just to show you that the whole number of shepherds is reduced to the one body of the one shepherd, certainly Peter's a shepherd, undoubtedly a pastor; Paul's a shepherd, yes, clearly a pastor; John's a shepherd, James a shepherd, Andrew a shepherd, and the other apostles are shepherds. All holy bishops are shepherds, pastors, yes, clearly so. And how can this be true: And there will be one flock and one shepherd (Jn 10:16)? Then if there will be one flock and one shepherd is true, the innumerable number of shepherds or pastors must be reduced to the body of the one shepherd or pastor.¹⁶

This gospel that has just been read about Christ the Lord, and how he walked over the surface of the sea, and about the apostle Peter, and how, by growing afraid as he walked, he staggered, and by losing confidence began to submerge, until by confessing he again emerged; this gospel is advising us to take the sea as meaning the present age and this world, and the apostle Peter as representing the one and only Church. Peter, you see, is first in the class of the apostles, and readiest in expressing love of Christ, and is often the one who answers for them all. Thus when the Lord Jesus Christ was inquiring who people said he was, and the disciples told him the various opinions people held, and the Lord again asked them, 'But you, who do you say that I am?'-it was Peter who answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Mt 16:15-16). Then the Lord said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because it is not flesh and blood that revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven.' Then he added, 'And I say to you.' As much as to say, Because you said to me, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,' I in turn say to you, 'You are Peter' (Mt 16:7-18). Previously, of course, he was called Simon; this name of Peter was bestowed on him by the Lord, and that with the symbolic intention of his representing the Church. Because Christ, you see, is the petra or rock; Peter, or Rocky, is the Christian people.. I mean, the basic name is 'rock.' Therefore Rocky is so called from rock, not the rock from Rocky; just as Christ is not so called from Christian, but Christian from Christ. So, 'You,' he says, 'are Peter, and on this rock,' which you have acknowledged, 'on this rock,' which you recognized when you said 'You are Christ, the Son of the living God, I will build my Church;' that is, on myself, the Son of the living God, 'I will build my Church' (Mt 16:18). I will build you on me, not me on you.

There were people, you see, who wanted to build on human beings merely, and they would say, 'I'm Paul's man, I'm Apollo's, I'm Kephas'-that's Peter or Rocky...And others, who didn't want to be built on Rocky, but on the rock, said, 'But I'm Christ's.' When, however, the apostle Paul realized that he had been chosen and Christ had been ignored, he said, 'Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you, Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?' (1 Cor 1:12-13). Not in Paul's name, nor in Rocky's either, but in the name of Christ, so that Rocky might be built up on the rock, not the rock on Rocky.

So then, this self-same Peter, blessed by being surnamed Rocky from the rock, representing the person of the Church, holding chief place in the apostolic ranks, no sooner had he heard that he was blessed, no sooner had he heard that he was Rocky, no sooner had he heard that he was to be built on the rock, than on hearing also about the Lord's coming passion, which the Lord said was going to happen pretty quickly, he expressed his displeasure. He was afraid of losing by death the one he had confessed to be the fountain of life. He was shocked, and said, 'Far be it from you, Lord; this must not happen.' Be easy on yourself, God; I don't want you to die.

By observing this member of the Church ourselves, let us try and distinguish in our own lives what comes from God's ideas, and what from our own. Then we shan't stagger, then we shall be founded on the rock, then we shall be solid and steady against the winds, the storms of rain, the floods, namely the trials and temptations of this present age. However, notice that man Peter, who was the symbolic representative of us all; now he's trusting, now he's tottering; one moment he's acknowledging Christ to be immortal, the next he's afraid of his dying. Its because the Church of Christ in the same sort of way has strong members, and also has weak members. It can't do without its strong members, nor without its weak ones. That's why the apostle Paul says, 'But we who are strong should bear the burdens of the weak' (Rom 15:1). Now Peter, in saying 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Mt 16:15), represents the strong. But in his being filled with alarm, and his staggering, and not wanting Christ to suffer because he was afraid of death and didn't recognize life, he represents the weak members of the Church. So in that one apostle, that is, in Peter, first and chief in the ranks of the apostles, in whom the Church was symbolized, each kind of member had to be symbolized too, that is to say, the strong and the weak; because without the one or the other there is no Church.¹⁷

Peter had already said to him, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' He had already heard, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld shall not conquer her' (Mt 16:16-18). Such faith was drowned when the Lord was crucified. Peter, you see, only believed he was the Son of God up to the time he saw him hanging on the tree, the time he saw him fixed there with nails, the time he saw him dead, the time he saw him buried. Then he lost what he held. Where's the rock? Where's the immovable solidity of the rock? Christ himself was the rock, while Peter, Rocky, was only named from the rock. That's why the rock rose again, to make Peter solid and strong; because Peter would have perished, if the rock hadn't lived.¹⁸

When Christ said, Who do you say that I am? Peter answered, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And the Lord said to him: Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, as it has to those who call me a prophet, but my Father, who is in heaven; and I say to you, you are Peter (Mt. 16:15-18). You have said to me, let me say to you; you have made your confession of faith, now hear my blessing.

You see, the Lord had said about himself what was less important, and Peter had told him what was more important. In the Lord Jesus Christ, after all, what was less important was his being the Son of man; what was more important was his being the Son of God. He mentioned the less important thing, because he humbled himself; the one whom he exalted mentioned the more important one. Upon this rock, said the Lord, I will build my Church. Upon this confession, upon this that you said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,' I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not conquer her (Mt. 16:18).¹⁹

For not without cause among all the Apostles doth Peter sustain the person of this Church Catholic; for unto this Church were the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven given, when they were given unto Peter: and when it is said unto him, it is said unto all, Lovest thou Me? Feed My sheep. Therefore the Church Catholic ought willingly to pardon her sons, upon their amendment, and confirmation in godliness; when we see that Peter himself, bearing her person, both when he had tottered on the sea, and when with carnal feeling he had sought to call back the Lord from suffering, and when he had cut off the ear of the servant with the sword, and when he had thrice denied the Lord Himself, and when afterwards he had fallen into superstitious dissembling, had pardon granted unto him, and after amendment and strengthening attained at last unto the glory of the Lord's suffering.²⁰

We know what rock is; and yet a hard and obstinate person is called a rock, and a solid, immovable person is called rock.

In praise you take the rock's solidity, in blame you take its hardness. We know the solidity of the rock, and we accept Christ as the rock: Now the rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4).²¹

One wicked man represents the whole body of the wicked; in the same way as Peter, the whole body of the good, yea, the body of the Church, but in respect to the good. For if in Peter's case there were no sacramental symbol of the Church, the Lord would not have said to him, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.' If this was said only to Peter, it gives no ground of action to the Church. But if such is the case also in the Church, that what is bound on earth is bound in heaven, and what is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven-for when the Church excommunicates, the excommunicated person is bound in heaven; when one is reconciled by the Church, the person so reconciled is loosed in heaven-if such, then, is the case in the Church, Peter, in receiving the keys, represented the holy Church.²²

Coming now to what the Lord goes on to say to Moses: 'You cannot see my face and live, for a man shall not see my face and live. And the Lord said Behold, there is a place beside me, and you shall stand upon the rock the moment my majesty passes, and I will set you at a look-out in the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed, and I will take away my hand, and then you shall see my back; for my face shall not appear to you' (Ex 33:20). This is usually understood, not inappropriately, to prefigure the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, taking his 'back' to mean his flesh, in which he was born of the virgin, died and rose again...This then is the sight which ravishes every rational soul with desire for it, and of which the soul is more ardent in its desire the purer it is; and it is the purer the more it rises again to the things of the spirit; and it rises more to the things of the spirit, the more it dies to the material things of the flesh. But while 'we are away from the Lord and walking by faith and not by sight' (2 Cor 5:6), we have to behold Christ's back, that is, his flesh, by this same faith; standing that is upon the solid foundation of faith, which is represented by the rock, and gazing at his flesh from the security of the lookout on the rock, namely the Catholic Church, of which it is said, 'And upon this rock I will build my Church' (Mt 16:18). All the surer is our love for the face of Christ which we long to see, the more clearly we recognize in his back how much Christ first loved us.

But as regards this flesh of his, it is faith in his resurrection that saves and justifies. 'If you believe in your hearts,' it says, 'that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved' (Rom 10:9); and again, 'Who delivered himself up for our transgressions and rose again for our justification' (Rom 4:25). So it is the resurrection of the Lord's body that gives value to our faith.

Even his enemies believe that the body died on the cross of pain, but they do not believe that it rose again. We however believe it absolutely, observing it so to say from the firmness of the rock, from where 'we await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies,' in the certainty of hope (Rom 8:23)...'And you shall stand,' it says, 'upon the rock the moment my majesty passes' (Ex 33:21). And in very truth, the moment the majesty of the Lord passed, in the glory of the Lord's resurrection and ascension to the Father, we were firmly established upon the rock. It was then that Peter himself was firmly established, so that he could boldly preach Christ whom he had timorously thrice denied before he was firmly established.²³

Some one, perhaps, may inquire what is signified by the division that was made of His garments into so many parts, and of the casting of lots for the coat. The raiment of the Lord Jesus Christ parted into four, symbolized His quadripartite Church, as spread abroad over the whole world, which consists of four quarters...But the coat, on which lots were cast, signifies the unity of all the parts, which is contained in the bond of charity...And it was without seam, that its sewing might never be separated; and came into the possession of one man, because He gathereth all into one. Just as in the case of the apostles, who formed the exact number of twelve, in other words, were divisible into four parts of three each, when the question was put to all of them, Peter was the only one that answered, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;' and to whom it was said, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' as if he alone received the power of binding and loosing; seeing, then, that one spake in behalf of all, and received the latter along with all, as if personifying the unity itself; therefore one stands for all, because there is unity in all.²⁴

The Creed of most holy martyrdom, which you received as a group and which you have recited today as individuals,

contains the truths upon which the faith of Mother Church is solidly established as on a firm foundation, which is Christ Jesus the Lord. 'For other foundation no one can lay, but that which has been laid, which is Christ Jesus' (1 Cor. 3:11).25

So whoever builds him up like that is not building him on rock, but placing him on sand. 'Now the rock was Christ' (1 Cor 10:4).26

Well, when they had rushed for the stones, hard men for hard stones, they started hurling at him things just like themselves. He was being stoned with rocks, as he was dying for the Rock. Its what the apostle says: But the rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4).27

Peter too would walk. He as Head, Peter as Body: because, 'Upon this rock,' He saith, ' I will build My Church.' He was bidden to walk, and he was walking by the Grace of Him bidding, not by his own strength.28

Thus Christ is also called the cornerstone who has made both one (Eph 2:20, 14). A corner joins two walls coming from different directions. What could be more different than circumcised and uncircumcised, meaning one wall from Judea and another wall from the Gentiles? But they are joined together by the cornerstone. For the stone which the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner (Ps 118:22).29

None of us lacks Christ. He is complete in all of us, and still there is more of his body waiting for him. Those disciples believed, through them many inhabitants of Jerusalem came to believe, Judea came to believe, Samaria came to believe. Let the members join the body, the building attach itself to the foundation. For no other foundation can anyone lay, says the apostle, except what has been laid, which is Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 3:11).30

That Jerusalem of ours, though, still in exile, is being built in heaven. That's why Christ, its foundation, preceded it into heaven. That, you see, is where our foundation is, and the head of the Church, because a foundation too is also called a head; and indeed that is what it is. Because the head of a building too is its foundation; its head isn't where it is finished, but where it starts growing upward from. The tops of earthly buildings are raised up high; yet they set their head firmly in the solid ground. In the same sort of way the head of the Church has gone ahead into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Just as men go about their work, when for laying foundations they bring along suitable material to make a solid base, to ensure the security of the mass that is going to be placed on top of it in construction of the edifice to be; so in the same sort of way, by all those things that took place in Christ, being born, growing up, being arrested, enduring abuse, being scourged, crucified, killed, dying, being buried, it was like material being brought along for the heavenly foundations.

So now that our foundation has been laid in the heights, let us get ourselves built on it. Listen to the apostle: No other foundation, he says, can anyone lay, besides the one which has been laid, which is Christ Jesus (1 Cor 3:11). But what comes next? But let each of you see what you build on top of the foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble (1 Cor:10,12). Christ is indeed in heaven, but also in the hearts of believers. If Christ has the first place there, the foundation is rightly laid. So if you are building on it, you may build without a qualm, if you build, to match the worth of the foundation, gold, silver, precious stones. If however, by building wood, grass, stubble, you fail to match the worth of the foundation, at least stick to the foundation, and because of the dry and fragile things you have constructed on it, prepare yourself for the fire. But if the foundation is there, that is if Christ has obtained the first place in your heart, while the things of this world are loved in such a way that they are not put before Christ, but the Lord Christ is put before them, so that he is the foundation, that is holding the first place in your heart, then you will suffer loss, he says, but you yourself shall be saved, in such a way, though, as is by fire (1 Cor 3:15).31

If in Him tempted we have been, in Him we overcome the devil...'On the Rock Thou hast exalted me.' Now therefore here we perceive who is crying from the ends of the earth. Let us call to mind the Gospel: 'Upon this Rock I will build My Church.' Therefore She crieth from the ends of the earth, whom He hath willed to build upon a Rock. But in order that the

Church might be builded upon the Rock, who was made the Rock? Hear Paul saying: 'But the Rock was Christ.' On Him therefore builded we have been. For this reason that Rock whereon we have been builded, first hath been smitten with winds, flood, rain, when Christ of the devil was being tempted. Behold on what firmness He hath willed to stablish thee. With reason our voice is not in vain, but is hearkened unto: for on great hope we have been set: 'On the Rock Thou hast exalted me.'³²

For as some things are said which seem peculiarly to apply to the Apostle Peter, and yet are not clear in their meaning, unless when referred to the Church, whom he is acknowledged to have figuratively represented, on account of the primacy which he bore among the Disciples; as it is written, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' and other passages of like purport: so Judas doth represent those Jews who were enemies of Christ...³³

One wicked man represents the whole body of the wicked; in the same way as Peter, the whole body of the good, yea, the body of the Church, but in respect to the good. For if in Peter's case there were no sacramental symbol of the Church, the Lord would not have said to him, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.' If this was said only to Peter, it gives no ground of action to the Church. But if such is the case also in the Church, that what is bound on earth is bound in heaven, and what is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven, for when the Church excommunicates, the excommunicated person is bound in heaven; when one is reconciled by the Church, the person so reconciled is loosed in heaven: if, such, then is the case in the Church, Peter, in receiving the keys, represented the good in the Church, and in Judas' person were represented the bad in the Church...³⁴

So my life will depend on you, and my salvation be bound up with you? Have I forgotten my foundation all that much? Wasn't Christ the rock? The one who builds on the rock, isn't he the one whom neither wind nor rain nor rivers can overthrow? So come with me, if you will, onto the rock, and don't aim at replacing the rock for me.³⁵

How great a house is this! But when does it sing the new song? When it is in building. When is it dedicated? At the end of the world. Its foundation has already been dedicated, because He hath ascended into heaven, and dieth no more. When we too shall have risen to die no more, then shall we be dedicated.³⁶

The Church of the Jews comes from the circumcision, the Church of the Gentiles comes from the uncircumcision. Coming from different directions, they are joined together in the Lord. That is why the Lord is called the cornerstone. Thus the psalm says: The stone which the builders rejected, this very one has become the head of the corner (Ps 118:22). And the apostle says: Christ Jesus being himself the cornerstone (Eph 2:20).³⁷

So was there no point in the Lord saying, What you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Mt 18:18; 16:19)? So were the keys given to the Church of God for nothing?³⁸

Luke 22:32

Listen to the Lord, when He says, 'I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not;' that we may never think of our faith as so lying in our free will that it has no need of the divine assistance.³⁹

Faith pours out prayer, and the pouring out of prayer obtains the strengthening of faith. Faith, I say, pours out prayer, the pouring out of prayer obtains strengthening even for faith itself. For that faith might not fail in temptations, therefore did the Lord say, 'Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' What is to 'enter into temptation,' but to depart from faith? For so far temptation advances as faith gives way: and so far temptation gives way, as faith advances. For that you may know, Beloved, more plainly, that the Lord said, 'Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation,' as touching faith lest it should

fail and perish; He said in the same place of the Gospel, 'This night hath Satan desired to sift you as wheat, and I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not.'⁴⁰

John 21:15-17

We have heard the Lord Jesus setting before us the whole office and duty of the good shepherd or pastor. In doing so, he was giving us clearly to understand that there are good shepherds. And yet, to prevent us drawing the wrong conclusions from the existence of many shepherds or pastors, I, he said, am the good shepherd. And then he went on to show what makes a good shepherd: The good shepherd, he says, lays down his life for the sheep. But the hired hand, and the one who is not the shepherd, sees the wolf coming, and runs away, because he does not care about the sheep; he is only a hired hand (Jn 10:11-13). So Christ is the good shepherd. What about Peter? Isn't he a good shepherd? Didn't he too lay down his life for the sheep? What about Paul? What about the other apostles? What about the blessed martyr bishops who came after their times? What indeed about this saint of ours, Cyprian? Weren't they all good shepherds, and not hired hands, of whom it says, Amen I tell you, they have received their reward (Mt 6:2)? So all these were good shepherds...

Because you see, even among the heretics, who have endured a certain amount of harassment because of their iniquities and errors, there are those who boast of being martyrs, in order to steal all the more easily under this cloak of respectability; because in fact they are wolves. But if you really want to know in what class to count them, listen to that good shepherd the apostle Paul, saying that not all who hand over their bodies to the flames in martyrdom are to be considered as having shed their blood for the sheep, but rather against the sheep...

But how can you have even the tiniest bit of charity, if even when you have been proved wrong, you don't love unity? When the Lord was entrusting this unity to good shepherds, he didn't wish to talk about many shepherds. As I said, it's not that Peter was not a good shepherd, or Paul, or the rest of the apostles, or the holy bishops who came after them, or blessed Cyprian. All these were good shepherds; and yet he did not draw the attention of these good shepherds to good shepherds, but to the good shepherd. I, he said, am the good shepherd (Jn 10:11)...What was Peter? Was he either not a shepherd, not a pastor, or else a bad one? Let's see if he's not a shepherd. Do you love me? You said it to him, Lord. Do you love me? And he answered, I do. And you then said to him, Feed my sheep. You, Lord, you yourself, by your very questioning of him, by the formal decree of your own lips, made a lover a pastor.

So he is a pastor, a shepherd, to whom you entrusted your sheep, with the task of feeding them. You yourself appointed him, he's a shepherd. Let's see now if he's a good one. We find out in this very exchange of question and answer. You inquired whether he loved you, he answered, I do. You saw into his heart, that he answered truthfully. So isn't he good, seeing that he loves so great a good? ...So he was both a shepherd and a good shepherd; nothing to compare, of course, with the authority and goodness of the shepherd of shepherds, the pastor of pastors; but all the same he too was both a pastor and a good one, and the others like him were good pastors.

So why is it that you draw the attention of good shepherds to the idea of one shepherd? For what other reason could it be, but that in the one shepherd you are teaching the lesson of unity? And the Lord explains the matter more clearly through my ministry, as he reminds your graces from the gospel and says, "Listen to what I have drawn attention to: I am the good shepherd, I said; because all the others, all the good shepherds are my members, parts of me; one head, one body, one Christ. So both the shepherd of the shepherds, and the shepherds of the shepherd, and the sheep with the shepherds under the shepherd, are one. All this is only what the apostle says: Just as the body is one and has many parts, but all the parts of the body, though they are many, form one body, so too is Christ (1 Cor 12:12). If, then, so too is Christ, it was quite right for Christ, who contains all the good shepherds in himself, to draw attention to one by saying, I am the good shepherd. I am, I am one person, with me all in the unity are one. Anyone who feeds the sheep outside me feeds them against me. Anyone who does not gather with me scatters."⁴¹

But first the Lord asks what He knew, and that not once, but a second and third time, whether Peter loved Him; and just as often he has the same answer, that He is loved, while just as often He gives Peter the same charge to feed His sheep. To the threefold denial there is now appended a threefold confession, that his tongue may not yield a feebler service to love than to fear, and imminent death may not appear to have elicited more from the lips than present life. Let it be the office of love to feed the Lord's flock, if it was the signal of fear to deny the Shepherd. Those who have this purpose in feeding the flock

of Christ, that they may have them as their own, and not as Christ's, are convicted of loving themselves, and not Christ, from the desire either of boasting, or wielding power, or acquiring gain, and not from the love of obeying, serving and pleasing God. Against such, therefore, there stands as a wakeful sentinel this thrice inculcated utterance of Christ, of whom the apostle complains that they seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's. For what else mean the words, 'Lovest thou Me? Feed My sheep,' than if it were said, If thou lovest me, think not of feeding thyself, but feed my sheep as mine, and not as thine own; seek my glory in them, and not thine own; my dominion, and not thine; my gain, and not thine; lest thou be found in the fellowship of those who belong to the perilous times, lovers of their own selves, and all else that is joined on to this beginning of evils?...With great propriety, therefore, is Peter addressed, 'Lovest thou Me:' and the command applied to him, 'Feed my lambs,' and this a second and third time...Let us, then, love not ourselves, but Him; and in feeding His sheep, let us be seeking the things which are His, not the things which are our own.⁴²

But what now? The Lord asketh him as ye heard when the Gospel was being read, and saith to him, Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? He answered and said, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. And again the Lord asked this question, and a third time He asked it. And when he asserted in reply his love, He commended to him the flock. For each several time the Lord Jesus said to Peter, as he said, I love Thee: Feed My lambs, feed My little sheep. In this one Peter was figured the unity of all pastors, of good pastors, that is, who know that they feed Christ's sheep for Christ, not for themselves.⁴³

So when the Lord was speaking just now, he said he was a shepherd; he also said he was a gate. You've got each thing there; both I am the gate and I am the shepherd (Jn 10:9,11). He's the gate in the head, the shepherd in the body. You see, he says to Peter, whom he singles out to represent the Church, Peter, do you love me? He answers, Lord, I do. And then a third time, Peter, do you love me? Peter was upset that he asked him a third time (Jn 21:15-17); as though the one could see his conscience when he was going to deny him could not see his faith when he wanted to confess him.⁴⁴

Every time, though, every time, that is with each of his three questions, as Peter answers that he loves him, the Lord Jesus entrusts him with his lambs, and says, Feed my lambs, feed my sheep (Jn 21:15-17). What are you going to give me, since you love me? Show your love in my sheep. What are you bestowing on me by loving me, seeing that it was I who bestowed on you the ability to love me? But you do have the means of showing your love for me, you have the means of exercising it: Feed my sheep.

To what extent, though, the lambs of the Lord were to be fed, with what love the sheep bought at such a price were to be fed, he indicated in what followed. I mean, after Peter, completing the just requirement of his threefold answer, had professed himself to be a lover of the Lord, and had his sheep entrusted to him, he heard about his own future martyrdom. Here the Lord indicated that his sheep are to be loved by those to whom he entrusts them, in such a way that they are ready to die for them. That's what this same John writes in his letter: Just as Christ laid down his life for us, in the same way we too ought to lay down ours for the brethren (1 Jn 3:16).⁴⁵

Here I find all the good shepherds in the one shepherd. The good shepherds are not lacking after all, but they are in the one. Those who have broken away are many. Here one is being proclaimed because unity is being commended to us. It isn't really because the Lord couldn't find shepherds to commend his sheep to that here shepherds are not mentioned and the shepherd is. In that other text he found Peter to commend them to. Yes indeed, and in Peter himself he commended unity to us. There were several apostles, and only one was told, Feed my sheep (Jn 21:17). It is unthinkable that good shepherds should be lacking now; far be it from us that they should be lacking, far be it from his mercy not to produce them and establish them. Of course, if there are good sheep, there are also good shepherds, because good shepherds are made out of good sheep. But all the good shepherds are in the one, they are one. They feed the sheep, Christ feeds them...And with Peter too, when he was commending his sheep to him as one man to another, he wished to make him one with himself, and to commend his sheep to him in such a way that he himself would be the head and Peter would represent the body, that is to say the Church, and like husband and wife they would be two in one flesh. Well, what did he say to him first, in order to be able to commend his sheep to him, without simply commending them to him as one man to another? Peter, do you love me? And he answered, I do. And again, Do you love me? And he answered, I do. And a third time, Do

you love me? And he answered, I do (Jn 21:15-17). He makes sure of love in order to consolidate unity.⁴⁶

Quite rightly too did the Lord after his resurrection entrust his sheep to Peter to be fed. It's not, you see, that he alone among the disciples was fit to feed the Lord's sheep; but when Christ speaks to one man, unity is being commended to us. And he first speaks to Peter, because Peter is the first among the apostles.⁴⁷

So the Lord entrusted his sheep to us bishops, because he entrusted them to Peter; if, that is, we are worthy with any part of us, even with the tips of our toes, to tread the dust of Peter's footsteps, the Lord entrusted his sheep to us. You are his sheep, we are sheep along with you, because we are Christians. I have already said, we are fed and we feed.⁴⁸

But when he declared his love once, and again, and a third time, the Lord entrusted him with his sheep. Do you love me? He said. Lord, you know that I love you. Feed my lambs. This once, and again, and a third time, as though the only way Peter could show his love for Christ would be by being a faithful shepherd and pastor under the prince of all pastors... Watch out, though, brothers and sisters, for men who are bad servants, who have carved out private herds for themselves out of the Lord's flock, and divided up the estate they had not bought. Some unfaithful servants have sprung up, you see, and divided the flock of Christ, and by their thefts, as it were, from his flock have put together private herds for themselves, and you hear them saying, 'These are my sheep'... Far be it from us to call you our sheep; that's no Catholic way of speaking, it isn't brotherly, it isn't Peter's because it is against the Rock. You are sheep, but those of the one who has bought both us and you. We have one and the same Lord; he is the real shepherd, not just hired for the job. ⁴⁹

What now on this occasion? The Lord questions him, as you heard when the gospel was read, and says to him, Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? He answered and said, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And again the Lord asked this question, and a third time he asked this question. And every time in reply he affirmed his love, he entrusted him with the care of his flock. Every time, you see, that Peter said I love you, the Lord Jesus said to him, Feed my lambs, feed my sheep (Jn 21:15-17). The one man Peter represents the unity of all the shepherds or pastors of the Church-but of the good ones, who know how to feed Christ's flock for Christ, not for themselves.⁵⁰

So, brothers and sisters, receive it in a spirit of obedience when you hear that you are Christ's sheep; because we bishops too are filled with fear and trembling when we hear, Feed my sheep.⁵¹

Ambrose

He, then, who before was silent, to teach us that we ought not to repeat the words of the impious, this one, I say, when he heard: 'But who do you say I am,' immediately, not unmindful of his station, exercised his primacy, that is, the primacy of confession, not of honor; the primacy of belief, not of rank... This, then, is Peter who has replied for the rest of the Apostles; rather, before the rest of men. And so he is called the foundation, because he knows how to preserve not only his own but the common foundation. Christ agreed with him; the Father revealed it to him. For he who speaks of the true generation of the Father, received it from the Father, did not receive it from the flesh. Faith, then, is the foundation of the Church, for it was not said of Peter's flesh, but of his faith, that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' But his confession of faith conquered hell. And this confession did not shut out one heresy, for, since the Church like a good ship is often buffeted by many waves, the foundation of the Church should prevail against all heresies. The day will fail me sooner than the names of heretics and the different sects, yet against all is this general faith-that Christ is the Son of God, and eternal from the Father, and born of the Virgin Mary.⁵²

Jesus said to them: Who do men say that I am? Simon Peter answering said, The Christ of God (Lk. ix.20). If it is enough for Paul 'to know nothing but Christ Jesus and Him crucified,' (1 Cor. ii.2), what more is to be desired by me than to know Christ? For in this one name is the expression of His Divinity and Incarnation, and faith in His Passion. And accordingly though the other apostles knew, yet Peter answers before the rest, 'Thou art the Christ the Son of God.'... Believe, therefore,

as Peter believed, that thou also mayest be blessed, and that thou also mayest deserve to hear, 'Because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven.'...Peter therefore did not wait for the opinion of the people, but produced his own, saying, 'Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God': Who ever is, began not to be, nor ceases to be. Great is the grace of Christ, who has imparted almost all His own names to His disciples. 'I am,' said He, 'the light of the world,' and yet with that very name in which He glories, He favoured His disciples, saying, 'Ye are the light of the world.' 'I am the living bread;' and 'we all are one bread' (1 Cor. x.17)...Christ is the rock, for 'they drank of the same spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ' (1 Cor. x.4); also He denied not to His disciple the grace of this name; that he should be Peter, because he has from the rock (petra) the solidity of constancy, the firmness of faith. Make an effort, therefore, to be a rock! Do not seek the rock outside of yourself, but within yourself! Your rock is your deed, your rock is your mind. Upon this rock your house is built. Your rock is your faith, and faith is the foundation of the Church. If you are a rock, you will be in the Church, because the Church is on a rock. If you are in the Church the gates of hell will not prevail against you...He who has conquered the flesh is a foundation of the Church; and if he cannot equal Peter, he can imitate him.⁵³

Which of these three different causes of impossibility, think you, which we have enumerated (setting aside the fourth) can we meetly assign to the case of the Son of God? Is He naturally insensible and immovable, like a stone? He is indeed a stone of stumbling to the wicked, a cornerstone for the faithful; but He is not insensible, upon Whom the faithful affection of sentient people are stayed. He is not an immovable rock, 'for they drank of a Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.'...Moreover, that thou mayest know that it is after His Manhood that He entreats, and in virtue of His Godhead that He commands, it is written for thee in the Gospel that He said to Peter: 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' To the same Apostle, again, when on a former occasion he said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' He made answer: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build My Church, and I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' Could He not then, strengthen the faith of the man to whom, acting on His own authority, He gave the kingdom, whom He called the Rock, thereby declaring him to be the foundation of the Church?⁵⁴

It was not out of confusion that Peter said: 'Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinner' (Lk. 5.8); for Peter was a wise and judicious man-a man in whom were both the foundation of the Church and the authority to discipline; and he perceived that nothing could be more useful to him than that he should be exalted as a result of Christ's ensuing act (of raising him).⁵⁵

It is that same Peter to whom He said, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church.' Therefore, where Peter is, there the Church is, there death is not, but life eternal. And therefore did He add, 'and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,' (or him). Blessed Peter, against whom 'the gates of hell prevailed not,' the gate of heaven closed not; but who, on the contrary, destroyed the porches of hell, and opened the heavenly vestibules; wherefore, though placed on earth, he opened heaven and closed hell.⁵⁶

'They sucked honey out of the firm rock,' (Deut. xxxii.13): for the flesh of Christ is a rock, which redeemed heaven and the whole world (1 Cor. x.4).⁵⁷

The Lord said to Peter: on this rock I will build My Church...On this catholic confession of faith he establishes the faithful in life.⁵⁸

Nor Paul inferior to Peter, though the latter is the foundation of the Church, and the former, a wise architect, knew how to lay a foundation for the steps of believing people; nor was Paul, I say, unworthy of the college of apostles; and is easily to be compared even with the first, and second to none. For who knows not himself unequal, makes himself equal.⁵⁹

Ambrosiaster

By the apostles who were somewhat distinguished among their colleagues, whom also he, Paul, because of their constancy calls 'pillars', and who had always been intimate with the Lord, even beholding his glory on the mount, by them he (Paul) says the gift which he received from God was approved; so that he would be worthy to have primacy in preaching to the Gentiles, even as Peter had the primacy in preaching to the circumcision. And even as he gives colleagues to Peter, outstanding men among the apostles, so he also joins to himself Barnabas, who was associated with him by divine choice; yet he claims the privilege of primacy granted by God for himself alone, even as it was granted to Peter alone among the apostles, in such a way that the apostles of the circumcision stretched out their right hands to the apostles of the Gentiles to manifest a harmony of fellowship, that both parties, knowing that they had received from the Lord a spirit of completeness in the imparting of the gospel, might show that they were in no way appointing one another.⁶⁰

(Verse 20). 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.' The above puts together New and Old Testaments. For the apostles proclaimed what the prophets said would be, although Paul says to the Corinthians: 'God placed the apostles first, the prophets second' (1 Cor. 12.28). But this refers to other prophets, for in 1 Cor. Paul writes about ecclesiastical orders; here he is concerned with the foundation of the Church. The prophets prepared, the apostles laid the foundations. Wherefore the Lord says to Peter: 'Upon this rock I shall build my Church,' that is, upon this confession of the catholic faith I shall establish the faithful in life.⁶¹

Paul names Peter alone and compares him to himself since he had received the privilege of founding the Church; in like manner Paul had been chosen to have the privilege of founding the Churches of the Gentiles. It did nevertheless happen that Peter preached also to the Gentiles, if he had cause, and Paul to the Jews, for each is found to have done both. Still we find that full authority in preaching to Jews was given to Peter, and to Paul complete authority in preaching to Gentiles. Wherefore indeed he calls himself teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth...⁶²

After the concord of fellowship and the honor which each accorded to the other in the matter of the privilege of founding churches, now, because some matter of neglect or error has intervened, the apostles seem to differ among themselves-not in a personal concern, but in a concern of the Church. 'To his face,' Paul says, 'I opposed him.' What does this mean, except that Paul contradicted Peter in his presence? And Paul has added the reason: 'Because he stood condemned.' Condemned assuredly by evangelical truth which Peter's act (of separating himself from the circumcision) opposed. For who dared to contradict Peter, the chief apostle to whom the Lord had given the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, except such another who in the assurance of his election knew that he was not unequal, and so could firmly disavow what Peter had thoughtlessly done.⁶³

Worthy it was that Paul desired to see Peter, since Peter was chief among the apostles, to whom the Savior had entrusted the care of the Church. Not, to be sure, that Paul could learn anything from him, since he had already been taught by that same authority by whom Peter himself had been instructed: but on account of the disposition of the apostolic office, so that Peter might know that this office which he himself had received had been given also to Paul. Coming, therefore, to Peter, Paul was warmly received, and he remained with Peter for 15 days, as co-apostle in harmony with him. Paul makes these things known, in order to show that he possessed the agreement of the apostles and that they in no way dissented, as certain pseudo-apostles were murmuring about him.⁶⁴

'For I am not at all inferior to these superlative apostles' (2 Cor. 12.11)...He says this because he is inferior to his apostolic predecessors neither in preaching, nor in performing miracles, nor in worthiness, but only in time. But if we think that things must be ranked according to time, John began to preach before Christ, and Christ did not baptize John, but John Christ. Does God judge this? Moreover, Andrew followed the Savior before Peter; and yet Andrew did not receive the privilege (of founding the Church), but Peter. Why then did Paul not seem to be an apostle to certain persons when by the grace of God he was able to do the same things which the other apostles did? Thus he grieves and under compulsion shows what, according to the estimate of the Lord, he deserves...⁶⁵

Luke 22:32: Clearly, in Peter all are contained: praying for Peter, (Jesus) is understood to have prayed for all. It is always the people who are rebuked or praised in a leader. This is why He also says elsewhere: 'I pray for those whom you have given me' (John 17:9).⁶⁶

Aphraates

But before all things I desire that thou wouldst write and instruct me concerning this that straitens me, namely concerning our faith; how it is, and what its foundation is, and on what structure it rises, and on what it rests, and in what way is its fulfilment and consummation, and what are the works required for it.

Faith...is like a building that is built up of many pieces of workmanship and so its edifice rises to the top. And know, my beloved, that in the foundations of the building stones are laid, and so resting upon stones the whole edifice rises until it is perfected. Thus also the true Stone, our Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of all faith. And on Him, on (this) Stone faith is based. And resting on faith all the structure rises until it is completed. For it is the foundation that is the beginning of all the building. For when anyone is brought nigh unto faith, it is laid for him upon the Stone, that is our Lord Jesus Christ. And His building cannot be shaken by the waves, nor can it be injured by the winds. By the stormy blasts it does not fall, because its structure is reared upon the rock of the true Stone. And in that I have called Christ the Stone, I have not spoken my own thought, but the Prophets beforehand called Him the Stone.

And now hear concerning faith that is based upon the Stone, and concerning the structure that is reared up upon the Stone...So also let the man, who becomes a house, yea, a dwelling place, for Christ take heed to what is needed for the service of Christ, Who lodges in him, and with what things he may please Him. For first he builds his building on the Stone, which is Christ. On Him, on the Stone, is faith built...All these things doth the faith demand that is based on the rock of the true Stone, that is Christ.

And if perchance thou shouldst say: If Christ is set for the foundation, how does Christ also dwell in the building when it is completed? For both these things did the blessed Apostle say. For he said: 'I as a wise architect have laid the foundation.' And there he defined the foundation and made it clear, for he said as follows: 'No man can lay other foundation than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus'...And therefore that word is accomplished, that Christ dwells in men, namely, in those who believe on Him, and He is the foundation on which is reared up the whole building.

But I must proceed to my former statement that Christ is called the Stone in the Prophets. For in ancient times David said concerning Him: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the building.' And how did the builders reject this Stone which is Christ? How else than that they so rejected Him before Pilate and said: 'This man shall not be King over us'...By these things they rejected the Stone which is Christ.

And furthermore Isaiah also prophesied beforehand with regard to this stone. For he said: 'Thus saith the Lord, Behold I lay in Zion a chosen stone in the precious corner, the head of the wall of the foundation.' And he said again there: 'Every one that believeth on it shall not fear. And whosoever falleth on that stone shall be broken, and everyone on whom it shall fall, it will crush. For the people of the house of Israel fell upon Him, and He became their destruction for ever.' And again: 'it shall fall on the image and crush it. And the Gentiles believed on it and do not fear.' And he shows thus with regard to that stone that it was laid as head of the wall and foundation.

And again Daniel also spoke concerning this stone which is Christ. For he said: 'The stone was cut out from the mountain, not by hands, and it smote the image, and the whole earth was filled with it.' This he showed beforehand with regard to Christ that the whole earth shall be filled with Him. For lo! by the faith of Christ are all the ends of the earth filled, as David said: 'The sound of the Gospel of Christ has gone forth into all the earth.' And again when He sent forth His apostles He spake thus to them: 'Go forth, make disciples of all nations and they will believe on Me.' And again the Prophet Zechariah also prophesied about the stone which is Christ. For he said: 'I saw a chief stone of equality and of love.'

And again the Apostle has commented for us upon this building and upon the foundation; for he said thus: 'No man can lay another foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'...And he showed with regard to faith that first it is laid on a sure foundation...These then are the works of faith which is based on the true Stone which is Christ, on Whom the whole building is reared up.⁶⁷

The Apostolical Constitutions

Luke 22:32: For on this account the devil himself is very angry at the holy Church of God: he is removed to you, and has raised against you adversities, seditions, and reproaches, schisms and heresies. For he had before subdued that people to himself, by their slaying of Christ. But you who have left his vanities, he tempts in different ways, as he did the blessed Job. For indeed he opposed that great high priest Joshua the son of Josedek; and he often times sought to sift us, that our faith might fail...He will say now, as He said formerly of us when we were assembled together, 'I have prayed that your faith may not fail.'68

Asterius

Aptly indeed Isaiah says prophetically that the Father was laying the Son as a cornerstone, doubtless signifying that the whole structure of the world was borne upon that foundation and base. No doubt at another time, as has been written in the holy books of the Gospel, the only Begotten calls Peter the foundation of the Church, saying: 'You are Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church.' Now this chief, as it were, great and hard stone, Christ, was set into the excavated hollow of this world, into this vale of tears, as David says, in order that he might bear all Christians founded upon him aloft into the domicile of our hope. 'For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.' But our Saviour did give Peter a like appellation, thereby teaching that his chief disciple ought to be honored, calling him a rock of faith. Through Peter, therefore who was made a true and faithful teacher of piety, a stable and inflexible foundation for the Church exists. Moreover, having struck root in this foundation we stand complete, who are Christians all over the world. To be sure from the time of the announcement of the Gospel, many temptations have sprung up, and innumerable tyrants with their chief, the devil, have tried to destroy the foundations and to turn us from our moorings. Rivers have run like torrents, say the saving and holy Scriptures; the violent winds of diabolical spirits have rushed; the plentiful and harsh showers of persecution have poured down forcefully upon Christians. Yet nothing has proved more powerful than the divine ramparts, because doubtless the foundation of faith was raised by the holy hands of that chief apostles. These things, I think, needed to be said in response to that word of blessing from him who called the evangelist and holy preacher a rock. Moreover we may see, if we please, the method by which Peter built-not with stones and walls, or other earthly materials, but with words and deeds which he performed at the instigation of the Holy Spirit.69

Thus Peter calls Christ the Son of the living God. Peter and no other spoke carefully; and he confessed the right rule of faith which had no error in it. And having given to us all in this inviolable law a work of piety, he by no means departed without reward, since-blessed by him who is in the highest degree blessed-he was named a rock of faith, and the foundation and basis of God's Church. Moreover by promise he received the keys of the kingdom and was made master of its gates, so that he might open to whomever he willed and might close the gates to whomever they must rightly be closed. By these last we understand those who are defiled and profane, and those who deny that confession on account of which Peter, like a sedulous and energetic guardian of the Church's goods, was put in charge of the gates of the kingdom.70

Athanasius

I know moreover that not only this thing saddens you, but also the fact that while others have obtained the churches by violence, you are meanwhile cast out from your places. For they hold the places, but you the Apostolic Faith. They are, it is true, in the places, but outside of the true Faith; while you are outside the places indeed, but the Faith, within you...But ye are blessed, who by faith are in the Church, dwell upon the foundations of the faith, and have full satisfaction, even the highest degree of faith which remains among you unshaken. For it has come down to you from Apostolic tradition, and frequently has accursed envy wished to unsettle it, but has not been able. On the contrary, they have rather been cut off from their attempts to do so. For thus it is written, 'Thou art the Son of the Living God,' Peter confessing it by revelation of the Father, and being told, 'Blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood did not reveal it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven,' and the rest. No one therefore will ever prevail against your Faith, most beloved brethren.71

It is written, 'The Lord in Wisdom founded the earth;' if then by Wisdom the earth is founded, how can He who founds be founded? Nay, this too is said after the manner of proverbs, and we must in like manner investigate its sense; that we may know that, while by Wisdom the Father frames and founds the earth to be firm and steadfast, Wisdom Itself is founded for us, that It may become beginning and foundation of our new creation and renewal. Accordingly here as before, He says not, 'Before the world He has made me Word or Son,' lest there should be as it were a beginning of His making. For this we must seek before all things, whether He is Son, and on this point specially search the Scriptures;' for this it was, when the Apostles were questioned that Peter answered, saying, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.' This also the father of the Arian heresy asked as one of his first questions; 'If Thou be the Son of God;' for he knew that this is the truth and the sovereign principle of our faith; and that, if He were Himself the Son, the tyranny of the devil would have its end; but if He were a creature, He too was one of those descended from that Adam whom he deceived, and he had no cause for anxiety. For the same reason the Jews of the day were angered, because the Lord said that He was Son of God, and that God was His proper Father. For had He called Himself one of the creatures, or said, 'I am a work,' they had not been startled at the intelligence, nor thought such words blasphemy, knowing, as they did, that even Angels had come among their fathers; but since He called Himself Son, they perceived that such was not the note of a creature, but of God head and of the Father's nature. The Arians then ought, even in imitation of their own father the devil, to take some special pains on this point; and if He has said, 'He founded me to be Word or Son,' then to think as they do; but if He has not so spoken, not to invent for themselves what is not.

For He says not, 'Before the world He founded me as Word or Son,' but simply, 'He founded me,' to shew again, as I have said, that not for His own sake but for those that are built upon Him does He here also speak, after the way of proverbs. For this knowing, the Apostle also writes, 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ; but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.' And it must be that the foundation should be such as the things built on it, that they may admit of being well compacted together. Being then the Word, He has not, as Word, any such as Himself, who may be compacted with Him; for He is Only-begotten; but having become man, He has the like of Him, those namely the likeness of whose flesh He has put on. Therefore according to His manhood He is founded, that we, as precious stones, may admit of building upon Him, and may become a temple of the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us. And as He is a foundation, and we stones built upon Him, so again He is a Vine and we knit to Him as branches, not according to the essence of the Godhead; for this surely is impossible; but according to His manhood, for the branches must be like the vine, since we are like Him according to the flesh.

Thus, He saith not, 'He made me a foundation,' lest He might seem to be made and to have a beginning of being, and they might thence find a shameless occasion of irreligion; but, 'He founded Me.' Now what is founded is founded for the sake of the stones which are raised upon it; it is not a random process, but a stone is first transported from the mountain and set down in the depth of the earth. And while a stone is in the mountain it is not yet founded; but when need demands, and it is transported, and laid in the depth of the earth, then forthwith if the stone could speak, it would say, 'He now founded me, who brought me hither from the mountain.' Therefore the Lord also did not when founded take a beginning of existence; for He was the Word before that; but when He put on our body, which He severed and took from Mary, then He says, 'He hath founded me;' as much as to say, 'Me, being the Word, He hath enveloped in a body of earth.' For so He is founded for our sakes, taking on Him what is ours, that we, as incorporated and compacted and bound together in Him through the likeness of the flesh, may attain unto a perfect man, and abide immortal and incorruptible.

Wherefore also in the Judgment, when every one shall receive according to his conduct, He says, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' How then, or in whom, was it prepared before we came to be, save in the Lord who 'before the world' was founded for this purpose; that we, as built upon Him, might partake as well-compacted stones, the life and grace which is from Him?⁷²

And so the works of the Jews are undone, for they were a shadow; but the Church is firmly established; it is founded on the rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Theirs it was to say, Why dost Thou, being a man, make Thyself God? and their disciple is the Samosatene; whence to his followers with reason does he teach his heresy. But we have not so learned Christ, if so be that we have heard Him, and have learned from Him.⁷³

But what is also to the point, let us note that the very tradition, teaching and faith of the Catholic Church from the beginning, which the Lord gave, was preached by the Apostles, and was preserved by the Fathers. On this was the Church

founded; and if anyone departs from this, he neither is nor any longer ought to be called a Christian...And because this is the faith of the Church, let them somehow understand that the Lord sent out the Apostles and commanded them to make this the foundation of the Church...74

In Thy saints, who in every age have been well pleasing to Thee, is truly Thy faith; for Thou hast founded the world on Thy faith, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.75

Basil the Great

And the house of God, located on the peaks of the mountains, is the Church according to the opinion of the Apostle. For he says that one must know 'how to behave in the household of God.' Now the foundations of this Church are on the holy mountains, since it is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. One of these mountains was indeed Peter, upon which rock the Lord promised to build his Church. Truly indeed and by highest right are sublime and elevated souls, souls which raise themselves above earthly things, called 'mountains.' The soul of the blessed Peter was called a lofty rock because he had a strong mooring in the faith and bore constantly and bravely the blows inflicted by temptations. All, therefore, who have acquired an understanding of the godhead-on account of the breadth of mind and of those actions which proceed from it-are the peaks of mountains, and upon them the house of God is built.76

Basil of Seleucia

'You, however, who do you say I am?' And silence held them all suspended, for not all knew. But when Jesus asked, acknowledged ignorance in some divine way suggested a response to Peter, and towards a response he was spontaneously moved, like a lyre endowed with reason and roused by action of invisible hands. In obedience the tongue of Peter sought employment and though ignorant of doctrine, supplied a response: 'You are Christ, Son of the living God.' Jesus confirmed this statement with his approbation, thereby instructing all: 'Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven.' He called Peter blessed, so that Peter might join faith to his statement, just as he praised the response because of its meaning...Now Christ called this confession a rock, and he named the one who confessed it 'Peter,' perceiving the appellation which was suitable to the author of this confession. For this is the solemn rock of religion, this the basis of salvation, this the wall of faith and the foundation of truth: 'For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.' To whom be glory and power forever.77

Peter, the Coryphaeus of the apostles, the chief of the disciples of Christ, the accurate expositor of the revelations from the Father, he who walked on the sea, &c.78

Bede

He commends the great perfection of faith to us (Mt. 16.16), equally he demonstrates the great strength of this perfected and completed faith against all temptation (Mt. 16.18!).79

You are Peter and on this rock from which you have taken your name, that is, on myself, I will build my Church, upon that perfection of faith which you confessed I will build my Church by whose society of confession should anyone deviate although in himself he seems to do great things he does not belong to the building of my Church...Metaphorically it is said to him on this rock, that is, the Saviour which you confessed, the Church is to be built, who granted participation to the faithful confessor of his name.80

Moreover he is called Peter because of the vigour of his mind which clung fast to that most solid rock, Christ.81

Peter, who before was called Simon, received from the Lord the name 'Peter' because of the strength of his faith and the firmness of his confession; for Peter clung with a firm and sturdy heart to him about whom it is written: 'the rock, moreover, was Christ.'⁸²

And upon this rock, that is, upon the Lord and Saviour who gave participation in his name to the one who in faith recognized, loved, and confessed him, so that Peter might be called by the name of the rock: upon this rock the Church is built, so that one does not attain to eternal life and the share of the elect except by faith in and love of Christ, by partaking of Christ's sacraments, and by observing his commandments.⁸³

Cassiodorus

'It will not be moved' is said about the Church to which alone that promise has been given: 'You are Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.' For the Church cannot be moved because it is known to have been founded on that most solid rock, namely, Christ the Lord...⁸⁴

The Church's foundation is Christ the Lord, who thus holds his Church together, so that it can by no shaking collapse, just as the Apostle says: 'For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus' (1 Cor. 3:11)...Moreover, the words 'on the holy mountains' signify the apostles and the prophets who are called mountains because of the firmness of their faith and the excellence of their righteousness. Deservedly have they been called by such a name upon whom the true Church of God has been established.⁸⁵

Psalm 103.5: 'Who established the earth on its foundation so that it will never be shaken.' It does not seem this verse can be construed literally; for since we have read that the earth must be changed, how can it happen that it should never be shaken? But here when we read 'established earth,' let us rather understand the strengthened Church, which can be called 'earth' insofar as it is composed of earthly men, as we read in another place: 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.' From this 'foundation,' Christ is rightly inferred, who is an immovable foundation and an inviolable rock. Concerning this the Apostle says: 'For no other foundation can any man lay than that which is already laid, which is Christ Jesus' (1 Cor. 3.11). If we abide continually upon Christ we will in no way be shaken.⁸⁶

Cassian (John)

But if you prefer the authority of a greater person...let us interrogate no beginner or untaught schoolboy, nor a woman whose faith might appear to be rudimentary; but that greatest of disciples among disciples, and of teachers among teachers, who presided and ruled over the Roman Church, and held the chief place in the priesthood as he did in the faith. Tell us then, tell us, we pray, O Peter, thou chief of the Apostles, tell us how the Churches ought to believe in God. For it is right that you should teach us, as you were taught by the Lord, and that you should open to us the gate, of which you received the key. Shut out all those who try to overthrow the heavenly house: and those who are endeavoring to enter by secret holes and unlawful approaches: as it is clear that none can enter the gate of the kingdom save one to whom the key bestowed on the Churches is revealed by you. Tell us then how we ought to believe in Jesus Christ and to confess our common Lord. You will surely reply without hesitation: 'Why do you consult me as to the way in which the Lord should be confessed, when you have before you my own confession of Him? Read the gospel, and you will not want me myself, when you have got my confession. Nay, you have got me myself when you have my confession; for though I have no weight apart from my confession, yet the actual confession adds weight to my person.'

Tell us then, O Evangelist, tell us the confession: tell us the faith of the chief Apostle...'Thou art,' he says, 'the Christ the Son of the living God.'...Is there anything puzzling or obscure in this? It is nothing but a plain and open confession: he proclaims Christ to be the Son of God.

But what are the other words which follow that saying of the Lord's, with which He commends Peter? 'And I,' said He, 'say

unto thee, that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church.' Do you see how the saying of Peter is the faith of the Church? He then must of course be outside the Church, who does not hold the faith of the Church. 'And to thee,' saith the Lord, 'I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' This faith deserved heaven: this faith received the keys of the heavenly kingdom. See what awaits you. You cannot enter the gate to which this key belongs, if you have denied the faith of this key. 'And the gate,' He adds, 'of hell shall not prevail against thee.' The gates of hell are the belief or rather the misbelief of heretics. For widely as hell is separated from heaven, so widely is he who denies from him who confessed that Christ is God. 'Whatsoever,' He proceeds, 'thou shalt bind on earth, shalt be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shalt be loosed also in heaven.' The perfect faith of the Apostle somehow is given the power of Deity, that what it should bind or loose on earth, might be bound or loosed in heaven. For you then, who come against the Apostle's faith, as you see that already you are bound on earth, it only remains that you should know that you are bound also in heaven.⁸⁷

Chrysostom (John)

'But whom say ye that I am?' that is, 'ye that are with me always, and see me working miracles, and have yourselves done many mighty works by me.' What then saith the mouth of the apostles, Peter, the ever fervent, the leader of the apostolic choir? When all are asked, he answers. And whereas when He asked the opinion of the people, all replied to the question; when He asked their own, Peter springs forward, and anticipates them, and saith, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' What then saith Christ? 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.'...Why then is this man blessed? Because he acknowledged Him very Son...What then saith Christ? 'Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas.' 'Thus since thou hast proclaimed my Father, I too name him that begat thee;' all but saying, 'As thou art son of Jonas, even so am I of my Father.'

Therefore He added this, 'And I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; that is, on the faith of his confession. Hereby He signifies that many were on the point of believing, and raises his spirit, and makes him a shepherd. 'And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' And if not against it, much more not against Me. So be not troubled because thou art shortly to hear that I shall be betrayed and crucified.' Then He mentions also another honor. 'And I also will give thee the keys of the heavens.' But what is this, 'And I also will give thee?' 'As the Father hath given thee to know Me, so I also will give thee.' And He said not, 'I will entreat the Father' (although the manifestation of his authority was great, and the largeness of the gift unspeakable), but, 'I will give thee.' What dost thou give? tell me. 'The keys of the heavens, that whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.' How then is it not 'His to give to sit on His right hand, and on His left,' when He saith, 'I will give thee?'

Seest thou how He, His own self, leads Peter on to high thoughts of Him, and reveals Himself, and implies that He is Son of God by these two promises? For those things which are peculiar to God alone, (both to absolve sins, and to make the church incapable of overthrow in such assailing waves, and to exhibit a man that is a fisher more solid than a rock, while all the world is at war with him), these He promises Himself to give; as the Father, speaking to Jeremiah, said, He would make him as 'a brazen pillar, and as a wall;' but him to one nation only, this man in every part of the world. I fain would inquire then of those who desire to lessen the dignity of the Son, which manner of gifts were greater, those which the Father gave to Peter, or those which the Son gave him? For the Father gave to Peter the revelation of the Son; but the Son gave him to sow that of the Father and that of Himself in every part of the world; and to mortal man He entrusted the authority over all things in Heaven, giving him the keys; who extended the church to every part of the world, and declared it to be stronger than heaven.⁸⁸

For Simon, saith He, 'Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat;' that is, that he may trouble, confound, tempt you; but 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' And why, if Satan desired all, did He not say concerning all, I have prayed for you? Is it not quite plain that it is this, which I have mentioned before, that it is as reproving him, and showing that his fall was more grievous than the rest, that He directs His words to him? And wherefore said He not, But I did not suffer it, rather than, 'I have prayed?' He speaks from this time lowly things, on his way to His passion, that He might show His humanity. For He that hath built His church upon Peter's confession, and has so fortified

it, that ten thousand dangers and deaths are not to prevail over it; He that hath given him the keys of Heaven, and hath put him in possession of so much authority, and in no manner needed a prayer for these ends (for neither did He say, I have prayed, but with His own authority, 'I will build My church, and I will give thee the keys of Heaven'), how should He need to pray, that He might brace up the shaken soul of a single man? Wherefore then did He speak in this way? For the cause which I mentioned, and because of their weakness, for they had not as yet the becoming view of Him.⁸⁹

For when Nathaniel said, 'Thou art the Son of God,' Christ replies, 'Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these.' Now what is the question arising from this passage? It is this. Peter, when after so many miracles and such high doctrine he confessed that, 'Thou art the Son of God' (Matt. Xvi.16), is called 'blessed,' as having received the revelation from the Father; while Nathanael, though he said the very same thing before seeing or hearing either miracles or doctrine, had no such word addressed to him, but as though he had not said so much as he ought to have said, is brought to things greater still. What can be the reason for this? It is, that Peter and Nathanael both spoke the same words, but not both with the same intention. Peter confessed Him to be 'The Son of God' but as being very God; Nathanael, as being mere man. And whence does this appear? From what he said after these words; for after, 'Thou art the Son of God,' he adds, 'Thou art the King of Israel.' But the Son of God is not 'King of Israel' only, but of all the world. And what I say is clear, not from this only, but also from what follows. For Christ added nothing more to Peter, but as though his faith were perfect, said, upon this confession He would build the Church; but in the other case He did nothing like this, but the contrary.⁹⁰

In speaking of S. Peter, the recollection of another Peter has come to me (St. Flavian, his bishop), the common father and teacher, who has inherited his prowess, and also obtained his chair. For this is the one great privilege of our city, Antioch, that it received the leader of the apostles as its teacher in the beginning. For it was right that she who was first adorned with the name of Christians, before the whole world, should receive the first of the apostles as her pastor. But though we received him as teacher, we did not retain him to the end, but gave him up to royal Rome. Or rather we did retain him to the end, for though we do not retain the body of Peter, we do retain the faith of Peter, and retaining the faith of Peter we have Peter.⁹¹

He saith unto him, 'Feed my sheep'. And why, having passed over the others, doth He speak with Peter on these matters? He was the chosen one of the Apostles, the mouth of the disciples, the leader of the band; on this account also Paul went up upon a time to enquire of him rather than the others. And at the same time to show him that he must now be of good cheer, since the denial was done away, Jesus putteth into his hands the chief authority among the brethren; and He bringeth not forward the denial, nor reproacheth him with what had taken place, but saith: 'If thou lovest Me, preside over thy brethren, and the warm love which thou didst ever manifest, and in which thou didst rejoice, show thou now; and the life which thou saidst thou wouldest lay down for Me, now give for My sheep'...And if any should say 'How then did James receive the chair at Jerusalem?' I would make this reply, that He appointed Peter teacher not of the chair, but of the world...Then Peter turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; who also leaned on His breast at supper; and saith, Lord, and what shall this man do?' Wherefore hath he reminded us of that reclining? Not without cause or in a chance way, but to show us what boldness Peter had after the denial. For he who then did not dare to question Jesus, but committed the office to another, was even entrusted with the chief authority over the brethren, and not only doth not commit to another what relates to himself, but himself now puts another question to his Master concerning another. John is silent but Peter speaks. He showeth also here the love which he bare towards him; for Peter greatly loved John as is clear from what followed, and their close union is shown through the whole Gospel, and in the Acts. When therefore Christ had foretold great things to him, and committed the world to him, and spake beforehand of his martyrdom, and testified that his love was greater than that of the others, desiring to have John also to share with him, he said, 'And what shall this man do?' 'Shall he not come the same way with us?' And as at that other time not being able himself to ask, he puts John forward, so now desiring to make him a return, and supposing that he would desire to ask about the matters pertaining to himself, but had not courage, he himself undertook the questioning. What then saith Christ? 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?' Since he spake from strong affection, and wishing not to be torn away from him, Christ, to show that however much he might love, he could not go beyond his love, saith, 'If I will that he tarry-what is that to thee?'...And this

He did to withdraw them (Peter and John) from their unseasonable sympathy for each other; for since they were about to receive the charge of the world, it was necessary that they should no longer be closely associated together, for assuredly this would have been a great loss to the world. Wherefore He saith unto him, 'Thou hast a work entrusted unto thee, look to it, accomplish it, labor and struggle. What if I will that he tarry here? Look thou to and care for thine own matters.'92

For even if all were believers, still all were not alike, but were different in their merits. Wherefore to lead them all to greater emulation, he keeps no man's ecomiums concealed. For when they who labor more, do not receive the greater reward also, many become more listless. On this ground even in the kingdom, the honors are not equal, nor among the disciples were all alike, but the three were preeminent among the rest. And among these three again there was a great difference. For this is a very exact method observed by God even to the last. Hence, 'one star differeth from another star in glory,' (1 Cor. xv.41), it says. And yet all were Apostles and all are to sit on twelve thrones, and all left their goods, and all accompanied with Him; still it was the three He took. And again, to these very three, He said it was possible that some might even be superior. 'For to sit,' He says, 'on My right hand and on My left, is not mine to give, save to those for whom it is prepared' (Mark x.40). And He sets Peter before them, when He says, 'Lovest thou Me more than these' (John 21:15)? And John too was loved even above the rest. For there shall be a strict examination of all, and if thou be but little better than thy neighbor, if it be even an atom, or anything ever so little, God will not overlook even this.93

On this wise again Paul saith, 'I am not meet to be called an apostle;' because of this he became even first of all. So likewise John: 'I am not meet to loose the latchet of His shoe;' because of this he was the 'friend of the Bridegroom,' and the hand which he affirmed to be unworthy to touch his shoes, this did Christ draw unto His own head. So Peter too said, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man;' because of this he became a foundation of the Church. For nothing is so acceptable to God as to number one's self with the last. This is a first principle of all practical wisdom.94

For the Son of thunder, the beloved of Christ, the pillar of the Churches throughout the world, who holds the keys of heaven, who drank the cup of Christ, and was baptized with His baptism, who lay upon his Master's bosom, with much confidence, this man now comes forward to us now; not as an actor of a play, not as hiding his head with a mask, (for he hath another sort of words to speak), nor mounting a platform, nor striking the stage with his foot, nor dressed out with apparel of gold, but he enters wearing a robe of inconceivable beauty.95

The merciful God is wont to give this honour to his servants, that by their grace others may acquire salvation; as was agreed by the blessed Paul, that teacher of the world who emitted the rays of his teaching everywhere.96

Where the Cherubim sing the glory, where the Seraphim are flying, there shall we see Paul, with Peter, and as chief and leader of the choir of the saints, and shall enjoy his generous love. For if when here he loved men so, that when he had the choice of departing and being with Christ, he chose to be here, much more will he there display a warmer affection. I love Rome even for this, although indeed one has other grounds for praising it, both for its greatness, and its antiquity, and its beauty, and its populousness, and for its power and its wealth, and for its success in war. But I let all this pass, and esteem it blessed on this account, that both in his lifetime he wrote to them, and loved them so, and talked with them whiles he was with us, and brought his life to a close there. Wherefore the city is more notable upon this ground, than upon all others together. And as a body great and strong, it hath as two glistening eyes the bodies of these Saints. Not so bright is the heaven, when the sun sends forth his rays, as is the city of Rome, sending out these two lights into all parts of the world. From thence will Paul be caught up, thence Peter. Just bethink you, and shudder, at the thought of what a sight Rome will see, when Paul ariseth suddenly from that deposit, together with Peter, and is lifted up to meet the Lord. What a rose will Rome send up to Christ!...what two crowns will the city have about it! what golden chains will she be girded with! what fountains possess! Therefore I admire the city, not for the much gold, nor for the columns, not for the other display there, but for these pillars of the Church (1 Cor. 15:38).97

'For He that wrought for Peter unto the Apostleship of the Circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles.' He calls

the Gentiles the Uncircumcised and the Jews the Circumcision, and declares his own rank to be equal to that of the Apostles; and, by comparing himself with their Leader not with others, he shows that the dignity of each was the same. After he had established the proof of their unanimity, he takes courage, and proceeds confidently in his argument, not stopping at the Apostles, but advances to Christ Himself, and to the grace which He had conferred upon him...98

'And wherefore,' saith one, 'doth he not punish here?' That He may display that longsuffering of His, and may offer to us the salvation that cometh by repentance, and not make our race to be swept away, nor pluck away those who by an excellent change are able to be saved, before that salvation. For if He instantly punished upon the commission of sins, and destroyed, how should Paul have been saved, how should Peter, the chief teachers of the world? How should David have reaped the salvation that came by his repentance?99

This (James) was bishop, as they say, and therefore he speaks last, and herein is fulfilled that saying, 'In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established' (Deut. xvii.6; Matt. xviii.16)...'Then all the multitude kept silence,' etc. (v. 12). There was no arrogance in the Church. After Peter Paul speaks, and none silences him: James waits patiently; not starts up (for the next word). No word speaks John here, no word the other Apostles, but held their peace, for James was invested with the chief rule, and think it no hardship. So clean was their soul from love of glory. Peter indeed spoke more strongly, but James here more mildly: for thus it behooves one in high authority, to leave what is unpleasant for others to say, while he himself appears in the milder part.100

Peter, that chief of the apostles, first in the Church, the friend of Christ who did not receive revelation from man but from the Father, as the Lord bore witness to him saying: 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven': this same Peter (when I say 'Peter,' I name an unbreakable rock, an immovable ridge, a great apostle, the first of the disciples, the first called and the first obeying), this same Peter, I say, did not perpetrate a minor misdeed but a very great one. He denied the Lord. I say this, not accusing a just man, but offering to you the opportunity of repentance. Peter denied the Lord and governor of the world himself, the savior of all...101

Since then it was likely that he would be lifted up to folly by his practice of contradiction, Jesus next teacheth him not to oppose Him. This too Luke implies, when he telleth us that Christ said, 'And I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not' (Luke 22:32); that is, 'that thou be not finally lost.' In every way teaching him humility, and proving that human nature by itself is nothing. But, since great love made him apt for contradiction, He now so ordereth him, that he might not in after times be subject to this, when he should have received the stewardship of the world, but remembering what he had suffered, might know himself. And look at the violence of his fall; it did not happen to him once or twice, but he was so beside himself, that in a short time thrice did he utter the words of denial, that he might learn that he did not so love as he was loved. And yet, to one who had so fallen He saith again, 'Lovest thou Me more than these?' So that the denial was caused not by the cooling of his love, but from his having been stripped of aid from above. He accepteth then Peter's love, but cutteth off the spirit of contradiction engendered by it...For if the leader of their band, one so entirely fervent, was told that before the cock crew he should thrice deny his Master, it was likely that they would expect to have to undergo some great reverse, sufficient to bend even souls of the adamant. Since then it was probable that they considering these things would be astounded, see how He comforteth them, saying, 'Let not your heart be troubled.'102

'For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' I say, no man can lay it so long as he is a master-builder; but if he lay it...he ceases to be a master-builder. See how even from men's common notions he proves the whole of his proposition. His meaning is this: 'I have preached Christ, I have delivered unto you the foundation. Take heed how you build thereon, lest haply it be in vainglory, lest haply so as to draw away the disciples unto men.' Let us not then give heed unto the heresies. 'For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.' Upon this then let us build, and as a foundation let us cleave to it, as a branch to a vine; and let there be no interval between us and Christ...For the branch by its adherence draws in the fatness, and the building stands because it is cemented together. Since, if it stand apart it perishes, having nothing whereon to support itself. Let us not then merely keep hold of Christ, but let us be cemented to Him, for if we stand apart, we perish...And accordingly, there are many images whereby He brings us into union. Thus, if

you mark it, He is the 'Head', we are 'the body': can there be any empty interval between the head and the body? He is a 'Foundation', we are a 'building': He a 'Vine', we 'branches': He the 'Bridegroom', we the 'bride': He is the 'Shepherd', we the 'sheep': He is the 'Way', we 'they who walk therein.' Again, we are a 'temple,' He the 'Indweller': He the 'First-Begotten,' we the 'brethren': He the 'Heir,' we the 'heirs together with Him': He the 'Life,' we the 'living': He the 'Resurrection,' we 'those who rise again': He the 'Light,' we the 'enlightened.' All these things indicate unity; and they allow no void interval, not even the smallest.103

Peter, the coryphaeus of the choir of apostles, the mouth of the disciples, the foundation of the faith, the base of the confession, the fisherman of the world, who brought back our race from the depth of error to heaven, he who is everywhere fervent and full of boldness, or rather of love than boldness.104

He took the coryphaei and led them up into a high mountain apart...Why does He take these three alone? Because they excelled the others. Peter showed his excellence by his great love of Him, John by being greatly loved, James by the answer...'We are able to drink the chalice.'105...Do you not see that the headship was in the hands of these three, especially of Peter and James? This was the chief cause of their condemnation by Herod.106...The coryphaei, Peter the foundation of the Church, Paul the vessel of election.107

Christ foretold many things....He said, 'in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (John xvi.33), that is, no man shall get the better of you. And this we see by the events has come to pass. He said that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church' (Matt. xvi.18), even though persecuted, and that no one shall quench the preaching of the Gospel: and the experience of events bears witness to this prediction also: and yet when He said these things it was very hard to believe Him.108

And besides, the prophecies are of such a kind, as that even until now time has been unable to force aside the predicted course of things...for the destruction indeed of Jerusalem took place many years ago; but there are also other predictions which extend along from that time until His coming; which examine as you please: for instance, this, 'I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (Matt. xxviii.20) and, 'Upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Matt. xvi.18) and, 'This Gospel shall be preached unto all nations' (Matt. xxiv.14)...109

He spake some things to them about Himself, and about the churches, and about the things to come; and as He spake, He wrought mighty works. By the fulfillment therefore of what He said, it is plain that both the wonders wrought were real, and the future and promised things also. But that my meaning may be plainer, let me illustrate it from the actual case. He raised up Lazarus by a single word merely, and showing him alive. Again, He said, 'The gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Church (Matt. xvi.18)...110

Yet they frequently are seen to act confidently; as when John lay upon His bosom, when they came to Him and said, 'Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?' (Matt. xviii.1), when the sons of Zebedee entreated Him to set one of them on His right hand and the other on His left. Why then did they not here question Him? Because since all those instances related to themselves, they had need to enquire into them, while what here took place was of no such great importance to them. And indeed John did that a long time after towards the very end, when he enjoyed greater confidence, and was bold in the love of Christ; for he it was, he saith, 'whom Jesus loved.' What could equal such blessedness? But, beloved, let us not stop at this, the calling the Apostle blessed, but let us do all things that we also may be of the blessed, let us imitate the Evangelist, and see what it was that caused such great love. What then was it? He left his father, his ship, and his net, and followed Jesus. Yet this he did in common with his brother, and Peter, and Andrew, and the rest of the Apostles. What then was the special thing which caused this great love? Shall we discover it? He saith nothing of this kind about himself, but only that he was beloved; as to the righteous acts for which he was beloved he has modestly been silent. That Jesus loved him with an especial love was clear to every one; yet John doth not appear conversing with or questioning Jesus privately, as Peter often did, and Philip, and Judas, and Thomas, except only when he desired to show kindness and

compliance to his fellow Apostle; for when the chief of the Apostles by beckoning constrained him, then he asked. For these two had great love each for the other. Thus, for instance, they are seen going up together into the Temple and speaking in common to the people. Yet Peter in many places is moved, and speaks more warmly than John. And at the end he hears Christ say, 'Peter, lovest thou Me more than these?' (John xxi.15). Now it is clear that he who loved 'more than these' was also beloved. But this in his case was shown by loving Jesus, in the case of the other by being beloved by Jesus. What then was it which caused this especial love? To my thinking, it was that the man displayed great gentleness and meekness, for which reason he doth not appear in many places speaking openly. And how great a thing this is, is plain also from the case of Moses. It was this which made him such and so great as he was. There is nothing equal to lowliness of mind. For which cause Jesus with this began the Beatitudes, and when about to lay as it were the foundation of a mighty building, He placed first lowliness of mind. Without this a man cannot possibly be saved; though he fast, though he pray, though he give alms, if it be with a proud spirit, these things are abominable, if humility be not there...111

'And when Jesus beheld him,' saith the Evangelist, 'He said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.' He begins from this time forth to reveal things belonging to His Divinity, and to open it out by little predictions...But Peter makes no reply to these words; as yet he knew nothing clearly, but was still learning. And observe, that not even the prediction is fully set forth; for Jesus did not say, 'I will change thy name to Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church,' but, 'Thou shalt be called Cephas.' The former speech would have expressed too great authority and power; for Christ does not immediately nor at first declare all His power, but speaks for awhile in a humbler tone; and so, when He had given the proof of His Divinity, He puts it more authoritatively, saying, 'Blessed art thou, Simon, because My Father hath revealed it to thee'; and again, 'Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church' (Matt. xvi.17,18). Him therefore He so named, and James and his brother He called 'sons of thunder' (Mark iii.17). Why then doth He this? To show that it was He who gave the old covenant, that it was He that altered names, who called Abram 'Abraham,' and Sarai 'Sarah,' and Jacob 'Israel.' To many He assigned names even from their birth, as to Isaac, and Samson, and to those in Isaiah and Hosea (Isa. viii.3; His. I.4,6,9); but to others He gave them after they had been named by their parents, as to those we have mentioned, and to 'Joshua the son of Nun.'...But then they received each a different name, we now have all one name, that which is greater than any, being called 'Christians,' and 'sons of God,' and (His) 'friends,' and (His) 'Body.' For the very term itself is able more than all those others to rouse us, and make us more zealous for the practice of virtue. Let us not then act unworthily of the honor belonging to the title, considering the excess of our dignity, we who are called Christ's; for so Paul hath named us. Let us bear in mind and respect the grandeur of the appellation (1 Cor. iii.23). For if one who is said to be descended from some famous general, or one otherwise distinguished, is proud to be called this or that man's son, and deems the name a great honor, and strives in every way so as not to affix, by remissness of his own, reproach to him after whom he is called; shall not we who are called after the name, not of a general, nor any of the princes upon earth, nor Angel, nor Archangel, nor Seraphim, but of the King of these Himself, shall not we freely give our very life, so as not to insult Him who has honored us?...So let us who have been deemed worthy to be near Him, and much closer, and as much nearer than those just named, as the body is closer to the head than they, let us, I say, use every means to be imitators of Christ.112

And that thou mayest learn, that this denial (arose) not so much from sloth, as from his being forsaken of God, who was teaching him to know the measures of man and not to contradict the sayings of the Master, nor to be more high-minded than the rest, but to know that nothing can be done without God, and that 'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it' (Ps. cxxvii.1): therefore also Christ said to him alone, 'Satan desired to sift thee as wheat,' and I allowed it not, 'that thy faith may not fail' (Luke xxii.31, 32). For since it was likely that he would be high-minded, being conscious to himself that he loved Christ more than they all, therefore 'he wept bitterly'...113

What sayest thou, O Peter? the prophet said, 'The sheep shall be scattered;' Christ hath confirmed the saying, and sayest thou, No? Is not what passed before enough, when Thou saidst, 'Far be it from Thee,' and thy mouth was stopped? For this then He suffers him to fall, teaching him thereby to believe Christ in all things, and to account His own declaration more trustworthy than one's own conscience. And the rest too reaped no small benefit from his denial, having come to know man's weakness, and God's truth...For where he should have prayed, and have said, Help us, that we be not cut off, he is

confident in himself and saith, 'Though all men should be offended in Thee, yet will I never;' though all should undergo this, I shall never undergo it, which led him on little and little to self-confidence. Christ, then, out of a desire to put down this, permitted his denial. For since he neither submitted to Him nor the prophet...since he submitted not to His words, he is instructed by deeds. For in proof that for this intent He permitted it, that He might amend this in him, hear what He saith, 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' For this He said sharply reproving him, and showing that his fall was more grievous than the rest, and needed more help. For the matters of blame were two; both that he gainsaid; and, that he set himself before the other; or rather a third too, namely, that he attributed all to himself. To cure these things, He suffered the fall to take place...How then was it that He denied? he said not, that thou mayest not deny, but that thy faith fail not, that thou perish not utterly. For this came from His care.114

Luke 22:32

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Chrysologus (Peter)

For though to be called Peter is elsewhere merely to receive a name, in this place (the Church) it is a sign of strength. Truly, blessed Peter, that immovable foundation of salvation, showed himself to be such in the priestly office as they who desire the priesthood would wish to see...Peter is the guardian of the faith, the rock of the Church, and the gate keeper of heaven. He was chosen to be an apostolic fisher and with the hook of sanctity he brought to himself crowds submerged in waves of error, while by the nets of his teaching he brought from the multitude an abundance of men. Moreover, he was a most blessed and apostolic bird catcher, who reached the souls of youths flying through the air with the rod of the divine word.117

Just as Peter received his name from the rock, because he was the first to deserve to establish the Church, by reason of his steadfastness of faith, so also Stephen was named from a crown...the first who deserved to bear witness with his blood. Let Peter hold his ancient primacy of the apostolic choir. Let him open to those who enter the kingdom of heaven. Let him bind the guilty with his power and absolve the penitent in kindness.118

Cyprian

The Lord saith unto Peter, I say unto thee, (saith He,) that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18-19). To him again, after His resurrection, He says, Feed My sheep. Upon him being one He builds His Church; and although He gives to all the Apostles an equal power, and says, As My Father sent Me, even so I send you; receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted to him, and whosoever sins ye shall retain, they shall be retained (John 20:21);-yet in order to manifest unity, He has by His own authority so placed the source of the same unity, as to begin from one. Certainly the other Apostles also were what Peter was, endued with an equal fellowship both of honour and power; but a commencement is made from unity, that the Church may be set before as one; which one Church, in the Son of Songs, doth the Holy Spirit design and name in the Person of our Lord: My dove, My spotless one, is but one; she is the only one of her mother, elect of her that bare her (Cant. 9:6).

He who holds not this unity of the Church, does he think that he holds the faith? He who strives against and resists the Church, is he assured that he is in the Church? For the blessed Apostle Paul teaches this same thing, and manifests the sacrament of unity thus speaking, There is One Body, and One Spirit, even as ye are called in One Hope of your calling; One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God (Eph. 4:4). This unity firmly should we hold and maintain, especially we Bishops, presiding in the Church, in order that we may approve the Episcopate itself to be one and undivided. Let no one deceive the Brotherhood by falsehood; no one corrupt the truth of our faith, by a faithless treachery. The Episcopate is one; it is a whole, in which each enjoys full possession. The Church is likewise one, though she be spread abroad, and multiplies with the increase of her progeny: even as the sun has rays many yet one light; and the tree boughs many, yet its strength is one, seated in the deep-lodged root; and as, when many streams flow down from one source, though a multiplicity of waters seems to be diffused from the bountifulness of the overflowing abundance, unity is preserved in the source itself. Part a ray of the sun from its orb, and its unity forbids this division of light; break a branch from the tree, once broken it can bud no more; cut the stream from its fountain, the remnant will be dried up. Thus the Church, flooded with the light of the Lord, puts forth her rays through the whole world, with yet one light, which is spread upon all places, while its unity of body is not infringed. She stretches forth her branches over the universal earth, in the riches of plenty, and pours abroad her bountiful and onward streams; yet is there one head, one source, one Mother, abundant in the results of her fruitfulness.

It is of her womb that we are born; our nourishing is from her milk, our quickening from her breath. The spouse of Christ cannot become adulterate, she is undefiled and chaste; owning but one home, and guarding with virtuous modesty the sanctity of one chamber. She it is who keeps for God, and appoints unto the kingdom the sons she has borne. Whosoever parts company with the Church, and joins himself to an adulteress, is estranged from the promises of the Church. He who leaves the Church of Christ, attains not to Christ's rewards. He can no longer have God for a Father, who has not the Church for a Mother. If any man was able to escape, who remained without the ark of Noah, then will that man escape who is out of doors beyond the Church. The Lord warns us and says, He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who gathereth not with Me, scattereth. He who breaks the peace and concord of Christ, sets himself against Christ. He who gathers elsewhere but in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ. 119

Our Lord, whose precepts and warnings we ought to observe, determining the honour of a Bishop and to the ordering of His own Church, speaks in the Gospel, and says to Peter, I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18-19). Thence the ordination of Bishops, and the ordering of the Church, runs down along the course of time and line of succession, so that the Church is settled upon her Bishops; and every act of the Church is regulated by these same Prelates. 120

Luke 22:31-32

For Apostolic men also ceased not to pray day and night; and our Lord Himself also, the Author of our rule of life, and the Way of our example, prayed often and with watching, as we read in the Gospel, He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God: and we may be assured that when he prayed, He prayed for us, since He Himself was not a sinner, but bore the sins of others. But so truly did He pray for us, that we read in another place, And the Lord said to Peter, Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.121

The Lord offered petition, not for Himself (for what should He, the Innocent, ask for on His own account?) But for our sins, as Himself makes known when He says to Peter, Behold, Satan hath desired that he might sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And afterwards He entreats the Father for all, saying, Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on Me, through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us.122

Cyril of Alexandria

But why do we say that they are 'foundations of the earth'? For Christ is the foundation and unshakable base of all things- Christ who restrains and holds together all things, that they may be very firm. Upon him also we all are built, a spiritual household, put together by the Holy Spirit into a holy temple in which he himself dwells; for by our faith he lives in our hearts. But the next foundations, those nearer to us, can be understood to be the apostles and evangelists, those eyewitnesses and ministers of the word who have arisen for the strengthening of the faith. For when we recognize that their own traditions must be followed, we serve a faith which is true and does not deviate from Christ. For when he wisely and blamelessly confessed his faith to Jesus saying, 'You are Christ, Son of the living God,' Jesus said to divine Peter: 'You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church.' Now by the word 'rock', Jesus indicated, I think, the immoveable faith of the disciple. Likewise, the psalmist says: 'Its foundations are the holy mountains.' Very truly should the holy apostles and evangelists be compared to holy mountains for their understanding was laid down like a foundation for posterity, so that those who had been caught in their nets would not fall into a false faith.123

'Upon this rock I shall build my Church. And I shall give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' Observe how he declares himself to be Lord of both heaven and earth. For he promises things which are beyond the capacity of our nature, nay, even beyond the condition of angels-things which all should fittingly ascribe to a unique and surpassing nature and majesty. In the first place he says that the Church is under his own authority, but Scripture elsewhere affirms that the Church is subject to God rather than to any man. For Paul says that Christ has prepared the Church for himself to be without any wrinkle or blemish-the Church which he has founded, the foundation itself being predicated of him, since he is the Lord of strength. And of this Church he puts Peter the shepherd in charge. Then he adds: 'And to you I shall give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' This word no angel nor any other rational power can speak. It is proper only to God, Lord of all, who holds power in heaven and earth. Moreover the time of the gift was the hour of the resurrection when he said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any they are retained.'124

For that reason divine Scripture says that Peter, that exceptional figure among the apostles, was called blessed. For when the Savior was in that part of Caesarea which is called Philippi, he asked who the people thought he was, or what rumor about him had been spread throughout Judea and the town bordering Judea. And in response Peter, having abandoned the childish and abused opinions of the people, wisely and expertly exclaimed: 'You are Christ, Son of the living God.' Now when Christ heard this true opinion of him, he repaid Peter by saying: 'Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood have not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' The surname, I believe, calls nothing other than the unshakable and very firm faith of the disciple 'a rock,' upon which the Church was founded and made firm and remains continually impregnable even with respect to the very gates of Hell. But Peter's faith in the Son was not easily attained, nor did it flow from human apprehension; rather it was derived from the ineffable instruction from above; since God the Father clearly shows his own Son and causes a sure persuasion of him in the minds of his people. For Christ was in no way

deceptive when he said, 'Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.' If, therefore, blessed Peter, having confessed Christ to be the Son of the living God, are those not very wretched and abandoned who rashly rail at the will and undoubtedly true teaching of God, who drag down the one who proceeds from God's own substance and make him a creature, who foolishly reckon the coeternal author of life to be among those things which have derived their life from another source? Are such people not at any rate very ignorant?125

But allusively to the name from the rock (petra), He changes his name to Peter (petros), for on him was He about to found His Church.126

The Church is unshaken, and 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,' according to the voice of the Saviour, for it has Him for a foundation.127

It is likely that by these words (Is. 33:16) our Lord Jesus Christ is called a rock, in Whom, as some cave or sheepfold, the Church is conceived as having a safe and unshaken abiding place for its well-being; 'For thou art Peter,' the Saviour says, 'and upon this rock I will build My Church.'128

There is then one Christ and Son and Lord, not as though he were a man connected with God simply by a unity of dignity or authority, for equality of honour does not unite natures: Peter and John are equal in honour in that they are apostles and holy disciples, but the two are not one.129

John 21:15-17

If anyone asks for what cause he asked Simon only, though the other disciples were present, and what he means by 'Feed my lambs,' and the like, we answer that St. Peter, with the other disciples, had been already chosen to the Apostleship, but because meanwhile Peter had fallen (for under great fear he had thrice denied the Lord), he now heals him that was sick, and exacts a threefold confession in place of triple denial, contrasting the former with the latter, and compensating the fault with the correction...By the triple confession Peter abrogates the sin contracted in his triple denial. For from what our Lord says, 'Feed my lambs,' a renewal of the Apostolate already delivered to him is considered to have been made which presently absolves the disgrace of his sin and blots out the perplexity of his human infirmity.'130

Cyril of Jerusalem

As the delusion was extending, Peter and Paul, a noble pair, chief rulers of the Church, arrived and set the error right...131

Didymus the Blind

How powerful is Peter's faith and his confession that Christ is the only-begotten God, the word, the true Son of God, and not merely a creature. Though he saw God on earth clothed in flesh and blood, Peter did not doubt, for he was willing to receive what 'flesh and blood have not revealed to you.' Moreover he recognized the consubstantial and coeternal branch of God, thereby glorifying that uncreated root, that root without beginning which had revealed the truth to him. Peter believed that Christ was one and the same deity with the Father; and so he was called blessed by him who alone is the blessed Lord. Upon this rock the Church was built, the Church which the gates of hell—that is, the arguments of heretics—will not overcome. The keys to the kingdom of heaven were given to Peter in order that, 'baptizing them in the name of the Father, and Son, and the Holy Spirit,' he might open the gates of God's kingdom to those whose faith agreed both with his own confession and with those things which he and the other apostles heard from Christ. To those, however, who do not, by like confession, offer a hymn of praise, Peter shuts the most blessed and hoped for entrance.132

Epiphanius

Those too who have fallen away through persecution, if they show full repentance, sit in sackcloth and ashes and weep before the Lord - the Benefactor has the power to show mercy even to them. No ill can come of repentance. Thus the Lord and his church accept the penitent, as Manasseh the son of Hezekiah returned and was accepted by the Lord-and the chief of the apostles, St. Peter, who denied for a time and still became our truly solid rock which supports the Lord's faith, and on which the church is in every way founded. This is, first of all, because he confessed that 'Christ' is 'the Son of the living God,' and was told, 'On this rock of sure faith will I build my church'-for he plainly confessed that Christ is true Son. For when he said, 'Son of the living God,' with the additional phrase, 'the living,' he showed that Christ is God's true Son, as I have said in nearly every Sect. Peter also makes us certain of the Holy Spirit by saying to Ananias, 'Why hast Satan tempted you to lie to the holy Ghost? Ye have not lied unto man, but unto God,' for the Spirit is of God and not different from God. And Peter also became the solid rock of the building and foundation of God's house, because, after denying, turning again, and being found by the Lord, he was privileged to hear, 'Feed my lambs and feed my sheep.' For with these words Christ led us to the turning of repentance, so that our well founded faith might be rebuilt in him-a faith that forbids the salvation of no one alive who truly repents, and amends his faults in this world.133

The first of the Apostles, that firm rock upon which the church of God is built, so that the gates of hell, that is to say the heresies and heresiarchs, will not prevail against it. For in every way was the faith confirmed in him who received the key of heaven, in him who looses on earth and binds in heaven. For in him are found all the subtle questions of faith.134

Ephrem Syrus

In the tenth year let Mount Sinai give glory, which melted-before its Lord! It saw against its Lord-stones taken up: but He took stones-to build the Church upon the Rock; blessed be His building!135

Shadowed forth in thy beauty is the beauty of the Son, Who clothed Himself with suffering when the nails passed through Him. The awl passed in thee since they handled thee roughly, as they did His hands; and because He suffered He reigned, as by thy sufferings thy beauty increased. And if they showed no pity upon thee, neither did they love thee: still suffer as thou mightest, thou hast come to reign! Simon Peter showed pity on the Rock; whoso hath smitten it, is himself thereby overcome; it is by reason of Its suffering that Its beauty hath adorned the height and the depth.136

Hail, O Peter: gate of sinners, firm trust of penitents, encouragement of converts, recalling those who deny, consolation of the lapsed. Hail, O Peter: tongue of the disciples, voice of the heralds, eye of the apostles, keeper of the heavens, firstborn of the key-bearers. Hail, O Peter: who plays out the devil's contest, and after injury brings back victory with violence, who overthrows the greatest enemy, who after being wounded brought back honour and after a fall erected a trophy and ripped off the crown from the head of the adversary.137

Eusebius

'And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings, and routed them. Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bear, at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of thy nostrils' (Ps. 18.14)...By 'the foundations of the world,' we shall understand the strength of God's wisdom, by which, first, the order of the universe was established, and then, the world itself was founded-a world which will not be shaken. Yet you will not in any way err from the scope of the truth if you suppose that 'the world' is actually the Church of God, and that its 'foundation' is in the first place, that unspeakably solid rock on which it is founded, as Scripture says: 'Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'; and elsewhere: 'The rock, moreover, was Christ.' For, as the Apostle indicates with these words: 'No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.'

Then, too, after the Savior himself, you may rightly judge the foundations of the Church to be the words of the prophets and apostles, in accordance with the statement of the Apostle: 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.' These foundations of the world have been laid bare because the enemies of God, who once darkened the eyes of our mind, lest we gaze upon divine things, have been routed and put to flight-scattered by the arrows sent from God and put to flight by the rebuke of the Lord and by the blast from his nostrils. As a result, having been saved from these enemies and having received the use of our eyes, we have seen the channels of the sea and have looked upon the foundations of the world. This has happened in our lifetime in many parts of the world.138

The Savior prophesied that His doctrine would be preached over the whole world, wherever man was, as a testimony to all nations; and, by a divine foreknowledge predicted that the Church, too, which, during the years of His sojourning amongst men, was not seen nor established, should be invincible, incapable of being overthrown, and never to be overcome by death; but should, according to His declaration, stand and continue immovable, as being, by His power, firmly established and embedded on a rock that could not be moved, nor broken. Better than all reasoning, with good cause should the accomplishment of this prophecy put to silence the unbridled tongues of all who, unchecked by shame, are ever ready to give proof of their audacity. For the fame of His Gospel has filled every country which the sun illumines. Nor has it in any way yielded to its enemies, or even to the gates of death; and this because of that word which He uttered, 'I will build My Church upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'139

Peter, on whom is built Christ's Church, against which (Church) the gates of hell shall not prevail...140

Firmicus Maternus

Another pagan sacrament has the key word, *theos ek patras*, 'god from a rock.' Why do you adulterate the faith and transfer this holy and worshipful mystery to pagan doings? Different is the stone which God promised He would lay in making strong the foundations of the promised Jerusalem. What the symbol of the worshipful stone means to us is Christ. Why do you with the knavery of a thief transfer to foul superstitions the dignity of a worshipful name? Your stone is one that ruin follows and the disastrous collapse of tumbling towers; but our stone, laid by the hand of God, builds up, strengthens, lifts, fortifies, and adorns the grace of the restored work with the splendor of everlasting immortality.

For Isaias says of this at the behest of the Holy Spirit: Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I lay a stone for the foundations of Sion, a precious stone, elect, a chief cornerstone, honored, and he that shall believe in it shall not be confounded. Also in the Psalms there is a similar declaration, for the Holy Spirit says in the 117th Psalm: The stone which the builders rejected: the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing: and it is wonderful in our eyes. Through many prophets the Holy Spirit shows us the meaning of that name, for the prophet Zacharias says: Behold, I bring my servant, the Orient is his name; for the stone that I have laid before the face of Jesus; upon the stone there are seven eyes.

Now that through this 'stone,' that is, through our Lord Jesus Christ, both these gods will fall and the multitudinous temples with them, is clearly explained by Daniel in worshipful prophesies...What oracular utterance of the prophets issues any statement concerning the stone of the idolaters, whereof people say 'god from a rock'? And for whom has the stone been an obstacle, for whom a help? But this holy stone (that is, Christ) either supports the foundations of faith or, being set in the corner, unites with balanced control the two lines of the wall (that is, it gathers into one the strength of the Old and New Testament), or at any rate brings into accord the disparity of body and soul by conferring immortality upon man, or promulgates the law, or gives testimony against sinners, or, what is better, smites the statue of the devil, so that when he is overcome and prostrate and turned into ashes and cinders, Christ may lift up His sublime head and attain the pure realm of His sovereignty.141

Firmilian

But how great his error, how exceeding his blindness, who says, that remission of sins can be given in the synagogues of heretics, and abideth not on the foundation of the one Church which was once fixed by Christ on a rock, may be hence

learnt, that Christ said to Peter alone, Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18-19): and again in the Gospel, when Christ breathed on the Apostles only, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained (John 20:22-23). The power then of remitting sins was given to the Apostles, and to the Churches which they, sent by Christ, established, and to the Bishops who succeeded them vicarious ordination. And herein I am justly indignant at such open and manifest folly in Stephen, that he who boasts of the seat of his episcopate, and contends that he holds the succession from Peter, on whom the foundations of the Church were laid, introduces many other rocks, and buildeth anew many Churches, in that by his authority he maintains baptism among them. For they who are baptized, without doubt fill up the number of the Church. But whoso approves their baptism, must needs also maintain of those baptized, that the Church also is with them. Nor does he perceive that he who thus betrays and abandons unity, casts into the shade, and in a manner effaces, the truth of the Christian Rock...Stephen, who proclaims that he occupies by succession the chair of Peter, is roused by no zeal against heretics, conceding to them no small but the very greatest power of grace, so far as to say and assert that through the Sacrament of Baptism they wash off the defilement of the old man, pardon the old deadly sins, make sons to God by heavenly regeneration, renew to eternal life by the sanctification of the Divine laver. He who concedes and assigns heretics such great and heavenly privileges of the Church, what else does he than hold communion with them, for whom he maintains and claims so much grace.142

Fulgentius

For the Saviour and judge of men has ordained, that only in this life would anyone's sins be remitted by him...Wherefore human vanity should not pointlessly hope to hear (at some future time after death) what divine truth has or has not promised. It is for this reason that Christ has assigned on earth the power of binding and loosing to Peter-that is, to his Church-in order that we may recognise during this life the free mercy offered in the forgiveness of sins and in the future the just wages which are repaid to all for the quality of their deeds.143

Supplication for the pardon of one's sins would never have been ordained for the sinner, if forgiveness were not truly offered to the suppliant. But repentance will indeed benefit the sinner, provided the catholic Church oversees it. For God ascribed to the Church in the person of blessed Peter the power to bind and to loose, saying: 'Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Mt. 16.19). At whatever age, therefore, a man should make true repentance of his sins and by the direction of God should correct his life, he will not be deprived of the reward of forgiveness, since God, as he says through the prophet, does not wish the death of a sinner; but let the sinner turn from his way and let his soul live (Ez. 33.11).144

Gaudentius of Brescia

I beseech our common father Ambrose, that, after the scanty dew of my discourse, he may pour abundantly into your hearts the mysteries of the divine writings. Let him speak from that Holy Spirit with which he is filled, and 'from his belly shall flow rivers of living water;' and, as a successor of Peter, he shall be the mouth of all the surrounding priests. For when the Lord Jesus asked of the apostles, 'Whom do you say that I am?' Peter alone replies, with the mouth of all believers, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' What reward did that confession at once receive? Blessedness indeed, and the most glorious power of the heavenly kingdom. Now when Peter alone speaks, the faith of the other believers is not excluded; but a fitting order is observed; whilst to the prince of the apostles the first place of speaking is justly deferred, lest there might seem to be confusion rather than reply, if all emulously and together had answered on that occasion. And it is to be considered how that Judas Iscariot could not have confessed with the mouth and with the heart he believed not...But later, when Judas had been condemned for the crime that he had committed; all the apostles, when Christ had risen, receive the keys in Peter; yea, rather, with Peter receive the keys of the heavenly kingdom from the Lord Himself, when He says, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven;' and again, 'Going,' He says, 'teach all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' For the gate

of the kingdom of heaven is not opened save by this key of the spiritual sacraments.145

Gregory the Great

For since the truth shines forth from the Church Catholic alone, the Lord says that there is a place by Him, from which He is to be seen. Moses is placed on a rock, to behold the form of God, because if any one maintains not the firmness of Faith, he discerns not the Divine presence. Of which firmness the Lord says, 'Upon this rock I shall build my Church.'146

Gregory to John, Bishop of Constantinople: At the time when your Fraternity was advanced to Sacredotal dignity, you remember what peace and concord of the churches you found. But, with what daring or with what swelling of pride I know not, you have attempted to seize upon a new name, whereby the hearts of all your brethren might have come to take offence. I wonder exceedingly at this, since I remember how thou wouldest fain have fled from the episcopal office rather than attain it. And yet, now that thou hast got it, thou desirest so to exercise it as if thou hadst run to it with ambitious intent. For, having confessed thyself unworthy to be called a bishop, thou hast at length been brought to such a pass as, despising thy brethren, to covet to be named the only bishop...I have taken care to address your Fraternity, not indeed in writing, but by word of mouth, desiring you to restrain yourself from such presumption...I beg you, I beseech you, and with all the sweetness in my power demand of you, that your Fraternity gainsay all who flatter you and offer you this name of error, nor foolishly consent to be called by the proud title. Consider, I pray thee, that in this rash presumption the peace of the whole Church is disturbed, and that it is in contradiction to the grace that is poured out on all in common...And thou wilt become by so much the greater as thou restrainest thyself from the usurpation of a proud and foolish title: and thou wilt make advance in proportion as thou art not bent on arrogation by derogation of thy brethren. Wherefore, dearest brother, with all thy heart love humility, through which the concord of all the brethren and the unity of the holy universal Church may be preserved.

Certainly the apostle Paul, when he heard some say, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, but I of Christ (1 Cor. 1:13), regarded with the utmost horror such dilaceration of the Lord's body, whereby they were joining themselves, as it were, to other heads, and exclaimed, saying, Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul (ib.)? If then he shunned the subjecting of the members of Christ partially to certain heads, as if beside Christ, though this were to the apostles themselves, what wilt thou say to Christ, who is the Head of the universal Church, in the scrutiny of the last judgment, having attempted to put all his members under thyself by the appellation of Universal? Who, I ask, is proposed for imitation in his wrongful title but he who, despising the legions of angels constituted socially with himself, attempted to start up to an eminence of singularity, that he might seem to be under none and to be alone above all? Who even said, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of heaven; I will sit upon the mount of the testament, in the sides of the North: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High (Isai. xiv.13).

For what are all thy brethren, the bishops of the universal Church, but stars of heaven, whose life and discourse shine together amid the sins and errors of men, as if amid the shades of night? And when thou desirest to put thyself above them by this proud title, and to tread down their name in comparison with thine, what else dost thou say but I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of heaven? Are not all the bishops together clouds, who both rain in the words of preaching, and glitter in the light of good works? And when your Fraternity despises them, and you would fain press them down under yourself, what else say you but what is said by the ancient foe, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds?

This most holy man the lord John, of so great abstinence and humility, has, through the seduction of familiar tongues, broken out into such a pitch of pride as to attempt, in his coveting of that wrongful name, to be like him who, while proudly wishing to be like God, lost even the grace of the likeness granted him, and because he sought false glory, thereby forfeited true blessedness.

Certainly Peter, the first of the apostles, himself a member of the holy and universal Church, Paul, Andrew, John-what were they but heads of particular communities? And yet all were members under one Head. And (to bind all together in a short girth of speech) the saints before the law, the saints under the law, the saints under grace, all these making up the Lord's Body, were constituted as members of the Church, and not one of them has wished himself to be called universal. Now let your Holiness acknowledge to what extent you swell within yourself in desiring to be called by that name by

which no one presumed to be called who was truly holy.

Was it not the case, as your Fraternity knows, that the prelates of this Apostolic See, which by the providence of God I serve, had the honour offered them of being called universal by the venerable Council of Chalcedon. But yet not one of them has ever wished to be called by such a title, or seized upon this ill-advised name, lest if, in virtue of the rank of the pontificate, he took to himself the glory of singularity, he might seem to have denied it to all his brethren...What, then, can we bishops say for ourselves, who have received a place of honour from the humility of our Redeemer, and yet imitate the pride of the enemy himself?...What, then, dearest brother, wilt thou say in that terrible scrutiny of the coming judgment, if thou covetest to be called in the world not only father, but even general father?...Lo, by reason of this execrable title of pride the Church is rent asunder, the hearts of all the brethren are provoked to offence...And thou attemptest to take the honour away from all which thou desirest unlawfully to usurp to thyself singularly.

I therefore have once and again through my representatives taken care to reprove in humble words this sin against the whole Church; and now I write myself.147

To Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria: In position you are my brethren...And lo, in the preface of the epistle which you have addressed to myself who forbade it, you have thought it fit to make use of a proud appellation, calling me Universal Pope. But I beg your most sweet Holiness to do this no more, since what is given to another beyond what reason demands is subtracted from yourself. For as for me, I do not seek to be prospered by words but by my conduct. Nor do I regard that as an honour whereby I know that my brethren lose their honour. For my honour is the honour of the universal Church...Then am I truly honoured when the honour due to all and each is not denied them. For if your Holiness calls me Universal Pope, you deny that you are yourself what you call me universally. But far be this from us. Away with words that inflate vanity and wound charity.148

To Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria: Your most sweet Holiness has spoken much in your letter to me about the chair of Saint Peter, Prince of the apostles, saying that he himself now sits on it in the persons of his successors...He has spoken to me about Peter's chair who occupies Peter's chair...I greatly rejoiced because you, most holy ones, have given to yourselves what you have bestowed upon me. For who can be ignorant that holy Church has been made firm in the solidity of the Prince of the apostles, who derived his name from the firmness of his mind, so as to be called Petrus from petra. And to him it is said by the voice of Truth, To thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xvi.19). And again it is said to him, And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren (xxii.32). And once more, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Feed My sheep (Joh. xxi.17). Wherefore though there are many apostles, yet with regard to the principality itself of the See of the Prince of the apostles alone has grown strong in authority, which in three places is the See of one. For he himself exalted the See in which he deigned even to rest and end the present life. He himself adorned the See to which he sent his disciple as evangelist. He himself stablished the See in which, though he was to leave it, he sat for seven years. Since then it is the See of one, and one See, over which by divine authority three bishops now preside, whatever good I hear of you, this I impute to myself...We are one in Him...149

Gregory Nazianzen

Shall I bring forth another and laudable example of order and discipline-one great and laudable, especially worthy of our present commemoration and calling to mind? Notice how out of the disciples of Christ-all great and lofty, all worthy of Christ's selection-only one is called a rock and receives for his faith the founding of the Church. And another is loved more earnestly, and rests upon the breast of Jesus; yet the other disciples accept it with a calm spirit that these should be preferred to themselves. Now when Christ made his ascent up the mountain to be transfigured and to lay open his divinity and to lay that bare which was covered by the flesh, who, pray, went up together with him-for not all were admitted to the sight of this miracle? Peter, James and John who were esteemed above the others.150

Gregory of Nyssa

These men (i.e., Peter, James, & John) are the foundations of the Church, and the pillars and mainstays of truth. They are the perpetual founts of salvation, from whom the copious waters of divine doctrine flow. The prophet bids us go to them when he writes: 'With joy you will draw water from the founts of the Saviour.' We celebrate the memory of Peter, who is the chief of the apostles, and together with him the other members of the Church are glorified; for upon him the Church of God is established. Indeed this man, in accordance with the title conferred upon him by the Lord, is the firm and very solid rock upon which the Saviour has built his Church. Finally we celebrate the memory of James and John. But what effort is required of us to exert ourselves in such a way that our commemoration may be worthy of the virtue of the apostles? The warmth of our praises does not extend to Simon insofar as he was a catcher of fish; rather it extends to his firm faith, which is at the same time the foundation of the whole Church.151

Hilary of Poitiers

A belief that the Son of God is Son in name only, and not in nature, is not the faith of the Gospels and of the Apostles...whence I ask, was it that the blessed Simon Bar-Jona confessed to Him, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?...And this is the rock of confession whereon the Church is built...that Christ must be not only named, but believed, the Son of God.

This faith is that which is the foundation of the Church; through this faith the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. This is the faith which has the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever this faith shall have loosed or bound on earth shall be loosed or bound in heaven...The very reason why he is blessed is that he confessed the Son of God. This is the Father's revelation, this the foundation of the Church, this the assurance of her permanence. Hence has she the keys of the kingdom of heaven, hence judgment in heaven and judgment on earth....Thus our one immovable foundation, our one blissful rock of faith, is the confession from Peter's mouth, Thou art the Son of the living God.152

Matthew also, chosen to proclaim the whole mystery of the Gospel, first a publican, then an Apostle, and John, the Lord's familiar friend, and therefore worthy to reveal the deepest secrets of heaven, and blessed Simon, who after his confession of the mystery was set to be the foundation-stone of the Church, and received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and all his companions who spoke by the Holy Ghost, and Paul, the chosen vessel, changed from persecutor into Apostle, who, as a living man, abode under the deep sea and ascended into the third heaven, who was in paradise before his martyrdom, whose martyrdom was the perfect offering of a flawless faith...153

Ignatius

Luke 22:32: They are ashamed of the cross; they mock at the passion; they make a jest of the resurrection. They are the offspring of that spirit who is the author of all evil, who led Adam, by means of his wife, to transgress the commandment, who slew Abel by the hands of Cain, who fought against Job, who was the accuser of Joshua, the son of Josedech, who sought to 'sift the faith' of the apostles, who stirred up the multitude of the Jews against the Lord, who also now 'worketh in the children of disobedience;' from whom the Lord Jesus Christ will deliver us, who prayed that the faith of the apostles might not fail, not because He was not able of Himself to preserve it, but because He rejoiced in the pre-eminence of the Father.154

Isidore of Pelusium

Christ, who searcheth the hearts, did not ask His disciples, 'Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' Because He did not know the varying opinion of men concerning Himself, but was desirous, of teaching all that same confession which Peter, inspired by Him, laid as the basis and foundation, on which the Lord built His Church.155

Christ is the Rock, abiding unshaken, when He was incarnate.156

Isidore of Seville

Peter bears the character of the Church, which has the power to forgive sins and to lead men from Hades to the heavenly kingdom...All the apostles also bear the type of the whole Church, since they also have received a like power of forgiving sins. They bear also the character of the patriarchs, who by the word of preaching spiritually brought forth God's people in the whole world...The wise man who built his house upon the rock signifies the faithful teacher, who has established the foundations of his doctrine and life upon Christ.157

Moreover, Christ is called a 'foundation' because faith is established in him, and because the catholic Church is built upon him.158

Thus far we have spoken of priestly origins in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament after Christ the priestly order arises from Peter; for to him the first priestly office in the Church of Christ was given. Thus the Lord says to him: 'You are Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it; and I shall give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.' So Peter first received the power of binding and loosing, and he first led people to faith by the power of his preaching. Still, the other apostles have been made equal with Peter in a fellowship of honor and power. They also, having been sent out into all the world, preached the Gospel. Having descended from these apostles, the bishops have succeeded them, and through all the world they have been established in the seats of the apostles.159

James of Nisbis

Faith is composed and compacted of many things. It is like a building, because it is constructed and completed in much hope. You are not ignorant that large stones are placed in the foundations of a building, and then all that is built thereon has the stones joined together, and so raised till the completion of the work. So, of all our faith, our Lord Jesus Christ is the firm and true foundation; and upon this rock our faith is established. Therefore, when any one has come to faith, he is set upon a firm rock, which is our Lord Jesus Christ. And, calling Christ a rock, I say nothing of my own, for the prophets have before called Him a rock...And our Lord, the bestower of life, to all those who come to Him to be healed, said, 'Be it done unto thee according to thy faith.' Thus, when the blind man came to Jesus, He says to him, 'Dost thou believe that I can cure thee?' And he answered, 'Yea, Lord, I believe.' (Matt. ix.28)...And Simon, who was called a rock, was deservedly called a rock because of his faith.160

And Simon, the head of the apostles, who denied Christ, saying, 'I saw Him not,' and cursed and swore that 'he knew Him not,' as soon as he offered unto God contrition and penitence, and washed his sins in the tears of his sorrow, our Lord received him, and made him the foundation, and called him a rock, of the building of His Church.161

Josue arranged and set stones as a testimony to Israel; and Jesus, our Saviour, called Simon the rock of faith, and placed him as a faithful testimony amongst the Gentiles.162

Jerome

The one foundation which the apostolic architect laid is our Lord Jesus Christ. Upon this stable and firm foundation, which has itself been laid on solid ground, the Church of Christ is built...For the Church was founded upon a rock...upon this rock the Lord established his Church; and the apostle Peter received his name from this rock (Mt. 16.18).163

She, that with a firm root is founded upon the rock, Christ, the Catholic Church, is the one dove; she stands the perfect one, and near to His right hand, and has nothing sinister in her.164

This mountain is in the house of the Lord, which the prophet sighs after, saying, 'One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,' (Ps. xxvii.4), and concerning which Paul writes to Timothy, 'But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth' (1 Tim. iii.15). This house is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, as imitators of Christ. Of this house, Jerusalem, the Psalmist cries out saying, 'They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion; he shall not be moved for ever that dwelleth in Jerusalem. Mountains are round about it; and the Lord is round about His people' (Ps. cxxiv.1). Whence also upon one of the mountains Christ founds the Church, and says to him, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'165

The rock is Christ, Who gave to His apostles, that they also should be called rocks, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church.'166

'You are Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church.' Just as Christ himself gave light to the apostles, in order that they might be called the light of the world, so other names were derived from the Lord: for example, Simon, who believed in the rock, Christ, was given the name 'Peter.' And in accordance with the metaphor of the rock, Jesus rightly said to him: 'I shall build my Church upon you. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'167

'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.'...For if those who are no longer strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household have been built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ himself being the cornerstone-in whom the whole building has been joined together into a temple holy in the Lord, in whom the Ephesians are built into a temple of God in the spirit: if this is so, then there is one God of one building and temple which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Now if a universal building is joined together and is growing into a temple holy in the Lord, then we must strive with every effort to become the sorts of stones about which it is written: 'holy stones are rolled upon the earth.'168

Though, he says, the Lord had with Him the apostles Peter and John; and they saw Him transfigured on the mount, and upon them the foundation of the Church is placed...169

Was there no other province in the whole world to receive the gospel of pleasure, and into which the serpent might insinuate itself, except that which was founded by the teaching of Peter upon the rock Christ.170

When subsequently one presbyter was chosen to preside over the rest, this was done to remedy schism and to prevent each individual from rending the church of Christ by drawing it to himself. For even at Alexandria from the time of Mark the Evangelist until the episcopates of Heraclas and Dionysius the presbyters always named as bishop one of their own number chosen by themselves...For what function, excepting ordination, belongs to a bishop that does not also belong to a presbyter? It is not the case that there is one church at Rome and another in all the world beside. Gaul and Britain, Africac and Persia, India and the East all worship one Christ and observe one rule of truth. If you ask for authority, the world outweighs its capital. Wherever there is a bishop, whether it be at Rome or at Engubium, whether it be at Constantinople or at Rhegium, whether it be at Alexandria or at Zoan, his dignity is one and his priesthood is one. Neither the command of wealth nor the lowliness of poverty makes him more of a bishop or less a bishop. All alike are successors of the apostles.171

But you say, the Church was founded upon Peter: although elsewhere the same is attributed to all the Apostles, and they all receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the strength of the Church depends upon them all alike, yet one among the twelve is chosen so that when a head has been appointed, there may be no occasion for schism.172

I have all but passed over the most important point of all. While you were still quite small, bishop Anastasius of holy and blessed memory ruled the Roman church.173

Away with all that is overweening; let the state of Roman majesty withdraw. My words are spoken to the successor of the fisherman, to the disciple of the cross. As I follow no leader save Christ, so I communicate with none but your blessedness, that is, with the chair of Peter. For this I know, is the rock on which the church is built!174

John of Damascus

At Caesarea Philippi...where his disciples were assembled, on the spur of the moment the Rock of Life himself excavated a seat from a certain rock. Then he asked his disciples who the people were saying the Son of Man was. He did not seek this information because he was unaware of the ignorance of men; for Jesus requires no investigation. But he wanted to dispel by the light of knowledge the fog which lay upon the disciple's spiritual eyes. The disciples responded that some called Jesus John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets...In order to erase this suspicion and to give to the ignorant the most excellent gift possible, namely, a true confession, what did Jesus do, he for whom nothing was impossible? As a man he posed a probing question, but as God he brought him out of the dark who first had been called and first had followed. This was the man whom Christ in his foreknowledge had predestined to be a worthy overseer of the Church. As God, Jesus inspired this man and spoke through him. What was the question? 'But who do you say I am?' And Peter, fired by a burning zeal and prompted by the Holy Spirit replied: 'You are Christ, Son of the living God.' Oh blessed mouth! Perfectly, blessed lips! Oh theological soul! Mind filled by God and made worthy by divine instruction! Oh divine organ through which Peter spoke! Rightly are you blessed, Simon son of Jonah...because neither flesh nor blood nor human mind, but my Father in heaven has revealed this divine and mysterious truth to you. For no one knows the Son, save he who is known by him...This is that firm and immovable faith upon which, as upon the rock whose surname you bear, the Church is founded. Against this the gates of hell, the mouths of heretics, the machines of demons-for they will attack-will not prevail. They will take up arms but they will not conquer.175

This rock was Christ, the incarnate Word of God, the Lord, for Paul clearly teaches us: 'The rock was Christ' (1 Cor. 10.4).176

Moreover, that Christ is one-one person and hypostasis-is evident. He asks: 'Who do people say that I am?'...Peter replied, saying: 'You are Christ, Son of the living God.'...Wherefore, indeed, he heard: 'Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah since neither flesh nor blood has revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. You are Peter'-and upon this rock the Church was firmly established-'and the gates of hell'-that is, the mouths of heretics-'shall not prevail against it.'177

Maximus of Turin

This is Peter to whom Christ the Lord freely conceded participation in his name. For as the Apostle teaches, Christ is the rock; and by Christ Peter was made a rock when the Lord said to him: 'You are Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church.' For just as water flowed from the rock when God's people were thirsting in the desert, so when the whole world was languishing in drought the spring of a saving confession flowed from the mouth of Peter. This is Peter to whom Christ entrusted the feeding of his sheep and lambs just before he ascended to the Father. As Christ had redeemed these by the compassion of his obedient service, so Peter served them by virtue of his faith. And rightly did that witness of mysteries, the Son of God, commit the feeding and tending of sheep to Peter whom he knew would not desist in his enthusiasm and faithfulness in nourishing the Lord's flock...178

It is necessary, however, to inquire how closed heavens are to be opened. I think that they cannot be opened otherwise than by taking up the keys of the apostle Peter-the keys which the Lord bestowed on him when he said: 'To you I give the keys

of the kingdom of heaven.' Indeed let us ask Peter, that as a good gate keeper of the heavenly palace, he may open to us. Moreover, let us diligently ask what these keys may be. I say that Peter's key is Peter's faith, by which he opened heaven, by which, secure, he penetrated hades, by which, fearless, he walked on water. For so great is the power of apostolic faith, that all elements lie open to it: the angelic gates are not closed to it, nor do the gates of Hell prevail against it, nor do floods of water sink it. That key itself, which we call faith, let us see how firm and solid it is. I judge that it was produced by the work of 12 artisans; for the holy faith was comprehended in the creed of the 12 apostles, who, like skilled artisans working in concert, produced the key by their understanding. For I call the creed itself the key, which causes the shades of the devil to draw back, that the light of Christ may come. The hidden sins of conscience are brought into the open so that the clear works of justification may shine. Therefore this key must be shown to our brothers in order that they also as followers of Peter may learn to unlock hades and to open heaven.179

We have frequently said that Peter was called a rock by the Lord. Thus: 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.' If, then, Peter is the rock upon whom the Church is built, rightly does he first heal feet, so that as he maintains the foundations of the Church's faith he also strengthens the foundations of a person's limbs. Rightly, I say, does he first heal a Christian's feet so that he can walk upon the rock of the Church not as one who is fearful and weak but as one who is robust and strong. And where are the words of Paul the apostle not read? Where are they not written down, kept in the heart, and preserved in speech? This Paul was called a vessel of election by the Lord. A good vessel, in which the precious precepts of Christ's commandments are treasured! A good vessel, from whose fulness the substance of life is always poured forth for the peoples, and still it is full. Rock and vessel-most appropriate names for the apostles, and necessary instruments for the house of the Savior! For a strong house is built of rock and rendered useful by vessels. A rock provides the peoples with something firm lest they waver, while a vessel shelters Christians lest they be tempted.180

Last Sunday we showed that Saint Peter proceeded along his erring ways during the Savior's suffering and that after he denied the Lord he was better. For he became more faithful after he wept over the faith that he had lost, and for that reason he gained back a greater grace than he lost: like a good shepherd he accepted the charge of protecting the sheep, so that he who had previously been weak to himself would now become the foundation for all, and the very person who had faltered when tested by questioning would strengthen others with the unwavering character of his faith. On account of the firmness of his faithfulness he is called the rock of the churches, as the Lord says: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church. He is called a rock because he will be the first to lay the foundations of faith among the nations and so that, like an immovable stone, he might hold fast the fabric and structure of the whole Christian endeavor. Because of his faithfulness, therefore, Peter is called a rock, as the apostle says: And they drank from the spiritual rock, and the rock was Christ. Rightly does he who merits fellowship in deed merit fellowship also in name, for in the same house Peter laid the foundation and Peter does the planting, and the Lord gives the increase and the Lord provides the watering.181

On account of his faithfulness Peter is told: Blessed are you, Simon bar Jonah, because flesh and blood have not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to you: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church. Although he used to be called Simon, then, he is named Peter on account of his faithfulness. We read what the Apostle says of the Lord Himself: They drank from the spiritual rock, but the rock was Christ. Rightly, then, inasmuch as Christ is a rock, is Simon named Peter, in order that he who shared with the Lord in faith might be at one with the Lord as well in the Lord's name-that just as a Christian is so called from Christ, the apostle Peter would similarly receive his name from Christ the rock.182

But let us see what Simon Peter's boat is, which the Lord judged the more fitting of the two to teach from and which keeps the Savior safe from harm and brings the words of faith to the people. For we have discovered that the Lord previously set sail in another boat and was provoked by serious wrongs. For He sailed with Moses in the Red Sea when he led the people of Israel through the waters, but He was hurt by serious wrongs, as He himself says to the Jews in the Gospel: If you believe Moses you would also believe Me. The wrong inflicted upon the Savior is the Synagogue's disbelief. Therefore He chooses Peter's boat and forsakes Moses'; that is to say, He spurns the faithless Synagogue and takes the faithful Church. For the two were appointed by God as boats, so to speak, which would fish for the salvation of humankind in this world as

in a sea, as the Lord says to the apostles: Come, I will make you fishers of men.

Of these two boats, then, one is left useless and empty on the shore, while the other is led out heavily laden and full to the deep. It is the Synagogue that is left empty at the shore because it has rejected Christ as well as the oracles of the prophets, but it is the Church that is taken heavily laden out to the deep because it has received Christ with the teaching of the apostles. The Synagogue, I say, stays close to the land as if clinging to earthly deeds. The Church, however, is called out into the deep, delving, as it were, into the profound mysteries of the heavens, into that depth concerning which the Apostle says: O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. For this reason it is said to Peter: Put out into the deep - that is to say, into the depths of reflection upon the divine generation. For what is so profound as what Peter said to the Lord: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God? What is so trivial as what the Jews said about the Lord: Is this not the son of Joseph the carpenter? For the one, by a higher counsel, assented in divine fashion to the birth of Christ, while the others, with a viper's mind, considered His heavenly generation in fleshly wise. Hence the Savior says to Peter: because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven. But to the Pharisees he says: How are you able to speak good things when you are evil?

The Lord, then, gets only into this boat of the Church, in which Peter has been proclaimed pilot by the Lord's own words: Upon this rock I will build my Church. This boat so sails upon the deeps of this world that, when the earth is destroyed, it will preserve unharmed all whom it has taken in. Its forshadowing we see already in the Old Testament. For as Noah's ark preserved alive everyone whom it had taken in when the world was going under, so also Peter's Church will bring back unhurt everyone whom it embraces when the world goes up in flames. And as a dove brought the sign of peace to Noah's ark when the flood was over, so also Christ will bring the joy of peace to Peter's Church when the judgment is over, since He Himself is dove and peace, as He promised when He said: I shall see you again and your heart will rejoice. But since we read in Matthew that this same boat of Peter, from which the Lord is now drawing forth the sacraments of His heavenly teaching, was so shaken about by violent winds as the Lord was sleeping in it that all the apostles feared for their lives, let us see why in one and the same boat at one time He teaches the people in tranquility and at another He inflicts the fear of death upon the disciples in stormy weather, especially inasmuch as Simon Peter was there with the other apostles. This was the reason for the danger: Simon Peter was there, but the betrayer Judas was also there. For although the faith of the one was the foundation of the boat, still the faithlessness of the other shook it. Tranquility exists when Peter alone pilots, stormy weather when Judas comes aboard.¹⁸³

Nilus of Ancyra

If, moreover, a man of the Lord is meant, the first to be compared to gold would be Cephas, whose name is interpreted 'rock.' This is the highest of the apostles, Peter, also called Cephas, who furnished in his confession of faith the foundation for the building of the Church.¹⁸⁴

Origen

And if we too have said like Peter, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' not as if flesh and blood had revealed it unto us, but by light from the Father in heaven having shone in our heart, we become a Peter, and to us there might be said by the Word, 'Thou art Peter,' etc. For a rock is every disciple of Christ of whom those drank who drank of the spiritual rock which followed them, and upon every such rock is built every word of the church, and the polity in accordance with it; for in each of the perfect, who have the combination of words and deeds and thoughts which fill up the blessedness, is the church built by God.

But if you suppose that upon the one Peter only the whole church is built by God, what would you say about John the son of thunder or each one of the Apostles? Shall we otherwise dare to say, that against Peter in particular the gates of Hades shall not prevail, but that they shall prevail against the other Apostles and the perfect? Does not the saying previously made, 'The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it,' hold in regard to all and in the case of each of them? And also the saying, 'Upon this rock I will build My church'? Are the keys of the kingdom of heaven given by the Lord to Peter only, and will no other of the blessed receive them? But if this promise, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' be common to others, how shall not all things previously spoken of, and the things which are subjoined as having

been addressed to Peter, be common to them?

'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' If any one says this to Him...he will obtain the things that were spoken according to the letter of the Gospel to that Peter, but, as the spirit of the Gospel teaches, to every one who becomes such as that Peter was. For all bear the surname of 'rock' who are the imitators of Christ, that is, of the spiritual rock which followed those who are being saved, that they may drink from it the spiritual draught. But these bear the surname of the rock just as Christ does. But also as members of Christ deriving their surname from Him they are called Christians, and from the rock, Peters...And to all such the saying of the Saviour might be spoken, 'Thou art Peter' etc., down to the words, 'prevail against it.' But what is the 'it'? Is it the rock upon which Christ builds the church, or is it the church? For the phrase is ambiguous. Or is it as if the rock and the church were one and the same? This I think to be true; for neither against the rock on which Christ builds the church, nor against the church will the gates of Hades prevail. Now, if the gates of Hades prevail against any one, such an one cannot be a rock upon which Christ builds the church, nor the church built by Jesus upon the rock.185

Look at the great foundation of that Church and at the very solid rock upon which Christ has founded the Church. Wherefore the Lord says: 'Ye of little faith, why have you doubted?'186

Moreover in the law this (love) is said to be the first commandment, and in the Gospels one is taught above all other things about love. Although the highest calling of feeding the sheep was communicated to Peter, and though the Church was established upon him as upon a solid ground, the confession of no other virtue is required of him, save that of love...187

But if she (the soul) does contrive to get through these unscathed, then the winter is past, and spring has come to her. For spring for her is when repose is given to her soul and calmness to her mind. Then the Word of God comes to her, then He calls her to Himself, and bids her come forth, not only from the house, but from the city itself-in other words, she must forsake not only fleshly vices, but also everything bodily and visible that the world contains. For we have already demonstrated plainly that the city is a figure for the world. The soul, therefore, is summoned forth outside the wall, and is brought to the outwork, when, forsaking and leaving things seen and temporal, she hastens towards those that are unseen and eternal. She is shown, however, that the way thereto must be followed beneath the cover of the rock, and not out in the open. And that she may not suffer the sun's heat and perhaps become tanned again and say once more: 'The sun hath looked askance at me,' therefore she takes the way beneath the cover of the rock.

But He will not have this covering made for her of branches, or canvas, or skins; He will have her covering made of rock-that is, the firm and solid teachings of Christ. For Him St. Paul declares to be a rock when he says: And the rock was Christ.

If, then, the soul be shielded and covered with the doctrine and the faith of Christ, she can come safely to that secret place wherein she may behold the glory of the Lord with open face. We may well believe that covering of the rock is safe, since Solomon also says of it in Proverbs that the tracks of the serpent cannot be detected on the rock...For no tracks of the serpent-that is, no marks of sin-can be found in this rock which is Christ, for it is He alone who did no sin. Having therefore availed herself of the covering of this rock, the soul comes safely to the place on the outwork-that is, to the contemplation of things incorporeal and eternal. David speaks of this same rock under another metaphor in Psalm Seventeen: And He set my feet upon a rock and ordered my paths. Do not be surprised if with David this rock is as it were the ground and basis upon which a soul goes to God, while with Solomon it is the covering of the soul that is set upon reaching the mystical secrets of wisdom; seeing that Christ Himself is at one time called the Way by which believers go, and again the Forerunner, as when Paul says: Into which the forerunner Jesus entered for us.

Like to these is the saying of God to Moses: Lo, I have set thee in a cleft of the rock, and thou shalt see my back parts. That Rock which is Christ is, therefore, not completely closed, but has clefts. But the cleft of the rock is He who reveals God to men, and makes Him known to them; for no one knoweth the Father, save the Son. So no one sees the back parts of God-that is to say, the things that are come to pass in the latter times, unless he be placed in the cleft of the rock, that is to say, when he is taught them by Christ's own revealing.188

But who is thus blessed, who so throws off the burden of temptations that no thought of ambiguity creeps up on his mind?

See what was said by the Lord to the great foundation of the church and very solid rock, upon which Christ founded the church: 'O you of little faith he says, why have you doubted?'189

Pacian

All you seek then, you have in Matthew. Why did not you, whoteach a bishop, read it all? Look at the opening words of that precept. As Matthew himself reports, the Lord spoke to Peter a little earlier; he spoke to one, that from one he might found unity, soon delivering the same to all. Yet he still begins just as to Peter: 'And I say also unto thee', he says 'that thou art Peter...'190

Palladius of Helenopolis

'You, however, who do you say I am?' Not all responded, but Peter only, interpreting the mind of all: 'You are Christ, Son of the living God.' The Saviour, approving the correctness of this response, spoke, saying: 'You are Peter, and upon this rock'-that is, upon this confession-'I shall build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.' Now with respect to this confession you will find...among all men both censure and praise. Thus at one time the Ephesians spoke ill of Christ and the apostles, crying: 'They turn the world upside down' (Acts 17.6). Now, however, they have ceased speaking ill, they themselves having been glorified...They are swine and dogs who say, 'He deceived the world'; but they are disciples who seek after him, saying: 'You are Christ, the Son of the living God.'191

By the permission of the Lord, these things were in the beginning for the discipline of the saints, the devil seeking to have them, as the saving Word says, 'Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' And not solely did Jesus pray for Peter, but for all who have the faith of Peter.192

Paschasius Radbertus

There is one response of all upon which the Church is founded and against which the gates of hell will not prevail...Such a great faith does not arise except from the revelation of God the Father and inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that anyone that has faith, like firm stone, is called Peter...It should be noted that anyone of the faithful is rock as far as he is an imitator of Christ and is light as far as he is illuminated by light and by this the Church of Christ is founded upon those as far as they are strengthened by Christ. So not on Peter alone but on all the apostles and the successors of the apostles the Church of God is built. But these mountains are first built on the mountain Christ is elevated above all mountains and hills.193

One heavenly house in the heavens has been established, through the foundation of faith, upon him who is rightly called 'a rock.'194

For the name, derived equally in Latin from the 'rock' (petra) which is Christ, designates the firmness of his faith.195

This is indeed the true and inviolable faith given to Peter from God the Father, which affirms that if there had not always been a son there would not always have been a Father, upon which faith the whole Church is both founded and remains firm, believing that God is the Son of God.196

Paul of Emessa

Upon this faith the Church of God has been founded. With this expectation, upon this rock the Lord God placed the foundations of the Church. When then the Lord Christ was going to Jerusalem, He asked the disciples, saying, 'Whom do

men say that the Son of Man is?' The apostles say, 'Some Elias, others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.' And He says, but you, that is, My elect, you who have followed Me for three years, and have seen My power, and miracles, and beheld Me walking on the sea, who have shared My table, 'Whom do you say that I am?' Instantly, the Coryphaeus of the apostles, the mouth of the disciples, Peter, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'197

Paul Orosius

Oh Peter, upon whom Christ founded his Church, and oh Paul, who laid a foundation besides which no one can place another, namely, Christ: blessed apostles, pillars and mainstays of the truth...198

Peter loved Christ and he never departed from that love; and as a testimony of his love for the Lord, he is at one moment established as the rock of the Church's foundation; yet in the next moment he is seduced by the word of Satan.199

Paulinus of Nola

Likewise He shares His glory with His people, giving us a participation in almost everything, even in His names. Just as He is called the Strength of God, so He deigns to be our strength, too: God is our Refuge and our Strength. As we are His heirs, so He is ours, for you read in the book of Moses: The people of Jacob are become the Lord's portion; and again in the Psalms: The Lord is my portion. Just as He called Himself the Light of this world, so He said to His own: You are the light of this world. Again, He says: I am the living bread; and: We are all one bread. Elsewhere He states: I am the true Vine; and to you He says: I planted thee a fruitful vine, all true. Christ is the mountain of God, in which God is well pleased to dwell, and His saints are the mountains of God, fruitful mountains, from which He enlighteneth us wonderfully from the everlasting mountains. Christ is the rock, for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. The favour of this name, too, He did not refuse to His disciple; He says to him: Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. But why are we surprised that He granted His names to His servants, when He shares even His Father and His kingship with them? For to those who received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God.200

Prosper of Aquitaine

In the same sense He said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and thou, being converted in the end, confirm thy brethren. And pray lest ye enter into temptation. When the faith of so great an Apostle was going to give way unless Christ prayed for him, this was a sure sign that he, too, was subject to unsteadiness which could falter in temptation; and he was not so confirmed with the strength to persevere, that he was not liable to any weakness. For, indeed, even after all this, trepidation was to shake him so badly that in the house of Caiaphas, frightened by the questions of some servant girl, his constancy was to give way, and that to the extent of disowning Christ three times, after he had promised to die for Him...The Lord could also have given the chief of His disciples such firmness of soul that, as He Himself was not to be deterred from the resolve to undergo His Passion, so Saint Peter also on that occasion would not have been overcome by fear. But such steadfastness belonged only to Him who alone could say in truth and reality, I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again. In all other men, as long as the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and as long as the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak, immovable strength of soul is not to be found, because the perfect and undisturbed happiness of peace is not our lot in this life, but in the next only. But in the uncertainty of the present struggle, when the whole of life is a trial and when victory itself is not shielded from the Waylayer's pride, the danger of inconstancy is ever present...The most blessed Peter himself passed through this conflict at the very moment when he was about to crown all his victories...Who, then, would doubt, who would fail to see that this strongest of rocks, who shared in the strength and the name of the first Rock, had always nourished the wish to be given the strength of dying for Christ?201

Tertullian

Again, He changes the name of Simon to Peter, inasmuch as the Creator also altered the names of Abram, Sarai, and Oshea, by calling the latter Joshua, and adding a syllable to each of the former. But why Peter? If it was because of the vigour of his faith, there were many solid materials which might lend a name from their strength. Was it because Christ was both a rock and a stone? For we read of his being placed 'for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence.' I omit the rest of the passage. Therefore He would fain impart to the dearest of His disciples a name which was suggested by one of His own especial designations in figure; because it was, I suppose, more peculiarly fit than a name which might have been derived from no figurative description of Himself.²⁰²

For though you think heaven still shut, remember that the Lord left here to Peter and through him to the Church, the keys of it, which every one who has been here put to the question, and also made confession, will carry with him.²⁰³

If, because the Lord has said to Peter, 'Upon this rock I will build My Church,' 'to thee have I given the keys of the heavenly kingdom;' or, 'Whatsoever thou shalt have bound or loosed in earth, shall be bound or loosed in the heavens,' you therefore presume that the power of binding and loosing has derived to you, that is, to every Church akin to Peter, what sort of man are you, subverting and wholly changing the manifest intention of the Lord, conferring (as that intention did) this (gift) personally upon Peter? 'On thee,' He says, 'will I build My Church;' and, 'I will give to thee the keys,' not to the Church; and, 'Whatsoever thou shalt have loosed or bound,' not what 'they shall have loosed or bound.' For so withal the result teaches. In (Peter) himself the Church was reared; that is, through (Peter) himself; (Peter) himself essayed the key; you see what (key): 'Men of Israel, let what I say sink into your ears: Jesus the Nazarene, a man destined by God for you,' and so forth. (Peter) himself, therefore, was the first to unbar, in Christ's baptism, the entrance to the heavenly kingdom, in which (kingdom) are 'loosed' the sins that were beforetime 'bound;' and those which have not been 'loosed' are 'bound,' in accordance with true salvation...²⁰⁴

Was anything withheld from the knowledge of Peter, who is called 'the rock on which the church should be built, 'who also obtained 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' with the power of 'loosing and binding in heaven and on earth?'²⁰⁵

For because Jesus Christ was to introduce the second people (which is composed of us nations, lingering deserted in the world aforetime) into the land of promise, 'flowing with milk and honey' (that is, into the possession of eternal life, than which nought is sweeter); this had to come about, not through Moses (that is, not through the Law's discipline), but through Joshua (that is, through the new law's grace), after our circumcision with 'a knife of rock' (that is, with Christ's precepts, for Christ is in many ways and figures predicted as a rock); therefore the man who was being prepared to act as images of this sacrament was inaugurated under the figure of the Lord's name, even so as to be named Jesus.²⁰⁶

Theodoret

Let no one then foolishly suppose that the Christ is any other than the only begotten Son. Let us not imagine ourselves wiser than the gift of the Spirit. Let us hear the words of the great Peter, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Let us hear the Lord Christ confirming this confession, for 'On this rock,' He says, 'I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.' Wherefore too the wise Paul, most excellent master builder of the churches, fixed no other foundation than this. 'I,' he says, 'as a wise master builder have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' How then can they think of any other foundation, when they are bidden not to fix a foundation, but to build on that which is laid? The divine writer recognises Christ as the foundation, and glories in this title.²⁰⁷

Other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus (1 Cor. iii.11). It is necessary to build upon,

not to lay foundations. For it is impossible for him who wishes to build wisely to lay another foundation. The blessed Peter also laid this foundation, or rather the Lord Himself. For Peter having said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;' the Lord said, 'Upon this rock I will build My Church.' Therefore call not yourselves after men's names, for Christ is the foundation.208

Wherefore our Lord Jesus Christ permitted the first of the apostles, whose confession He had fixed as a kind of groundwork and foundation of the Church, to waver to and fro, and to deny Him, and then raised him up again.209

Surely he is calling pious faith and true confession a 'rock.' For when the Lord asked his disciples who the people said he was, blessed Peter spoke up, saying 'You are Christ, the Son of the living God.' To which the Lord answered: 'Truly, truly I say to you, you are Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'210

'Its foundations are on the holy mountains.' The 'foundations' of piety are divine precepts, while the 'holy mountains' upon which these foundations are laid are the apostles of our Saviour. Blessed Paul says concerning these foundations: 'You have been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets whose cornerstone is Christ Jesus.' And again he says: 'Peter, James and John who are perceived to be pillars.' And after Peter had made that true and divine confession, Christ said to him: 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' And elsewhere Christ says: 'You are the light of the world, and a city set on a hill cannot be hid.' Upon these holy mountains Christ the Lord laid the foundations of piety.211

Dioscurus, however, refuses to abide by these decisions; he is turning the see of the blessed Mark upside down; and these things he does though he perfectly well knows that the Antiochean metropolis possesses the throne of the great Peter, who was the teacher of the blessed Mark, and first and coryphaeus of the apostles.212

Let us inquire who is he that is called a stone; and at which appearing small, later became very great, and covered the earth. Let us, therefore, hearken to God Himself saying by the prophet Isaias, 'Behold I lay in Sion a stone costly, a corner stone, precious, elect, into the foundations thereof, and everyone that believeth in it shall not be confounded' (Is. xxviii.16)...Let us also listen to the blessed David prophesying and crying out, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?' (Matt. xxi.42). And the blessed apostle Peter teaching among the Jews, and bringing before them the prophecy of the Lord, says, 'This is the stone which, rejected by you the builders, is become the head of the corner' (Acts iv.11). And the blessed apostle says, 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone' (Eph. ii.20); and elsewhere he says, 'Other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus,' (1 Cor. iii.11); and again, 'They drank,' he says, 'of the spiritual rock which followed them, but the rock was Christ'(1 Cor. x.4).Wherefore we are taught by the Old and New Testament, that our Lord Jesus Christ is called a stone.213

For if they say that these things happened before baptism, let them learn that the great foundation of the Church was shaken, and confirmed by divine grace. For the great Peter, having denied thrice, remained first; cured by his own tears. And the Lord commanded him to apply the same cure to the brethren, 'And thou,' He says, 'converted, confirm thy brethren' (Luke xxii.32).214

The Comments of 6th Century Palestinian and Syriac Clergy from a Letter to the Emperor Justin

With joy you will draw water from the springs of salvation (Isa. 12). Springs of salvation, says the prophet, meaning obviously the preaching of evangelical truth, from which spring the blessed apostles and their followers who were disciples through ordination and the wise teachers of the Church drew the saving water of faith, then irrigated the holy Church of God which, fixed on the rock of that greatest of apostles, defends the true and inflexible confession, and faithfully in every age exclaims with him (i.e. Peter) to the only Son of God: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Receiving this saving confession from the four holy synods which are honored for their evangelical teachings, we have never, by the grace of Christ, deviated from the true dogmas handed down to us; as an examination of the matter proves and as the constancy of our faith in times of necessity demonstrates. Since, therefore, as Christians we share in the doctrines of faith, and since, most reverend lord (i.e. Justin), we press for common peace and unity, we hereby make the faith, which we have acknowledged, from the beginning, open to your goodness through this our apology.²¹⁵

The Comments of Origen, Chrysostom or Cyril of Alexandria Falsely Attributed to Victor of Antioch

And to Simon He gave the name Peter (Mark iii.16). Lest any may think the apostles were chosen by chance or at random, the Evangelist gives the names of each in order. And he says that 'to Simon He gave the name Peter,' that the name may anticipate the event itself; because as Christ the Lord was about to build His Church on Peter, that is, on the unbroken and sound doctrine of Peter, and his unshaken faith, therefore in prophetic spirit does He call him Peter.²¹⁶

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A Refutation of the Misrepresentations of the Writings of William Webster and of the Church Fathers by Roman Catholic, Stephen Ray, in His Book *Upon This Rock*

By William Webster

Stephen Ray is a Roman Catholic who has written a biblical and patristic defense of the papacy in a book entitled *Upon This Rock*. It was published in the Spring of 1999. In this book, Stephen Ray makes reference to *The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock* and *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, both authored by William Webster. In these references Mr. Ray makes a number of charges against Mr. Webster and purposeful misrepresentations of his writings that need to be addressed.

The First Misrepresentation

The first misrepresentation occurs in the Introduction in which Mr. Ray makes the following statement:

Sometimes silence is more eloquent than words. This is especially true in Church history. We hear so much about what the Fathers say and so little about what they do not say. This is revealing and should play a significant role in our research. William Webster has written a book that we will refer to several times in our study. Webster is an ex-Catholic who decided to abandon the Church and cast his lot with the Fundamentalist Protestants. His book is entitled *Peter and the Rock* and asserts that, as the blurb on the back of the book says, "The contemporary Roman Catholic interpretation [of Peter and the rock] had no place in the biblical understanding of the early church doctors." To ascertain whether or not such an assertion is true is one of the main goals of this book. But along with what the Fathers say, we need to hear their silence as well. While reading Webster's book, I noticed, along with his selective use of the Fathers in attempting to discredit the Catholic Church's teaching on the Papacy, that there are no citations "revealed" in his book in which a Christian, especially a Church Father, explicitly denies the Petrine primacy or the Petrine succession. Webster collects a large number of passages that are supposed to prove that the

Fathers oppose Catholic teaching, yet never is there a flat-out denial of the Petrine primacy or the primacy of Rome. This is a silence that speaks volumes! We may find differing interpretations of Peter's primacy, which is what we should expect, according to John Henry Newman, yet we find no denial of that primacy.

I wrote to William Webster and asked him if he knew of any Church Father who denied the primacy of Peter or of his successors. Mr. Webster's response was very telling, and I wish he had been forthright about this matter in his book. His return E-mail stated, "No father denies that Peter had a primacy or that there is a Petrine succession. The issue is how the fathers interpreted those concepts. They simply did not hold to the Roman Catholic view of later centuries that primacy and succession were 'exclusively' related to the bishops of Rome." What an extraordinary admission; what an extraordinary truth. Many of the Fathers were in theological or disciplinary disagreement with Rome (for example, Cyprian and Irenaeus), yet they never denied Rome's primacy. They may have debated what that primacy meant, or how it was to work out in the universal Church, but they never denied the primacy. The quickest way to achieve jurisdictional or doctrinal victory is to subvert or disarm the opponent. In this case it would have been as simple as proving from the Bible or from tradition that Peter, and subsequently his successors in Rome, had no primacy, no authority to rule in the Church. Yet, as even Webster freely admits, this refutation never occurred. Irenaeus may challenge the appropriateness of a decision made by Victor, but he never challenges Victor's authority to make the binding decision. Cyprian may at times disagree with a decree of Stephen's on baptism, but he never rejects the special place of the Roman See, which would have been the easiest means of winning the debate. The bishop of Rome was unique in assuming the authority and obligation to oversee the Churches. Clement and Ignatius make this clear from the first century and the beginning of the second. If the authority exercised had been illegitimate, or wrongly arrogated, it would have been an act of overzealousness at one end of the spectrum, of tyranny at the other. Yet no one ever stood up and said, "No, you have no authority. Who are you to order us, to teach us, to require obedience from us, to excommunicate us?" If the jurisdictional primacy of Rome had been a matter of self-aggrandizement, someone would have opposed it as they opposed other innovations and heresies in the Church. The silence is profound (*Upon This Rock* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), p. 12-13).

Mr. Ray has charged that my response in my email was somehow different from that which was expressed in my book. He charges me with failure to be forthright insinuating that I have purposefully misled people. First of all, Mr. Ray failed to give my full response to his request in my email. The full text of my answer is as follows:

Thanks for your e-mail, As to your questions let me make this brief comment. No father denies that Peter had a primacy or that there is a Petrine succession. The issue is how the Fathers interpreted those concepts. They simply did not hold to the Roman Catholic view of later centuries that primacy and succession were "exclusively" related to the bishops of

Rome. They do not apply the special titles they attribute to Peter to the bishops of Rome and what is more they often attribute the same titles to the other apostles. The most explicit denial of a Petrine primacy in the Roman Catholic sense comes from Augustine which I have documented in the book where he states in exegeting the rock of Matthew 16:18 that Christ did not build his Church on a man but on Peter's confession. He specifically separates Peter's faith from Peter's person and if the Church is not built upon the person of Peter there is no papal office. This is not to say that the Rome did not have authority in the eyes of the fathers. But Rome did not have exclusive authority. The ecclesiology of the early Church was one of conciliarity which was shared by all the major patriarchal sees. Rome was the only patriarchal see in the West and therefore held authority in the West, though in the beginning this was not universal but regional, as Rufinus' translation of the Nicene Council makes clear. I would strongly urge you to read the historical works that I have referenced from the various Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant historians. John Meyendorff is especially good. Hope this is helpful (Personal email from William Webster to Stephen Ray).

Mr. Ray has purposefully misrepresented me in his statements. He is very aware of the fact that I deal extensively with the question he raises in a very forthright manner in my book. Mr. Ray's main argument rests on an argument from silence, the fact that the Fathers never denied the primacy of Peter or Petrine succession. Of course they didn't. As I mentioned in my email they explicitly affirm it. However, in affirming it they do not interpret it in the same way Rome does today. That is the point. When Roman apologists use the term 'primacy' they mean universal jurisdiction to rule the Church universal. When they speak of Petrine succession they mean this in an exclusive sense as applied to the bishops of Rome. But when the Fathers speak of a Petrine primacy and succession and the primacy of Rome they mean something quite different. They are not silent on the issue. They never denied that Rome had a primacy, but it was interpreted as a primacy of honor since the Church was located in the capital of the Empire and was the site of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul. It was not a primacy of universal jurisdiction. They never denied that the Church of Rome had a right to exercise authority. But that authority was limited in its jurisdiction. But when the meaning of primacy and rule is couched in the language of Vatican I we find a vigorous opposition to such claims by the Church Fathers. There is not silence. The Fathers do speak, and they make it clear what they mean by the terms they use. They also speak by repudiating the unlawful claims of Rome as they began to be expressed in the third century and in all the subsequent centuries of the Church. Stephen Ray, and

Roman apologists in general, are guilty of a major error of historiography. This is the error of importing the theological understanding of terms developed in a later age and to then impose these concepts on the same terms of the writings of an earlier age, assuming that because they use the same word you do, that they mean the same thing by it. The heretic, Pelagius, used the term grace. He did not deny its necessity. But the issue is not whether he used the word but what he meant by his use of it. And when we examine his use of the word we find that his understanding was definitely heretical. In like manner, when we examine the way the Church Fathers employed the terms they used with respect to Peter and the meaning of primacy we discover that their understanding of those terms is very different from Vatican I and present day Roman Catholic concepts.

With regard to Mr. Ray's charges that I have been less than honest with my readers on the Father's views of Peter and the primacy, the reader can judge for himself whether those charges are valid. The following is the discussion from my book, *The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock* dealing with the issue of how the Fathers interpret the primacy of Peter and Petrine succession when I deal with Augustine and Chrysostom:

Augustine

According to Augustine the Apostles are equal in all respects. Each receives the authority of the keys, not Peter alone. But some object, doesn't Augustine accord a primacy to the apostle Peter? Does he not call Peter the first of the apostles, holding the chief place in the Apostleship? Don't such statements prove papal primacy? While it is true that Augustine has some very exalted things to say about Peter, as do many of the fathers, it does not follow that either he or they held to the Roman Catholic view of papal primacy. This is because their comments apply to Peter alone. They have absolutely nothing to do with the bishops of Rome. How do we know this? Because Augustine and the fathers do not make that application in their comments. They do not state that their descriptions of Peter apply to the bishops of Rome. The common mistake made by Roman Catholic apologists is the

assumption that because some of the fathers make certain comments about Peter—for example, that he is chief of the apostles or head of the apostolic choir—that they also have in mind the bishop of Rome in an exclusive sense. But they do not state this in their writings. This is a preconceived theology that is read into their writings. Did they view the bishops of Rome as being successors of Peter? Yes. Did they view the bishops of Rome as being the exclusive successors of Peter? No. In the view of Augustine and the early fathers all the bishops of the Church in the East and West were the successors of Peter. They all possess the chair of Peter. So when they speak in exalted terms about Peter they do not apply those terms to the bishops of Rome. Therefore, when a father refers to Peter as the rock, the ‘coryphaeus,’ the first of the disciples, or something similar, this does not mean that he is expressing agreement with the current Roman Catholic interpretation. This view is clearly validated from the following statements of Augustine:

This same Peter therefore who had been by the Rock pronounced ‘blessed,’ bearing the figure of the Church, holding the chief place in the Apostleship (*Sermon 26*).

The blessed Peter, the first of the apostles (*Sermon 295*).

Before his passion the Lord Jesus, as you know, chose those disciples of his, whom he called apostles. Among these it was only Peter who almost everywhere was given the privilege of representing the whole Church. It was in the person of the whole Church, which he alone represented, that he was privileged to hear, ‘To you will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt 16:19). After all, it isn’t just one man that received these keys, but the Church in its unity. So this is the reason for Peter’s acknowledged preeminence, that he stood for the Church’s universality and unity, when he was told, ‘To you I am entrusting,’ what has in fact been entrusted to all (*Sermon 295*).

Previously, of course, he was called Simon; this name of Peter was bestowed on him by the Lord, and that with the symbolic intention of his representing the Church. Because Christ, you see, is the petra or rock; Peter, or Rocky, is the Christian people (*Sermon 76*).

So then, this self–same Peter, blessed by being surnamed Rocky from the rock, representing the person of the Church, holding chief place in the apostolic ranks (*Sermon 76*).

For as some things are said which seem peculiarly to apply to the Apostle Peter, and yet are not clear in their meaning, unless when referred to the Church, whom he is acknowledged to have figuratively represented, on account of the primacy which he bore among the Disciples; as it is written, ‘I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,’ and other passages of like purport: so Judas doth represent those Jews who were enemies of Christ (*Exposition on the Book of Psalms, Psalm 119*).

You will remember that the apostle Peter, the first of all the apostles, was thrown completely of balance during the Lord’s passion (*Sermon 147*).

Christ, you see, built his Church not on a man but on Peter’s confession. What is Peter’s confession? ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ There’s the rock for you, there’s the foundation, there’s where the Church has been built, which the gates of the underworld cannot conquer. (*Sermon 229*).

And this Church, symbolized in its generality, was personified in the Apostle Peter, on account of the primacy of his apostleship. For, as regards his proper personality, he was by nature one man, by grace one Christian, by still more abounding grace one, and yet also, the first apostle; but when it was said to him, I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,’ he represented the universal Church, which in this world is shaken by divers temptations, that come upon it like torrents of rain, floods and tempests, and falleth not, because it is founded upon a rock (petra), from which Peter received his name. For petra (rock) is not derived from Peter, but Peter from petra; just as Christ is not called so from the Christian, but the Christian from Christ. For on this very account the Lord said, ‘On this rock will I build my Church,’ because Peter had said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ On this rock, therefore, He said, which thou hast confessed, I will build my Church. For the Rock (Petra) was Christ; and on this foundation was Peter himself built. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus. The Church, therefore, which is founded in Christ received from Him the keys of the kingdom of heaven in the person of Peter, that is to say, the power of binding and loosing sins. For what the Church is essentially in Christ, such representatively is Peter in the rock (petra); and in this representation Christ is to be understood as the Rock, Peter as the Church (*Commentary on the Gospel of John, Tractate 124.5*).

Augustine states that Peter is the first and head of the apostles and that he holds a primacy. However he does not interpret that primacy in a Roman Catholic sense. He believes that Peter's primacy is figurative in that he represents the universal Church. Again, he explicitly states that Christ did not build his Church upon a man but on Peter's confession of faith. Peter is built on Christ the rock and as a figurative representative of the Church he shows how each believer is built on Christ. In Augustine's view, Peter holds a primacy or preeminence, but none of this applies to him in a jurisdictional sense, because he says that 'Christ did not build his Church upon a man.' We can not get a clearer illustration that the fathers did indeed separate Peter's confession of faith from Peter's person. In commenting on one of Augustine's references to Peter and the rock, John Rotelle, the editor of the Roman Catholic series on the Sermons of Augustine, makes these observations:

'There was Peter, and he hadn't yet been confirmed in the rock': That is, in Christ, as participating in his 'rockiness' by faith. It does not mean confirmed as the rock, because *Augustine never thinks of Peter as the rock*. Jesus, after all, did not in fact call him the rock...but 'Rocky.' *The rock on which he would build his Church was, for Augustine, both Christ himself and Peter's faith, representing the faith of the Church* (emphasis mine) (John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (New Rochelle: New City, 1993), *Sermons*, Sermon 265D.6, p. 258-259, n. 9.

Augustine does not endorse the Roman Catholic interpretation. Again and again he states that the rock is Christ, not Peter. Augustine claims no exclusive Petrine succession in the Roman bishops and no papal office. Karlfried Froehlich sums up Augustine's views on Peter and the rock of Matthew 16 in these comments:

Augustine's formulation (of Matthew 16:18-19), informed by a traditional North African concern for the unity of the church, that in Peter *unus pro omnibus* (one for all) had answered and received the reward, did not suggest more than a figurative reading of Peter as an image of the true church. In light of Peter's subsequent fall and denial, the name itself was regularly declared to be derived from Christ, the true rock. Augustine, who followed

Origen in this assumption, was fascinated by the dialectic of the ‘blessed’ Peter (Matt. 16:17) being addressed as ‘Satan’ a few verses later (v. 23). In Peter, weak in himself and strong only in his connection with Christ, the church could see the image of its own total dependence on God’s grace. Augustine rigorously separated the name-giving from its explanation: Christ did not say to Peter: ‘you are the rock,’ but ‘you are Peter.’ The church is not built upon Peter but upon the only true rock, Christ. Augustine and the medieval exegetes after him found the warrant for this interpretation in 1 Cor. 10:4. The allegorical key of this verse had already been applied to numerous biblical rock passages in the earlier African testimonia tradition. Matt. 16:18 was no exception. If the metaphor of the rock did not refer to a negative category of ‘hard’ rocks, it had to be read christologically (Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952), Volume I, p. 182-183).

Karl Morrison sums up Augustine’s views of ecclesiology in these words:

Peter was said to have received the power of the keys, not in his own right, but as the representative of the entire Church. Without contesting Rome’s primacy of honor, St. Augustine held that all the Apostles, and all their successors, the bishops, shared equally in the powers which Christ granted St. Peter (*De Schismate Donatistorum*, Book I.10; Book 2,3,4,6; C.S.E.L. 26. 12, 36. Cited by E. Giles, *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority* (London: SPCK, 1952), pp. 118-119).

Reinhold Seeberg, the Protestant Church historian, makes these comments on Augustine’s interpretation of Peter pointing out that it reflects the view of Cyprian:

The idea of the Roman Primacy likewise receives no special elucidation at the hands of Augustine. We find a general acknowledgment of the ‘primacy of the apostolic chair,’ but Augustine knows nothing of any special authority vested in Peter or his successors. Peter is a ‘figure of the church’ or of ‘good pastors,’ and represents the unity of the church (serm. 295.2; 147.2). In this consists the significance of his position and that of his successors...As all bishops (in contradistinction from the Scriptures) may err (unit. eccl. II.28), so also the Roman bishop. This view is plainly manifest from the bearing of Augustine and his colleagues in the Pelagian Controversy...Dogmatically, there had been no advance from the position of Cyprian. The Africans, in their relations with Rome, played somewhat the role of the Gallicanism of a later period (Robert Eno, *The Rise of the Papacy* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1990), pp. 67-69).

W.H.C. Frend affirms the above consensus of Augustine's ecclesiology and his interpretation of Peter's commission:

Augustine...rejected the idea that 'the power of the keys' had been entrusted to Peter alone. His primacy was simply a matter of personal privilege and not an office. Similarly, he never reproached the Donatists for not being in communion with Rome, but with lack of communion with the apostolic Sees as a whole. His view of Church government was that less important questions should be settled by provincial councils, greater matters at general councils (*A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: Parker, 1844), The Epistles of St. Cyprian, Epistle LXX. 17, 18, 20, pp. 279-281).

Chrysostom

What was Chrysostom's view of Peter and his interpretation of the rock of Matthew 16? Does it coincide with the teaching of papal primacy espoused by the Church of Rome? The answer is no. Chrysostom's views are very similar to those of Augustine. As we have seen Augustine held a very high view of Peter. He called him the chief and first of the apostles and yet stated that the rock was not Peter but Christ. A very similar picture presents itself in the writings of Chrysostom. In his book *Studies in the Early Papacy*, the Roman Catholic apologist, Dom Chapman, has referenced approximately ninety citations from Chrysostom's writings which he claims as proof of a clear and unambiguous affirmation of a Petrine and thereby a papal primacy. But Dom Chapman has committed a primary error of historiography—that of reading back into the writings of a previous age the presuppositions and conclusions of a later age. He assumes that because a particular father makes certain statements about Peter that he must have a primacy of jurisdiction in mind and that this applies in his thinking to the bishop of Rome in an exclusive sense as well. But as we have seen with Augustine this is not the case. A close examination of the comments of Chrysostom demonstrates this to be true in his case as well. Like Augustine, Chrysostom makes some very exalted statements about Peter:

Peter, that chief of the apostles, first in the Church, the friend of Christ who did not receive revelation from man but from the Father, as the Lord bore witness to him saying: ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar–Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven’: this same Peter (when I say ‘Peter,’ I name an unbreakable rock, an immovable ridge, a great apostle, the first of the disciples, the first called and the first obeying), this same Peter, I say, did not perpetrate a minor misdeed but a very great one. He denied the Lord. I say this, not accusing a just man, but offering to you the opportunity of repentance. Peter denied the Lord and governor of the world himself, the savior of all...(De Eleemos III.4, M.P.G., Vol. 49, Col. 298).

Peter, the coryphaeus of the choir of apostles, the mouth of the disciples, the foundation of the faith, the base of the confession, the fisherman of the world, who brought back our race from the depth of error to heaven, he who is everywhere fervent and full of boldness, or rather of love than boldness (*Hom. de decem mille talentis* 3, PG III, 20. Cited by Dom Chapman, *Studies in the Early Papacy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), p. 74).

These are exalted titles but in using them Chrysostom does not mean that Peter possesses a primacy of jurisdiction in the Church or that he is the rock upon which the Church is built. Again, we have already seen this in Augustine. He uses similar language in describing Peter but without its having a Roman Catholic meaning. We know this is also true for Chrysostom because he applies similar titles to the other apostles and did not interpret the rock of Matthew 16 to be Peter. The term *coryphaeus*, for example, was a general title applied by Chrysostom to several of the apostles, not to Peter exclusively. It carries the idea of leadership but implies no jurisdiction. Chrysostom uses this term to describe Peter, James, John, Andrew and Paul. He states that just as Peter received the charge of the world, so did the apostles Paul and John. Just as Peter was appointed teacher of the world, so was Paul. Just as Peter was a holder of the keys of heaven, so was the apostle John. He places the apostles on an equal footing relative to authority:

He took the *coryphaei* and led them up into a high mountain apart...Why does He take these three alone? Because they excelled the others. Peter showed his excellence by his great love of Him, John by being greatly loved, James by

the answer... 'We are able to drink the chalice.' (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume X, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, Homily 56.2; p. 345)....

Do you not see that the headship was in the hands of these three, especially of Peter and James? This was the chief cause of their condemnation by Herod (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XI, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, Homily XXVI, p. 169.....

The coryphaei, Peter the foundation of the Church, Paul the vessel of election (*Contra ludos et theatra* 1, PG VI, 265. Cited by Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), p. 76).

And if any should say 'How then did James receive the chair at Jerusalem?' I would make this reply, that He appointed Peter teacher not of the chair, but of the world...And this He did to withdraw them (Peter and John) from their unseasonable sympathy for each other; for since they were about to receive the charge of the world, it was necessary that they should no longer be closely associated together (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIV, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 88.1-2, pp. 331-332).

For the Son of thunder, the beloved of Christ, the pillar of the Churches throughout the world, who holds the keys of heaven, who drank the cup of Christ, and was baptized with His baptism, who lay upon his Master's bosom, with much confidence, this man now comes forward to us now (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIV, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 1.1, p. 1).

The merciful God is wont to give this honor to his servants, that by their grace others may acquire salvation; as was agreed by the blessed Paul, that teacher of the world who emitted the rays of his teaching everywhere (*Homily* 24, On Genesis. Cited by E. Giles, *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority* (London: SPCK, 1952), p. 165).

It is clear from these statements that Chrysostom, while certainly granting a large leadership role to Peter, does not consider him to have been made the supreme ruler of the Church. These passages demonstrate that the exalted titles applied to Peter were not exclusively applied to him. There is one passage in which Chrysostom does state that Peter received authority over the Church:

For he who then did not dare to question Jesus, but committed the office to another, was even entrusted with the chief authority over the brethren (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIV, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 88.1-2, pp. 331-332).

This would seem to indicate that Chrysostom taught that Peter was the supreme ruler of the Church. However in the passage cited above Chrysostom speaks of the apostle John as also receiving the charge of the whole world and the keys equally with Peter:

And this He did to withdraw them (Peter and John) from their unseasonable sympathy for each other; for since they were about to receive the charge of the world, it was necessary that they should no longer be closely associated together (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIV, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 88.1-2, pp. 331-332).

For the Son of thunder, the beloved of Christ, the pillar of the Churches throughout the world, who holds the keys of heaven (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIV, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 1.1, p. 1).

He goes on to speak of Paul as being on an equal footing with Peter:

Where the Cherubim sing the glory, where the Seraphim are flying, there shall we see Paul, with Peter, and as chief and leader of the choir of the saints, and shall enjoy his generous love....I love Rome even for this, although indeed one has other grounds for praising it...Not so bright is the heaven, when the sun sends forth his rays, as is the city of Rome, sending out these two lights into all parts of the world. From thence will Paul be caught up, thence Peter. Just bethink you, and shudder, at the thought of what a sight Rome will see, when Paul ariseth suddenly from that deposit, together with Peter, and is lifted up to meet the Lord. What a rose will Rome send up to Christ!...what two crowns will the city have about it! what golden chains will she be girded with! what fountains possess! Therefore I admire the city, not for the much gold, nor for the columns, not for the other display there, but for these pillars of the Church (1 Cor. 15:38) (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XI, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans*, Homily 32, Ver. 24, pp. 561-562).

Further, Chrysostom speaks of James, and not Peter, as possessing the chief rule and authority in Jerusalem and over the Jerusalem Council:

This (James) was bishop, as they say, and therefore he speaks last...There was no arrogance in the Church. After Peter Paul speaks, and none silences him: James waits patiently; not starts up (for the next word). No word speaks John here, no word the other Apostles, but held their peace, for James was invested with the chief rule, and think it no hardship. So clean was their soul from love of glory. Peter indeed spoke more strongly, but James here more mildly: for thus it behooves one in high authority, to leave what is unpleasant for others to say, while he himself appears in the milder part (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XI, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, Homily 33, pp. 205, 207).

Dom Chapman interprets these statements in a limited sense this way:

Obviously, it is James who has the ‘rule’ and the ‘great power’ as bishop of those believing Pharisees who had initiated the discussion. But the idea that he had (rule) over Peter is, of course, ludicrous, and the notion that he could possibly be the president of the council certainly never occurred to Chrysostom’s mind (Dom John Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), p. 90).

The problem with what Chapman says is that this is not what Chrysostom says. Chrysostom says nothing about the chief rule of James being limited to that of the believing Pharisees. There is not one word said about Pharisees. His reference to the chief rule is of the overall Council over which James presided. When all of his statements about Peter, Paul, James and John are taken together, it becomes clear that in the mind of Chrysostom, all the apostles together held the care of the world and headship of the Church universally. Peter did not hold a primacy of jurisdiction but of teaching, which he says is equally true of John and Paul:

And if anyone would say ‘How did James receive the chair of Jerusalem?’ I would reply that he appointed Peter a teacher not of the chair, but of the world (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIV, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 88.1-2, pp. 331-332).

Chrysostom interprets the keys given to Peter as a declarative authority to teach and preach the gospel and to extend the kingdom of God, not a

primacy of jurisdiction over the other apostles:

For the Father gave to Peter the revelation of the Son; but the Son gave him to sow that of the Father and that of Himself in every part of the world; and to mortal man He entrusted the authority over all things in Heaven, giving him the keys; who extended the Church to every part of the world, and declared it to be stronger than heaven (*A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford, Parker, 1844), *Homilies of S. John Chrysostom on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, Homily 54.3).

This authority was shared equally by all the apostles. Chrysostom states, for example, that John also held the authority of the keys and, like Peter, he held a universal teaching authority over the Churches throughout the world:

For the Son of thunder, the beloved of Christ, the pillar of the Churches throughout the world, who holds the keys of heaven (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIV, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 1.1, p. 1).

It is also evident from Chrysostom's exegesis of Matthew 16 that he did not teach that Peter was made supreme ruler of the Church. He did not interpret the rock of Matthew 16 to be the person of Peter, but his confession of faith, pointing to Christ himself as the rock and only foundation of the Church:

'And I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church'; that is, on the faith of his confession. Hereby He signifies that many were on the point of believing, and raises his spirit, and makes him a shepherd...For the Father gave to Peter the revelation of the Son; but the Son gave him to sow that of the Father and that of Himself in every part of the world; and to mortal man He entrusted the authority over all things in Heaven, giving him the keys; who extended the church to every part of the world, and declared it to be stronger than heaven (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume X, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, Homily 54.2-3; pp. 332-334).

He speaks from this time lowly things, on his way to His passion, that He might show His humanity. For He that hath built His church upon Peter's confession, and has so fortified it, that ten thousand dangers and deaths are not to prevail over it...(Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 1956), Volume X, Chrysostom, *On Matthew*, Homily 82.3, p. 494).

‘For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’ I say, no man can lay it so long as he is a master–builder; but if he lay it...he ceases to be a master–builder. See how even from men’s common notions he proves the whole of his proposition. His meaning is this: ‘I have preached Christ, I have delivered unto you the foundation. Take heed how you build thereon, lest haply it be in vainglory, lest haply so as to draw away the disciples unto men.’ Let us not then give heed unto the heresies. ‘For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.’ Upon this then let us build, and as a foundation let us cleave to it, as a branch to a vine; and let there be no interval between us and Christ...For the branch by its adherence draws in the fatness, and the building stands because it is cemented together. Since, if it stand apart it perishes, having nothing whereon to support itself. Let us not then merely keep hold of Christ, but let us be cemented to Him, for if we stand apart, we perish...And accordingly, there are many images whereby He brings us into union. Thus, if you mark it, He is the ‘Head’, we are ‘the body’: can there be any empty interval between the head and the body? He is a ‘Foundation’, we are a ‘building’: He a ‘Vine’, we ‘branches’: He the ‘Bridegroom’, we the ‘bride’: He is the ‘Shepherd’, we the ‘sheep’: He is the ‘Way’, we ‘they who walk therein.’ Again, we are a ‘temple,’ He the ‘Indweller’: He the ‘First–Begotten,’ we the ‘brethren’: He the ‘Heir,’ we the ‘heirs together with Him’: He the ‘Life,’ we the ‘living’: He the ‘Resurrection,’ we ‘those who rise again’: He the ‘Light,’ we the ‘enlightened.’ All these things indicate unity; and they allow no void interval, not even the smallest (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XII, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, Homily VIII.7, p. 47).

Chrysostom argues that the rock is not Peter but Peter’s confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God. Even Dom Chapman is forced to admit that Chrysostom consistently interpreted the rock to be Peter’s confession of faith: ‘The rock on which the Church is to be built is regularly taken by St. Chrysostom to be the confession of Peter, or the faith which prompted this confession.’ (Dom John Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), p. 77).

It is Peter’s confession that is the foundation of the Church. Peter is not the foundation. According to Chrysostom that position belongs to Christ alone. Dom Chapman objects to this claiming that in Chrysostom’s mind, the rock is not only Peter’s faith but also Peter’s

person. He cites a quote where Chrysostom speaks of Peter as being strengthened by Christ to stand as a rock against a hostile world:

For those things which are peculiar to God alone, (both to absolve from sins, and to make the church incapable of overthrow in such assailing waves, and to exhibit a man that is a fisher more solid than any rock, while all the world is at war with him), these He promises Himself to give; as the Father, speaking to Jeremiah, said, He would make him as 'a brazen pillar, and as a wall;' but him to one nation only, this man in every part of the world (A *Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford, Parker, 1844), *Homilies of S. John Chrysostom on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, Homily 54.3).

In light of these statements Chapman says:

I think this statement alone would have made it clear that the Rock is Peter, in St. Chrysostom's view, as well as, and because of, the firmness of his confession. He has no idea of the two notions, 'Peter is the Rock' and 'his faith is the Rock' being mutually exclusive, as, in fact, they are not (Dom John Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), p. 79).

But this statement is a complete misrepresentation. In exegeting the rock of Matthew 16, just prior to the above statements, Chrysostom states that Peter is not the rock. In the quotes given by Chapman, what Chrysostom is saying is that just as the Lord strengthened Jeremiah for his calling so he would strengthen Peter. He says he will be like a rock, not that he is the rock of Matthew 16. This is very similar to Augustine's position on Peter:

So is it the case that Peter is now true, or that Christ is true in Peter? When the Lord Jesus Christ wished, he left Peter to himself, and Peter was found to be a man; and when it so pleased the Lord Jesus Christ, he filled Peter, and Peter was found to be true. The Rock had made Rocky Peter true, for the Rock was Christ (John Rotelle, *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Brooklyn: New City, 1992), Sermons, *Sermon 147.3*, p. 449).

According to Augustine, the rock is Christ and Christ made Peter a rock of strength in his faith. But Peter is not the rock of Matthew 16. He simply derives strength to be a rock from the rock, Christ Jesus himself. And what is true for Peter becomes true for all Christians

because Peter is a figurative representative of the Church. In contradistinction to Chapman's assertions the fathers do in fact separate Peter's faith from Peter's confession, making them mutually exclusive, as we have seen with Augustine and Ambrose. While it is true that it is the person of Peter who makes the confession, the focus of Chrysostom is not on Peter's person but on Peter's faith.

Chrysostom holds a similar view to that of Ambrose which we referenced earlier. Ambrose says that where Peter is (his confession), there is the Church. Chrysostom affirms the same point when he says: 'For though we do not retain the body of Peter, we do retain the faith of Peter, and retaining the faith of Peter we have Peter.' (*On the Inscription of the Acts*, II. Cited by E. Giles, *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority* (London: SPCK, 1952), p. 168. Cf. Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, p. 96).

While holding a very high view of the status of the apostle Peter, Chrysostom, like Augustine, did not transfer this status to the bishops of Rome. In his thinking, along with Cyprian, Augustine, Jerome and Ambrose, all bishops are successors of Peter. There is no supreme authority of one bishop over another. In all his remarks about Peter, where does Chrysostom apply them to the bishops of Rome in an exclusive sense? He never does that. He never personally makes that application in his statements and it is historically dishonest to assert that that is what he meant when he personally never said it. In similar fashion to Cyprian, Chrysostom refers to the chair of Peter, stating that the bishop of Antioch possesses that chair, demonstrating that in his mind all legitimate bishops are successors of Peter and not just the bishop of Rome:

In speaking of S. Peter, the recollection of another Peter has come to me, the common father and teacher, who has inherited his prowess, and also obtained his chair. For this is the one great privilege of our city, Antioch, that it received the leader of the apostles as its teacher in the beginning. For it was right that she who was first adorned with the name of Christians, before the whole world, should receive the first of the apostles as her pastor. But though we received him as teacher, we did not retain him to the end, but gave him up to royal Rome. Or rather we did retain him to the end, for though we do not retain the body of Peter, we do retain the faith of Peter, and retaining the faith

of Peter we have Peter (*On the Inscription of the Acts*, II. Cited by E. Giles, *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority* (London: SPCK, 1952), p. 168. Cf. Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, p. 96).

In his book, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, Herbert Scott makes the assertion that John Chrysostom held to the view of papal primacy because he expressed exalted views about the apostle Peter. He makes the assumption that because Chrysostom speaks of Peter in exalted terms that such statements apply to the bishops of Rome in an exclusive sense. But when pressed by the question as to whether Chrysostom actually makes this application himself, Scott is forced to this significant admission:

Granted that Chrysostom reiterates that Peter is the coryphaeus, 'the universal shepherd,' etc., what evidence is there, it is asked, that he recognised these claims in the Bishop of Rome? Is there anything in his writings to that effect?...If it be held that all this labouring by Chrysostom of the honour and powers of Peter does not of itself demand the exalted position of his successors as its explanation, it must be conceded that there is little or nothing in his writings which explicitly and incontestably affirms that the Bishop of Rome is the successor of S. Peter in his primacy (S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), p. 133).

In other words, there is no evidence in any of the writings of Chrysostom that he applied his statements about Peter to the bishops of Rome. Nevertheless, Scott goes on to suggest that Chrysostom's statements imply a papal interpretation to his words. As Scott puts it:

Surely, however, if Peter is the foundation of the Church as Chrysostom constantly affirms, and if the Church is eternal as the Founder made it, he must last as long as the building, the Church, which is erected upon him (S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), p. 133).

The logic employed here by Scott is flawed. Chrysostom never makes such a statement. He has in fact explained what he means when he says that Peter is the foundation. There is no reason to suppose that Chrysostom envisioned a papal office when he speaks of Peter as the foundation of the Church. We have seen quite clearly from

Chrysostom's statements that he taught that the Church was built on Peter's confession of faith. It can be said to be built on Peter only in the sense that it is built on his confession. Chrysostom's comments given above on Antioch demonstrate that he teaches that the Church's foundation is preserved throughout history as Peter's confession of faith is preserved. It is not preserved by being built upon the bishops of Rome as supposed exclusive successors of Peter, but upon Peter's confession. As Chrysostom put it, 'Where you have Peter's confession there you have Peter: 'for though we do not retain the body of Peter, we do retain the faith of Peter, and retaining the faith of Peter we have Peter.' (*On the Inscription of the Acts*, II. Cited by E. Giles, *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority* (London: SPCK, 1952), p. 168. Cf. Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, p. 96). Nevertheless, Scott goes on to offer what he considers incontrovertible proof of the expression of papal primacy from Chrysostom's writings:

There is indeed one passage which may be a categorical affirmation of the primacy of the pope: De Sacerdotio 53: 'Why did Christ shed His Blood? To purchase the sheep which He confided to Peter and those who came after him.' It may be urged that S. Chrysostom means no more by this than all those who have the care of souls. On the other hand, there may be a reference to Peter only and to his personal commission: 'Feed my sheep'; and Chrysostom soon afterwards actually quotes these words. And when one recalls his comments on them given above, as meaning Peter's 'government' and 'ruling the brethren,' it is at least likely that here is a reference to Peter's successors in the see of Rome (S. Herbert Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), p. 133).

These assertions are refuted by Dom Chrysostom Baur, the Roman Catholic biographer on the life of John Chrysostom. He points out that Chrysostom's writings contain no allusion to a papal primacy and that the supposed evidence as that appealed to by Scott twists his writings to say what one wants them to say. It is to read a preconceived theology into his writings that Chrysostom himself never expressed. Baur comments:

A more important question is whether Chrysostom considered the primacy of Peter as only personal, or as an official primacy, hence a permanent

arrangement of the Church, and whether he correspondingly attributed the primacy of jurisdiction in the Church also to the Bishops of Rome...Chrysostom never made in his works any questionable deductions, never passed sentence with clear words on the jurisdiction of the Pope. Even P. Jugie admits this frankly. N. Marini, who later became a Cardinal, published a book on this question. In this he seeks, with the help...of a number of quotations from Chrysostom, to prove that this must pass for unqualified evidence of the jurisdictional primacy of the successors of Peter in Rome. His first argument is borrowed from the Treatise on the Priesthood. In Book 2.1 Chrysostom asks: 'Why did Christ shed His blood? In order to ransom His sheep, which He entrusted to Peter and to those after him.' Marioni translates here 'Peter and his successors,' which naturally facilitates his proof. But Chrysostom actually expressed himself in a more general way, and means by 'those after him' all the pastors generally, to whom the sheep of Christ had been entrusted after Peter. So it is not practicable to interpret this passage so narrowly as Marini has done. Still less convincing is Marini's second piece of evidence. In a letter which Chrysostom addressed to Pope Innocent from his exile, he says that he would gladly assist in putting an end to the great evil, 'for the strife has spread over almost the entire world.' So then, one concludes, Chrysostom ascribes to the Pope authority over the whole world. Then Chrysostom writes once more, to the Bishop of Thessalomki: 'Do not grow weary of doing that which contributes to the general improvement of the Church,' and he praises Bishop Aurelius of Carthage, because he put forth so much effort and struggle for the churches of the whole world. It would not occur to anyone to wish to construe from this a possible proof of the primacy of the bishops of Saloniki or of Carthage (Dom Chrysostomus Baur, O.S.B., *John Chrysostom and His Time* (Westminster: Newman, 1959), Vol. I, pp. 348-349).

Clearly, Chrysostom cannot be cited as a proponent of a Petrine or papal primacy in the Roman Catholic sense any more than Augustine. Michael Winter candidly admits that Chrysostom's views, especially his interpretation of the rock of Matthew 16, were antithetical to those of Rome and greatly influenced the Eastern fathers who followed him. He states that such Eastern fathers as Theodore of Mopsuestia, Palladius of Helenopolis, Theodore of Ancyra, Basil of Seleucia and Nilus of Ancyra held to an opinion that was unfavourable to the superiority of Peter, an opinion that was widespread in the East in the first half of the fifth century:

The antipathy to Rome which finds its echo even in the works of St. John

Chrysostom became more pronounced as the Eastern Church came more and more under the control of the emperor and effected eventually their estimate of St. Peter. Although they were not influenced by the Eusebian idea that the 'rock' of the church was Christ, the lesser Antiocheans betray an unwillingness to admit that Peter was the rock. Theodore of Mopsuestia, who died a quarter of a century after Chrysostom, declared that the rock on which the church was built was Peter's confession of faith. The same opinion is repeated by Palladius of Helenopolis in his Dialogues on the life of St. John Chrysostom. Without any elaboration he states that the rock in Matthew 16 is Peter's confession. The complete absence of reasons or arguments in support of the contention is an indication of how widely the view was accepted at that date. Such an opinion was, in fact, held also by Theodore of Ancyra, Basil of Seleucia, and Nilus of Ancyra, in the first half of the fifth century...The opinion unfavourable to the superiority of St. Peter gained a considerable following in the East under the influence of the school of Antioch (Michael Winter, *St. Peter and the Popes* (Baltimore: Helikon, 1960), p. 73).

Stephen Ray gives a further criticism of my comments in these statements:

Webster continues, "On the one hand the Eastern Fathers and theologians held very high views of the status of the apostle Peter but they did not transfer that status to the bishops of Rome" (ibid.). We will provide plenty of evidence to disprove Webster's assertion later in our study; but here is a single reference to put the lie to Webster's claim. Methodius (c. 815-885), the famous Eastern Father and "apostle to the Slavs", or one of his disciples, wrote, "It is not true, as this Canon states, that the holy Fathers gave the primacy to old Rome because it was the capital of the Empire; it is from on high, from divine grace, that this primacy drew its origin. Because of the intensity of his faith Peter, the first of the Apostles, was addressed in these words by our Lord Jesus Christ himself 'Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep'. That is why in hierarchical order Rome holds the pre-eminent place and is the first See. That is why the leges of old Rome are eternally immovable, and that is the view of all the Churches" (N. Brian-Chaninov, *The Russian Church* (1931), 46; cited by Butler, *Church and Infallibility*, 210) (*Upon This Rock* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), p. 177).

Please note the defense Mr. Ray employs for his position that the Fathers of the church apply the prerogatives of Peter to the bishops of Rome in an exclusive sense as a refutation of my statements. He gives a questionable quotation from a ninth century Eastern theologian. Notice how he introduces the quotation: 'Methodius, or one of his disciples, wrote.' In other words we do not know for sure who wrote this. There is no reference given to the writing itself as to its

genuinness and the citation comes from a source, that is taken from another source, which simply lists it as a quotation. This is very sloppy scholarship if we can call it that at all. In addition, the ninth century is hardly what we would call the patristic age. Historically, the patristic age is considered to have ended with John of Damascus in the mid eighth century. Furthermore, Yves Congar, the Roman Catholic theologian and historian, affirms the fact that the Eastern Fathers of the patristic age and afterwards did not hold to the view of an exclusive Petrine primacy at Rome. These are not the comments of a Protestant historian, but of one of the most eminent Roman Catholic theologians and historians of this century:

Many of the Eastern Fathers who are rightly acknowledged to be the greatest and most representative and are, moreover, so considered by the universal Church, do not offer us any more evidence of the primacy. Their writings show that they recognized the primacy of the Apostle Peter, that they regarded the See of Rome as the *prima sedes* playing a major part in the Catholic communion—we are recalling, for example, the writings of St. John Chrysostom and of St. Basil who addressed himself to Rome in the midst of the difficulties of the schism of Antioch—but they provide us with no theological statement on the universal primacy of Rome by divine right. The same can be said of St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. John Damascene (Yves Congar, *After Nine Hundred Years* (New York: Fordham University, 1959), pp. 61-62).

It does sometimes happen that some Fathers understood a passage in a way which does not agree with later Church teaching. One example: the interpretation of Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16–19. Except at Rome, this passage was not applied by the Fathers to the papal primacy; they worked out an exegesis at the level of their own ecclesiological thought, more anthropological and spiritual than juridical (Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 398).

It must be confessed that the consciousness of the Roman primacy was not expressed in the East at the period when the primacy became classically fixed in tradition, at least not with a clarity that alone could have avoided schism. In the great councils held in the East, there had never been a formula on the universal primacy by divine right...We do not find texts in the East as strong as those in the West; the rescripts of Theodore and of Valentinian II and Valentinian III concern the West. In a number of documents Rome is merely portrayed as an ecclesiastical and canonical court of first instance. In other texts, Rome is recognized as having the right as first See, of intervening to preserve the purity of doctrinal tradition, but not to regulate the life of the churches or to settle questions of discipline in the East. Finally—and to our mind this is the most important point—although the East recognized the primacy of Rome, it did not imply by this exactly what Rome herself did, so that, even within the question on which they were in agreement, there existed the beginning of a very serious estrangement bearing upon the decisive element of the ecclesiastical constitution

and the rule of communion (Yves Congar, *After Nine Hundred Years* (New York: Fordham University, 1959), pp. 61-62.)

The East never accepted the regular jurisdiction of Rome, nor did it submit to the judgment of Western bishops. Its appeals to Rome for help were not connected with a recognition of the principle of Roman jurisdiction but were based on the view that Rome had the same truth, the same good. The East jealously protected its autonomous way of life. Rome intervened to safeguard the observation of legal rules, to maintain the orthodoxy of faith and to ensure communion between the two parts of the church, the Roman see representing and personifying the West...In according Rome a 'primacy of honour', the East avoided basing this primacy on the succession and the still living presence of the apostle Peter. A *modus vivendi* was achieved which lasted, albeit with crises, down to the middle of the eleventh century...From the perspective of an ecclesiology which is not only theoretical but is also put into practice, we are confronted by two logics. The East remained oriented on the logic of local or particular churches in communion with one another in the unity of faith, love and eucharist; this unity was realized by means of exchanges and communications and then, when the need made itself felt, by the holding of a council. It was a unity of communion. The West, which Islam had cut off from North Africa, accepted the authority of the Roman see, and over the course of history Rome occupied an increasingly prominent place. It is a fact that the two gravest crises between Byzantium and Rome arose in times when the papal authority was affirmed most strongly: with Photius under Nicholas I and John VIII, and with Cerularius at the time of the so-called Gregorian Reform (Nicholas II, Leo IX, Humbert, Gregory VII) (Yves Congar, *Diversity and Communion* (Mystic: Twenty-Third, 1982), pp. 26-27)

Pierre Batiffol likewise affirms the fact that the Eastern Church, historically, has never embraced the ecclesiology of Roman primacy:

I believe that the East had a very poor conception of the Roman primacy. The East did not see in it what Rome herself saw and what the West saw in Rome, that is to say, a continuation of the primacy of St. Peter. The bishop of Rome was more than the successor of Peter on his *cathedra*, he was Peter perpetuated, invested with Peter's responsibility and power. The East has never understood this perpetuity. St. Basil ignored it, as did St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. John Chrysostom. In the writings of the great Eastern Fathers, the authority of the Bishop of Rome is an authority of singular grandeur, but in these writings it is not considered so by divine right (Cited by Yves Congar, *After Nine Hundred Years* (New York: Fordham University, 1959), pp. 61-62).

It should be clear from the foregoing documentation that Mr. Ray's charge is a purposeful misrepresentation. How does what I wrote to him in my email differ from what I have written in *The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock*? My statements in the book affirm in every detail and in much greater length what I

wrote to him in my email. I have given full documentation from the writings of the Church Fathers and then have backed up my conclusions with the judgments of leading Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant historians.

A Second Misrepresentation

A second misrepresentation has to do with Tertullian's interpretation of the rock of Matthew 16. In my book *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History* and *The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock* I make reference to the writings of Tertullian and in particular his comments from his treatise, *On Modesty*. The reason for concentrating on this work is because this is the first instance of an actual exegesis of the meaning of the rock of Matthew 16:18 in the history of the Church. There are passing comments in other of Tertullian's writings, such as his treatise, *On Prescription Against Heretics*, in which he refers to Peter as the rock. But in his treatise, *On Modesty*, while he again affirms that Peter is the rock, he explains what he means by this statement. In other words he gives an exegesis of the passage. Stephen Ray makes the following criticism of my comments:

On Modesty 21, ANF 4:99. This treatise was written in 220, at the peak of Tertullian's Montanist period. He was in a sect that would have been extremely odious to Protestants and Orthodox today. He scorned the orthodox teaching of the Church and depended upon the ecstatic trances and revelations of two women prophets: Prisca and Maximilla. Interestingly enough, this is the only quotation from Tertullian that William Webster refers to in his book *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History* - a book with the intent of discrediting the Catholic Church. Webster writes, "Tertullian, at the beginning of the third century, was the first to identify the 'rock' of Matthew 16:18 with Peter in his treatise *On Modesty*. But what he means by this identification is not that Peter is the rock in the sense that the Church is built on him, but that it is built through him as he preaches the gospel" (48-49). He then quotes the above passage in its entirety. Whether Webster is being dishonest by withholding pertinent information, or whether he failed to research the issue thoroughly, is not certain; but there are two severe

problems with his assertion. First, he does not tell us that there is actually a reference to Peter as the “rock” twenty years earlier, made, by Tertullian himself while in his orthodox period. We read it a few pages back: ““anything withheld from the knowledge of Peter, who is called ‘the rock on which the church should be built,’ who also obtained ‘the keys of the kingdom of heaven,’ with the power of ‘loosing and binding in heaven and on earth.’ We also find Tertullian referring to the Church as “built upon him (Peter)”. Why does Webster not inform his readers of Tertullian’s earlier orthodox teaching? Second, Webster neglects to alert his reader to the fact that the passage cited is from the depths of Tertullian’s Montanist period-his descent into heresy. Webster himself would recoil at Montanist extremes and would shun Montanist theology, especially the expectation of the imminent descent of the heavenly Jerusalem, coming down from the sky to settle near Pepuza in Phrygia. Is it not curious that Webster, in rejecting the orthodox teaching, the early Church on Peter’s primacy (as reflected in Tertullian’s orthodox writings), sides with the heretical Tertullian in the interpretation of this Scripture passage? It should be remembered that Tertullian had turned his back on the Church; and was writing in indignation - with all the acrimony he could muster-to repudiate the Church and her foundations. All the orthodox theologians of the time condemned him and his Montanist theology. Tertullian’s indictment of the Church’s understanding of Matthew 16, however, only serves to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that the Church did teach that Matthew 16 referred to Peter as the Rock and that that office and authority had been passed on to the Church. If the Church had not assumed this foundational understanding, and overtly taught it, why else would Tertullian strike out vindictively to subvert the accepted interpretation? (*Upon This Rock* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), pp. 175-176).

In my reference to Tertullian’s comments in *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History* I was not intentionally withholding information from the reader. I was simply making reference to the fact that Tertullian is the first church Father to

identify the rock of Matthew 16 with Peter and I use his treatise *On Modesty* as an example of that fact. In addition, I used this treatise because it gives Tertullian's full explanation of what he means by the terms he uses. Mr. Ray implies that I am possibly dishonest or am ignorant of the true facts regarding Tertullian's writings. But this is a baseless charge. William Jurgens, who is a Roman Catholic patristics scholar, in citing evidence for the papal primacy in the early Church, cites the very same quotation from Tertullian's treatise, *On Modesty*, which I also cite in *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, except that he fails to give the full quotation thereby distorting the meaning of the passage. But he does not inform the reader of any other passages from the writings of Tertullian that pertain to that subject. He is content to allow this passage to stand on its own as an expression of the fact that Tertullian identified the rock with Peter. That does not mean that there were no other references to that fact or that Mr. Jurgens is ignorant of those writings. The same pertains in my reference to Tertullian in *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*. But Mr. Ray knows this is so and that his charges against me are disingenuous because of what I have written in *The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock*. It is significant that Mr. Ray completely neglects to inform his readers of what is written there. He is being purposefully deceitful and misleading because I cite the very passage he references above from Tertullian's treatise, *On Prescription Against Heretics*, in addition to the passage from, *On Modesty*, as an affirmation of Tertullian's identification of the rock with Peter. The following are my comments from *The Matthew 16 Controversy*:

Tertullian was born in Carthage in North Africa and practiced law before his conversion to Christianity ca. A.D. 193. As a Christian he was a prolific writer and has been called the 'Father of Latin Christianity'. He was most likely a layman and his writings were widely read. He had a great influence upon the Church fathers of subsequent generations, especially Cyprian. He is the first of the Western fathers to comment on Matthew 16. In one of his writings Tertullian identifies the rock with the person of Peter on which the Church would be built:

Was anything withheld from the knowledge of Peter, who is called the 'rock

on which the church should be built' who also obtained 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' with the power of 'loosing and binding in heaven and earth?' (Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), Volume III, Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heretics* 22).

Though Tertullian states that Peter is the rock he does not mean it in a pro-papal sense. We know this because of other comments he has made. But if we isolate this one passage it would be easy to read a pro-Roman interpretation into it. However, in other comments on Matthew 16:18–19, Tertullian explains what he means when he says that Peter is the rock on which the Church would be built:

If, because the Lord has said to Peter, 'Upon this rock I will build My Church,' 'to thee have I given the keys of the heavenly kingdom;' or, 'Whatsoever thou shalt have bound or loosed in earth, shall be bound or loosed in the heavens,' you therefore presume that the power of binding and loosing has derived to you, that is, to every Church akin to Peter, what sort of man are you, subverting and wholly changing the manifest intention of the Lord, conferring (as that intention did) this (gift) personally upon Peter? 'On thee,' He says, 'will I build My church;' and, 'I will give thee the keys'...and, 'Whatsoever thou shalt have loosed or bound'...In (Peter) himself the Church was reared; that is, through (Peter) himself; (Peter) himself essayed the key; you see what key: 'Men of Israel, let what I say sink into your ears: Jesus the Nazarene, a man destined by God for you,' and so forth. (Peter) himself, therefore, was the first to unbar, in Christ's baptism, the entrance to the heavenly kingdom, in which kingdom are 'loosed' the sins that were beforetime 'bound;' and those which have not been 'loosed' are 'bound,' in accordance with true salvation...(Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), Volume IV, Tertullian, *On Modesty* 21, p. 99).

When Tertullian says that Peter is the rock and the Church is built upon him he means that the Church is built through him as he preaches the gospel. This preaching is how Tertullian explains the meaning of the keys. They are the declarative authority for the offer of forgiveness of sins through the preaching of the gospel. If men respond to the message they are loosed from their sins. If they reject it they remain bound in their sins. In the words just preceding this quote Tertullian explicitly denies that this promise can apply to anyone but Peter and therefore he

does not in any way see a Petrine primacy in this verse with successors in the bishops of Rome. The patristic scholar, Karlfried Froehlich, states that even though Tertullian teaches that Peter is the rock he does not mean this in the same sense as the Roman Catholic Church:

‘Tertullian regarded the Peter of Matthew 16:18–19 as the representative of the entire church or at least its ‘spiritual’ members.’ (Karlfried Froehlich, *Saint Peter, Papal Primacy, and Exegetical Tradition, 1150-1300*, pp. 13. Taken from *The Religious Roles of the Papacy: Ideals and Realities, 1150-1300*, ed. Christopher Ryan, *Papers in Medieval Studies 8* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1989)

It is a common practice of Roman Catholic apologists to omit part of the quotation given above by Tertullian in order to make it appear that he is a proponent of papal primacy. An example of this is found in a recently released Roman Catholic defense of the papacy entitled *Jesus, Peter and the Keys*. The authors give the following partial citation from Tertullian:

I now inquire into your opinion, to see whence you usurp this right for the Church. Do you presume, because the Lord said to Peter, ‘On this rock I will build my Church, I have given you the keys of the kingdom of heaven’ [Matt. 16:18-19a] or ‘whatever you shall have bound or loosed on earth will be bound or loosed in heaven’ [Matt. 16:19b] that the power of binding and loosing has thereby been handed on to you, that is, to every church akin to Peter? What kind of man are you, subverting and changing what was the manifest intent of the Lord when he conferred this personally upon Peter? On you, he says, I will build my Church; and I will give to you the keys, not to the Church; and whatever you shall have bound or you shall have loosed, not what they shall have bound or they shall have loosed (Scott Butler, Norman Dahlgren, David Hess, *Jesus, Peter and the Keys* (Santa Barbara: Queenship, 1996), pp. 216-217).

When comparing this citation with the one given above it is clear that these authors have left out the last half of the quotation. The part of the quotation that is omitted defines what Tertullian means when he states that Christ built his Church on Peter and invested him with authority. Again, what he means by these words is that Christ built his church on Peter by building it *through* him as he preached the gospel. This is a meaning that is clearly contrary to the Roman Catholic perspective. To

omit this is to distort the teaching of Tertullian and to give the impression that he taught something he did not teach. So, though Tertullian states that Peter is the rock, he does not mean this in the same way the Roman Catholic Church does. Peter is the rock because he is the one given the privilege of being the first to open the kingdom of God to men. This is similar to the view expressed by Maximus of Tours when he says: 'For he is called a rock because he was the first to lay the foundations of the faith among the nations' (*Ancient Christian Writers* (New York: Newman, 1989), *The Sermons of St. Maximus of Turin*, Sermon 77.1, p. 187).

Not only do we see a clear denial of any belief in a papal primacy in Tertullian's exegesis of Matthew 16, but such a denial is also seen from his practice. In his later years Tertullian separated himself from the Catholic Church to become a Montanist. He clearly did not hold to the view espoused by Vatican I that communion with the Bishop of Rome was the ultimate criterion of orthodoxy and of inclusiveness in the Church of God (*The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock* (Battle Ground: Christian Resources, 1996), pp. 26-28).

Surely these comments demonstrate that Mr. Ray's charges are groundless and misleading because he purposefully omits reference to them. Now Mr. Ray would have us believe that Tertullian's comments are to be discounted because he is writing as a Montanist and that his point of view expressed in the treatise *On Modesty* is somehow different from his earlier references to Peter as the rock in his pre-Montanist days in his treatise *On Prescription Against Heretics*. But where is the evidence for this? The Montanist heresies embraced by Tertullian were condemned by his contemporaries but where is the censure for his exegesis of Matthew 16:18-19 which is antithetical to present day Roman ecclesiology? There was none. The fact of the matter is, Tertullian makes precisely the same statement as a Montanist that he made in his pre-Montanist days as recorded in his treatise *On Prescription Against Heretics* in which he refers to Peter as 'the rock on which the Church would be built.' In his treatise *On Monogamy*, written as a Montanist, Tertullian makes this statement about Peter: 'Peter alone do I find...to have been married. Monogamist I am led to presume by consideration of the Church, which, built upon him, was destined to appoint every grade of her Order from

monogamists' (Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, Ed, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), Volume 4, On Monogamy Chapter VIII, p. 65). There is no difference between these statements. In both cases he states that the Church is built upon Peter. Regarding this statement by Tertullian as a Montanist Mr. Ray offers these comments:

Even during his heretical Montanist period, Tertullian verifies that the early Church accepted the interpretation of Matthew 16, which declared Peter as the rock and the foundation of the Church. It was not contested; in fact, Tertullian uses it as given in his argument. Had the interpretation not been a given, his argument would have fallen flat. That Tertullian says the Church was built upon Peter is not as significant as the manner in which he says it. He states it, not as a point to be proved, but as a proof for his point. The early Church was extremely conservative and held tenaciously to the teaching passed down from the apostles, both written and in practice. Tertullian, even as a Montanist makes this statement confidently, knowing that all those who heard or read his statement would agree without question, since it was the clear understanding of the whole of Christendom (*Upon This Rock* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), Footnote #47 pp. 172-173).

Tertullian states that Peter is the rock on which the Church was built. He says this as a Montanist. Mr. Ray contends that Tertullian is expressing the belief of the universal Church, a belief handed down from the Apostles themselves. And then in his treatise *On Modesty* Tertullian tells us what he actually means when he says that Peter is the rock on whom the Church would be built and his exegesis is completely contrary to the Roman Catholic interpretation. Mr. Ray states that from Tertullian's words it is obvious that the early Church accepted the interpretation which declared Peter as the rock and foundation of the Church. It follows then that the early Church also followed Tertullian's exegesis of what that meant. Let me point out again that this is the first instance of the actual interpretation of the Matthew 16 passage in the history of the Church. So one cannot argue that Tertullian's exegesis is somehow contrary to the prevailing exegesis of the day. While it is true that Tertullian embraced heretical tendencies in certain areas as a Montanist, this does not mean that he was wrong in

everything he wrote. Many of his treatises written in defense of the faith during his Montanist period were orthodox. As the editor writes in the Introduction to Tertullian's works in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*: 'Whatever perverting effect Tertullian's secession to the sect of Montanus may have had on his judgment in his latest writings; it did not vitiate the work against Marcion. With a few trivial exceptions, this treatise may be read by the strictest Catholic without any feeling of annoyance' (Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, Ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994, Volume 3, pp. 7-8). Mr. Ray speaks in glowing terms of Origen in his book but Origen was also condemned as a heretic by the Church. But he is completely silent on this fact. He is willing to accept Origen's statements, even though he is a heretic, because he feels that Origen supports his position, which in fact he doesn't. When Tertullian gives his exegesis of the rock and keys of Matthew 16 he is explaining what he means when he states that Peter is the rock and the Church is built on him. Mr. Ray is willing to accept Tertullian as a Montanist when he states that Peter is the rock, without any qualifying exegesis. But the moment he interprets his words he suddenly becomes a heretic whose words are to be rejected. The double standard here is plain for all to see.

Mr. Ray makes much of the fact that Tertullian and the early Church positively state that the rock is Peter. There is no debate about this. But what Mr. Ray blinds himself to is the fact that these Fathers do not mean this in a pro-papal sense. He imports theological meanings developed from a later age into their words. It is possible to believe that Peter is the rock and not believe this means a papal office. We must allow the words of the Fathers themselves to give us the understanding of what *they* meant by the words they used and not force them to say what we want them to say because we have a theological agenda we are promoting. Tertullian has told us precisely what he means when he states that Peter is the rock and it is a meaning contrary to the Roman Catholic position espoused today.

A Third Misrepresentation

A third misrepresentation by Stephen Ray has to do with the teachings of Cyprian. The following are my comments on Cyprian and his teaching from *The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock*:

Cyprian was a bishop of Carthage in North Africa in the mid–third century. He was one of the most influential theologians and bishops of the Church of his day and gave his life in martyrdom for his faith. He was greatly influenced by the writings of Tertullian, the North African father who preceded him. He is often cited by Roman Catholic apologists as a witness for papal primacy. In his treatise *On the Unity of the Church* Cyprian gives the following interpretation of the rock of Matthew 16:

The Lord saith unto Peter, I say unto thee, (saith He,) that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18–19). To him again, after His resurrection, He says, Feed My sheep. Upon him being one He builds His Church; and although He gives to all the Apostles an equal power, and says, As My Father sent Me, even so I send you; receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted to him, and whosoever sins ye shall retain, they shall be retained (John 20:21);—yet in order to manifest unity, He has by His own authority so placed the source of the same unity, as to begin from one (*A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: Parker, 1844), Cyprian, *On The Unity of the Church* 3-4, pp. 133-135).

Cyprian clearly says that Peter is the rock. If his comments were restricted to the above citation it would lend credence to the idea that he was a proponent of papal primacy. However Cyprian’s comments continue on from the statements given above. His additional statements prove conclusively that although he states that Peter is the rock he does not mean this in a pro–Roman sense. His view is that Peter is a symbol of unity, a figurative representative of the bishops of the Church. Cyprian viewed all the apostles as being equal with one another. He believed the words to Peter in Matthew 16 to be representative of the ordination of all Bishops so that the Church is founded, not upon one Bishop in one see, but upon all equally in collegiality. Peter, then, is a representative figure of the episcopate as a whole. His view is clearly stated in these words:

Certainly the other Apostles also were what Peter was, endued with an equal fellowship both of honour and power; but a commencement is made from unity, that the Church may be set before as one; which one Church, in the Song of Songs, doth the Holy Spirit design and name in the Person of our Lord: My dove, My spotless one, is but one; she is the only one of her mother, elect of her that bare her (Cant. 9:6) (*A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: Parker, 1844), Cyprian, *On The Unity of the Church* 3, p. 133).

Our Lord whose precepts and warnings we ought to observe, determining the honour of a Bishop and the ordering of His own Church, speaks in the Gospel and says to Peter, I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Thence the ordination of Bishops, and the ordering of the Church, runs down along the course of time and line of succession, so that the Church is settled upon her Bishops; and every act of the Church is regulated by these same Prelates (*A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: Parker, 1844), The Epistles of S. Cyprian, *Ep.* 33.1).

Cyprian, like Tertullian and Origen, states that Peter is the rock. But such a statement must be qualified. He definitely does not mean this in the same way the Church of Rome does. In his treatise, *On the Unity of the Church*, Cyprian teaches that Peter alone is not the rock or foundation on which the Church is built, but rather, he is an example of the principle of unity. He is representative of the Church as a whole. The entire episcopate, according to Cyprian, is the foundation, though Christ is himself the true Rock. The bishops of Rome are not endowed with divine authority to rule the Church. All of the bishops together constitute the Church and rule over their individual areas of responsibility as co-equals. If Cyprian meant to say that the Church was built upon Peter and he who resists the bishop of Rome resists the Church (cutting himself off from the Church), then he completely contradicts himself, for he opposed Stephen, the bishop of Rome, in his interpretation of Matthew 16 as well as on theological and jurisdictional issues. His actions prove that his comments about Peter could not coincide with the Roman Catholic interpretation of his words. To do so is a distortion of his true meaning.

Historically there has been some confusion on the interpretation of Cyprian's teaching because there are two versions of his treatise, *On the Unity of the Church*. In the first Cyprian speaks of the chair of Peter in which he equates the true Church with that chair. He states that there is only one Church and one chair and a primacy given to Peter. In the second, the references to a Petrine primacy are softened to give greater emphasis to the theme of unity and co-equality of bishops. Most Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars now agree that Cyprian is the author of both versions. He wrote the second in order to offset a pro-Roman interpretation which was being attached to his words which he never intended. The episcopate is to him the principle of unity within the Church and representative of it. The 'chair of Peter' is a figurative expression which applies to every bishop in his own see, not just the bishops of Rome. The bishop of Rome holds a primacy of honor but he does not have universal jurisdiction over the entire Church for Cyprian expressly states that all the apostles received the same authority and status as Peter and the Church is built upon all the bishops and not just Peter alone. Some object to these conclusions about Cyprian citing his statements about the chair of Peter. Roman Catholic apologists would lead us to believe that Cyprian's comments refer exclusively to the bishops of Rome and that they therefore possess special authority as the successors of Peter.

The Roman Catholic historian, Robert Eno, repudiates this point of view as a misrepresentation of Cyprian's view. As he points out Cyprian did not believe that the bishop of Rome possessed a higher authority than he or the other African bishops. They were all equals:

Cyprian makes considerable use of the image of Peter's cathedra or chair. Note however that it is important in his theology of the local church: 'God is one and Christ is one: there is one Church and one chair founded, by the Lord's authority, upon Peter. It is not possible that another altar can be set up, or that a new priesthood can be appointed, over and above this one altar and this one priesthood' (Ep. 43.5).

The cathedri Petri symbolism has been the source of much misunderstanding

and dispute. Perhaps it can be understood more easily by looking at the special treatise he wrote to defend both his own position as sole lawful bishop of Carthage and that of Cornelius against Novatian, namely, the *De unitate ecclesiae*, or, as it was known in the Middle Ages, *On the Simplicity of Prelates*. The chapter of most interest is the fourth. Controversy has dogged this work because two versions of this chapter exist. Since the Reformation, acceptance of one version or the other has usually followed denominational lines.

Much of this has subsided in recent decades especially with the work of Fr. Maurice Bevenot, an English Jesuit, who devoted most of his scholarly life to this text. He championed the suggestion of the English Benedictine, John Chapman, that what we are dealing with here are two versions of a text, both of which were authored by Cyprian. This view has gained wide acceptance in recent decades. Not only did Cyprian write both but his theology of the Church is unchanged from the first to the second. He made textual changes because his earlier version was being misused.

The theology of the controverted passage sees in Peter the symbol of unity, not from his being given greater authority by Christ for, as he says in both versions, ‘...a like power is given to all the Apostles’ and ‘...No doubt the others were all that Peter was.’ Yet Peter was given the power first: ‘Thus it is made clear that there is but one Church and one chair.’ The Chair of Peter then belongs to each lawful bishop in his own see. Cyprian holds the Chair of Peter in Carthage and Cornelius in Rome over against Novatian the would-be usurper. You must hold to this unity if you are to remain in the Church. Cyprian wants unity in the local church around the lawful bishop and unity among the bishops of the world who are ‘glued together’ (Ep. 66.8).

Apart from his good relations and harmony with Bishop Cornelius over the matter of the lapsed, what was Cyprian’s basic view of the role, not of Peter as symbol of unity, but of Rome in the contemporary Church? Given what we have said above, it is clear that he did not see the bishop of Rome as his superior, except by way of honor, even though the lawful bishop of Rome also held the chair of Peter in an historical sense (Ep. 52.2). Another term frequently used by the Africans in speaking of the Church was ‘the root’ (*radix*). Cyprian sometimes used the term in connection with Rome, leading some to assert that he regarded the Roman church as the ‘root.’ But in fact, in Cyprian’s teaching, the Catholic Church as a whole is the root. So when he bade farewell to some Catholics travelling to Rome, he instructed them to be very careful about which group of Christians they contacted after their arrival in Rome. They must avoid schismatic groups like that of Novation. They should contact and join the Church presided over by Cornelius because it alone is the Catholic Church in Rome. In other words, Cyprian exhorted ‘...them to discern the womb and root...of the Catholic Church and to cleave to it’ (Ep. 48.3).

It is clear that in Cyprian's mind...one theological conclusion he does not draw is that the bishop of Rome has authority which is superior to that of the African bishops (Robert Eno, *The Rise of the Papacy* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1990), pp. 57-60).

As Charles Gore has pointed out, Cyprian used the phrase, the Chair of Peter' in his Epistle 43, which Roman apologists often cite in defense of an exclusive Roman primacy, to refer to his own see of Carthage, not the see of Rome. This is confirmed as a general consensus of Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic historians. James McCue, writing for Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, in the work *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, affirms this interpretation of Cyprian's view in the following comments:

According to Cyprian's interpretation of Matthew 16:18, Jesus first conferred upon Peter the authority with which he subsequently endowed all the apostles. This, according to Cyprian, was to make clear the unity of the power that was being conferred and of the church that was being established. Cyprian frequently speaks of Peter as the foundation of the church, and his meaning seems to be that it was in Peter that Jesus first established all the church-building powers and responsibilities that would subsequently also be given to the other apostles and to the bishops.

Peter is the source of the church's unity only in an exemplary or symbolic way...Peter himself seems, in Cyprian's thought, to have had no authority over the other apostles, and consequently the church of Peter cannot reasonably claim to have any authority over the other churches (*Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, Edited by Paul Empie and Austin Murphy (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974), *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V*, pp. 68-69).

This judgment is further affirmed by the Roman Catholic historian, Michael Winter:

Cyprian used the Petrine text of Matthew to defend episcopal authority, but many later theologians, influenced by the papal connexions of the text, have interpreted Cyprian in a propapal sense which was alien to his thought...Cyprian would have used Matthew 16 to defend the authority of any bishop, but since he happened to employ it for the sake of the Bishop of Rome, it created the impression that he understood it as referring to papal authority...Catholics as well as Protestants are now generally agreed that Cyprian did not attribute a superior authority to Peter (Michael Winter, *St. Peter and the Popes* (Baltimore: Helikon, 1960), pp. 47-48).

This Roman Catholic historian insists that it is a misrepresentation of Cyprian's true teaching to assert that he is a father who supports the Roman Catholic interpretation of Matthew 16. And he says that both Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars are now agreed on this. Once again, Roman Catholic historians specifically repudiate what some Roman apologists often teach about Cyprian and his comments on the 'Chair of Peter'. Karlfried Froehlich states:

Cyprian understood the biblical Peter as representative of the unified episcopate, not of the bishop of Rome...He understood him as symbolizing the unity of all bishops, the privileged officers of penance...For (Cyprian), the one Peter, the first to receive the penitential keys which all other bishops also exercise, was the biblical type of the one episcopate, which in turn guaranteed the unity of the church. The one Peter equaled the one body of bishops (Karlfried Froehlich, *Saint Peter, Papal Primacy, and the Exegetical Tradition*, 1150-1300, p. 36, 13, n. 28 p. 13. Taken from *The Religious Roles of the Papacy: Ideals and Realities*, 1150-1300, ed. Christopher Ryan, *Papers in Medieval Studies* 8 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1989).

John Meyendorff explains the meaning of Cyprian's use of the phrase 'chair of Peter' and sums up the Cyprianic ecclesiology which was normative for the East as a whole:

The early Christian concept, best expressed in the third century by Cyprian of Carthage, according to which the 'see of Peter' belongs, in each local church, to the bishop, remains the longstanding and obvious pattern for the Byzantines. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, can write that Jesus 'through Peter gave to the bishops the keys of heavenly honors.' Pseudo-Dionysius when he mentions the 'hierarchs'—i.e., the bishops of the early Church—refers immediately to the image of Peter....Peter succession is seen wherever the right faith is preserved, and, as such, it cannot be localized geographically or monopolized by a single church or individual (John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology* (New York: Fordham University, 1974), p. 98).

Cyprian's view of Peter's 'chair' (cathedri Petri) was that it belonged not only to the bishop of Rome but to every bishop within each community. Thus Cyprian used not the argument of Roman primacy but that of his own authority as 'successor of Peter' in Carthage...For Cyprian, the 'chair of Peter', was a sacramental concept, necessarily present in each local church: Peter was the example and model of each local bishop, who, within his

community, presides over the Eucharist and possesses ‘the power of the keys’ to remit sins. And since the model is unique, unique also is the episcopate (episcopatus unus est) shared, in equal fullness (in solidum) by all bishops (John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s, 1989), pp. 61, 152).

And finally, Reinhold Seeberg explains Cyprian’s interpretation of Matthew 16 and his ecclesiology in these words:

According to Matt. 16:18f., the church is founded upon the bishop and its direction devolves upon him: ‘Hence through the changes of times and dynasties the ordination of bishops and the order of the church moves on, so that the church is constituted of bishops, and every act of the church is controlled by these leaders’ (Epistle 33.1)...The bishops constitute a college (collegium), the episcopate (episcopatus). The councils developed this conception. In them the bishops practically represented the unity of the church, as Cyprian now theoretically formulated it. Upon their unity rests the unity of the church...This unity is manifest in the fact that the Lord in the first instance bestowed apostolic authority upon Peter: ‘Hence the other apostles were also, to a certain extent, what Peter was, endowed with an equal share of both honor and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity, in order that the church of Christ may be shown to be one’ (de un. eccl. 4)...In reality all the bishops—regarded dogmatically—stand upon the same level, and hence he maintained, in opposition to Stephanus of Rome, his right of independent opinion and action...(Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952), Volume I, p. 182-183).

The above quotations from world renowned Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox historians reveal a consensus of scholarly opinion on Cyprian’s teaching effectively demonstrating the incompatibility of Cyprian’s views with those espoused by Vatican I. This consensus also reveals the danger of taking the statements of Church fathers at face value without regard for the context of those statements or for seeking a proper interpretation of the meaning of the terms they use. It is easy to import preconceived meanings into their statements resulting in misrepresentation of their teaching. The authors of *Jesus Peter and the Keys* are guilty of this very thing. They list quotations from Cyprian in total disregard of the true facts as they have been enumerated by the above historians giving the impression that

Cyprian believed in papal primacy when in fact he did not. Their point of view and that of many of the Roman apologists of our day is thoroughly repudiated even by conservative Roman Catholic historians. Cyprian is an excellent example of a father who states that Peter is the rock but who does not mean this in a Roman Catholic sense. But without giving the proper historical context and understanding of his writings it would be quite easy to mislead the uninitiated by investing Cyprian's words with the doctrinal development of a later age thereby misrepresenting his actual position (*The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock* (Battle Ground: Christian Resources, 1996), pp. 32-40).

Stephen Ray makes the following observations on my comments:

William Webster, who mentions only the passages he considers harmful to the Catholic Church, fails, of course, to mention this quotation and others from Cyprian in his *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History* and *Peter and the Rock* because it does not fit his “proof-texting” agenda. In his book *Peter and the Rock*, Webster attempts to prove that Cyprian had no concept of Roman primacy and says that the citations he provides “reveal a consensus of scholarly opinion on Cyprian’s teaching effectively demonstrating the incompatibility of Cyprian’s views with those espoused by Vatican 1” (39). His comments seem to betray an ignorance of scholars who disagree with him. His imagined “consensus” is one built upon selective proof-texting. He quite blithely dismisses a complete modern consensus that cuts across Protestant, Catholic, and even secular (as well as conservative and liberal) lines with respect to the identification of Peter and the Rock in Matthew 16: 18). Instead, he points to Protestant apologists who often cite modernist Catholic theologians - those who have abandoned the historic teachings of the Church - to try to show that “our own” scholars have rejected our position but then refuse even to acknowledge their own Evangelical Protestant scholars who disagree with their position. This amounts to a huge double standard that needs to be exposed for what it is. Scholars who do not fit Webster’s

“consensus” include B. C. Butler, John Chapman, E. Giles, A. H. Cullen, William Barry, and Warren Carroll, to mention only a few. Webster’s section on St. Cyprian also demonstrates his unwillingness to represent fairly the process and necessity of doctrinal development within the Church. As we have demonstrated earlier in this book: the oak tree has grown and looks perceptibly different from the fragile sprout that cracked the original acorn, yet the organic essence and identity remain the same. Do the words of the very first Christians contain the full-blown understanding of the Papacy as expressed in Vatican I? No, they do not, as Webster correctly observes. But then, neither do the words of the first Christians present the fully developed understanding of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ (or the canon of the New Testament, for that matter) as expounded and practiced by later generations of the Church. One must be careful not to read too much into the early centuries-but one must also be careful not to ignore the obvious doctrinal substance contained and practiced by our forebears, which was simply developed and implemented as the need arose throughout subsequent centuries (*Upon This Rock* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), p. 183-184, Footnote #70).

The consensus of scholarly opinion I make reference to come partially from the comments of two conservative Roman Catholic historians, Robert Eno and Michael Winter. In fact, Mr. Ray quotes extensively and approvingly from Michael Winter throughout his book as a reliable source. These are not men who are ‘liberal’ and have been censured by the Roman Church as Mr. Ray falsely claims. Note the conclusions of these two historians:

Robert Eno: It is clear that in Cyprian’s mind...one theological conclusion he does not draw is that the bishop of Rome has authority which is superior to that of the African bishops (Robert Eno, *The Rise of the Papacy* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1990), pp. 57-60).

Michael Winter: Catholics as well as Protestants are now generally agreed that Cyprian did not attribute a superior authority to Peter (Michael Winter, *St. Peter and the Popes* (Baltimore: Helikon, 1960), pp. 47-48).

Are we to conclude that these Roman Catholic historians are guilty of proof-

texting because they come to a conclusion which is unsatisfactory to Mr. Ray. These men are true historians who deal honestly with the facts. Michael Winter affirms that the consensus of scholarly opinion today is that Cyprian's ecclesiology is antithetical to claims of Rome. That is not just my own personal opinion but that of a Roman Catholic historian. Go argue with your own authorities Mr. Ray.

Mr. Ray goes on to state that I am guilty of a double standard because I will quote Roman Catholic historians who discredit Roman Catholic claims all the while neglecting to mention Evangelical scholars who disagree with our own. He says that my comments on a scholarly consensus relative to Cyprian 'seem to betray an ignorance of scholars who disagree with him. His imagined "consensus" is one built upon selective proof-texting. He quite blithely dismisses a complete modern consensus that cuts across Protestant, Catholic, and even secular (as well as conservative and liberal) lines with respect to the identification of Peter and the Rock in Matthew 16: 18).' Now Mr. Ray has just performed a subtle sleight of hand. He has changed the subject. I was dealing with a scholarly opinion with respect to Cyprian's perspective. He suddenly shifts the ground of discussion to a scholarly Evangelical consensus on the meaning of the rock of Matthew 16. The scholarly opinion with regard to Cyprian stands. What Ray is referring to on the other is that a number of prominent evangelical scholars and theologians such as Oscar Cullmann, D.A. Carson and William Hendriksen have stated that Peter is the rock. And so he leaves the reader with the implication that these evangelicals agree with the Roman Catholic interpretation. The authors of the book, *Jesus, Peter and the Keys* have done precisely the same thing. What he fails to mention is that none of these scholars agree with the Roman Catholic interpretation. There indeed are a number of evangelical scholars who agree that Peter is the rock, but there is likewise a unanimous consensus from these same scholars that this does not mean papal primacy. Just as it is possible for Tertullian, Origen and Cyprian to state that Peter is the rock and not mean that in a Roman Catholic sense, it is the same with these scholars.

And finally Mr. Ray states that my comments on the church Fathers belie an ignorance of the truth of doctrinal development. He would have us believe that the

Roman Catholic teaching is that the early Church only believed in the Roman primacy in an implicit sense and that it eventually flowered fully at a later age. Mr. Ray is forced to this conclusion by the weight of patristic evidence against his position. But unfortunately for Mr. Ray, Vatican I, in promulgating the decrees on papal primacy, has stated that there was no development of this doctrine in the Church, that it was there in full belief, understanding and practice from the very beginning because it was established by Christ himself.

A Fourth Misrepresentation

Mr. Ray has gone on in the book to make several other assertions which need to be addressed. In dealing with several quotes from Origen, he puts forth the following challenge: ‘Can anyone claim that the Fathers attributed Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew’s Gospel, ‘You are Peter (Rock) and upon this Church I will build my Church’ (Mt 16:18), to Peter’s confession alone and not to Peter himself?’ The answer quite simply is yes. Augustine does precisely that. He makes the following statement in one of his sermons:

Remember, in this man Peter, the rock. He’s the one, you see, who on being questioned by the Lord about who the disciples said he was, replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ On hearing this, Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you’... ‘You are Peter, Rocky, and on this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of the underworld will not conquer her. To you shall I give the keys of the kingdom. Whatever you bind on earth shall also be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall also be loosed in heaven’ (Mt 16:15–19). In Peter, Rocky, we see our attention drawn to the rock. Now the apostle Paul says about the former people, ‘They drank from the spiritual rock that was following them; but the rock was Christ’ (1 Cor 10:4). So this disciple is called Rocky from the rock, like Christian from Christ.

Why have I wanted to make this little introduction? In order to suggest to you that in Peter the Church is to be recognized. Christ, you see, built his Church not on a man but on Peter’s confession. What is Peter’s confession? ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ There’s the rock for you, there’s the foundation, there’s where the Church has been built, which the gates of the underworld cannot conquer (John Rotelle, O.S.A., Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (New Rochelle: New City Press, 1993), *Sermons*, Volume III/6, Sermon 229P.1, p. 327).

Another example that can be cited is Ambrose. he states:

He, then, who before was silent, to teach us that we ought not to repeat the words of the impious, this one, I say, when he heard, 'But who do you say I am,' immediately, not unmindful of his station, exercised his primacy, that is, the primacy of confession, not of honor; the primacy of belief, not of rank.

This, then, is Peter, who has replied for the rest of the Apostles; rather, before the rest of men. And so he is called the foundation, because he knows how to preserve not only his own but the common foundation...Faith, then, is the foundation of the Church, for it was not said of Peter's flesh, but of his faith, that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' But his confession of faith conquered hell. And this confession did not shut out one heresy, for, since the Church like a good ship is often buffeted by many waves, the foundation of the Church should prevail against all heresies (*The Fathers of the Church* (Washington D.C., Catholic University, 1963), Saint Ambrose, Theological and Dogmatic Works, *The Sacrament of the Incarnation of Our Lord* IV.32-V.34, pp. 230-231).

Peter therefore did not wait for the opinion of the people, but produced his own, saying, 'Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God': Who ever is, began not to be, nor ceases to be. Great is the grace of Christ, who has imparted almost all His own names to His disciples. 'I am,' said He, 'the light of the world,' and yet with that very name in which He glories, He favored His disciples, saying, 'Ye are the light of the world.' 'I am the living bread'; and 'we all are one bread' (1 Cor. x.17)...Christ is the rock, for 'they drank of the same spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ' (1 Cor. x.4); also He denied not to His disciple the grace of this name; that he should be Peter, because he has from the rock (petra) the solidity of constancy, the firmness of faith. Make an effort, therefore, to be a rock! Do not seek the rock outside of yourself, but within yourself! Your rock is your deed, your rock is your mind. Upon this rock your house is built. Your rock is your faith, and faith is the foundation of the Church. If you are a rock, you will be in the Church, because the Church is on a rock. If you are in the Church the gates of hell will not prevail against you...He who has conquered the flesh is a foundation of the Church; and if he cannot equal Peter, he can imitate him (*Commentary in Luke* VI.98, CSEL 32.4).

Both of these Fathers separate Peter's confession from Peter's person. Augustine states explicitly that the Church is not built on Peter's person but on his confession of faith. This was Augustine's personal perspective throughout his ministry. But one will not find this citation or that from Ambrose in Mr. Ray's book even though he knows they exist because they are listed in my book *The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock*.

Mr. Ray makes some additional comments on this subject when he references the teaching of the Church Father, James of Nisbis. He provides the following quotation from James: 'And Simon the head of the Apostles, he who denied Christ...our Lord received him, and made him the foundation, and called him the

rock of the edifice of the Church.' He then offers the following critique of my comments:

To William Webster's credit, he included this passage from Jacob of Nisbis along with another, which reads "Our Lord Jesus Christ is the firm and true foundation; and upon this rock our faith is established. Therefore, when any one has come to faith, he is set upon a firm rock.... And Simon, who was called a rock, was deservedly called a rock because of his faith", and another referring to "Simon the rock of faith". However, Webster concludes by saying that "James, like Eusebius and Augustine, states that the rock of the Church is Christ. He alone is the true and unique foundation. However, Peter is also called a rock foundation of the Church but only because of his faith. The Church is built upon Christ as the foundation, not upon Peter. It can be said to be built on Peter only in the sense that it is built upon his faith which points to Christ" (Webster, *Peter and the Rock*, 100). Why does Webster have to work so hard to establish the *either-or* dichotomy? Why not accept the *both-and* position of the Fathers and the Catholic Church? (*Upon This Rock* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), Footnote #93, p. 193).

I appreciate the fact that Stephen Ray had the courtesy to note that I had included the additional quotations from James of Nisbis, in addition to the one citation he gave in his book. The additional citations are important because they explain what James means when he states that Peter is the foundation and rock of the Church. He is consistent in his perspective with that expressed by Eusebius, a contemporary of James, and Augustine. The emphasis in James' writing is on the faith of Peter and as we have seen in the above citations from Ambrose and Augustine, the early Church Fathers separated the faith of Peter from his person. Stephen Ray asks, 'Why does Webster have to work so hard to establish the *either-or* dichotomy? Why not accept the *both-and* position of the Fathers and the Catholic Church?' The simple answer, Mr. Ray, is that the Fathers themselves established the *either-or* dichotomy. They do not have the *both-and* position that the Roman Church would like to promote in terms of papal primacy. I am not laboring hard to twist the words of this church Father to say something that is

inconsistent with the prevailing view of his day. These comments are consistent with the overall patristic interpretation. Christ is the rock and foundation of the Church. Peter is the rock and foundation, along with all the other apostles (Eph. 2:20), because of their faith and teaching. The Church is built upon this faith, which points to Christ. But as Augustine points out, the Church is not built upon Peter's person. Therefore when the Fathers say that the Church is built upon Peter they mean upon his confession of faith. This is why James of Nisbis refers to Peter as the 'rock of faith.'

A Fifth Misrepresentation

Another misrepresentation that needs to be addressed by Mr. Ray are some of his comments on Ambrose. In his writings Ambrose makes the following statement:

It is to Peter himself that He says: 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church.' Where Peter is, there is the Church (W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1979), Volume 2, St. Ambrose, On Twelve Psalms 440,30, p. 150).

Mr. Ray gives the following interpretation to these words: 'Peter is the rock upon which the Church is built. If one is with Peter, that is, the bishop of Rome, he is with the Church—all others are on the outside' (*Upon This Rock* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), p. 218). What Mr. Ray would have us believe is that when Ambrose states that 'Where Peter is there is the Church', what he means is 'Where the Bishop of Rome is there is the Church'. I give the following refutation of that position in the following comments from *The Matthew 16 Controversy*:

The impression given by (Roman Catholic apologists) is that in these comments Ambrose supports the Roman Catholic interpretation of Matthew 16. They apply the following logic to his statement: The above quote seems to suggest that Peter's person is the rock. And since the bishops of Rome are the successors to Peter they are, therefore, by succession, the rocks of the Church. Therefore, according to Ambrose, the Church is founded upon the universal rule of the bishops of Rome. To be in communion with Rome is to be in the Church. To be out of communion with Rome is to be out of the Church for where Peter (that

is, the bishop of Rome) is, there is the Church. Is this what Ambrose meant? If we divorce this one sentence from its context and from the rest of his comments on Peter in other writings, we could certainly lean towards that interpretation. However, Ambrose made other comments on Peter and Matthew 16 which explain exactly what he meant when he said that Peter is the rock. Unfortunately, these other comments are often neglected in discussions by Roman Catholic apologists. Often a quote like this is given out of the context. The result is that an interpretation is given the words of Ambrose that is completely foreign to his true meaning. This becomes clear upon examination of his other statements: (I then list the quotations from Ambrose cited above). What does Ambrose mean when he says that Peter is the foundation? In the sense that he was the first to openly confess faith in Christ as the Messiah and Son of God. The rock is not Peter himself but Peter's confession of faith! It is this faith which is the foundation of the Church. Peter possesses a primacy, but he explains that primacy as one of confession and faith and not of rank in the sense of ruling over the other apostles. Thus, when Ambrose says that 'where Peter is there is the Church,' he means that where Peter's confession is, there is the Church. He does not mean the bishop of Rome at all. He goes on to give an exposition of the rock reminiscent of the interpretation of Origen who says that all believers are rocks. As (Roman Catholic historian) Robert Eno points out, when the overall context of Ambrose's statement is taken into account, it demonstrates that the interpretation given by (Roman Catholic apologists) is a complete misrepresentation of Ambrose's statement since his statement has nothing to do with ecclesiology and papal authority. Robert Eno gives the following explanation:

There is no question then that Ambrose honored the Roman see, but there are other texts which seem to establish a certain distance and independence as well. He commented, for example, that Peter's primacy was a primacy of confession, not of honor; a primacy of faith, not rank...Finally, one further text should be mentioned in connection with Ambrose since it is a text which like *Roma locuta est* has become something of a shibboleth or slogan. This is

the brief phrase from his commentary on the fortieth Psalm: *Ubi Petrus, ibi ecclesia* (where Peter is, there is the Church)...As Roger Gryson has shown, in his study on Ambrose and the priesthood, the context of such a statement has nothing to do with any treatise on ecclesiology. It is but one statement in a long chain of allegorical exegesis starting with the line from Ps. 41:9: 'Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted...has lifted his heel against me.' This is not to deny the fairly common association of Peter as the symbol of the Church, the *figura ecclesiae* we have seen in Augustine. But it says little that is new and nothing at all about papal authority (Robert Eno, *The Rise of the Papacy* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1990), pp. 83-84).

In the view of the fathers, as seen in the examples of Cyprian, Ambrose and Augustine, the Church is not embodied in one individual but in a confession of right faith. Where you have that right confession you have Peter. This is explicitly stated for example by Chrysostom. Like Ambrose, he says that where Peter is there is the Church in the sense of Peter's confession and he applies it not to Rome but to Antioch:

'Though we do not retain the body of Peter, we do retain the faith of Peter, and retaining the faith of Peter we have Peter' (*On the Inscription of Acts*, II. Taken from E. Giles, *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority* (London: SPCK, 1952), p.168)(*The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock* (Battle Ground: Christian Resources, 1996), pp. 62-66).

A Sixth Misrepresentation

One final misrepresentation I would like to address are some additional comments Mr. Ray makes in his Introduction. He states:

The bishop of Rome was unique in assuming the authority and obligation to oversee the Churches. Clement and Ignatius make this clear from the first century and the beginning of the second. If the authority exercised had been illegitimate, or wrongly arrogated, it would have been an act of overzealousness at one end of the spectrum, of tyranny at the other. Yet no one ever stood up and said, "No, you have no authority. Who are you to order us, to teach us, to require obedience from us, to excommunicate us?" If the jurisdictional primacy of Rome had been a matter of self-aggrandizement, someone would have opposed it as they opposed other innovations and heresies in the Church. The silence is profound (*Upon This Rock* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), p. 13).

These statements are a complete misrepresentation of the truth and demonstrate a profound ignorance of church history. The church Fathers and ecumenical

councils are not silent on their opposition to the claims of the bishops of Rome which they considered to be in fact illegitimate and innovations. The fact that Cyprian changed the wording of his treatise, *On the Unity of the Church*, because Stephen the bishop of Rome misapplied his words to mean papal primacy is clear evidence that they were opposed to any thought that the bishop of Rome held universal jurisdiction within the Church. This is also seen in the example of Cyprian and the Eastern Fathers who opposed Stephen and his demands for their submission to his teaching on the rebaptism of heretics. I give the following summation of that controversy in *The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock*:

The conflict regarding heretical baptism was over whether or not it was necessary to rebaptize those who had been baptized by Novationist groups—which baptized in the name of the Trinity—who were then later converted and sought membership in the orthodox Church. Cyprian and many Eastern bishops said yes, while Stephen said no. The controversy escalated to the point where Stephen demanded submission by Cyprian and the others to his point of view on pain of exclusion from communion with Rome upon refusal. Stephen went so far as to denounce Cyprian as a false prophet and deceitful worker. It is evident from Cyprian's correspondence that such a demand by Stephen was made on the basis of his application of Matthew 16 to himself as Peter's successor. In light of this, the response of Cyprian and the Eastern bishops is significant. Did they submit to Stephen? They did not. In fact, Stephen's demand, his interpretation of scripture, and the ecclesiology which it represented, was unanimously repudiated by these bishops. Their response was a North African Council in 256 A.D., attended by eighty-seven North African bishops, with the full support of the Eastern Churches as represented by Firmilian of Cappadocia who wrote to Cyprian to encourage him in his defiance of Stephen. All agreed with Cyprian in rejecting not only Stephen's theology and practice on heretical baptism but also his claims to authority. In their opening remarks to the Council the bishops give the following remarks which clearly reflect their understanding of

ecclesiology:

It remains that we severally declare our opinion on this same subject, judging no one, nor depriving any one of his right of communion, if he differ from us. For no one setteth himself up as a Bishop of Bishops, or by tyrannical terror forceth his Colleagues to a necessity of obeying; inasmuch as every Bishop, in the free use of his liberty and power, has the right of forming his own judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he can himself judge another. But we must all await the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who alone has the power of both setting us in the government of His Church, and of judging of our acts therein (*A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: Parker, 1844), *The Epistles of St. Cyprian, The Judgments of Eighty-Seven Bishops in the Council of Carthage on the Question of Baptizing Heretics*, pp. 286-287).

It is obvious from these comments that these bishops reject the notion that one particular bishop holds a position of authority over other bishops as head of the Church universal. No single bishop can legitimately claim to be ‘Bishop of Bishops’ as they put it. This is further illustrated by Firmilian, the leading bishop of Cappadocia, who completely supported Cyprian in his opposition to Stephen. In a personal letter to Cyprian he expressed his own personal opposition to Stephen by stating that Stephen had fallen into error and adopted a false ecclesiology by misinterpreting Matthew 16. He gives his point of view in the following words:

But how great his error, how exceeding his blindness, who says, that remission of sins can be given in the synagogues of heretics, and abideth not on the foundation of the one Church which was once fixed by Christ on a rock, may be hence learnt, that Christ said to Peter alone, Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven: and again in the Gospel, when Christ breathed on the Apostles only, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. The power then of remitting sins was given to the Apostles, and the Churches which they, sent by Christ, established, and to the Bishops who succeeded them by vicarious ordination.

And herein I am justly indignant at such open and manifest folly in Stephen, that he who boasts of the seat of his episcopate, and contends that he holds the succession from Peter, on whom the foundations of the Church were laid, introduces many other rocks, and buildeth anew many Churches, in that by

his authority he maintains baptism among them...Nor does he perceive that he who thus betrays and abandons unity, casts into the shade, and in a manner effaces, the truth of the Christian Rock...Stephen, who proclaims that he occupies by succession the chair of Peter, is roused by no zeal against heretics...He who concedes and assigns to heretics such great and heavenly privileges of the Church, what else does he than hold communion with them, for whom he maintains and claims so much grace?...But as to the refutation of the argument from custom, which they seem to oppose to the truth, who so foolish as to prefer custom to truth, or not to leave darkness, when he sees light?...And this you of Africa may say in answer to Stephen, that on discovering the truth you abandoned the error of custom. But we join custom to truth, and to the custom of the Romans we oppose custom, but that of truth; from the beginning holding that which was delivered by Christ and by His Apostles (*A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: Parker, 1844), *The Epistles of St. Cyprian*, Epistle LXXV. 17, 18, 20, pp. 279-281).

Firmilian expresses a view of the overall government of the Church which is directly opposed to that of Vatican I. He states that the keys were given to Peter alone as a representative of the Church universal, but were subsequently given to all the Apostles who then passed them on to every legitimate succeeding bishop. In the mind of Firmilian, all bishops are on an equal footing. He mocks Stephen's claim of superiority to other bishops based on his possessing a unique Petrine succession. According to Firmilian all bishops possess the chair of Peter and are built upon the rock. This is not the exclusive and unique possession of the bishops of Rome. And if, as Firmilian claims Stephen did, they depart from the unity of the Church which is expressed in the collegiality of its bishops, they separate themselves from the rock and foundation of the Church. Because Stephen, in Firmilian's view, had departed from Apostolic truth, he was no longer in unity with Apostolic succession and the rock foundation of the Church. The Roman see itself was not inherently authoritative simply because it could claim a Petrine foundation and succession. This did not impress the Eastern bishops. The important thing to them, and to Cyprian as well, was conformity to Apostolic truth. Where Roman custom opposed what they considered to be truth, they felt obliged to oppose the bishop of Rome. These bishops did not submit to the bishop of

Rome and Cyprian died out of communion with him. They clearly did not view the Roman bishop as the universal ruler of the Church, nor communion with him a necessary condition for membership in the Church universal. Cyprian could say, 'He who does not have the Church for his mother does not have God for his father,' but in so stating he did not mean submission to and communion with the bishop of Rome. Karl Morrison sums up the controversy between Stephen and Cyprian and the Eastern bishops in these words:

Stephen had condemned Cyprian as 'false Christ, false apostle, and practicer of deceit,' because he advocated re-baptism; and the Bishop of Carthage reciprocated in kind. Since the headship which Stephen claimed was unwarranted, by the example of St. Peter, he could not force his brethren to accept his views. Even worse, his judgment opposed the authentic tradition of the Church. The bishop of Rome, wrote Cyprian, had confounded human tradition and divine precepts; he insisted on a practice which was mere custom, and 'custom without truth is the antiquity of error.' Whence came the 'tradition' on which Stephen insisted? Cyprian answered that it came from human presumption. Subverting the Church from within, Stephen wished the Church to follow the practices of heretics by accepting their baptisms, and to hold that those who were not born in the Church could be sons of God. And finally, Cyprian urged that bishops (Stephen was meant) lay aside the love of presumption and obstinacy which had led them to prefer custom to tradition and, abandoning their evil and false arguments, return to the divine precepts, to evangelical and apostolic tradition, whence arose their order and their very origin.

In a letter to Cyprian, Firmilian endorsed everything the bishop of Carthage had said and added a few strokes of his own...Recalling the earlier dispute about the date of Easter, he upheld the practice of Asia Minor by commenting that, in the celebration of Easter and in many other matters, the Romans did not observe the practices established in the age of the Apostles, though they vainly claimed apostolic authority for their aberrant forms. The decree of Stephen was the most recent instance of such audacity, an instance so grave that Firmilian ranked Stephen among heretics and blasphemers and compared his doctrines and discipline with the perfidy of Judas. The Apostles did not command as Stephen commanded, Firmilian wrote, nor did Christ establish the primacy which he claimed...To the Roman custom, Firmilian, like Cyprian, opposed the custom of truth, 'holding from the beginning that which was delivered by Christ and the Apostles.' And, Firmilian argued, by his violence and obstinacy, Stephen had apostacized from the communion of ecclesiastical unity; far from cutting heretics off from his communion, he had

cut himself off from the orthodox and made himself ‘a stranger in all respects from his brethren, rebelling against the sacrament and the faith with the madness of contumacious discord. With such a man can there be one Spirit and one Body, in whom perhaps there is not even one mind, slippery, shifting, and uncertain as it is?’ (Karl Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), pp. 31-32).

These facts are certainly no endorsement of the views promulgated by the First Vatican Council. The writings and practice of Cyprian reveal that he held an opinion directly opposing that of Vatican One on papal supremacy. William Jurgens affirms this in the following summation of Cyprian’s practice which reflected his theory of ecclesiology:

Although Cyprian was on excellent terms with Pope St. Cornelius...he fell out sharply with Cornelius’ successor, Pope St. Stephen...on the question of the rebaptizing of converted heretics. It was the immemorial custom of the African Church to regard Baptism conferred by heretics as invalid, and in spite of Stephen’s severe warnings, Cyprian never yielded. His attitude was simply that every bishop is responsible for his own actions, answerable to God alone (William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1970), Volume I, p. 216-217) (*The Matthew 16 Controversy: Peter and the Rock* (Battle Ground: Christian Resources, 1966), pp. 196-199).

Stephen Ray says, ‘If the authority exercised had been illegitimate, or wrongly arrogated, it would have been an act of overzealousness at one end of the spectrum, of tyranny at the other. Yet no one ever stood up and said, “No, you have no authority. Who are you to order us, to teach us, to require obedience from us, to excommunicate us?”’ If the jurisdictional primacy of Rome had been a matter of self-aggrandizement, someone would have opposed it as they opposed other innovations and heresies in the Church. The silence is profound’ (*Upon This Rock* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), p. 13).

The foregoing facts give the lie to these assertions. It is not the silence but the clear expression of outrage and opposition that is profound. The Council of Carthage explicitly denies the right of any bishop to call himself the Bishop of Bishops and to demand obedience to his demands. William Jurgens is a Roman Catholic patristic scholar quoted over and over again by Stephen Ray. He repudiates the the above assertions of Mr. Ray when he says that ‘in spite of

Stephen's severe warnings, Cyprian never yielded. His attitude was simply that every bishop is responsible for his own actions, answerable to God alone' (William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1970), Volume I, p. 217).

This is just one example of many that could be cited. Others would be the opposition of the Eastern Churches to Victor, the bishop of Rome, in the second century; the opposition of Augustine and the North Africans to Zosimus in the fifth century; the excommunication of Vigilius by the North African bishops in the sixth; the repudiation of the primacy claims of Rome by the Second (I Constantinople) and the Fourth (Chalcedon) ecumenical councils; the official condemnation of Honorius as a heretic by the Sixth (III Constantinople) ecumenical council. And all of these culminating of course in the final and continuing repudiation by the Eastern Churches of the primacy claims of Rome with the split between the East and West in the eleventh century. But since Mr. Ray states that there is not one single example in all the history of the early Church this one example will suffice.

These are only a few of the many misrepresentations that are evident in Mr. Ray's book, *Upon This Rock*. He has consistently misrepresented my statements and those of the Church Fathers. If there is anyone guilty of proof-texting and of promoting an agenda it is Mr. Ray.

The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Development as It Relates to the Papacy by Vatican I and Pope Leo XIII

William Webster

One of the claims being made by present day Roman Catholic apologists is that, as an institution, the papacy was something that developed over time. In his book, *Upon This Rock*, Steve Ray represents this position. He uses the metaphor of the acorn and the oak. In critiquing my book, *The Matthew 16 Controversy, Peter and the Rock*, Ray states:

Webster's section on St. Cyprian also demonstrates his unwillingness to represent fairly the process and necessity of doctrinal development within the Church. As we have demonstrated earlier in this book: the oak tree has grown and looks perceptibly different from the fragile sprout that cracked the original acorn, yet the organic essence and identity remain the same. Do the words of the very first Christians contain the full-blown understanding of the Papacy as expressed in Vatican I? No, they do not, as Webster correctly observes (Steve Ray, *Upon This Rock* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999, p. 184).

Now, there is an implicit admission in these statements. Steve Ray is admitting to the fact that the papacy was not there from the very beginning. It was subject to a process of development and growth over time. This is a simple historical fact recognized by historians of nearly every persuasion. The problem for Roman Catholics is not whether there was development. The problem lies in the fact that

Vatican I says there was no development. In other words there was no acorn. It was a full blown oak from the very beginning and was therefore the practice of the Church from the very beginning. Vatican I reaffirmed the decree of the Council of Trent on the Unanimous Consent of the Fathers which has to do specifically with the interpretation of Scripture. It states that it is unlawful to interpret Scripture in any way contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. Vatican I then proceeds to set forth its teachings on papal primacy and infallibility with the interpretation of Matthew 16:18, John 21:15-17 and Luke 22:32 as the basis for its teachings. And then it states that the interpretations that it gives and the conclusions it draws from these interpretations, in terms of the practice of the Church, has been that which has *ever* been taught in the Church and practiced by it. Here is what Vatican I says:

Chapter I: Of the Institution of the Apostolic Primacy in blessed Peter.

We therefore teach and declare that, according to the testimony of the Gospel, the primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church of God was immediately and directly promised and given to blessed Peter the Apostle by Christ the Lord. For it was to Simon alone, to whom he had already said: ‘Thou shalt be called Cephas,’ that the Lord after the confession made by him, saying: ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,’ addressed these solemn words: ‘Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.’ And it was upon Simon alone that Jesus after his resurrection bestowed the jurisdiction of chief pastor and ruler over all his fold in the words: ‘Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.’ ***At open variance with this clear doctrine of Holy Scripture as it has been ever understood by the Catholic Church are the perverse opinions of those who, while they distort the form of government established***

by Christ the Lord in his Church, deny that Peter in his single person, preferably to all the other Apostles, whether taken separately or together, was endowed by Christ with a true and proper primacy of jurisdiction; or of those who assert that the same primacy was not bestowed immediately and directly upon blessed Peter himself, but upon the Church, and through the Church on Peter as her minister.

If any one, therefore, shall say that blessed Peter the Apostle was not appointed the Prince of all the Apostles and the visible Head of the whole Church militant; or that the same directly and immediately received from the same our Lord Jesus Christ a primacy of honor only, and not of true and proper jurisdiction: let him be anathema.

Chapter II: On the Perpetuity of the Primacy of blessed Peter in the Roman Pontiffs.

That which the Prince of Shepherds and great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ our Lord, established in the person of the blessed Apostle Peter to secure the perpetual welfare and lasting good of the Church, must, by the same institution, necessarily remain unceasingly in the Church; which, being founded upon the Rock, will stand firm to the end of the world. *For none can doubt, and it is known to all ages, that the holy and blessed Peter, the Prince and Chief of the Apostles, the pillar of the faith and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, and lives, presides, and judges, to this day and always, in his successors the Bishops of the Holy See of Rome, which was founded by him and consecrated by his blood. Whence, whosoever succeeds to Peter in this See, does by the institution of Christ himself obtain the Primacy of Peter over the whole Church.* The disposition made by Incarnate Truth therefore remains, and blessed Peter, abiding through the strength of the Rock in the power that he received, has not abandoned the direction of the Church. *Wherefore it has at all times been necessary that every*

particular Church—that is to say, the faithful throughout the world—should agree with the Roman Church, on account of the greater authority of the pryncedom which this has received; that all being associated in the unity of that See whence the rights of communion spread to all, might grow together as members of one Head in the compact unity of the body.

If, then, any should deny that it is by institution of Christ the Lord, or by divine right, that blessed Peter should have a perpetual line of successors in the Primacy over the universal Church, or that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter in this primacy: let him be anathema.

Hence we teach and declare that by the appointment of our Lord the Roman Church possesses a superiority of ordinary power over all other churches, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate; to which all, of whatever right and dignity, both pastors and faithful, both individually and collectively, are bound, by their duty of hierarchial subordination and true obedience, to submit not only in matters which belong to faith and morals, but also in those which appertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world, so that the Church of Christ may be one flock under one supreme pastor through the preservation of unity both of communion and of profession of the same faith with the Roman Pontiff. This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and

salvation (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper, 1877), Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council , Chapters I,II, III).

Notice here that Vatican I states that its interpretation of Matthew 16 and John 21 has been the interpretation that has ever been understood in the Church. That is, from them very beginning. It further states that Peter was given a primacy of jurisdiction from the very beginning by Christ himself and that this primacy was passed on to Peter's successors, the bishops of Rome. This, it says, has been

known to all ages. In other words, there was no acorn. According to Vatican I, the papacy was a full blown oak from the very beginning because it was established by Christ himself. And then it states that this teaching is part of the content of saving faith. To deviate from this teaching is to incur the loss of salvation. This is an explicit affirmation that outside the Church of Rome there is no salvation. Later on, in its teaching on papal infallibility, Vatican I states:

For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter, that by his revelation they might make known new doctrine; but that by his assistance they might inviolably keep and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith delivered through the Apostles. And, indeed, all the venerable Fathers have embraced, and the holy orthodox doctors have venerated and followed, their Apostolic doctrine; knowing most fully that this See of holy Peter remains ever free from all blemish of error according to the divine promise of the Lord our Saviour made to the Prince of his disciples: ‘I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and, when thou art converted, confirm thy brethren.’ This gift, then, of truth and never-failing faith was conferred by heaven upon Peter and his successors in his chair, that they might perform their high office for the salvation of all...

Therefore faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, for the glory of God our Saviour, the exaltation of the Christian religion, and the salvation of Christian people, the sacred Council approving, we teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the

consent of the Church. ***But if any one—which may God avert—presume to contradict this our definition: let him be anathema*** (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper, 1877), Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council, Chp. 4, pp. 266-71).

Vatican I is basing its teaching of papal infallibility on the interpretation of Luke 22:32. A teaching or tradition which it says was received from the very beginning of the Christian faith. The Council asserts that the doctrine of papal infallibility is a divinely revealed dogma and all who refuse to embrace it are placed under anathema.

The papal encyclical, *Satis Cognitum*, written by Pope Leo XIII in 1896, is a commentary on and papal confirmation of the teachings of Vatican I. As to the issue of doctrinal development, Leo makes it quite clear that Vatican I leaves no room for such a concept in its teachings. Leo states over and over again that the papacy was fully established by Christ from the very beginning and that its has been the foundation of the constitution of the Church and recognized as such from the very start and throughout all ages. He further affirms that Vatican I's teaching has been the constant belief of every age and and is therefore not a novel doctrine:

Wherefore, as appears from what has been said, Christ instituted in the Church a living, authoritative and permanent Magisterium, which by His own power He strengthened, by the Spirit of truth He taught, and by miracles confirmed. He willed and ordered, under the gravest penalties, that its teachings should be received as if they were His own...Jesus Christ, therefore, appointed Peter to be that head of the Church; and He also determined that the authority instituted in perpetuity for the salvation of all should be inherited by His successors, in whom the same permanent authority of Peter himself should continue. And so He made that remarkable promise to Peter and to no one else: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. xvi., 18)...It was necessary that a government of this kind, since it belongs to the constitution and formation of the Church,

as its principal element - that is as the principle of unity and the foundation of lasting stability - should in no wise come to an end with St. Peter, but should pass to his successors from one to another...When the Divine founder decreed that the Church should be one in faith, in government, and in communion, He chose Peter and his successors as the principle and centre, as it were, of this unity...Indeed, Holy Writ attests that the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven were given to Peter alone, and that the power of binding and loosening was granted to the Apostles and to Peter; but there is nothing to show that the Apostles received supreme power without Peter, and against Peter. Such power they certainly did not receive from Jesus Christ. ***Wherefore, in the decree of the Vatican Council as to the nature and authority of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff, no newly conceived opinion is set forth, but the venerable and constant belief of every age*** (Sess. iv., cap. 3).

The Roman Catholic Church, itself, has officially stated that there was no development of this doctrine in the early Church. After all, if the fullness of the definition of papal primacy as defined by Vatican I was instituted by Christ immediately upon Peter, as both Vatican I and Leo XIII affirm, then there is no room for development. It was instituted by Christ himself and was therefore present from the very beginning and would have been recognized as such by the Church as Vatican I states: 'Whence, whosoever succeeds to Peter in this See, does by the institution of Christ himself obtain the Primacy of Peter over the whole Church', a fact which Vatican I says has been known to all ages leading to the practice 'that it has at all times been necessary that every particular Church—that is to say, the faithful throughout the world—should agree with the Roman Church, on account of the greater authority of the principedom which this has received.' This documentation completely demolishes present day Roman Catholic apologists' theory of development. They are at odds with the magisterium of their own Church. Indeed, these apologists must set forth a theory of development because of the historical reality, but such a theory is at open variance with the clear teaching of Vatican I and Leo XIII.

So when we analyze these papal teachings in the light of history it is perfectly legitimate to ask the question on two levels. As to the actual insitution of the papacy, do we find the teachings of Vatican I expressed by the fathers of the Church in their practice? And secondly, as to the issue of interpretation, do we find a unanimous consent of the fathers regarding Vatican I's interpretation of Matthew 16:18, John 21:15-17 and Luke 22:32 that supports papal primacy and infallibility? In both cases the answer is a decided no.

The Papacy: A Response to Roman Catholic, Scott Windsor

A Rebuttal of Roman Catholic, Scott Windsor, to William Webster's Rebuttal of Steve Ray's Misrepresentations of the Teaching of Augustine

William Webster

Scott Windsor has offered a rebuttal to my first response to Stephen Ray entitled *An Answer to the Refutation of the Misrepresentations of the Writings of William Webster and of the Church Fathers by Roman Catholic, Stephen Ray, in His Book Upon This Rock, by William Webster* . He has, however, apparently failed to realize that I responded a second and third time to Stephen Ray's response and that most of what he addresses in this 'rebuttal' has already been answered. In other words he is going over old ground. But in his rebuttal Scott has made some comments that need to be addressed. Surprisingly, he introduces his rebuttal with a repudiation of the Roman Catholic teaching of papal primacy. He suggests that I personally have misunderstood and have misrepresented the teaching of Roman Catholicism on this subject. But in reality it is he who does not understand what his own Church clearly and dogmatically teaches. He begins by quoting from my response to Steve Ray and then gives his own response. My original statements will be given in blue, Scott Windsor's response will be in red and my response to his comments will be in black:

Windsor:

In an IRC chat with someone, I was asked to read former Catholic, William Webster's refutation of Catholic apologist, Stephen Ray. That website is: <http://www.christiantruth.com/stephenray.html>. I agreed to do this and told this person that I would get back to him/her on this. Mr. Ray also has posted his own response to Webster at: www.catholic-convert.com/webster/index.html

I am dividing my response into smaller sections than Mr. Webster's original, this part will deal primarily with what is being said in regard to St. Augustine.

Webster's Original Statements:

No father denies that Peter had a primacy or that there is a Petrine succession. The issue is how the Fathers interpreted those concepts. They simply did not hold to the Roman Catholic view of later centuries that primacy and succession were "exclusively" related to the bishops of Rome. They do not apply the special titles they attribute to Peter to the bishops of Rome and what is more they often attribute the same titles to the other apostles. The most explicit denial of a Petrine primacy in the Roman Catholic sense comes from Augustine which I have documented in the book where he states in exegeting the rock of Matthew 16:18 that Christ did not build his Church on a man but on Peter's confession. He specifically separates Peter's faith from Peter's person and if the Church is not built upon the person of Peter there is no papal office. This is not to say that the Rome did not have authority in the eyes of the fathers. But Rome did not have exclusive authority. The ecclesiology of the early Church was one of conciliarity which was shared by all the major patriarchal sees. Rome was the only patriarchal see in the West and therefore held authority in the West, though in the beginning this was not universal but regional, as Rufinus' translation of the Nicene Council makes clear.

Mr. Ray's main argument rests on an argument from silence, the fact that the Fathers never denied the primacy of Peter or Petrine succession. Of course they didn't. As I mentioned in my email they explicitly affirm it. However, in affirming it they do not interpret it in the same way Rome does today. That is the point. When Roman apologists use the term 'primacy' they mean universal

jurisdiction to rule the Church universal. When they speak of Petrine succession they mean this in an exclusive sense as applied to the bishops of Rome. But when the Fathers speak of a Petrine primacy and succession and the primacy of Rome they mean something quite different. They are not silent on the issue. They never denied that Rome had a primacy, but it was interpreted as a primacy of honor since the Church was located in the capital of the Empire and was the site of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul. It was not a primacy of universal jurisdiction. They never denied that the Church of Rome had a right to exercise authority. But that authority was limited in its jurisdiction. But when the meaning of primacy and rule is couched in the language of Vatican I we find a vigorous opposition to such claims by the Church Fathers. There is not silence. The Fathers do speak, and they make it clear what they mean by the terms they use. They also speak by repudiating the unlawful claims of Rome as they began to be expressed in the third century and in all the subsequent centuries of the Church.

Windsor:

Webster charges, “This is not to say that Rome did not have authority in the eyes of the (F)athers. But Rome did not have exclusive authority.” No, Rome did not have exclusive authority, and never had it, and never claimed to have it! Each bishop, in his own diocese, has the equivalent authority of the Pope over his jurisdiction. When the Pope acts in his capacity as Bishop of Rome, he is no different, other than a “first among equals,” than the rest of the bishops over their own jurisdictions. The Pope does also have another title, “Vicar of Christ” wherein he stands in Christ’s place here on earth, over Christ’s Church. This authority is clearly given to St. Peter when “The Good Shepherd” told Peter, “Feed My lambs...Tend My sheep...Feed My sheep” (John 21:16-17). In this sequence, Jesus is speaking directly to Peter, and not to any of the rest of the Apostles, all of whom are also present (minus Judas). So there is something special about Peter, and the see that he would occupy. This isn’t the position of a tyrant, a king, or a dictator, but a shepherd. Clearly Jesus left one of the Apostles “in charge” to “tend (His) sheep,” and that one Apostle is St. Peter. This is not an exclusive authority over the other Apostles - just an added responsibility for Peter and his successors. Having one Apostle to hold this position is the unifying factor

for all true Christians.

Webster shows his misunderstanding of the Roman Catholic position and definition of “primacy.” One must speculate that if Mr. Webster had known the true teachings of the Catholic Church, he may never have left it. One has to hope that when he does come to this understanding, he will return home - where he will be welcomed as the Prodigal Son was. I also have the hope that Emanon, also a former Catholic, will also return home. To continue: Primacy is not a position of universal “authority” per se, but of universal responsibility to feed, tend and care for Jesus’ sheep - the Church.

It is encouraging to note that Mr. Webster does not deny that the Roman Pontiff does indeed have a primacy of honor, but Peter’s commission from Christ was more than honorary. Peter was to take Jesus’ place as the Shepherd, the one who watches over the sheep.

Webster:

Scott Windsor states: No, Rome did not have exclusive authority, and never had it, and never claimed to have it. Each bishop, in his own diocese, has the equivalent authority of the Pope over his jurisdiction. When the Pope acts in his capacity as Bishop of Rome, he is no different, other than a “first among equals,” than the rest of the bishops over their own jurisdictions...This is not an exclusive authority over the other Apostles - just an added responsibility for Peter and his successors.

I am sure that there will be many Roman Catholics who read these words who will be surprised to discover that their Church has never claimed the right of exclusive rule over the universal Church; that primacy merely means a primacy of honor; that the Roman bishop merely functions in the role of a shepherd as teacher and has no universal jurisdictional authority as ruler of the Church; and that he is no different from any other bishop who has responsibility over a

specific see. With such statements one has to ask why Scott Windsor is Roman Catholic and not Orthodox. The Roman Catholic Church dogmatically teaches the very opposite of what Scott Windsor is expressing in these statements. The Roman Church has most certainly claimed an exclusive authority to RULE the Church universal. This is what a primacy of jurisdiction means and which was clearly expressed by Vatican I. Scott's opinion, the bishop of Rome is in fact a dictator. He may be a benign dictator, but he is a dictator nonetheless. According to that Council and the claims of Roman Pontiffs historically the primacy of Rome is not merely a primacy of honor and of shepherding but of jurisdiction and rule. In fact, Vatican I anathematizes anyone who says that the primacy of the bishop of Rome is primarily one of honor and not of jurisdiction. And Vatican I states that this teaching has been the teaching of the Church from the very beginning. The following is what I wrote in response to Stephen Ray, a response which Scott Windsor has apparently not read:

The problem is not whether there was development. The problem lies in the fact that Vatican I says there was no development. In other words there was no acorn. It was a full blown oak from the very beginning and was therefore the practice of the Church from the very beginning. Vatican I reaffirmed the decree of the Council of Trent on the Unanimous Consent of the Fathers. As Steve rightly points out this has to do specifically with the interpretation of Scripture. It states that it is unlawful to interpret Scripture in any way contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. Vatican I then proceeds to set forth its teachings on papal primacy and infallibility with the interpretation of Matthew 16:18, John 21:15-17 and Luke 22:32 as the basis for its teachings. And then it states that the interpretations that it gives and the conclusions it draws from these interpretations, in terms of the practice of the Church, has been that which has EVER been taught in the

Church and practiced by it. Here is what Vatican I says:

Chapter I: Of the Institution of the Apostolic Primacy in blessed Peter.

We therefore teach and declare that, according to the testimony of the Gospel, the primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church of God was immediately and directly promised and given to blessed Peter the Apostle by Christ the Lord. For it was to Simon alone, to whom he had already said: ‘Thou shalt be called Cephas,’ that the Lord after the confession made by him, saying: ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,’ addressed these solemn words: ‘Blessed art thou, Simon Bar–Jona, because flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.’ And it was upon Simon alone that Jesus after his resurrection **bestowed the jurisdiction of chief pastor and ruler over all his fold** in the words: ‘Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.’ At open variance with this clear doctrine of Holy Scripture as it has been ever understood by the Catholic Church are the perverse opinions of those who, while they

distort the form of government established by Christ the Lord in his Church, deny that Peter in his single person, preferably to all the other Apostles, whether taken separately or together, **was endowed by Christ with a true and proper primacy of jurisdiction**; or of those who assert that the same primacy was not bestowed immediately and directly upon blessed Peter himself, but upon the Church, and through the Church on Peter as her minister.

If any one, therefore, shall say that blessed Peter the Apostle was not appointed the Prince of all the Apostles and the visible Head of the whole Church militant; or that the same directly and immediately received from the same our Lord Jesus Christ a primacy of honor only, and not of true and proper jurisdiction: let him be anathema.

Chapter II: On the Perpetuity of the Primacy of blessed Peter in the Roman Pontiffs.

That which the Prince of Shepherds and great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ our Lord, established in the person of the blessed Apostle Peter to secure the perpetual welfare and lasting good of the Church, must, by the same institution, necessarily remain unceasingly in the Church; which, being founded upon the Rock, will stand firm to the end of the world. For none can doubt, and it is known to all ages, that the

holy and blessed Peter, the Prince and Chief of the Apostles, the pillar of the faith and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, and lives, presides, and judges, to this day and always, in his successors the Bishops of the Holy See of Rome, which was founded by him and consecrated by his blood. Whence, whosoever succeeds to Peter in this See, does by the institution of Christ himself **obtain the Primacy of Peter over the whole Church**. The disposition made by Incarnate Truth therefore remains, and blessed Peter, abiding through the strength of the Rock in the power that he received, has not abandoned the direction of the Church. Wherefore it has at all times been necessary that every particular Church—that is to say, the faithful throughout the world—should agree with the Roman Church, on account of the greater authority of the principedom which this has received; that all being associated in the unity of that See whence the rights of communion spread to all, might grow together as members of one Head in the compact unity of the body.

If, then, any should deny that it is by institution of Christ the Lord, or by divine right, that blessed Peter should have a perpetual line of successors in the Primacy over the universal Church, or that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter in this primacy: let

him be anathema.

Hence we teach and declare that by the appointment of our Lord *the Roman Church possesses a superiority of ordinary power over all other churches, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate; to which all, of whatever right and dignity, both pastors and faithful, both individually and collectively, are bound, by their duty of hierarchial subordination and true obedience, to submit not only in matters which belong to faith and morals, but also in those which appertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world,* so that the Church of Christ may be one flock under one supreme pastor through the preservation of unity both of communion and of profession of the same faith with the Roman Pontiff. This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and salvation (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper, 1877), Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council , Chapters I,II, III).

Vatican I states that from the very beginning Christ entrusted to Peter and his successors in the bishops of Rome a primacy of jurisdiction which was subsequently passed down to his successors in the bishops of Rome. It further states that this teaching is part of the content of saving faith. To deviate from this teaching is to incur the loss of salvation.

This is an explicit affirmation that outside the Church of Rome there is no salvation.

We are dealing here with Roman Catholic apologists who are seemingly ignorant of the teachings of their own Church and who charge Protestants with misrepresentation, but it is they themselves who are the guilty party. Stephen Ray did this with the teaching of [Vatican I](#) and its denial of the Doctrine of Development and now Scott Windsor has done so with the whole concept of primacy. Both of them contradict the plain teaching of that Council. Perhaps it would behoove these gentlemen before they engage in apologetics to become more familiar with the teachings of their own communion.

Augustine

Windsor:

Next, Mr. Webster turns his attention toward St. Augustine, but it is clear to see that Webster contradicts himself with his main tenant, that “(a)ccording to Augustine the Apostles are equal in all respects. Each receives the authority of the keys, not Peter alone.”

But, Mr. Webster, it is not the keys that are in question here! Though, it can be argued that some of the Early Fathers do indeed say the keys are given only to Peter, let us deal with St. Augustine for now. The authority of the keys, (which is to bind and loose, retain and/or forgive sins - another very Catholic position given that men are able to forgive sins), is given first to St. Peter (Matthew 16:18) and later to the rest of the Apostles (Matthew 18:18). We concur that this authority is truly given to all the Apostles, I am not so sure that we concur that this authority is passed on to their successors, which in Catholic belief, it surely is - but many Protestants believe this “power” ended with the end of the Apostolic Age. (We can take that up in a future debate, if Mr. Webster so chooses to engage me). The point that Webster, and it would seem most other Protestant apologists miss, is that Catholics do not base the primacy solely on Matthew 16:18! The primacy of

responsibility is clearly shown in John 21:15-17. And, the point that Mr. Webster is attempting to make here is that St. Peter is not given anything different than any of the rest of the Apostles were given. Hmmm, how about a new name? How about being the only one commanded to “Feed My sheep...?”

Webster:

Scott, according to Augustine, the commission of Christ to Peter to feed His sheep was not a commission given to Peter exclusively but applied to all the apostles and to all shepherds universally in the Church for all time. This is because in Augustine's view Peter is representative of the Church universal and what was said to him was said to all. So your assertion that the commission of Peter applies to Peter alone is incorrect as far as Augustine is concerned. For example, he states:

So let us love him, let there be nothing dearer to us than he. So do you imagine that the Lord is not questioning us? Was Peter the only one who qualified to be questioned, and didn't we? When that reading is read, every single Christian is being questioned in his heart. So when you hear the Lord saying 'Peter, do you love me?' think of it as a mirror, and observe yourself there. I mean, what else was Peter doing but standing for the Church? So when the Lord was questioning Peter, he was questioning us, he was questioning the Church. I mean, to show you that Peter stood for the Church, call to mind that place in the gospel, 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld shall not conquer her; to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 16:18-19). One man receives them; you see, he explained himself what the keys of the kingdom mean: 'What you all bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what you all loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Mt 18:18). If it

was said to Peter alone, Peter alone did this; he passed away, and went away; so who binds, who looses? I make bold to say, we too have these keys. And what am I to say? That it is only we who bind, only we who loose? No, you also bind, you also loose. Anybody who's bound, you see, is barred from your society; and when he's barred from your society, he's bound by you; and when he's reconciled he's loosed by you, because you too plead with God for him.

We all love Christ, you see, we are his members; and when he entrusts the sheep to the shepherds, the whole number of shepherds is reduced to the body of one shepherd. Just to show you that the whole number of shepherds is reduced to the one body of the one shepherd, certainly Peter's a shepherd, undoubtedly a pastor; Paul's a shepherd, yes, clearly a pastor; John's a shepherd, James a shepherd, Andrew a shepherd, and the other apostles are shepherds. All holy bishops are shepherds, pastors, yes, clearly so. And how can this be true: And there will be one flock and one shepherd (Jn 10:16)? Then if there will be one flock and one shepherd is true, the innumerable number of shepherds or pastors must be reduced to the body of the one shepherd or pastor (John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (New Rochelle: New City, 1993), *Sermons*, Volume III/6, Sermon 229N.1-3, pp. 320-321).

Windsor:

Mr. Webster includes several quotes from St. Augustine, which I will also leave in place:

Augustine: This same Peter therefore who had been by the Rock pronounced 'blessed,' bearing the figure of the Church, holding the chief place in the Apostleship (Sermon 26).

Windsor:

Hmmm, St. Peter is holding the “chief place in the Apostleship.” This is supportive of the Catholic definition throughout the ages, including the present!

Webster:

Scott Windsor asks, If Peter is referred to as chief how could he be the same as the rest of the apostles? If Scott had taken the time to read all of responses to Steve Ray he would have seen that I have already dealt with that issue. I pointed out in the section on Chrysostom that the term chief was not used exclusively of Peter, but was also used in reference to Paul and the other apostles as well. The Greek term is coryphaeus.

Augustine: The blessed Peter, the first of the apostles (Sermon 295).

Windsor:

Hmmm, the “blessed Peter, the first of the apostles.” Again, supportive of St. Peter’s “lead” role among the Apostles.

Webster:

Again, if Scott had read my full response to Steve Ray he would have found an explanation of what Augustine means when he refers to Peter as ‘first’ of the Apostles. The following are my comments on this issue:

Here is how Augustine defines what he means when he says that Peter is the first of the Apostles:

As you know, all of you who know the holy scriptures, among the disciples whom the Lord chose while present in the flesh, Peter was

the first to be chosen. Paul on the other hand was not chosen among them, nor with them, but a long time afterward, though not for all that unequal to them. So Peter is the first of the apostles, Paul the last; while God, whose servants these two are, whose heralds, whose preachers these two are, is the first and the last (Rv 22:13). Peter first among the apostles, Paul last among the apostles; God both first and last, before whom nothing and after whom nothing. So God who has presented himself as eternally the first and the last, himself joined together the first and the last apostles in martyrdom (John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine*, Sermons III/8 (Hyde Park: New City, 1994), Sermon 299.2, p. 229).

The blessed apostles Peter and Paul were called at different times, and crowned on the same day. The Lord called Peter before all the others, Paul after all the others; Peter the first of the apostles, Paul the last; they were led to martyrdom on one and the same day by the First and the Last (John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine*, Sermons III/8 (Hyde Park: New City, 1994), Sermon 299C.1, p. 250).

Note here that Augustine states that Peter is the first and Paul is the last. This has to do with the priority of time, not with official position. He also states that Paul and Peter are equals. The Abbe Guettee, a convert to Orthodoxy from Roman Catholicism, in commenting on Augustine's view of Peter and his primacy states:

He (Augustine) calls Peter the first (primus) as he calls Paul the last, (novissimus,) which conveys only an idea of time. And that this was indeed St. Augustine's idea, appears from the fact that in this same text, so much abused by Romanists, because in it Augustine grants Peter the primacy, he distinctly asserts that Peter and Paul, the first and the last, were equal in the honour of the apostleship. Therefore, according to St. Augustine, Peter received only the high favour of being called first to the Apostleship. This distinction with which the Lord honoured him, is his glory,

but gave him no authority (Abbe Guettee, *The Papacy* (Blanco: New Sarov, 1866), p. 176).

Augustine: Before his passion the Lord Jesus, as you know, chose those disciples of his, whom he called apostles. Among these it was only Peter who almost everywhere was given the privilege of representing the whole Church. It was in the person of the whole Church, which he alone represented, that he was privileged to hear, 'To you will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 16:19). After all, it isn't just one man that received these keys, but the Church in its unity. So this is the reason for Peter's acknowledged preeminence, that he stood for the Church's universality and unity, when he was told, 'To you I am entrusting,' what has in fact been entrusted to all (Sermon 295).

Windsor:

Here we see Peter, again, being given preeminence, but a similar authority given to the rest of the Apostles. Again, completely in line with current and past Catholic beliefs on the Pope and the college of bishops.

Augustine: Previously, of course, he was called Simon; this name of Peter was bestowed on him by the Lord, and that with the symbolic intention of his representing the Church. Because Christ, you see, is the *petra* or rock; Peter, or Rocky, is the Christian people (Sermon 76).

Windsor:

Well, first off I cannot let this interpretation of "Peter" to mean "Rocky" go unchallenged. This too seems to be a novel interpretation that is not reflected by the Early Fathers, nor even other apologists before this recent time.

Webster:

This is the translation given by the Roman Catholic translator and publisher of the work, Scott. The translator is a world renowned Augustinian scholar. Are you in the same category, Scott, to offer such

criticisms?

Windsor:

Second, we find again St. Augustine acknowledging that St. Peter IS the representative for the Universal (Catholic) Church.

Augustine: So then, this self–same Peter, blessed by being surnamed Rocky from the rock, representing the person of the Church, holding chief place in the apostolic ranks (Sermon 76).

Windsor:

Again, St. Peter is shown to be “holding chief place in the apostolic ranks.” If he is “chief” how could he be “the same” as the rest of the Apostles?

Webster:

Again, Scott, to repeat the statements from above, the fathers did not apply these titles exclusively to Peter. As I indicated in Chrysostom’s use of the same title as employed here by Augustine, he also attributes it to the apostle Paul.

Augustine: For as some things are said which seem peculiarly to apply to the Apostle Peter, and yet are not clear in their meaning, unless when referred to the Church, whom he is acknowledged to have figuratively represented, on account of the primacy which he bore among the Disciples; as it is written, ‘I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,’ and other passages of like purport: so Judas doth represent those Jews who were enemies of Christ (Exposition on the Book of Psalms, Psalm 119).

Windsor:

Again, St. Peter is being held out as the one to represent the Church because of “the primacy which he bore among the Disciples.”

Webster:

Augustine himself defines what he means by the primacy given to Peter and he does not interpret this in terms of a primacy of jurisdiction. He states: 'After all, it isn't just one man that received these keys, but the Church in its unity. So this is the reason for Peter's acknowledged preeminence, that he stood for the Church's universality and unity, when he was told, 'To you I am entrusting,' what has in fact been entrusted to all' (Sermon 295).

Augustine: You will remember that the apostle Peter, the first of all the apostles, was thrown completely of balance during the Lord's passion (Sermon 147).

Windsor:

Even though St. Peter stumbled (an example that even the popes that would follow him would stumble) he was still regarded as "first of all the apostles."

Webster:

Augustine speaks of Peter as being a representative of the Church so that what was spoken to Peter and granted to Peter was not spoken and granted to him alone, but to him as the representative of the universal Church:

Before his passion the Lord Jesus, as you know, chose those disciples of his, whom he called apostles. Among these it was only Peter who almost everywhere was given the privilege of representing the whole Church. It was in the person of the whole Church, which he alone represented, that he was privileged to hear, 'To you will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 16:19). After all, it isn't just one man that received these keys, but the

Church in its unity. So this is the reason for Peter's acknowledged pre-eminence, that he stood for the Church's universality and unity, when he was told, 'To you I am entrusting,' what has in fact been entrusted to all. I mean, to show you that it is the Church which has received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, listen to what the Lord says in another place to all his apostles: 'Receive the Holy Spirit;' and straightway, 'Whose sins you forgive, they will be forgiven them; whose sins you retain, they will be retained' (Jn 20:22-23). This refers to the keys, about which it is said, 'whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven' (Mt 16:19). But that was said to Peter. To show you that Peter at that time stood for the universal Church, listen to what is said to him, what is said to all the faithful, the saints: 'If your brother sins against you, correct him between you and himself alone. If he does not listen to you, bring with you one or two; for it is written, By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every matter be settled. If he does not even listen to them, refer him to the Church; if he does not even listen to her, let him be to you as a heathen and a tax collector. Amen amen I tell you, that whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Mt 16:18). It is the dove that binds, the dove that looses, the building built upon the rock that binds and looses (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume VI, St. Augustin, Sermon 26.1-4, pp. 340-341).

In this passage Augustine states that the pre-eminence or primacy of Peter is due to the fact that he represents the Church universal. When Christ bequeathed the power of binding and loosing to Peter he was bequeathing this power to the entire Church. Augustine then ties together Matthew 16 and Matthew 18 exegetically to demonstrate that

what had been entrusted to Peter had in fact been entrusted to all. There are no distinctions between the Apostles in the mind of Augustine. They are all on an equal footing.

In Augustine's view Peter is a symbolic representative of the Church. While he holds a primacy it is not a primacy of jurisdiction but of honor. As W.H.C. Frend states in referring to Augustine's view of Peter:

His (Peter's) primacy was simply a matter of personal privilege and not an office (The Early Church (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), p. 222).

The following quotations demonstrate how often the theme of Peter's being a symbolic representative of the Church universal recurs in the writings of Augustine:

Its clear, you see, from many places in scripture that Peter can stand for, or represent, the Church; above all from that place where it says, To you will I hand over the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall also be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Mt. 16:19). Did Peter receive these keys, and Paul not receive them? Did Peter receive them, and John and James and the other apostles not receive them? Or are the keys not to be found in the Church, where sins are being forgiven every day? But because Peter symbolically stood for the Church, what was given to him alone was given to the whole Church. So Peter represented the Church; the Church is the body of Christ (John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (New Rochelle: New City, 1992), Sermons, III/5, Sermon 149.6-7, p. 21).

And this Church, symbolized in its generality, was personified in the Apostle Peter, on account of the primacy

of his apostleship. For, as regards his proper personality, he was by nature one man, by grace one Christian, by still more abounding grace one, and yet also, the first apostle; but when it was said to him, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

For, as regards his proper personality, he was by nature one man, by grace one Christian, by still more abounding grace one, and yet also, the first apostle; but when it was said to him, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,' he represented the universal Church, which in this world is shaken by divers temptations, that come upon it like torrents of rain, floods and tempests, and falleth not, because it is founded upon a rock (petra), from which Peter received his name. For petra (rock) is not derived from Peter, but Peter from petra; just as Christ is not called so from the Christian, but the Christian from Christ. For on this very account the Lord said, 'On this rock will I build my Church,' because Peter had said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' On this rock, therefore, He said, which thou hast confessed, I will build my Church. For the Rock (Petra) was Christ; and on this foundation was Peter himself built. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus. The Church, therefore, which is founded in Christ received from Him the keys of the kingdom of heaven in the person of Peter, that is to say, the power of binding and loosing sins. For what the Church is essentially in Christ, such representatively is Peter in the rock (petra); and in this representation Christ is to be understood as the Rock, Peter

as the Church (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume VII, St. Augustin, *On the Gospel of John*, Tractate 124.5).

For not without cause among all the Apostles doth Peter sustain the person of this Church Catholic; for unto this Church were the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven given, when they were given unto Peter: and when it is said unto him, it is said unto all, Lovest thou Me? Feed My sheep (*A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: Parker, 1847), Seventeen Short Treatises of S. Augustine, *De Agone Christiano* (The Christian Conflict) 32, p. 184).

One wicked man represents the whole body of the wicked; in the same way as Peter, the whole body of the good, yea, the body of the Church, but in respect to the good. For if in Peter's case there were no sacramental symbol of the Church, the Lord would not have said to him, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.' If this was said only to Peter, it gives no ground of action to the Church. But if such is the case also in the Church, that what is bound on earth is bound in heaven, and what is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven—for when the Church excommunicates, the excommunicated person is bound in heaven; when one is reconciled by the Church, the person so reconciled is loosed in heaven—if such, then, is the case in the Church, Peter, in receiving the keys, represented the holy Church (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume VII, St. Augustine, *On The Gospel of St. John*, Tractate 50.12, p. 282).

Peter was the only one that answered, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;' and to whom it was said, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' as if he

alone received the power of binding and loosing: seeing, then, that one spake in behalf of all, and received the latter along with all, as if personifying the unity itself; therefore one stands for all, because there is unity in all (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume VII, St. Augustin, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John*, Tractate 118.4, p. 431).

The theme of symbolic representation is applied by Augustine to Christ's commission to Peter to feed his sheep in John 21. Augustine interprets this commission to Peter as representative of a commission to all shepherds and pastors in the Church. It is not a commission given to Peter alone. When Christ speaks to Peter he is speaking to the universal Church. Peter is viewed as symbolically representing the Church and its shepherds:

So let us love him, let there be nothing dearer to us than he. So do you imagine that the Lord is not questioning us? Was Peter the only one who qualified to be questioned, and didn't we? When that reading is read, every single Christian is being questioned in his heart. So when you hear the Lord saying 'Peter, do you love me?' think of it as a mirror, and observe yourself there. I mean, what else was Peter doing but standing for the Church? So when the Lord was questioning Peter, he was questioning us, he was questioning the Church. I mean, to show you that Peter stood for the Church, call to mind that place in the gospel, 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld shall not conquer her; to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 16:18-19). One man receives them; you see, he explained himself what the keys of the kingdom mean: 'What you all bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what you all loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Mt 18:18). If it

was said to Peter alone, Peter alone did this; he passed away, and went away; so who binds, who looses? I make bold to say, we too have these keys. And what am I to say? That it is only we who bind, only we who loose? No, you also bind, you also loose. Anybody who's bound, you see, is barred from your society; and when he's barred from your society, he's bound by you; and when he's reconciled he's loosed by you, because you too plead with God for him.

We all love Christ, you see, we are his members; and when he entrusts the sheep to the shepherds, the whole number of shepherds is reduced to the body of one shepherd. Just to show you that the whole number of shepherds is reduced to the one body of the one shepherd, certainly Peter's a shepherd, undoubtedly a pastor; Paul's a shepherd, yes, clearly a pastor; John's a shepherd, James a shepherd, Andrew a shepherd, and the other apostles are shepherds. All holy bishops are shepherds, pastors, yes, clearly so. And how can this be true: And there will be one flock and one shepherd (Jn 10:16)? Then if there will be one flock and one shepherd is true, the innumerable number of shepherds or pastors must be reduced to the body of the one shepherd or pastor (John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (New Rochelle: New City, 1993), *Sermons*, Volume III/6, Sermon 229N.1-3, pp. 320-321).

What now on this occasion? The Lord questions him, as you heard when the gospel was read, and says to him, Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? He answered and said, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And again the Lord asked this question, and a third time he asked this question. And every time in reply he affirmed his love, he entrusted him with the care of his flock. Every time, you see, that Peter said I love you, the Lord Jesus said

to him, Feed my lambs, feed my sheep (Jn. 21:15-17). the one man Peter represents the unity of all the shepherds or pastors of the Church—but of the good ones, who know how to feed Christ’s flock for Christ, not for themselves (John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine*, Sermons III/4 (Hyde Park: New City, 1994), *Sermon 147.2*, p. 448).

So he is a pastor, a shepherd, to whom you entrusted your sheep, with the task of feeding them. You yourself appointed him, he’s a shepherd. Let’s see now if he’s a good one. We find out in this very exchange of question and answer. You inquired whether he loved you, he answered, I do. You saw into his heart, that he answered truthfully. So isn’t he good, seeing that he loves so great a good? ...So he was both a shepherd and a good shepherd; nothing to compare, of course, with the authority and goodness of the shepherd of shepherds, the pastor of pastors; but all the same he too was both a pastor and a good one, and the others like him were good pastors. So why is it that you draw the attention of good shepherds to the idea of one shepherd? For what other reason could it be, but that in the one shepherd you are teaching the lesson of unity? And the Lord explains the matter more clearly through my ministry, as he reminds your graces from the gospel and says, “Listen to what I have drawn attention to: I am the good shepherd, I said; because all the others, all the good shepherds are my members, parts of me; one head, one body, one Christ. So both the shepherd of the shepherds, and the shepherds of the shepherd, and the sheep with the shepherds under the shepherd, are one. All this is only what the apostle says: Just as the body is one and has many parts, but all the parts of the body, though they are many, form one body, so too is Christ (1 Cor 12:12). If, then, so too is Christ, it was quite right for

Christ, who contains all the good shepherds in himself, to draw attention to one by saying, I am the good shepherd. I am, I am one person, with me all in the unity are one. Anyone who feeds the sheep outside me feeds them against me. Anyone who does not gather with me scatters (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume VII, St. Augustin, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 123.5, pp. 445-446).

Quite rightly too did the Lord after his resurrection entrust his sheep to Peter to be fed. It's not, you see, that he alone among the disciples was fit to feed the Lord's sheep; but when Christ speaks to one man, unity is being commended to us. And he first speaks to Peter, because Peter is the first among the apostles (John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (New Rochelle: New City Press, 1994), *Sermons*, Volume III/8, Sermon 295.4, p. 199).

So the Lord entrusted his sheep to us bishops, because he entrusted them to Peter; if, that is, we are worthy with any part of us, even with the tips of our toes, to tread the dust of Peter's footsteps, the Lord entrusted his sheep to us. You are his sheep, we are sheep along with you, because we are Christians. I have already said, we are fed and we feed (John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (New Rochelle: New City Press, 1994), *Sermons*, Volume III/8, Sermon 296.13, p. 211).

But when he declared his love once, and again, and a third time, the Lord entrusted him with his sheep. Do you love me? He said. Lord, you know that I love you. Feed my lambs. This once, and again, and a third time, as though the only way Peter could show his love for Christ would be by being a faithful shepherd and pastor under the prince of all pastors...(John Rotelle, Ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1992), *Sermons*, Volume III/4, Sermon 147A.1-2, pp. 451-452).

According to Augustine, when Christ entrusted the sheep to Peter he was not making him the supreme ruler of the Church. He and all the shepherds of the Church are under Christ, the chief shepherd. There is only one head, Christ, and all the Apostles are of equal status under Christ as the chief shepherd. In addition, when Christ entrusted his sheep to Peter he was not entrusting the other Apostles to him, but the converts who would be the fruit of his preaching. The Apostles are equally shepherds with Peter.

Therefore, the logic of Augustine and of the fathers as a whole is as follows:

- 1) Peter holds a primacy, but it is not a primacy of jurisdiction.
- 2) Peter is not the rock but his confession of Christ or Christ himself and therefore the Church is not built on Peter personally but on his confession of faith which points to Christ.
- 3) All the Apostles are equal.
- 4) Peter is a symbolic representative of the Church as a whole. What was spoken to Peter and granted to him by Christ was spoken and granted to all the Apostles equally and through them to the Church universal.
- 5) All the bishops are successors of Peter because they are the successors of the Apostles, all of whom were equal.
- 6) All the bishops sit on the chair of Peter.
- 7) Therefore, the exalted titles applied to Peter do not apply to the bishops of Rome because the fathers never make that application in their writings.

Augustine: Christ, you see, built his Church not on a man but on Peter's confession. What is Peter's confession? 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' There's the rock for you, there's the foundation, there's where the Church has been built, which the gates of the underworld cannot conquer. (Sermon 229).

Windsor:

This is a figurative passage. The Church was not physically built upon “the man” of St. Peter, for he would be crushed in the literal sense. Jesus foundationally lays the groundwork for the Church on Simon’s confession, but there’s more to this chapter! Simon Bar Jona is renamed Peter here! When God renames someone, there is great significance! (Noting: Abraham, Israel, etc.) None of the other Apostles were so honored or held up as Simon Bar Jona!

Webster:

Yes, Peter’s name was changed. But it is quite clear that Augustine does not interpret the change of the name in the same way you do because he says in that context that Christ did not build his Church on a man, i.e. on Peter, but on Peter’s confession of faith in Christ. Augustine himself explains the significance of the change of Peter’s name, Scott, and it is not consistent with your position. He states:

‘Previously, of course, he was called Simon; this name of Peter was bestowed on him by the Lord, and that with the symbolic intention of his representing the Church. Because Christ, you see, is the *petra* or rock; Peter, or Rocky, is the Christian people (Sermon 76).

Augustine: And this Church, symbolized in its generality, was personified in the Apostle Peter, on account of the primacy of his apostleship. For, as regards his proper personality, he was by nature one man, by grace one Christian, by still more abounding grace one, and yet also, the first apostle; but when it was said to him, I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,’ he represented the universal Church, which in this world is shaken by divers temptations, that come upon it like torrents of rain, floods and tempests, and falleth not, because it is founded upon a rock (*petra*), from which Peter received his name. For *petra* (rock) is not derived from Peter, but Peter from *petra*; just as Christ is not called so from the Christian,

but the Christian from Christ. For on this very account the Lord said, 'On this rock will I build my Church,' because Peter had said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' On this rock, therefore, He said, which thou hast confessed, I will build my Church. For the Rock (Petra) was Christ; and on this foundation was Peter himself built. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus. The Church, therefore, which is founded in Christ received from Him the keys of the kingdom of heaven in the person of Peter, that is to say, the power of binding and loosing sins. For what the Church is essentially in Christ, such representatively is Peter in the rock (petra); and in this representation Christ is to be understood as the Rock, Peter as the Church (Commentary on the Gospel of John, Tractate 124.5).

Windsor:

Again we are shown that St. Peter is given primacy and is the single Apostle shown to represent the Church. Where were the other Apostles at this time? They were right there with St. Peter! Why then does the Lord single out Simon and give him the name of Peter? If this were merely an act of symbolism, then why, from this time forward, is Simon referred to as "Peter?"

Webster:

Augustine states that Peter is the first and head of the apostles and that he holds a primacy. However he does not interpret that primacy in a Roman Catholic sense. He believes that Peter's primacy is figurative in that he represents the universal Church. Again, he explicitly states that Christ did not build his Church upon a man but on Peter's confession of faith. Peter is built on Christ the rock and as a figurative representative of the Church he shows how each believer is built on Christ. In Augustine's view, Peter holds a primacy or preeminence, but none of this applies to him in a jurisdictional sense, because he says that 'Christ did not build his Church upon a man.' We can not get a clearer illustration that the fathers did indeed separate Peter's confession of faith from Peter's person.

Windsor:

This would be a logical argument, IF not for the fact that at the beginning of Matthew 16 this Apostle is known as “Simon” and after verse 18 he is known as “Peter.” Mr. Webster is attempting to put a 16th century spin on an ancient text - but wait, that’s what he accuses Catholic apologists of doing!

Webster:

Scott, if you are going to deal with Augustine you have to deal with what he personally has to say. He does not draw the conclusions you draw from his words. Again, Augustine does not place the significance on the change of name that you do. As we have seen, Augustine is aware that Peter’s name has been changed but that did not bring him to the conclusion that Peter was established as the universal ruler of the Church or as the rock upon which the Church would be built. If you want to call this a spin, fine, but it is a spin that is found in Augustine in the early 5th century, thereby preceding the 16th century by a significant amount of time! I am putting an Augustinian, 5th century “spin” on the text, a spin that can be further applied to other fathers in the 3rd (Origen and Cyprian) and 4th (Chrysostom) centuries. So I am putting a patristic spin (interpretation) on the text. As Oscar Cullmann points out, the view of the Reformers was not a novel interpretation invented by them but hearkened back to the patristic tradition:

‘We thus see that the exegesis that the Reformers gave...was not first invented for their struggle against the papacy; it rests upon an older patristic tradition (Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple–Apostle–Martyr* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), p. 162).

Your appeal to Augustine, Scott, to support a Roman papal primacy cannot be supported from the facts. It is not enough to simply cite quotations. You must be able to give a proper interpretation of what

the fathers mean by the words they use. They, themselves, provide us with such an interpretation if we give the full context of their teaching.

Windsor:

Webster also states: “We can not get a clearer illustration that the fathers did indeed separate Peter’s confession of faith from Peter’s person.”

Let’s take a look at what a few of the other Early Fathers said:

St. Cyprian of Carthage, The Unity of the Catholic Church:

The Lord says to Peter: “I say to you,” He says, “that you are Peter, and upon this rock will I build My Church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it. And to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever things you bind on earth shall be bound in also in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth, they shall be loosed in heaven.” [Cyprian’s first edition:]

And again He says to him after His resurrection: “Feed my sheep.” On him He builds the Church, and to him he gives the command to feed the sheep; although He assigns a like power to all the Apostles, yet He founded a single chair, and He established by His own authority a source and an intrinsic reason for that unity. Indeed, the others were that also which Peter was; but a primacy is given to Peter, whereby it is made clear that there is but one Church and one chair. So too, all are shepherds, and the flock is shown to be one, fed all by the Apostles in single-minded accord. If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he desert the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he still be confident that he is in the Church? The episcopate is one, of which each bishop holds his part within the undivided structure. The Church also is one, however widely she has spread among the multitude through her fruitful increase ... The Church is bathed in the light of the Lord, and

pours her rays over the whole world; but it is one light that is spread everywhere, and the unity of her structure is undivided. [Jurgens 555-556]

Now, does this sound a bit like Protestantism?! Where is the unity in Protestantism? Today, who would St. Cyprian say is sitting in the “one chair” of the Church?

Webster:

When Cyprian came into conflict with Stephen, Scott, he and Firmilian stated that Stephen had lost his chair and had cut himself off from the unity of the Church. Precisely what the Protestant and Orthodox Churches say about Rome today.

Windsor:

St. Cyprian of Carthage, Letter without heading, of Cyprian to the Lapsed. A.D, 250:

Our Lord, whose commands we ought to fear and observe, says in the Gospel, by way of assigning the episcopal dignity and settling the plan of His Church: “I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it. And to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever things you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, they will be loosed in heaven.”

From that time the ordination of bishops and the plan of the Church flows on through the changes of times and successions; for the Church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by the same rulers. Since this has indeed been established by Divine Law, I marvel at the rash boldness of certain persons who have desired to write me as if they were writing letters in the name of the Church,

“since the Church is established upon the bishop and upon the clergy and upon all who stand firm in the faith.” [Jurgens 571]

St. Cyprian again asserts that the Church is founded upon St. Peter, and that the plan of the Church, “through the changes of times and successions.” Please note that he specifically mentions successions clearly indicating this “ability” was handed down from the Apostles to the current time.

St. Cyprian of Carthage, Letter of Cyprian to Quintus, Bishop in Mauretania. A.D. 254/255:

...For Peter, whom the Lord chose first and upon whom He built His Church, when Paul later disagreed with him about circumcision, did not claim anything for himself insolently nor assume anything arrogantly, so as to say that he held the primacy and that he ought rather to be obeyed by novices and those more recently arrived.
[Jurgens 592a]

Here we find St. Cyprian again asserting that the Church is indeed built upon Peter.

Webster:

I dealt with the whole issue of Cyprian and his view of Peter in a detailed response to Steve Ray demonstrating from the writings of Roman Catholic historians that Cyprian did not embrace the view of papal primacy. When he states that the Church is built upon Peter he means this in the same way as expressed by Augustine—Peter is a figurative representative of the Church. The bishop of Rome does not possess a position of authority over any see but his own. In Cyprian’s view, all bishops are on an equal footing with one another. The following statements by Roman Catholic patristics scholar, Johannes Quasten, affirms these conclusions:

To defend ecclesiastical unity, when it was threatened by schisms, Cyprian wrote *De unitate ecclesiae* and many of his letters, founding it, so far as the members of the Church are concerned, on adherence to the bishop. 'You should understand that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop and that whoever is not with the bishop is not in the Church' (Epist. 66.8). Thus the ordinary is the visible authority around which the congregation is centered.

The solidarity of the universal Church rests in turn on that of the bishops, who act as a sort of senate. They are the successors of the apostles and the apostles were the bishops of old. 'The Lord chose the apostles, that is, the bishops and rulers' (Epist. 3.3). The Church is built upon them. Thus Cyprian interprets the *Tu es Petrus* (You are Peter) as follows:

"Our Lord, whose precepts and admonitions we ought to observe, describing the honour of a bishop and the order of His Church, speaks in the Gospel, and says to Peter: 'I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Thence, through the changes of times and successions, the ordering of bishops and the plan of the Church flow onwards; so that the Church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by these same rulers. Since then this order has been established by divine decree, I am amazed that some individuals have had the bold effrontery to write me and send letters in the name of the Church, seeing that the Church is composed of the bishop and the

clergy and all who are steadfast' (Cyprian, Epistle XXXIII, 1).

Thus he understands Matth. 16:18 of the whole episcopate, the various members of which, attached to one another by the laws of charity and concord (Epist. 54.1; 68.5), thus render the Church universal a single body. 'The Church, which is catholic and one, is not split asunder nor divided but is truly bound and joined together by the cement of its priests, who hold fast one to another' (Epist. 66.8).

The Primacy of Rome

Cyprian is convinced that the bishop answers to God alone. 'So long as the bond of friendship is maintained and the sacred unity of the Catholic Church is preserved, each bishop is master of his own conduct, conscious that he must one day render an account of himself to the Lord' (Epist. 55.21). In his controversy with Pope Stephen on the rebaptism of heretics he voices as the president of the African synod of September 256 his opinion as follows:

"No one among us sets himself up as a bishop of bishops, or by tyranny and terror forces his colleagues to compulsory obedience, seeing that every bishop in the freedom of his liberty and power possesses the right to his own mind and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another. We must all await the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who singly and alone has power both to appoint us to the government of his Church and to judge our acts therein' (CSEL 3, 1, 436).

From these words it is evident that Cyprian does not recognize a primacy of jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome

over his colleagues. Nor does he think Peter was given power over the other apostles because he states: *hoc erant et ceteri apostoli quod fuit Petrus, pari consortio praediti et honoris et potestatis* (De unit. 4). No more did Peter claim it: 'Even Peter, whom the Lord first chose and upon whom He built His Church, when Paul later disputed with him over circumcision, did not claim insolently any prerogative for himself, nor make any arrogant assumptions nor say that he had the primacy and ought to be obeyed' (Epist. 71, 3)."

On the other hand, it is the same Cyprian who gives the highest praise to the church of Rome on account of its importance for ecclesiastical unity and faith, when he complains of heretics 'who dare to set sail and carry letters from schismatic and blasphemous persons to the see of Peter and the leading church, whence the unity of the priesthood took its rise, not realizing that the Romans, whose faith was proclaimed and praised by the apostle, are men into whose company no perversion of faith can enter' (Epist. 59, 14). Thus the *cathedra Petri* is to him the *ecclesia principalis* and the point of origin of the *unitas sacerdotalis*. However, even in this letter he makes it quite clear that he does not concede to Rome any higher right to legislate for other sees because he expects her not to interfere in his own diocese 'since to each separate shepherd has been assigned one portion of the flock to direct and govern and render hereafter an account of his ministry to the Lord' (Epist- 59, 14)...If he refuses to the bishop of Rome any higher power to maintain by legislation the solidarity of which he is the centre, it must be because he regards the primacy as one of honor and the bishop of Rome as *primus inter pares* (Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1983), Volume II, pp. 374-378).

These comments by Quasten are significant. They demonstrate the importance of what I stated about Augustine where I mentioned that it is not enough to simply cite quotations. One must seek to understand what the fathers meant by the words and terms they used, to understand their historical context. Cyprian states that Peter is the rock of the Church. The Roman Catholic, as Scott Windsor has demonstrated, immediately jumps to the conclusion that Cyprian must mean what present day Roman Catholics mean by those words. Is that the case? According to a world renowned Roman Catholic patristics scholar, it certainly is not the case. Quasten gives us the historical context and interpretation of Cyprian's words which are not supportive of a Roman, papal ecclesiology. Thus, to appeal to Cyprian in support of such a concept is to misinterpret and distort the facts. It is to read into his words a theology he personally did not embrace.



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<p>Mark Shea, Author of <i>By What Authority?</i> and James White (and others) Attempt to Discuss Sola Scriptura.</p>	<p>James White</p>
<p>Roman Catholic Apologists Vent and Show Their True Feelings. This kind of vitriolic rhetoric tells you something about the motivations of those who oppose the gospel of grace.</p>	<p>James White</p>
<p>"I Came To Grant...Disunity" (Luke 12:51)</p> <p>James White discusses the whole issue of Mrs. Patty Bonds</p>	<p>James White</p>
<p><i>John 6, the Father and the Son, Salvation, and Roman Catholic Apologists</i></p> <p>Mr. Sungenis replied to this, and our response, though rather long--more than 200K--is worth the reading here for 1st, here for the second, and here for the third.</p>	<p>James White</p>
<p>1 Corinthians 3 and Purgatory</p>	<p>James White</p>

Catholic Answers Reaches New Lows
in Poor Scholarship and Mockery of Protestants.

James White

You Tell Me!
Does Rome clarify, or muddle, the gospel?

James White

Failure to Document
Catholic Answers tries to provide a defense of Honorius that drops to new lows in misrepresenting history.

James White

St. Joseph's Communications Admits Defeat
The actions of Tim Staples and St. Joseph's are the clearest admission of utter defeat on the issue of Papal Infallibility we have ever seen. Find out why you can't watch the debate on video tape even though it was videoed.

James White

Serving Up Circular Arguments
The July/August 2000 *This Rock* magazine contains yet another attempt to get around biblical truth. James White replies to Steve O'Reilly once again.

James White

Many Thanks, Honorius
James White reviews his debate with Tim Staples on Papal Infallibility.

James White

Tim Staples Misrepresents Paul
Colin Smith documents the error of Timothy Staples on the 8/14/00 *Bible Answer Man* broadcast regarding the meaning and usage of the subjunctive in koine Greek.

Colin Smith

The Mass Card
James White responds to the offering of a Mass in his name at the headquarters of *Catholic Answers*.

James White

Catholic Legends And How They Get Started
An Example Ever hear someone claim Augustine said "Roma locuta est, causa finita est" (Rome has spoken, the case is closed)? A valuable example of how Roman myths and legends get their start.

James White

Catholic Answers Dodges the Issues Again
Karl Keating says he won't debate James White because White lacks sufficient legitimacy! This from the man who has debated Vinney Lewis and Peter Ruckman....

James White

[Whitewashing Church History](#)

James White

James White responds to an attempt by *This Rock* to insert Papal supremacy into the early Church. A response to Steven O'Reilly's article, *The Attempt to Whitewash Peter's Primacy* in the February, 2000 issue.

[Tim and Mark discuss the Eucharist](#)

James White

A response to an article by Tim Staples in the Catholic Digest

James White

[An Open Invitation to Karl Keating to Debate in San Diego](#)

Given the recent publication of *Inside Catholic Answers* which chronicles the activities of CA in going to Protestant meetings and seeking to give a "Catholic answer," we invite Karl Keating to do what he has been invited to do for almost ten years: debate James White in San Diego, home of *Catholic Answers*.

[Invalid Arguments Abound in Roman Catholic Apologetics](#)

James White

Here is an example drawn from Robert Sungenis' writings.

[Bill Webster Responds to Misrepresentations](#)

James White

in the newly published book by Steve Ray, *Upon This Rock*. A must read for anyone who thinks Mr. Ray's new book fairly deals with historical issues.

[Bill Webster Responds to Roman Claims on the Papacy](#)

James White

including a review and rebuttal of Jesus, Peter & the Keys

[Looks Can Be Deceiving](#)

James White

A recent e-mail focuses on interpreting the early Church Fathers.

[The Believer's Security](#)

James White

A Response to James Akin from *This Rock* Magazine.

[The Bereans *Rejected Sola Scriptura*?](#)

James White

A Review and Rebuttal of an article in *This Rock*.

[95 Theses.](#)

Martin Luther

[An Open Letter to Tim Staples](#)

James White

Does The Bible Teach Sola Scriptura? A debate with Patrick Madrid. <i>LONG</i>	Transcript
The Immaculate Conception Is there a Biblical basis?	James White
The Meaning of "Theopneustos" Long	B.B. Warfield
Catholic Answers: Myth or Reality? <i>LONG</i> (but well worth it!)	James White
Mirror Mirror: The Decline of Catholic Answers	James White
A response to "Evangelicals and Catholics Together."	James White
Jesus, Peter & the Keys A Summary Response	James White
Muddying the Waters A Response to R. Sungenis' Article in <i>This Rock Magazine</i>	James White
Tradition in the New Testament A Response to David Palm's Article	James White
Is Roman Catholic History Reliable? A Recent Example from <i>This Rock Magazine</i>	James White
Of Athanasius and Infallibility Brief Comments on the Dialogue Between Douglas Jones and Patrick Madrid	James White
"The Sola Scriptura Debate" James White vs Gerry Matatics	Transcript
A Response to an Argument For Infallibility	James White
Calvinists Converting to Rome? A Review of Two Conversion Stories in <i>Surprised by Truth</i> .	James White

"Upon this Rock."

Jesus Is Speaking *TO* Peter *ABOUT* the "Rock."

James White

About Debates With Other Roman Catholic Apologists.

James White

The Empty Hand of Faith

An "Electronic Tract" on the Nature of Saving Faith

James White

A Wake Up Call To A Sleepy Evangelicalism

A Wave of New Books Attacking *Sola Scriptura* Reminds Us of What is Important.

James White

The Early Canon Process of the New Testament

James White

Why I Left The Roman Catholic Church

Benny Diaz

We highly recommend the work of our good friend William Webster on this subject. See his materials at www.christiantruth.com!

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Roman Catholicism

An In Channel Debate on Purgatory

James White vs. Various RC Participants

On Thursday evening, January 3, 2002, James White was to engage in an in-channel debate with a Roman Catholic from Australia who went by the nick of "velleity." Velleity had challenged James in the chat channel on December 30th. Here is the log of the challenge:

[19:00] <velleity> het NA27 how about you an me have a debate sometime in the future under strict rules?

[19:00] <NA27away> Sure, vell: Resolved: Not A Single Person at the Council of Nicea Believed as Dogma All Things Rome Demands Faith in Today. :-)

[19:01] <velleity> when would you like to argue this?

[19:01] <velleity> set a date

[19:01] <NA27away> Well, I head to Long Island January 17th, to it would be best before then....maybe a Thursday evening?

[19:02] <velleity> unless you lookingh for an extemporaneous debate?

[19:03] <velleity> just you and me..no intepolations from the spectators

[19:03] <NA27away> Fine with me.

[19:03] <NA27away> This coming Thursday, then?

[19:03] <velleity> time?

[19:04] <velleity> when you lose..you have to pay a penalty....

[19:04] <NA27away> lol

[19:04] <NA27away> I don't intend to, vell.

[19:04] <velleity> king charles the 1st never intended to lose his head either

[19:05] <NA27away> And who will "judge" the debate?

[19:07] <velleity> don't you have those protocols set up??

[19:07] <NA27away> For discussions in a chat channel? Uh, no. :-)

[19:07] <velleity> or do you just declare yourself the winner always??

[19:07] <NA27away> < sigh >

[19:09] <NA27away> Are you interested in discussing that topic this coming Thursday evening or not?

[19:10] <velleity> the topic is rhetorical

[19:10] <velleity> you had better qualify it I think

[19:11] <NA27away> Seems straightforward enough, but if you don't like that one, suggest another.

[19:13] <velleity> how about we reword the topic?

[19:14] * NA27away has no problem with debating any of the Marian dogmas, too. :-)

[19:14] <NA27away> Or purgatory.

[19:14] <NA27away> The Papacy.

[19:14] <NA27away> Justification.

[19:14] <NA27away> Election

[19:14] <NA27away> :_)

[19:15] * velleity chooses purgatory

[19:15] <NA27away> lol

[19:15] <NA27away> Bad move. But anyway....what was your suggestion for rewording the other, anyway?

[19:15] <velleity> never mind..purgatory it is

[19:16] * velleity snickers (this will be a push over)

[19:16] <NA27away> That's what Fr. Peter Stravinskias thought. :-)

[19:16] <velleity> I may even remain conscious for the greater part of the debate

[19:17] <NA27away> Your arrogance does not put you in good stead, I assure you.

[19:17] <velleity> nor does your hubris NA27

[19:17] <NA27away> I defeated Stravinskias in May of 2001 on the subject. To my knowledge, you have never engaged the topic in a meaningful manner. At least I know what Rome teaches on the subject.

[19:18] <velleity> well your knowledge is about to be expanded...

[19:18] <NA27away> I have a history to point to. I don't believe you do. Hence, to proclaim yourself victor before the debate has begun is foolishness. Be that as it may, when shall we begin?

[19:18] <NA27away> That would be "expanded."

[19:19] <velleity> just a word of advice though if I may..try not to let your limbic systems take over your proprioceptions..it is not helpful in debates

[19:19] <NA27away> lol

[19:19] <NA27away> What time do you wish to begin?

[19:19] <velleity> your call

[19:20] <NA27away> What time zone are you in?

[19:21] <velleity> nope I wish to totally vanquish him..not just slaughter him :)

[19:21] <NA27away> Suggest a format. Be glad to work it out. What time zone do you live in?

[19:22] <velleity> I'm in Sydney Australia

[19:23] <velleity> abut we can set the rules now ok?

[19:23] <NA27away> Gracious. Well, we can begin anywhere from 6-7:30PM MST as far as I'm concerned.

[19:24] <velleity> or you want only your rules?

[19:24] <NA27away> How about fifteen minutes to present an opening position....you can use prepared statements, but you can't flood (i.e., you need to use a delay in posting). I would suggest a 4000ms delay so that people can keep up with the scrolling text.

[19:25] <NA27away> Then ten minutes to rebut, no scrolled text.

[19:25] <velleity> done

[19:25] <NA27away> Then fifteen minutes each for cross examination. No grand standing.

[19:26] <NA27away> Then five minute closing statements, no scrolled text.

[19:26] <NA27away> Then open it to the room for discussion.

[19:26] <NA27away> Both participants can post unedited versions on their respective websites.

[19:26] * NA27away hopes everyone is logging this. :-)

[19:26] <velleity> define cross examination..I suggest we alternate...viz...proposition /response etc

[19:27] <NA27away> Cross-examination in a debate involves one side asking questions of the other; questions only, no rebuttal or comment, just questions.

[19:27] <NA27away> Right, we will moderate the channel so that it will be just you and me.

[19:27] <velleity> like being tired to a tree..shooting fish in a barrell :)

[19:27] <NA27away> That would be "tied."

[19:28] <velleity> no tired in your case

[19:28] <NA27away> One thing is for certain: you are not my equal in spelling or typing. :-)

[19:28] <NA27away> OK, so, when do we begin Thursday evening, sir?

[19:28] <NA27away> I assume it is sir?

[19:28] <velleity> or modesty

[19:28] <velleity> set the time

[19:29] <NA27away> OK, as 6:30PM would be 8:30PM EST, and a number of our regulars are in the EST, that would be good.

[19:29] <NA27away> It is currently 7:28PM MST, in case you wish to know.

[19:29] <velleity> 8.30pm est it is

[19:29] <NA27away> Excellent. See you then.

[19:29] <velleity> can hardly wait :)

[19:30] <velleity> hardly a challenge

[19:31] * NA27away shakes his head and chuckles.

[19:31] <velleity> if it was a tennis match I'd remove the strings from my racket to make it fair

Well, when 6:30PM Thursday came, there was no sign of velleity. To the date of the posting of this article, I have heard nothing from this challenger. However, we had more than fifty people in channel, all looking for a debate on purgatory. A Roman Catholic using the nick Christian said he would take up the challenge, if velleity did not show. With that background, we present the "debate that almost was," hoping that it will still be useful to those who take the time to read through it.

[18:42] <NA27> Greetings! Thank you for being here in #prosapologian this evening.

[18:42] <NA27> This is truly a momentous topic, as it demonstrates with clarity the vast differences

[18:42] <NA27> between the God-centered gospel of Scripture and the man-centered

[18:42] <NA27> sacramentalism of the Roman system.

[18:43] <NA27> Very few know the history of the development over time of this doctrine of purgatory.

[18:43] <NA27> Let's review, then look at the scant number of Biblical passages Rome has cited in

[18:43] <NA27> defense of this doctrine, and close by noting the vast number of Biblical passages

[18:43] <NA27> that teach contrary to the fundamental elements of the Roman Catholic doctrine of

[18:43] <NA27> purgatory, most specifically, the teaching of Holy Scripture that Christ's death is

[18:43] <NA27> complete, perfect, finished, and fully propitiatory.

[18:43] <NA27> The sole Jewish source cited, even by the 1994 Catholic Catechism, is 2

[18:43] <NA27> Maccabees 12:39-45, wherein we read of a group of Jewish fighters, all of whom

[18:43] <NA27> were idolaters. They carried pagan idols under their clothing, and God struck them

[18:43] <NA27> down as punishment. This uninspired book, rejected as canonical by such notable

[18:43] <NA27> early Fathers as Melito of Sardis, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, and Jerome, as

[18:43] <NA27> well as Pope Gregory the Great and at least fifty other major ecclesiastical writers

[18:43] <NA27> up to the time of the Reformation, including Cardinal Cajetan, the prelate who

[18:43] <NA27> interviewed Luther, says that the Jewish leader offered prayers and sacrifices for

[18:43] <NA27> these dead soldiers. It seems that any connection at all with the dead is sufficient at

[18:43] <NA27> this point, for obviously, since idolatry is a mortal sin, and would not send one to

[18:43] <NA27> purgatory, but to hell itself, this passage is hardly supportive of the doctrine we

[18:43] <NA27> examine tonight. At the very best it would have to be said that the passage

[18:44] <NA27> indicates an error in thinking on the part of the Jews, but given its highly unusual

[18:44] <NA27> nature, and the fact that no canonical Scripture supports it, its very use begins to

[18:44] <NA27> illustrate for us the highly questionable nature of purgatory as a dogma of Christian

[18:44] <NA27> faith.

[18:44] <NA27> When we come to the earliest centuries of the Christian church, we find no doctrine

[18:44] <NA27> of purgatory. What we do find fairly early on are prayers for the dead, often cited as

[18:44] <NA27> evidence of at least an implicit concept of purgatory. Yet, as historians such as Le

[18:44] <NA27> Goff point out, these primitive prayers are actually contradictory to the modern

[18:44] <NA27> concept of purgatory. They pray for their loved ones that they might have

[18:44] <NA27> refrigerium, refreshment, and yet this is couched in terms of the pleasures of

[18:44] <NA27> paradise, a state defined as "peace and light." Mohrmann comments that

[18:44] <NA27> refrigerium referred to "heavenly happiness," and that, "Among later Christian writers

[18:44] <NA27> refrigerium is used in a general way to denote the joys of the world beyond the

[18:44] <NA27> grave, promised by God to the elect." Neale, upon collating and studying ancient

[18:44] <NA27> liturgical sources, concluded, "(1) that prayers for the dead...have been from the

[18:44] <NA27> beginning the practice of the Universal Church. (2) And this without any idea of a

[18:44] <NA27> purgatory of pain, or of any state from which the departed soul has to be delivered

[18:44] <NA27> as from one of misery." The ease with which modern apologists for Roman

[18:44] <NA27> Catholicism point to these prayers without taking serious note of their character, and

[18:45] <NA27> the lack of a meaningful context by which to make them truly supportive of their

[18:45] <NA27> case, should give us reason to examine their claims more carefully. Indeed,

[18:45] <NA27> Tertullian, upon making reference to making oblations on the anniversary of
[18:45] <NA27> someone's death frankly admitted, "If you look in Scripture for a formal law
[18:45] <NA27> governing these and similar practices, you will find none. It is tradition that justifies
[18:45] <NA27> them, custom that confirms them, and faith that observes them." (De corona militis
[18:45] <NA27> 3.2-3). What a strange, strange statement if, in fact, the passages Roman Catholic
[18:45] <NA27> apologists cite are, in fact relevant. Evidently, Tertullian recognized that this was
[18:45] <NA27> merely a practice, not a doctrine, let alone a dogma. How time transformed this
[18:45] <NA27> simple practice into something wholly different!

[18:45] <NA27> The chief architects of the earliest concepts that lead to purgatory only decrease our
[18:45] <NA27> confidence in the doctrine. In the East we have Clement of Alexandria and Origen.
[18:45] <NA27> Both wrote extensively, and much of what they said would not be believed by almost
[18:45] <NA27> anyone here this evening, Catholic or Protestant. Both engaged in allegorical
[18:45] <NA27> interpretation that was devoid of meaningful exegetical content, and while Origen did
[18:45] <NA27> know both Greek and Hebrew, his view of Scripture as having all sorts of levels of
[18:45] <NA27> meaning led him to ignore the literal, historical-grammatical meaning and focus
[18:45] <NA27> upon an allegedly higher, "spiritual" meaning. Both likewise were influenced more
[18:45] <NA27> by Plato than by Paul, leading to a strange, and in fact unorthodox, theology. Both
[18:46] <NA27> men were led into wild speculations, especially in regard to the idea of a corrective,
[18:46] <NA27> punitive, cleansing of the soul. This idea came primarily from Greek philosophy and
[18:46] <NA27> dualism, surely not from Scripture.

[18:46] <NA27> At the same time non-canonical, gnostic-influenced works, such as the Apocalypse
[18:46] <NA27> of Peter or Paul, likewise presented a concept of the afterlife derived not from the
[18:46] <NA27> Bible but from Greek philosophy. These works, despite their non-canonical status,
[18:46] <NA27> deeply influenced the rise of purgatorial thinking in the middle ages.
[18:46] <NA27> In the West we find Augustine strangely giving credence to a concept of purgation
[18:46] <NA27> as well, though, as he likewise believed in predestination and election, and the idea
[18:46] <NA27> that saving faith is a gift of God, he melded these concepts into a strangely
[18:46] <NA27> inconsistent whole that led him to believe that such sufferings would only avail for
[18:46] <NA27> the elect and none others. He was influenced in his thinking by his mother's dying
[18:46] <NA27> request to be remembered in his prayers.

[18:46] <NA27> But most importantly we find, a full half millennia after the founding of the Church,
[18:46] <NA27> Gregory, bishop of Rome, known as Pope Gregory the Great today. This man's
[18:46] <NA27> theology was a mess: he was at best a semi-Pelagian who gave tremendous weight
[18:46] <NA27> to the idea of merit and works; he did not believe man was dead in sin, but only
[18:47] <NA27> wounded or sick; he was ignorant of both Greek and Hebrew and knew absolutely
[18:47] <NA27> nothing of biblical backgrounds as well. He would not have made it out of any
[18:47] <NA27> decent undergraduate Bible program today. Yet, he wrote extensively, putting his
[18:47] <NA27> manifest ignorance on paper. One of his works, completed after he became Pope,
[18:47] <NA27> was a work on Job, filled with the most inane and silly allegorical interpretation.
[18:47] <NA27> Schaff gives us an illustration of Gregory's thinking in this work:
[18:47] <NA27> The names of persons and things, the numbers, and even the syllables [of the book
[18:47] <NA27> of Job], are filled with mystic meaning. Job represents Christ; his wife the carnal
[18:47] <NA27> nature; his seven sons (seven being the number of perfection) represent the
[18:47] <NA27> apostles, and hence the clergy; his three daughters the three classes of the faithful
[18:47] <NA27> laity who are to worship the Trinity; his friends the heretics; the seven thousand
[18:47] <NA27> sheep the perfect Christians; the three thousand camels the heathen and
[18:47] <NA27> Samaritans; the five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses again the
[18:47] <NA27> heathen.

[18:47] <NA27> Ironically, this same work contains Gregory's rejection of Maccabees as a canonical
[18:47] <NA27> work. But it was another work of Gregory, the Dialogues, that is of importance to us
[18:47] <NA27> tonight. These dialogues between Gregory and the Roman archdeacon Peter
[18:47] <NA27> abound, as Schaff says, "in incredible marvels and visions of the state of departed
[18:48] <NA27> souls." Gregory admits that he is transmitting hearsay only and did not, himself, see
[18:48] <NA27> any of these alleged visions. This is the work, however, that becomes foundational
[18:48] <NA27> to the development in the middle ages of the doctrine that became dogma at the
[18:48] <NA27> Council of Florence yet 900 years in the future.

[18:48] <NA27> And so we have the beginnings of what would, eventually, become the modern
[18:48] <NA27> dogma of purgatory: scattered references from Origen the allegorist who believed
[18:48] <NA27> even Satan himself would be saved and who likewise believed in the pre-existence
[18:48] <NA27> of souls; Tertullian who became a Montanist; Augustine who was deeply influenced
[18:48] <NA27> by his mother's request and whose exegesis of Matthew 12 ignored the simple
[18:48] <NA27> parallel passage in Mark 3 that, as we shall see, renders Matthew 12 irrelevant to its
[18:48] <NA27> use by Rome today, and most importantly Gregory, who could not even read the
[18:48] <NA27> original languages, offered allegorical interpretation in the place of true exegesis,
[18:48] <NA27> and who passed on hearsay stories about visions of the afterlife that became central
[18:48] <NA27> to the development of the concept of purgatory during the Middle Ages. Indeed, did

[18:48] <NA27> not Peter warn us about what happens when untaught and unstable persons distort [18:48] <NA27> the Scriptures?

[18:48] <NA27> Time precludes delving much into the development of the actual dogma of [18:48] <NA27> purgatory, primarily in the 12th century, and its elevation to the status of dogma by [18:49] <NA27> the Council of Florence in the 15th century, a council history shows to have been [18:49] <NA27> political in nature, one that could hardly be said to have seriously considered [18:49] <NA27> anything of an exegetical or biblical nature. Indeed, Florence spent more time [18:49] <NA27> worrying about where to put the chairs for the seating of the Greek delegates than it [18:49] <NA27> did on the study of the Bible. Yet, the modern Catholic church views Florence as [18:49] <NA27> the 17th ecumenical council, and the modern catechism relies upon Florence and [18:49] <NA27> Trent to define purgatory in section 1031.

[18:49] <NA27> I don't know about you, but such a history does not recommend it to my thinking as [18:49] <NA27> something worthy of my faith and assent. I cannot help but think of the words of [18:49] <NA27> Scripture, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not in accordance to this [18:49] <NA27> word, there is no light in them." And so we now turn to the few passages that have [18:49] <NA27> been pressed into service by Rome to substantiate the dogma that is purgatory.

[18:49] <NA27> We have already addressed 2 Maccabees 12 in our previous comments. That [18:49] <NA27> leaves, primarily, Matthew 12:31-32 and 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. Let's begin with [18:49] <NA27> Matthew 12...

[18:49] <NA27> (Matthew 12:31-32) "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be [18:49] <NA27> forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. [32]

[18:50] <NA27> "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but [18:50] <NA27> whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age [18:50] <NA27> or in the age to come.

[18:50] <NA27> The context, of course, is that of the unforgivable sin, not purgatory. Roman [18:50] <NA27> Catholics seem to believe the final phrase, "either in this age, or in the age to come," [18:50] <NA27> while not specifically mentioning purgatory, at least opens up the concept of [18:50] <NA27> forgiveness of sins after death, "in the age to come." But what is missed by Roman [18:50] <NA27> Catholics at this point is the fact that what Jesus means by this important phrase is [18:50] <NA27> clearly explained by reference to the parallel passage in one of the other synoptic [18:50] <NA27> gospels, that being Mark. Note how he records the same discussion:

[18:50] <NA27> (Mark 3:28-29) "Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and [18:50] <NA27> whatever blasphemies they utter; [29] but whoever blasphemes against the Holy [18:50] <NA27> Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"--

[18:50] <NA27> Jesus is not, then, referring to the possibility of cleansing in the future, but is instead [18:50] <NA27> speaking of an "eternal sin," one that has no forgiveness whatsoever. If the Roman [18:50] <NA27> interpretation of Matthew 12 is valid, *then Mark's rendition is not.* Obviously, this [18:50] <NA27> cannot be, hence, it is the Roman interpretation that must be rejected. And so we [18:51] <NA27> turn to the key passage:

[18:51] <NA27> (1 Corinthians 3:8-15) Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each [18:51] <NA27> will receive his own reward according to his own labor. [9] For we are God's fellow [18:51] <NA27> workers; you are God's field, God's building. [10] According to the grace of God [18:51] <NA27> which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is [18:51] <NA27> building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. [11] For no man [18:51] <NA27> can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] [18:51] <NA27> Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, [18:51] <NA27> hay, straw, [13] each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it [18:51] <NA27> because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each [18:51] <NA27> man's work. [14] If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive [18:51] <NA27> a reward. [15] If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself [18:51] <NA27> will be saved, yet so as through fire.

[18:51] <NA27> Time is short, and I'm sure we will spend a good deal of time looking closely at this [18:51] <NA27> passage during the rest of the debate, but allow me to make a few basic points.

[18:51] <NA27> Verse 8 provides the first reference to "reward," and it is clearly in the context of the [18:51] <NA27> Christian leaders who labor in the work of ministry. It will be significant to note that [18:51] <NA27> the phrase "receive a reward" in verse 8 is identical in terminology to the same [18:52] <NA27> phrase in verse 14. Since in this context we know that the planting and watering [18:52] <NA27> mentioned goes back to Paul and Apollos, the topic remains consistent throughout [18:52] <NA27> this passage. Paul then speaks of himself and Apollos as "God's fellow workers," [18:52] <NA27> and they labor in this high calling in God's field. He uses two terms, field and [18:52] <NA27> building, but picks up only on the second, "God's building." A fellow worker of God [18:52] <NA27> works in building God's building, and that building is the church.

[18:52] <NA27> This then brings us to the main passage. Verses 10-15 give us an illustration [18:52] <NA27> of how weighty it is to minister in the church, and how God will someday manifest [18:52] <NA27> the motivations of the hearts of all those who have engaged in that work. Then in [18:52] <NA27> verses 16-17 Paul adds a further warning, speaking of God's certain judgment upon

[18:52] <NA27> those who do not build, but instead tear down, or destroy. There is an obvious
[18:52] <NA27> movement between 10-15 and 16-17, for in 10-15 the metaphor remains the
[18:52] <NA27> construction of a building upon a foundation; in 16-17 this switches to the metaphor
[18:52] <NA27> of the temple of God, already constructed. Further, in 10-15 the "certain ones" are
[18:52] <NA27> those who are indeed building upon the foundation, even if they have less than
[18:52] <NA27> perfect motivations or understanding; the certain one in verses 16-17 is not building
[18:52] <NA27> anything at all, but is instead tearing down and ruining what has already been built.
[18:52] <NA27> This distinction is important as well, as we shall see.
[18:52] <NA27> Two classes of people are seen in the text: those who have built upon the
[18:52] <NA27> foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones, and those who have used inferior
[18:53] <NA27> things, wood, hay, and stubble. The first class of things is precious and withstands
[18:53] <NA27> fire; the second class are combustible and are not valuable. Obviously, the terms
[18:53] <NA27> are figurative: Paul and Apollos had little real gold, but their works in building the
[18:53] <NA27> church were precious and would withstand the testing of God's omniscience. Unlike
[18:53] <NA27> the one who is destroyed by God in v. 17, these are all Christians, and all enter into
[18:53] <NA27> God's presence. This is a judgment regarding the QUALITY AND NATURE OF
[18:53] <NA27> THEIR WORKS. The fire, we are told, reveals "of what sort" (Gr: hopoion) the work
[18:53] <NA27> is. ALL leaders face this test, from the most godly to the least (if this is purgatory,
[18:53] <NA27> does that mean there are no saints who work in the church?).
[18:53] <NA27> Now, in regards to the Roman misuse of this passage, let us note some important
[18:53] <NA27> things.
[18:53] <NA27> 1) There is nothing in this passage about temporal punishments for sins.
[18:53] <NA27> 2) There is nothing in this passage about purgation or cleansing.
[18:53] <NA27> 3) The passage refers to a testing of WORKS not of souls or persons.
[18:53] <NA27> 4) Verses 14 and 15 are in direct parallel, showing us that the receiving of a reward
[18:53] <NA27> in v. 14 is the direct opposite of "suffer loss" in v. 15. All these Christian workers are
[18:53] <NA27> saved people, members of God's elect: yet some will receive a reward and others
[18:53] <NA27> will suffer loss. In neither case do we see anything even remotely similar to the
[18:53] <NA27> concept of satisfassio, the suffering of atonement, so as to be cleansed and enter
[18:53] <NA27> into the presence of God.
[18:54] <NA27> Calvin addressed the use of the passage by Rome in these words:
[18:54] <NA27> It remains, that we give an answer in passing to the Papists, who endeavor from
[18:54] <NA27> this passage to prop up Purgatory. "The sinners whom God forgives, pass through
[18:54] <NA27> the fire, that they may be saved." Hence they in this way suffer punishment in the
[18:54] <NA27> presence of God, so as to afford satisfaction to his justice I pass over their endless
[18:54] <NA27> fictions in reference to the measure of punishment, and the means of redemption
[18:54] <NA27> from them, but I ask, who they are that pass through the fire? Paul assuredly
[18:54] <NA27> speaks of ministers alone. "There is the same reason," they say, "as to all." It is not
[18:54] <NA27> for us but for God to judge as to this matter. But even granting them this, how
[18:54] <NA27> childishly they stumble at the term fire. For to what purpose is this fire, but for
[18:54] <NA27> burning up the hay and straw, and on the other hand, for proving the gold and
[18:54] <NA27> silver. Do they mean to say that doctrines are discerned by the fire of their
[18:54] <NA27> purgatory? Who has ever learned from that, what difference there is between truth
[18:54] <NA27> and falsehood? Farther, when will that day come that will shine forth so as to
[18:54] <NA27> discover every one's work? Did it begin at the beginning of the world, and will it
[18:54] <NA27> continue without interruption to the end? If the terms stubble, hay, gold, and silver
[18:54] <NA27> are figurative, as they must necessarily allow, what correspondence will there be
[18:54] <NA27> between the different clauses, if there is nothing figurative in the term fire? Away,
[18:54] <NA27> then, with such silly trifles, which carry their absurdity in their forehead, for the
[18:55] <NA27> Apostle's true meaning is, I think, sufficiently manifest. Calvin, J. (2000). Calvin's
[18:55] <NA27> Commentaries (electronic ed.). electronic ed. (1 Co 3:10). Garland, TX: Galaxie
[18:55] <NA27> Software.
[18:55] <NA27> Hence, as Roman Catholic McBrien admits, "There is, for all practical purposes, no
[18:55] <NA27> biblical basis for the doctrine of purgatory. This is not to say that there is no basis at
[18:55] <NA27> all for the doctrine, but only that there is no clear biblical basis for it." (Webster, 114)
[18:55] <NA27> Thus I end my case, and look forward now to the interaction that can only clarify and
[18:55] <NA27> enlighten the truth. Thank you for reading along.
[18:55] NA27 sets mode: +v Christian
[18:55] <Christian> applause
[18:55] NA27 sets mode: +v Sebond
[18:55] <Christian> wow
[18:56] <NA27> Have you chosen to go it alone, or will others be joining you?
[18:56] <Christian> Methinks it would be nice to have a partner, since I do not have a prepared statment
[18:56] <Christian> It was a lot to respond to
[18:56] <NA27> I have voiced Sebond....do you wish someone else to join you?
[18:56] <Sebond> I prepared nothing. I was expecting vel to show.

[18:56] <Christian> me2
[18:57] <NA27> Se: I understand that.
[18:57] <NA27> So does everyone else.
[18:57] <Christian>
[18:57] <NA27> If you don't wish to engage the topic with me directly, we can simply remove moderation and discuss it with everyone....
[18:57] <Christian> Bigscott
[18:57] NA27 sets mode: +v BigScott
[18:57] <Christian> NA...
[18:57] Stv_inout is now known as StevenD
[18:58] <Christian> Unfortunatly, my statement will mainly be a resoponse
[18:58] <NA27> I really do not want you to feel like you are on the "hot seat" without preparation.
[18:58] <Christian> instead of a statemtn
[18:58] <NA27> OK, feel free to begin. I will shut up.
[18:58] <Christian> is that ok?
[18:58] <NA27> YEs.
[18:58] <BigScott> Well, I came to watch and did not prepare for a "debate" but I can try...
[18:58] <Christian>
[18:58] <Christian> I would like to first comment on a couple of things...
[18:58] <Christian> First of all, I wish you would have started with McBriens quote, because it is right on
[18:59] <Christian> There is no clear biblical basis for the doctrine
[18:59] <Christian> There need not be
[18:59] <Christian> As far as Macc... you quote people who feel it is not canonical
[18:59] <Christian> I say that the canon is not smoething that is voted upon
[19:00] <Christian> The estblishment of SS is another topic
[19:00] <Christian> Purgatory is...
[19:00] <Christian> The best way to understand the true philosophical understanding of it is this...
[19:00] <Christian> When we die, we are either saved or unsaved...
[19:00] <Christian> The unsaved go to hell
[19:01] <Christian> The saved go to heaven, where they are before the brilliant light of God
[19:01] <Sebond> Excuse me for interrupting, but it should be pointed out that the American hierarchy has said that McBrien's work on Catholic teaching is at best suspect.
[19:01] <Christian> (he got purgatory right)
[19:02] <Christian> If you have ever spent time in a very dark room, and had someone turn on the lights, then you know that your eyes strain, and depending on howlong you were there will determine the pain
[19:02] <Christian> and the adjustment period
[19:03] <Christian> Saved people are the same way...
[19:03] <BigScott> James what was the section from Matthew you quoted?
[19:03] <Christian> Sin is darkness... The more we have the more comfortable we are in the darkness...
[19:03] <Christian> If our sin is not enough to condemn us, then we stand before God when we die
[19:03] <Christian> If our darkness has been great, so too will our strain and adjustment
[19:03] <Christian> But we are saved
[19:04] <Christian> That is it... plain and simple
[19:04] <Christian> The thing with truth, is that it cannot be contradicted with other truth
[19:04] <Christian> The Scriptures do not contain all truth
[19:04] <Christian> That was not its purpose
[19:04] <Christian> Definitions of heaven, hell, saints, trinity, etc were not included in it
[19:04] <Christian> because it is a book of salvation
[19:05] <Christian> The truth of purgatory does not contradict scripture...
[19:05] <Christian> Just like the Trinity doesn't, but it is not clearly defined wither....
[19:05] <BigScott> ~nas matt 5:26
[19:05] <Latreuo> 12 Matthew 5:26 "Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent. (NASB)
[19:05] <Christian> Someone else can jump in
[19:06] <NA27> Y'all still have 7:30 left for your opening presentation.
[19:06] <BigScott> Come out of where? What was this parable referring to?
[19:06] <Christian> take it scott
[19:07] <BigScott> OIC, this is not "open" yet, you're letting us present...
[19:07] <Christian> right
[19:07] <NA27> Yessir
[19:07] <ENielsen> Can you make a positive presentation for purgatory, Scott? That might be helpful, IMO
[19:07] <Christian> (pretty hard without prep, huh Scott)
[19:07] <BigScott> Well, again, not really "prepared" as White was, but lemme try...
[19:07] <NA27> After that time period, we will do 10 minutes of cross-examination.

[19:08] <Christian> Sebond?
[19:08] <BigScott> First off, we must readily admit that Purgatory is not explicitly taught from Scripture...
[19:09] <BigScott> The implicit verses, some of which White has already presented, plus Matthew 5:26 (and context) is another...
[19:09] <BigScott> combined with Rev. 21:27, we see that nothing impure can enter heaven...
[19:09] <BigScott> ~nas Rev 21:27
[19:09] <Latreuo> 12 Revelation 21:27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (NASB)
[19:10] <NA27> 3:30 remaining....
[19:10] <Christian> I believe we are probably done...
[19:11] <Christian> Lets start the conv
[19:11] <BigScott> So, with "implicit" scriptural teachings... we are reliant on Authority - which is really where any Catholic/Evangelical (or otherwise) debate must truly begin...
[19:11] <NA27> OK, I erred above: we originally scheduled a time of rebuttal before the cross-examination.
[19:11] <BigScott> np James
[19:11] <Christian> hmmm
[19:12] <NA27> I had scheduled 10 minutes....how about just 6 so we can get to cross?
[19:12] <Christian> why don't we do a Q&A first
[19:12] <BigScott> If the Church has the Authority to "bind and loose whatsoever..." then when we receive such a teaching FROM the Church, there is no question about it.
[19:12] <NA27> It is customary to have a chance to rebut before cross examination.
[19:12] <Christian> we already kinda did that... but ok
[19:12] <BigScott> I agree, let the rebuttal happen first...
[19:12] <Christian> go ahead... we will rebut your rebuttal
[19:12] <Christian>
[19:12] <NA27> OK, let me start my 6:00....and I will not be using a script. Just typing from now on....
[19:13] <BigScott> thank you!
[19:13] <Christian> good.... its your turn for your fingers to hurt
[19:13] <NA27> A few items, of course. First, Jesus is not talking about purgatory in Matthew 5; the prison was a debtor's prison, which has nothing to do with the concept of temporal punishments for sins.
[19:14] <NA27> Second, I believe the historical information I have presented completely undercuts what Scott was just saying about church authority. Unless one just blindly practices sola ecclesia and says, "Well, whatever Rome says, I'll believe," the issue of whether a dogma or doctrine has *any* claim to historicity and apostolic origination *is* relevant.
[19:14] <NA27> And this dogma, obviously, does not.
[19:14] <NA27> Next, both of the passages I addressed, in Matthew and 1 Corinthians, *have* been used in official RC documents as supportive of purgatory. They must be rehabilitated by the RC side this evening.
[19:15] <NA27> But most importantly, I would like to point out the primary problem with purgatory. You see, the entire idea of satisfactio (the suffering of atonement one undergoes in purgatory) is contradicted by every single word of Scripture that speaks of the perfection of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the perfect substitute for the people of God.
[19:16] <NA27> There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in all of Scripture to warrant the idea that when I have Christ's righteousness imputed to me, and I have ALL of my sins imputed to Christ, that there is still something left over so that I can die justified, yet impure, needing to go to purgatory before entering into the presence of God.
[19:17] <NA27> While your story about the light is interesting, Christian, it finds no basis in the Bible's teaching about the substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby I have been PERFECTED (Hebrews 10:10-14).
[19:17] <NA27> Let's remember:
[19:17] <NA27> ~nas 2Cor 5:20-21
[19:17] <Latreuo> 12 2Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (NASB)
[19:17] <Latreuo> 12 2Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (NASB)
[19:17] Hendrik [askme@dial-4.r5.ncsny.infoave.net] has joined #prosapologist
[19:17] <NA27> The righteousness of GOD, gentlemen....not a righteousness needing satisfactio to be perfected.
[19:18] <NA27> Hence, the true refutation of purgatory: it contradicts the plain teaching of what it means to be right with God. Combine this with the fact that the passages cited fail, and the historical issues I have already raised, and you can see why purgatory cannot command the faith of the Christian heart.
[19:18] <NA27> Thank you.
[19:18] <NA27> You now have 6:00.
[19:18] <Christian> Ok...
[19:19] <BigScott> Lee would like to have voice too...
[19:19] <Christian> First of all... lets clear this up... Catholics believe that any talk of time, before, after, here, there in the afterlife is poetic and imperfect
[19:19] NA27 sets mode: +v Lee
[19:19] <Lee> pax
[19:19] <Christian> You do not GO to purgatory and THEN heaven

[19:19] <Christian> (I only have 3 points)
[19:20] <Christian> Secondly, I am saying nothing about Christ's sacrifice... Paul said that we are perfected when we accept Christ
[19:20] <Christian> I am perfected, but not perfect
[19:20] <Lee> am i on?
[19:21] <ENielsen> Yes, Lee
[19:21] <Christian> Lastly... Christ's allows us to stand before God in heaven as saints... If the light analogy doesn't work for you then imagine purgatory is when you get to heaven and God runs up to you and hugs the hell out of you
[19:21] <BigScott> Lee, did you have something to add?
[19:21] <Lee> ~nas matthew 5:8
[19:22] <Latreuo> 12 Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (NASB)
[19:22] <Christian> hmmm
[19:22] <Christian> scott?
[19:22] <NA27> Anything else?
[19:23] <Christian> I'll go
[19:23] <NA27> You have about 1:30 left....
[19:23] <Christian> Heliocentricity was also not taught by the apostles or scripture, but it is true
[19:23] <BigScott> lost Lee... anyway... what is a debtor's prison? Is this not an analogy to the end, or is this to only be read one way?
[19:23] <Christian> not all truth is in scripture, and there is much more for us to discover
[19:24] <Christian> It does not conflict with scripture... that is the key point
[19:24] <NA27> OK....
[19:24] <NA27> During cross-examination, the person asking questions does just that....only asks questions. No argumentation from the questioner, OK>
[19:24] <Christian> ok
[19:24] <BigScott> I agree, the point the Protestant would have to make is that the Catholic position is contrary
[19:24] <NA27> The ones answering do so as briefly as possible.
[19:25] <NA27> Shall I go first for 10:00 or do you wish to start?
[19:25] ENielsen sets mode: +v Lee
[19:25] <Christian> you may go
[19:25] <NA27> That OK with you, Scott?
[19:25] <BigScott> sure
[19:25] <NA27> OK....Christian, you said, <Christian> The Scriptures do not contain all truth
[19:26] <NA27> correct?
[19:26] <Christian> correct
[19:26] <NA27> Could you explain that in light of the following?
[19:26] <NA27> ~nas John 17:17
[19:26] <Latreuo> 12 John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. (NASB)
[19:26] <Christian> Sure... God's Word is Truth and is found in Scripture and elsewhere
[19:27] <NA27> OK.... You also said, <Christian> You do not GO to purgatory and THEN heaven
[19:27] <NA27> Correct?
[19:27] <Christian> correct
[19:27] <Christian> not precisely
[19:27] <NA27> Could you please explain this in light of the fact that Rome has granted indulgences, measured in days, weeks, etc., and in light of the Sabbatine Privilege?
[19:28] <Christian> Yes... We have been imprecise in our language about an existence that is beyond our understanding
[19:28] <Christian> The RCC no longer does that
[19:28] <NA27> Are you familiar with the Sabbatine Privilege?
[19:28] <Christian> Hmmm...
[19:28] <NA27> Any of you?
[19:28] <Christian> Would you like to explain it?
[19:29] <Christian> (turn time off)
[19:29] <Sebond> MAY I explain the measurements, please?
[19:29] <NA27> Shall I voice AKAJerry for assistance?
[19:29] <NA27> Scott?
[19:29] <NA27> Yes, Sebond, please.
[19:29] NA27 sets mode: +v AKAJerry
[19:29] <BigScott> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13289b.htm> (Sabbatine privilege)
[19:30] <AKAJerry> Oops. I was elsewhere....
[19:30] <Sebond> Okay, you'll see often an indulgence for three years, five year, two weeks, whatever.
[19:30] <NA27> The Sabbatine privilege, which had the support of many Popes, involves the wearing of the scapular, and the promise of Mary to descend into purgatory and remove anyone who dies wearing the scapular on the Saturday after their death....
[19:30] <AKAJerry> Was the question about Sabbatine privilege?
[19:30] <AKAJerry> I am familiar with it a bit.
[19:30] <Sebond> Okay, this does NOT refer to time in purgatory.

[19:31] <BigScott> the wearing of the scapular, faithfully, carries a promise... the key word there is "faithfully" as opposed to "superstitiously"

[19:31] <Christian> NA was it ever doctrine?

[19:31] <NA27> OK, is it your position Sebond that Rome has never measured indulgences in terms of time?

[19:31] <Sebond> What it does refer to is the time of penance done by the early Christians when penances were severe.

[19:32] <NA27> OK...Lee quoted Matthew 5:8, which says....

[19:32] <NA27> ~nas Matt 5:8

[19:32] <BigScott> NA, indulgences are measured in time, but no one knows the exact time of Purgatory... or IF time is even relative

[19:32] <NA27> Is it Lee's position that we are made pure in heart by suffering in purgatory?

[19:32] <NA27> Thank you, Scott.

[19:32] <NA27> I can't interact with you during cross.

[19:32] <Latreuo> 12 Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (NASB)

[19:32] ENielsen sets mode: +v Lee

[19:32] <BigScott>

[19:33] <Lee> the clean of heart see God

[19:33] <Sebond> so, an indulgence of, say, three years is a penance equivalent to a penance done by an early Christian lasting three years.

[19:33] <Christian> ay ay ay

[19:33] <Christian> this is not working...

[19:33] <Christian>

[19:33] <Lee> the clean of heart are those who are sinless

[19:33] <NA27> I have 3:00 left.

[19:33] <Christian> This is not a good format for people who aren't prepared with canned statements

[19:33] <Lee> since sin cannot enter heaven

[19:33] <NA27> Christian: Are you the blessed man of Romans 4:8?

[19:33] <Lee> since sin is disobeying God

[19:33] <NA27> ~nas Rom 4:8

[19:33] <Latreuo> 12 Romans 4:8 "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." (NASB)

[19:34] <Christian> I hope to be

[19:34] <BigScott> We hope to be

[19:34] <NA27> Sebond?

[19:34] <BigScott>

[19:34] <Christian>

[19:34] <AKAJerry> You can be. And should be.

[19:34] <Lee> i dont see how that says the sin can enter heaven?

[19:34] <BigScott> answer James' question... that's all that is on the table now

[19:34] <NA27> If you are the blessed man, how can you go to purgatory, since the passage refers to imputation of sin? If God does not impute sin to you, how can you have to undergo satisfassio in purgatory?

[19:35] <Christian> I will not "go to" purgatory...

[19:35] <Lee> if you commit sin you must then be forgiven right or cleaned of your sin

[19:35] <BigScott> The man who has gone through Purgatory, his sins will not be taken into account.

[19:35] <Christian> As I said, purgatory is an adjustment

[19:35] <NA27> Scott: So it is your position that Romans 4:8 is referring only to people who have died?

[19:35] <Christian> God doesn't see my sin, and reveals himself to me... but that doesn;t mean that my sin wasn't really darkness for me

[19:35] <NA27> IT has not application to the living?

[19:35] Chemnitz is now known as Finagler

[19:36] <BigScott> ALL in Purgatory will not have their sins taken into account.

[19:36] <Lee> so if God either forgives your sin or takes it under no account since God is just there must be a reason for this

[19:36] <BigScott> NA, not necessarily...

[19:36] <NA27> I would like to follow up, but my time is exhausted.

[19:36] <Lee> ~nas romans 4:7-8

[19:36] <NA27> You now have 10:00.....

[19:36] <BigScott> some can "serve" their Purgatory here and now

[19:36] <Christian> go ahead

[19:36] <Latreuo> 12 Romans 4:7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered. (NASB)

[19:36] <Latreuo> 12 Romans 4:8 "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." (NASB)

[19:36] Chemnizt is now known as Chemnitz

[19:36] <Sebond> Dr. White, I am busy preparing a question for you. I am playing meatball apologetics. I hope you understand.

[19:36] <Christian> NA...

[19:36] <BigScott> NA, question for you...

[19:36] <NA27> Yes, Christian?

[19:36] <BigScott> what is your followup?
[19:37] <BigScott>
[19:37] <Christian> go ahead scott
[19:37] <Christian> hmmm
[19:37] <BigScott> NA - what is your followup?
[19:37] <NA27> It's not my time.
[19:37] <Christian> Oh I get it
[19:37] <Christian> lol
[19:37] <Christian> JUST ANSWER THE QUESTION!!
[19:38] <Christian>
[19:38] <Christian> NA - Was the Trinity taught by the Apostles?
[19:38] <NA27> Christian: Yessir.
[19:38] <Christian> How do you know this?
[19:38] <Lee> since God is Just would we say that one sin is the same as sinning 1000 times? i would say no because for each sin we commit to be forgiven we must make amends, since sin cannot enter heaven
[19:39] <BigScott> OK, so can Matt 5 be interpreted as analogous to Purgatory, or MUST it be just an earthly reference?
[19:39] <NA27> Because the Scriptures teach monotheism, the existence of three divine persons, and the equality of those persons. The NT is incoherent outside of a Trinitarian understanding.
[19:39] <BigScott> Christian, that's a bit off topic...
[19:39] <Christian> (he says that purgatory is not apostolic)
[19:39] <NA27>
[19:40] <NA27> 6:30 to go...
[19:40] <ENielsen> <BigScott> OK, so can Matt 5 be interpreted as analogous to Purgatory, or MUST it be just an earthly reference?
[19:40] AKAJerry will ask a question.
[19:40] <Christian> I'm not sure where to go with this... I don't feel like we have really exchanged any debate tonight
[19:40] <Lee> so how does a man who has sinned 1000 times become justified as a man who has sinned 1 time, God does not have to prove anything to us but God is Love and he wishes to show those in heaven that He is Just and Good, so that each man who sins will be made aware or is aware of their transgressions
[19:40] <NA27> Shall I answer that one?
[19:40] <BigScott> OK, I asked one... but go on
[19:41] <NA27> No, Scott, Matthew 5 cannot be interpreted as analogous to purgatory for numerous reasons; there is nothing in the context that would lead one to that understanding, first of all.

[19:41] <NA27> It is likewise contradictory to the teachings I have already presented regarding the imputation of Christ's righteousness.
[19:41] <NA27> Shall I now answer Lee's question?
[19:41] <Christian> How does it contradict, NA?
[19:41] <AKAJerry> Am I voiced?
[19:42] <Lee> so then the man who has sinned 1000 times must feel the remorse for his sins all 1000 of them, to call them to mind to regret his actions in disobeying God
[19:42] <NA27> AKA: Yes.
[19:42] <ENielsen> Yes, Jerry
[19:42] <BigScott> so, part of that context, vs 22.... is talking about the judgment... are we totally out of context?
[19:42] <AKAJerry> Just checking. Thanks.
[19:42] <Lee> and realize that for his actions Jesus died
[19:42] <NA27> Lee: The answer to your question is found in the simplest assertion of the gospel: that all have sinned, and the only way of salvation is to be clothed in the seamless robe of Christ's perfect righteousness, which is mine only because of the perfection of His death.
[19:42] <Christian> Amen NA
[19:43] <NA27> Christian: It contradicts because it posits that satisfassio can cleanse me from the punishments of sins.
[19:43] <Christian> Now how does that contradict Purgatory?
[19:43] <BigScott> And the Catholic has no objection to that line of though NA.
[19:43] <Lee> so is 1 sin equal to 1000 sins?
[19:43] <NA27> Because Rome continues to teach that I can be justified and die impure, Christian. That is Trent, btw.
[19:43] <NA27> Scott: That is a retort, not a question.
[19:43] <BigScott>
[19:43] <Christian>
[19:43] BigScott bites his tongue
[19:44] <AKAJerry> Ok....
[19:44] <AKAJerry> James....
[19:44] <NA27> Lee: No, but all the sins of all the elect were placed upon their perfect substitute, who bore them in our place, so that there is nothing we can do to add to what He did: my satisfassio is meaningless.

[19:44] <AKAJerry> Oops. Nevermind. I'll wait.
[19:44] <NA27> Yes, Jerry?
[19:44] <Lee> if you are justified and you lie if you truly understood and loved God why do you continue to lie? does that show that you really recognize what has Jesus done for you?
[19:44] <Christian> LOL
[19:44] <AKAJerry> Finish with Lee.
[19:44] <Christian> this is a mess
[19:44] <Christian> too many people!
[19:44] <Christian>
[19:44] <Lee> if you realized that for your lies Jesus died you would sooner die than sin again
[19:44] <NA27> Lee: Justification is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to me: sanctification is the process whereby I am conformed to the image of Christ. While intimately connected, they are not synonymous.
[19:45] <NA27> Jerry: Let's finish with your question.
[19:45] <Lee> or am I wrong?
[19:45] <AKAJerry> Ok...
[19:45] <BigScott> Jerry's turn...
[19:45] <AKAJerry> James, are you familiar and agree with what I believe Luther said that a believer is both just and sinner?
[19:45] <NA27> Yessir.
[19:45] <NA27> It is actually an Augustinian concept.
[19:45] <AKAJerry> So if you die tonight do you die a sinner?
[19:45] <AKAJerry> Ok...
[19:46] <Lee> argh
[19:46] <NA27> A sinner clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, AKA.
[19:46] Lee [~chatter@ppp-98-115.dialup.umbc.edu] has quit IRC (Window destroyed)
[19:46] <NA27> OK. Time to wrap things up...
[19:46] <Christian> lol
[19:46] <AKAJerry> So if you die a sinner do you go to heaven a sinner.
[19:46] <AKAJerry> ?
[19:46] <AKAJerry> How much time?
[19:46] <NA27> We were going to have some pretty lengthy closing statements, but let's cut it down to say, 3:00 each side, OK?
[19:47] <Christian> lol
[19:47] <Christian> ok...
[19:47] <AKAJerry> Is the 10 up?
[19:47] <NA27> Yessir, it is.
[19:47] <AKAJerry> Ok.
[19:47] <NA27> 3:00 closing statements OK?
[19:47] <NA27> Then we will remove moderation, and everyone can chat.
[19:47] <NA27> Do you wish to go first, since I had the privilege of doing so at the beginning?
[19:47] <StevenD> The deluge
[19:47] ENielsen sets mode: +v Lee
[19:47] <AKAJerry> I'm not closing.
[19:48] <BigScott> Go ahead James...
[19:48] <NA27> Christian? Scott?
[19:48] <BigScott> 3 minutes
[19:48] <NA27> Go first, or just go?
[19:48] <NA27>
[19:48] <NA27> OK...
[19:48] <NA27> I believe any meaningful discussion of purgatory always takes us to the most important point...
[19:48] <NA27> That is, does God save perfectly, or is He dependent upon us and our actions?
[19:48] <Sebond> Hebrews 12:14 speaks of a holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Now my question to Dr. White is this. Is this holiness merely an imputed righteousness, and if so why does it come in a passage that explicitly talks of discipline and training?
[19:49] <Christian> lol
[19:49] <BigScott> let James close folks
[19:49] <NA27> I hope those who have observed this debate this evening have been able to see the vast gulf that separates the gospel of free grace from the system that includes within it the idea of cooperation with grace.
[19:49] <Sebond> sorry.
[19:50] <NA27> Monergism and synergism are not big fancy words that theologians alone throw about: they speak to whether God is free to save perfectly, or whether He has limited himself to man's actions, man's will, man's response.
[19:50] <NA27> The doctrine of purgatory is unbiblical, as we have seen; it is a-historical, and that was not even challenged; and more importantly it is contradictory to the teaching that the righteousness by which we stand before God is a perfect one, needing no addition, suffering no subtraction.
[19:51] <NA27> I am thankful to Christian, Scott, Lee, Sebond, and AKAJerry for helping out in velleity's absence.
[19:51] <NA27> And I thank all of you (60 right now!) for sticking around.

[19:51] <Lee> i didnt finish i think half my stuff got crashed

[19:51] <NA27> Your turn. 3:00.

[19:51] <Christian> Thank you NA...

[19:51] <Christian> For this debate...

[19:51] <Lee> what was the last thing i said that got through

[19:51] <Christian> First thing... People must undersatnd that purgatory is not about salvation

[19:51] <Sebond> Dr. White, you won the debate hands down. Vell will get a sound thrashing if he ever shows again.

[19:52] <Christian> Christ's work was perfectly accomplished

[19:53] <Christian> I believe Dr. White said it best... we are sinners clothed in Christ

[19:53] <Christian> when we die

[19:53] <Christian> Sinners are used to the darkness...

[19:53] <Christian> Despite our sin, Christ brings us to the father...

[19:53] <Christian> That is His perfect work

[19:53] <Christian> Purgatory is OUR reaction to being before God

[19:53] <Christian> Scott?

[19:54] NA27 sets mode: -m

[19:54] CStar changes topic to "Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Soli Deo Gloria (www.aomin.org/proschat.html)"

[19:54] CStar: -#prosapologian- [NA27] issued [TOPIC]

[19:54] <NA27> Thank you gentlemen.

[19:54] <BigScott> working on something....

[19:54] NA27 sets mode: -v Sebond

[19:54] <buzz> Debate is over.

[19:54] <AKAJerry> thank you NA

[19:54] <Lee> when jesus died where did he go right into heaven?

[19:54] <OrtaDug> GEe

[19:54] NA27 sets mode: -v Lee

[19:54] <tollhouse> May I ask a couple of questions?

[19:54] <cds> You're welcome NA..

[19:54] <cds>

[19:54] ENielsen sets mode: -vvv AKAJerry BigScott Christian

[19:54] <OrtaDug> I am sick to my stomache

[19:54] NA27 sets mode: -v Latreuo

[19:54] <Sebond> The debate is over, Christian, and it was a disaster for us.

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Roman Catholicism

By What Authority Indeed?

James White

The following exchange took place on a Roman Catholic list in 1997 over the course of a couple of weeks. As you will see at the end of this exchange, Mr. Mark Shea, author of *By What Authority?*, threatened legal action if I posted this material. However, in February of 2002, Mr. Shea himself posted an entire section of this exchange on a public board. Taking his lead, I provide below all of my posts in this exchange.

In article <31721ff0@cclink.fhcrc.org>, marks <msha@cclink.fhcrc.org> writes:

- > 1. How do you know what books constitute Scripture apart from the
- > authority of Sacred Tradition (which you have attacked as
- > 'tradition of men'?)

Greetings, Mark:

"Where had I gone wrong?"

---Mark Shea, *_By What Authority?_*, p. 83.

Indeed, that is the question, is it not?

First, my compliments on a very well written book. It communicates its message clearly, and with a lot of personality. Stuffy scholar-types will sniffle at it, but don't let that bother you. It seems that there are many who feel that if you don't address difficult topics solely in scholarly language, you would be better off saying nothing at all. Scholarship for the sake of scholars only. Not for me, anyway.

My copy of your work is well marked, I assure you. There are many, many issues upon which I believe you have indeed "gone wrong," but they will come up as the conversation progresses---and that assumes, of course, that the conversation will, in fact, progress.

BTW, before I forget, I found the expose of the Jesus Seminar and the like to be most entertaining. It was also most useful in reaching your target audience, for they would inevitably join you in recoiling at the arrogant heresy of the Robert Funks of the world. I might note that Funk once told me and some others on a radio program to "go to hell" and then hung up on us. Such a kind and loving man. :)

But lest I be accused of wasting bandwidth, let's get to the heart of the matter. Your main argument is that without "Sacred Tradition," sola scriptura cannot stand, since the canon of Scripture requires external revelation so as to provide certainty. Such is a quick synopsis of the argument you develop in chapters 3-5 of *_By What Authority_*. But to be able to accurately evaluate the claims you make in these 43 short pages, I would like to ascertain a few more particulars that didn't make it into the text of your book:

1) You use the term "revelation" of the canon. I realize your work is not intended to meet the standards of the ITN-PS (International Theological Nit-Pickers Society), but the term "revelation" does carry some pretty heavy dogmatic baggage. In fact, I've met more than one Roman Catholic who would say that specific, special "revelation" is limited to *Scripture.* Certainly the vast majority would say that revelation ended with the Scriptures: there is none past the apostolic age. Hence, could you expand just a bit on what you mean by identifying the canon as "revelation" that exists outside of Scripture? It would seem you certainly don't hold to the "material sufficiency" viewpoint of Scripture, but more to the partim-partim viewpoint of

the majority at Trent.

2) Along the same lines, could you help me understand where you derive the Sacred Tradition that provides you with your current canon? I mean, Hippo and Carthage were not ecumenical councils; you find lots of folks, including Popes, holding to a different canon of Scripture *after* both of those provincial councils. Many sources admit that the first *dogmatic* listing of the canon as you now have it is found in Trent. Now, I really don't think the point you were trying to communicate in your book was, "The canon was uncertain and unknowable until 1546." That really wouldn't fly too well with your target audience. So, just how does one define "Sacred Tradition" in your view? And it might help many who find your arguments persuasive to compare and contrast the "Sacred Tradition" that tells you 2 Maccabees is Scripture with the "Sacred Tradition" that tells you that Mary was bodily assumed into heaven: or is it the same "Sacred Tradition"?

I think those questions should get us started, don't you? In closing, might you indicate, briefly, if you have read any of the following works of late?

Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible, Don Kistler, ed. (Soli Deo Gloria Publishers, 1995).

Peter and the Rock, by William Webster (Christian Resources, 1996).

The Roman Catholic Controversy (Bethany House, 1996).

If you haven't had a chance to drop by our web page since mid-December, it's changed---rather radically. A review of your book will be posted there shortly. <http://www.aomin.org>.

In His service,

James>>>>

/// James White, Orthopodeo@aol.com ///

>>> Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, AZ Campus <<<

>>> Faraston Theological Seminary <<<

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[To CATHOLIC@AMERICAN.EDU on 03-04-97

I hope to engage in further dialogue on the issue of Mark Shea's presentation of the necessity of "Sacred Tradition" soon. However, Mark's initial response included the following materials:

Upon noting that he had not read any of the recent Protestant works defending the position he decries, Mark writes:

- > James, before we get much further, please be aware of several
- > things.

- > 1. I am writing from work, the only account I have, and therefore
- > have little time to engage in protracted debates with somebody
- > who runs a professional anti-Catholic "ministry" (Alpha Omega
- > Ministries, for all you lurkers) dedicated to the destruction of
- > the Catholic Church and all its works and ways.

If I responded to someone who wrote to me concerning my own books and characterized them as being dedicated to "the destruction of the Christian Church and all its works and ways," I'd sort of expect any further conversation to be, well, short. I am always amazed at the double standard that exists with some Roman Catholic apologists. While I did not mention you specifically in _The Roman Catholic Controversy_, I consistently referred to others, such as Karl Keating, Patrick Madrid, Tim Staples, Scott Hahn, etc., as "Roman Catholic apologists." I did not refer to them as "anti-Protestants," nor did I describe their ministries as being "dedicated to the destruction of the Christian Church and all its works and ways." I feel no compulsion to "poison the well" and attempt to immediately bring negative emotions to bear. Let the truth be clearly heard without the muddle of emotionalism. So, Mark, I have to ask you: do you characterize all Protestant ministries that dare say, "No, Rome has erred on such and such a point," as you do ours? And may I ask why you ignore our work with Mormons, JW's, atheists, and the like? Please forgive me for being blunt, but aren't you just doing your best to paint our work in the worst possible light, and that unfairly?

- > 2. My wife is *this close* from having a baby, which means I
- > will, quite suddenly, be silent (very possibly without a word of

- > explanation, depending on when baby comes) and remain so for at
- > least a week.

Fully understood, of course. I placed no time demands in my initial post.

- > 3. I have *massive* writing projects ahead which concern me a
- > great deal more than having to re-write my book on Internet to
- > satisfy your incredible hunger to argue with Catholics.

I will allow the fair-minded reader to judge the last section of your comment. Somehow I doubt you would appreciate such a comment in a different context. I'll chalk it up to pre-baby pressures. As to writing projects, I have three books myself.

- > 4. I am blasting off to New Zealand in early April and have a ton
- > of preparation for that little sojourn down under.

Minneapolis, Albuquerque, Salt Lake, Indianapolis, and Long Island---all in the next 90 days, not including teaching a Systematic Theology class along the way.

- > All of which is to say, my answers stand a good chance of becoming
- > ever more terse and (soon) non-existent. Silence, however,
- > will not imply that you have shamed me into the mute inability to
- > reply to your crushing logical defence of sola scriptura (since
- > there is no such thing). It just means I have too much to do and
- > to little time to do it.

< chuckle > "...since there is no such thing." I find the statement sort of humorous, in light of the fact that upon being asked if you have read any of the recent Protestant works on the subject, you said, "Nope." Again, if you encountered someone making comments like this in a different venue, well, I think you might see what they indicate.

- > However, if others want to join the fray with you, I welcome it.
- > Only please, you others, don't start answering for me ("Mark
- > meant X by this passage"). Please give your own answers to James'
- > tedious assaults on Catholic Faith, not what you guess mine might
- > be. That will reduce confusion.

You know, Mark, I've read the complaints of many Catholics, including some of your own friends, about how they felt they were being treated when they entered into dialogues on other lists. Yet, I can honestly say, I can't remember a single one of them who ever received such a transparently bigoted response to an *initial* post as this one. I could have posted something about "Mark Shea's tedious assaults on the Bible," but I didn't. Instead, I asked questions based upon your own text. For some reason, you can't possibly accept the idea that anyone could 1) understand your arguments, 2) understand the arguments of Hahn, Keating, Madrid, Staples, et. al., and yet 3) not only reject those arguments, but present counter arguments as well. Hence, it seems you take the "stir up the emotions, rally the troops," rather than the "demonstrate the truth by presentation" approach. I'm disappointed, but I got over being surprised by such things a long time ago.

I was hoping some interaction would help produce a better, more *fair* and insightful review of your book. I'm sorry, but I get the *distinct* feeling that such isn't going to be the case.

/// James White, Orthopodeo@aol.com \\/
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[To CATHOLIC@AMERICAN.EDU on 03-05-97

(Psalm 56:4) In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?

In a message dated 97-03-06 12:43:14 EST, you write:

- >> If I responded to someone who wrote to me concerning my own books and
- > > characterized them as being dedicated to "the destruction of the Christian

- > > Church and all its works and ways," I'd sort of expect any further
- > > conversation to be, well, short. I am always amazed at the double standard
- > > that exists with some Roman Catholic apologists.
- >
- > etc.
- >
- > James. You complain of a double standard. I notice you make a distinction
- > between the "Christian Church" and the Catholic Church.

< chuckle > Uh, Mark, would you rather I had said "Catholic Church" there? That wouldn't have made a whole lot of sense, would it? No, but that's not your concern anyway, it seems.

You know, I don't think I can remember a single conversation--if such a term is even semi useful here--that has degraded as *quickly* as this one. In fact, the thought just struck me that the monks of the St. Benedict Center have always been far more courteous and kind than you have. I can't help but notice the massive difference in attitude between your book and this series of posts.

Everything I pointed out in my last post--mainly the appeal to the "crowd" and the unfair, unkind, and inaccurate caricatures you presented in your last post--went unanswered here. Instead, more attempts to "poison the well" are presented, nothing more.

- > I believe Protestants are Christian, James.
- >
- > Are Catholics Christian, James?

I don't even think all Protestants are Christians, Mark, do you? Robert Funk is technically a Protestant, isn't he, Mark? But I don't believe he's a Christian, do you? And what's the name of the lesbian witch who is professor of theology at Boston College? She's a Catholic, but I doubt very much she's a Christian--what do you think, Mark?

You err, badly, if you think I equate "Protestant = Christian, Catholic = non-Christian." You might try reading some of the works Protestants write on these issues, Mark. It would really help you to quit tilting at windmills. For example, a few months back I offered to send you The Roman Catholic Controversy in exchange for your own book: you declined. On pages 26-27 of that book you will find the following:

I am not saying that there are no professing Roman Catholics who are saved, nor that there are not Roman Catholic leaders who do not embrace God's grace in a saving manner. I speak of the official teachings of Rome, enshrined in her creeds, encyclicals, and conciliar documents, when I speak of Rome's "teachings." It is plain to all who will look that there is as wide a diversity of understandings of those teachings among Catholics as there are differing perspectives amongst Protestants on similar issues. It is vital to differentiate between the official teachings of Rome and the individual understandings of those teachings.

Many conservative Protestants, convinced that the Roman Catholic system has departed, fatally, from the true path, struggle with the idea that there are still those within that system that are heirs of eternal life. It should be remembered, however, that Protestants have always acknowledged the wideness of God's grace and mercy in this way. We look back upon men like Wycliffe and Hus, and recognize that they found the truth of the gospel even while they were within the confines of the Roman communion. Luther surely understood what it was to be justified by faith while a Roman Catholic monk. Are we really to assume he was the first, or even the last? Surely not.

- > { Snip all the rest of the stuff documenting the fact that James
- > has gone round and round with much wiser heads than mine on "bible
- > only" revelation and is immune to the effects of argumentation. }

Note again the unfair, unkind caricaturization: "is immune to the effect of argumentation." It must be very nice to proclaim yourself the victor without ever dirtying your hands with the details, Mark.

- > James, you have simply proven my point. If you are really interested
- > in this stuff, just go over the voluminous transcripts of your
- > own unlistening conversations with Catholic on your Sola list.

Note again: "unlistening conversations." Does the term "bigotry" enter into the picture here, perhaps? At the very least, "bias" is a proper term. It would be very easy to dismiss yourself, David Currie, Steve Ray, etc., as those who were unwilling to "listen" before their conversion to Rome. I prefer tackling the issues, Mark. Why don't you?

- > Or better yet, read my book again (since your questions yesterday
- > were already addressed there, but you did not seem aware of it).

If you mean the questions I originally posted, that assumes your book is self-attesting and perspicuous. :) Of course, the problem is, Roman theology has so many facets and currents and the like that there are certain questions that must be asked to get a firm hold on a particular person's viewpoint.

- > I've written my book once. I don't have to write it again.

Yes, Mark. I'm not asking you to re-write your book. I'm asking you to explain and defend its statements. I must admit---as an author, I find your attitude most strange. My book on the KJV controversy has brought hundreds of letters and e-mails. I've had a hard time bringing myself to write back to everyone and say, "I've written my book once. I don't have to write it again." Difficult attitude to understand.

- > Protestants are Christian, James.

Those who are in Christ are, Mark. The name means nothing---only Christ means anything.

- > Are Catholics Christian, James? Yes or no. Then tell us about double
- > standards.

Let's say I gave you a blanket "no," Mark---logically, how in the world would that amount to a double-standard like the one you are using consistently in your responses? It wouldn't. But my answer is the same: those who are in Christ are, Mark. The name means nothing---only Christ means anything. Again, if you would bother to keep up with Protestant writings on the subject, you'd be aware of that.

Mark, your book is full of errors, leaps in logic, half-truths, and downright *untruths.* The logical way of dealing with this is to 1) attempt to ascertain as accurately as possible what the author of such a book *meant,* 2) dialogue on the specific historical errors (such as your constant assumption of the universal acceptance of the Apocrypha, which is simply *untrue*), 3) present cogent and, in your case, completely ignored, Protestant arguments, and 4) provide to everyone interested the conclusions of such an inquiry. Since you won't allow even the first step, I can only critique the historical errors, point out the simple fact that you haven't interacted with the responses to your own position, nor with the *real* Protestant position, and finally inform those interested that when asked to engage such topics, the result on your part was pure emotionalism, the old "play to the crowd and make the other guy look like a real nasty dude" tactic. Like I said, disappointing, but not overly surprising.

```
+-----<<<<< Orthopodeo@aol.com >>>>>-----+
+
+           +
+       James White           +
+       http://www.aomin.org   +
+           +
+-----<<<<<<< Sola Scriptura! >>>>>>-----+
```

Neither dare one agree with catholic bishops if by chance they err in anything, with the result that their opinion is against the canonical Scriptures of God (Augustine, De unitate ecclesiae, 10).

[To CATHOLIC@AMERICAN.EDU on 03-06-97]</

(Psalm 119:18) Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.

In a message dated 97-03-06 15:01:25 EST, you write:

- > Mark's book strikes at a very central weakness inherent in the idea of Sola
- > Scriptura: if a believer can't practically decide what is, and what is not
- > Scripture, than how can he be expected to follow Scripture, and to follow it
- > as the sole practical guide to his faith? Mark's whole question boils down
- > to:
- >
- > In practice, how is one to know what is and what is not Scripture, apart
- > from Tradition?

That isn't, actually, what Mark's question "boils down to." There is so much more to the question that goes far beyond that--the definition of "Tradition," as I pointed out in my original post, for example, is *vital.*

Since you've read my book, and seem willing to answer some questions, I'd like to ask you to answer the question in the third paragraph of page 94 regarding how a Jewish man knew "infallibly" what the canon of Scripture was prior to the time of Christ.

BTW, in light of Mark's answers yesterday, are you comfortable saying that no one *did* know, with infallible certainty, what Scripture was until 1546?

- > As long as your response to him fails to answer this question, you fail to
- > provide a logical alternative to Sacred Tradition. Please give an answer
- > that would allow me to practically discern why I should agree that (for
- > example):
- >
- > 1) Clement, Wisdom, and Enoch are not Scriptural
- > 2) Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Hebrews, James, and Revelations are
- >
- > Instead of treating Mark's important question, you have so far avoided the
- > issue. Your posted responses were more along the lines of attacking the
- > Catholic position (and getting some facts wrong as you did), derisive ad
- > hominem attacks on Mark (these make you look bad), and other irrelevant
- > rhetorical flourishes.

Like I pointed out, since it is Mark who has introduced ad-hominem, emotionally-based arguments, and that in the *first* response, I despair of getting much of a fair hearing from you.

- > You say that there have been counter-arguments to Mark's arguments. So how
- > do they answer this question?
- >
- > You chuckle, and deride Mark for not reading any of the 3 books that you
- > promote as good counter-arguments. I did read one of your suggestions, your
- > own "The Roman Catholic Controversy." With regard to the canon in
- > particular, I was quite unimpressed with your reasoning.

I am not surprised.

- > From memory (and it
- > has been about 3 months since I looked at it), several things struck me:
- >
- > 1) You frankly admit that uncertainty about the canon would bring down the
- > entire position of Sola Scriptura. (You deny that there is a problem here,
- > but my jaw dropped at this candor, since you flat-out agree with Mark in
- > the importance of the question to your side.)
- >
- > 2) You seemed to say that Catholics might have a point with regard to the
- > New Testament canon. (You quickly pass over this apparent admission, even
- > though you previously said that uncertainty about the canon is serious.)
- >
- > 3) You state that our knowledge of the OT canon, on the other hand, was
- > solid. This was the bulk of your rebuttal of the canon question. Your
- > arguments for this were along the lines of "Well, of course there is a
- > canon," but you never said *how* we are to discern it. Catholics agree that
- > there is a canon too, so why do you beat at this straw man? Your treatment
- > is completely useless for determining as a practical matter what, precisely,
- > the canon is, and utterly fails to answer the question.

Well, I can honestly say, your memory isn't too good. :) I really haven't the foggiest idea how to respond to these three statements, since they have almost nothing whatsoever to do with anything I've written in my book.

1) No, I made no such admission, and would love you to cite the passage that you think makes this point.

2) I said it might *appear* that the Roman argument works for the NT, but it collapses on the OT. Specifically, I said on page 94, "While the Roman Catholic argument about the canon might appear to have some validity with reference to the New

Testament, it falls apart upon application to the Old." If you had read this statement in its context, you would see that I am not saying you "might have a point with regard to the New Testament canon."

3) You skip over the discussion of canon as a function of Scripture, as if it wasn't even there. Did you understand that discussion?

- > After reading your book, the end result was that I came away more impressed
- > than ever that discerning the canon was a central flaw in Sola Scriptura,
- > and that there was no good rebuttal here from your position. If the other
- > two books fail as badly, then I don't see why reading them is relevant to
- > this discussion.

Honestly, I doubt any information is useful to a person who is unwilling to listen or consider, so I'm not surprised. However, I wonder why Mark's book blissfully ignores all of these issues?

- > If they do answer the question, then could you please
- > summarize the rules they use for determining the canon? If your summary
- > sounds stimulating, then you might get us interested enough to want to track
- > them down directly.

Rules? Since canon is a function of inspiration, are you seriously asking for rules that would apply to God? Or did you ignore the difference between the canon as a function of Scripture, and our own recognition of it?

- > Catholics don't have a Sola Scriptura position, but you do. An attack on how
- > we discern Scripture isn't the central question in our faith understanding
- > that it is in yours.

No, Catholics don't have a sola scriptura position. They have a sola ecclesia position. The final authority, in all things, is the Church. BTW, why is it an "attack"? Why is pointing out inconsistencies and contradictions in Roman positions defined by yourself and Mark as "attacks"?

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+-----<<<<< Orthopodeo@aol.com >>>>>-----+
+                                     +
+      James White                    +
+      http://www.aomin.org           +
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+-----<<<<<<< Sola Scriptura! >>>>>>>-----+

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Whatever they may adduce, and wherever they may quote from, let us rather, if we are His sheep, hear the voice of our Shepherd. Therefore let us search for the church in the sacred canonical Scriptures (Augustine, De unitate ecclesiae, 3).

In a message dated 97-03-06 16:43:34 EST, you write:

- > Well, don't feel like it's a duty. I just figured it might be
- > entertaining to let other people try to coax James into answering
- > the straight question "How do I, Joe/Jane Schmo-in-the-Pew, know
- > what is inspired Scripture apart from Sacred Tradition and the
- > authority of the Church?" So far I have never seen James give a
- > straight answer to that question. Nobody I know has ever seen him
- > do it either. Perhaps if enough Catholics ask him, he will
- > achieve critical mass (as distinct from achieving criticism of the
- > mass) and answer that simple question. But I kinda doubt it.
- > Watch his modus operandi. He believes the best defence is a
- > good offence and so focuses entirely on criticizing Catholics and
- > asking interminable questions about things he's already received
- > answers to a hundred times before. Ask him however many times
- > you may, and he *never* tells us how he knows what is inspired
- > Scripture, he just ignores the question and makes another stale
- > complaint about Sacred Tradition.

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Therefore let God-inspired Scripture decide between us; and on whichever side be found doctrines in harmony with the word of God, in favor of that side will be cast the vote of truth (Basil, Ep. ad Eustathius, NPNF II, 8:229).

[To CATHOLIC@AMERICAN.EDU on 03-06-97]</

In a message dated 97-03-07 12:21:19 EST, you write:

- > Shoveling mercury with a pitchfork, I wrote of James White:
- >
- > > Ask him however many times
- > > you may, and he *never* tells us how he knows what is inspired
- > > Scripture, he just ignores the question and makes another stale
- > > complaint about Sacred Tradition.
- >
- > And James, as if to oblige me, replies...
- >
- > I'm sure you don't want to answer questions about whether your claims about
- > "Sacred Tradition" are consistent and logical---then again, epistemologically
- > speaking, since you've bought into sola ecclesia, such questions are not
- > answerable anyway. Rome must be right because, well, Rome is *always* right.
- >
- > Never mind that you have to base your arguments upon falsehoods regarding
- > the OT canon, etc., as long as it is in the service of the Mother Church.
- >
- > etc.

< Which assertions, I note, go utterly ignored in all of Mark's replies, and his book. >

- > Not many people know this, but James has actually had a button
- > installed on his word processor to generate these "Ignore the
- > question and attack Sacred Tradition" replies automatically. My
- > prediction was, dare I say it?, infallible! :)

No, I have a lot of macros, but that isn't one of them. Again, Mark, it's pretty clear you have no intention of allowing a level playing field, nor do you have the first desire to apply the same rules to your own position you insist upon for others. You demand answers to your questions without allowing anyone to say, "Uh, excuse me, Mark, but your own position can't answer that question logically, so why are you asking it?" I've gotten that indication quite clearly, so you can stop providing daily examples for us all. :) BTW, pointing out that a person is being inconsistent in their position *does* amount to a *partial* answer. Now, I could easily say, "And Mark, since you admit to not bother to read much in the way of Protestant scholarship, you don't have good ground upon which to stand. As some famous person ("Corkscrew," perhaps, or maybe "Slimemold"?) has said, 'I've already written my book. I'm not going to write it again.' " But, that would be a most unfriendly thing to say, so I won't.

While riding today I decided to try to find at least a few moments to begin some *short* posts on the subject of the authority of Scripture---to present the topic as it is completely ignored by you, Currie, Ray, and just about everyone else I've been reading recently. Sort of like the black hole of Catholic apologetics, I guess. If I could figure out a way to attach my laptop to the aero bars of my bike, *and* type, while riding, I might get that done sooner. But alas, I haven't figured that out yet. Instead, I'm staring four sermons, a trip to Albuquerque, a trip to Minneapolis, the rest of the chapters in my book on the Trinity, and five solid nights the week before Easter of missions work at the Mormon Easter Pageant in Mesa, AZ---all in the next 24 days. Patience is still a virtue, isn't it?

- > Fact is, James *has* no answer to the question, knows it, and so
- > must change the subject.

Bullies write like this, Mark, not thoughtful people. I could act the same way: "Why does Mark not interact with the currently

published Protestant literature on this issue? Why doesn't he deal with Sproul honestly? It's easy: he can't. He has no answers, so he deceives by blowing smoke." Yeah, that's *real* easy. And you know how long those conversations last? Not long, I assure you. So how about dumping the bravado, quit acting like a mind reader, and get serious, Mark? You confess you haven't even read The Roman Catholic Controversy. I've read Keating, Madrid, Ray, Currie, Shea, Butler/Dalhgren/Hess, et. al.; so upon what ground do you logically say *I* don't have an answer??

- > I have not yet checked the rest of my email (Charles, I'm getting
- > posts from March 5 arriving this morning. Dunno why.), but I am
- > curious as to my other post. James is intensely interested in
- > fairness. He asked me two questions in his initial post, which I
- > answered. I then mentioned he runs an anti-Catholic "ministry."
- > James, with a marvelous display of ruffled feathers declared this
- > "unfair" and said I was "anti-Protestant".

Excuse me, Mark? Do you deal with all of history in this manner? You surely must realize that those on the list can read posts for themselves. And there is something called an "archive file" too. You said:

1. I am writing from work, the only account I have, and therefore have little time to engage in protracted debates with somebody who runs a professional anti-Catholic "ministry" (Alpha Omega Ministries, for all you lurkers) dedicated to the destruction of the Catholic Church and all its works and ways.

In my reply, I wrote:

If I responded to someone who wrote to me concerning my own books and characterized them as being dedicated to "the destruction of the Christian Church and all its works and ways," I'd sort of expect any further conversation to be, well, short. I am always amazed at the double standard that exists with some Roman Catholic apologists. While I did not mention you specifically in The Roman Catholic Controversy, I consistently referred to others, such as Karl Keating, Patrick Madrid, Tim Staples, Scott Hahn, etc., as "Roman Catholic apologists." I did not refer to them as "anti-Protestants," nor did I describe their ministries as being "dedicated to the destruction of the Christian Church and all its works and ways." I feel no compulsion to "poison the well" and attempt to immediately bring negative emotions to bear. Let the truth be clearly heard without the muddle of emotionalism. So, Mark, I have to ask you: do you characterize all Protestant ministries that dare say, "No, Rome has erred on such and such a point," as you do ours? And may I ask why you ignore our work with Mormons, JW's, atheists, and the like? Please forgive me for being blunt, but aren't you just doing your best to paint our work in the worst possible light, and that unfairly?

- 1) You've never provided a logical response to this criticism.
- 2) There is nothing in this that calls *you* an "anti-Protestant." In fact, as anyone can see, I specifically *deny* using the term.

So, Mark, we seem to be left with two possibilities here:

- 1) Mark is so freaked about a soon-to-be little Shea, that his mind is blitzed and not functioning well, or,
- 2) Mark is misrepresenting conversations that took place only a few days ago for maximum emotional effect.

Which is it, Mark?

- > Now I believe Protestants are Christian. I can think of several
- > (George MacDonald, CS Lewis (that good Ulsterman), and Dorothy
- > Sayers, as well as good eggs like Chuck Swindoll, Jack Hayford,
- > Elisabeth Eliot, the sainted Jim Eliot and several members of my
- > wife's family whom I regard as great saints. The only conceivable
- > reason I think I might not see them in heaven is that they will be
- > so close to the Throne (and I so far up in the nosebleed seats)
- > that I won't be able to spy them at that distance.

I might point out, Mark, that their lives were lived as they were only because they were blessed to live at a time when they had the freedom to believe as they did.

- > But now, having answered James' questions, I ask in return: does
- > James say Catholics are Christian?

- >
- > After he answers those two simple questions (Are Catholics
- > Christian?/How do I determine what the canon is apart from Sacred
- > Tradition and the Magisterium?) we will be in a much better
- > position to discuss fairness, etc.)
- >
- > James, thanks for your input. It is nice to be vindicated so
- > publically. Your comments are duly noted.
- >
- > I look forward to a straight answer to my straight questions.

Hmm, is your mail program not working well, Mark? Seems I pointed out the answers to those questions a few days ago. Possibly the messages you are getting are so garbled and so muddled that that explains why you'd say publically that I identified you as an "anti-Protestant"? Here, let me re-post a section from 3/6/97:

I don't even think all Protestants are Christians, Mark, do you? Robert Funk is technically a Protestant, isn't he, Mark? But I don't believe he's a Christian, do you? And what's the name of the lesbian witch who is professor of theology at Boston College? She's a Catholic, but I doubt very much she's a Christian--what do you think, Mark?

You err, badly, if you think I equate "Protestant = Christian, Catholic = non-Christian." You might try reading some of the works Protestants write on these issues, Mark. It would really help you to quit tilting at windmills. For example, a few months back I offered to send you The Roman Catholic Controversy in exchange for your own book: you declined. On pages 26-27 of that book you will find the following:

I am not saying that there are no professing Roman Catholics who are saved, nor that there are not Roman Catholic leaders who do not embrace God's grace in a saving manner. I speak of the official teachings of Rome, enshrined in her creeds, encyclicals, and conciliar documents, when I speak of Rome's "teachings." It is plain to all who will look that there is as wide a diversity of understandings of those teachings among Catholics as there are differing perspectives amongst Protestants on similar issues. It is vital to differentiate between the official teachings of Rome and the individual understandings of those teachings.

Many conservative Protestants, convinced that the Roman Catholic system has departed, fatally, from the true path, struggle with the idea that there are still those within that system that are heirs of eternal life. It should be remembered, however, that Protestants have always acknowledged the wideness of God's grace and mercy in this way. We look back upon men like Wycliffe and Hus, and recognize that they found the truth of the gospel even while they were within the confines of the Roman communion. Luther surely understood what it was to be justified by faith while a Roman Catholic monk. Are we really to assume he was the first, or even the last? Surely not.

Now, let's hope that makes it through the process intact.

In a message dated 97-03-07 12:43:58 EST, you write:

- >> In practice, how is one to know what is and what is not Scripture, apart
- >> from Tradition?
- >
- > And James hits the button on his word processor...
- >
- > That isn't, actually, what Mark's question "boils down to." There is so much
- > more to the question that goes far beyond that--the definition of
- > "Tradition," as I pointed out in my original post, for example, is **vital**
- >
- > etc.
- >
- > and somehow never **does** get around to giving a straight answer to
- > that straight question.
- >
- > Have a pitchfork, Michael! There's a lot of shoveling to do!

Mark, may I ask that you at least act civilly, and not intrude your insults into everyone else's threads? You may not like me (that's obvious); you may want everyone else to dislike me as well (equally obvious); but unless you have a REALLY strong reason for not wanting any meaningful conversations to take place here, I'd like to ask that you drop the constant personal stuff. How about it?

BTW, I find it amazing that you can say, "Nope, haven't read your book, haven't read the Soli Deo Gloria work, either," and then, with a straight face, say, "He never does give a straight answer, does he?" I've just got to ask, Mark: how in the world would you know?

Over the past few days I've been asked the same question over and over again: "So, how do you know the canon?" No matter what I say, the same question comes back.

It's not that it isn't an important question: it is. But I'm reminded a good bit of the young LDS folks I have shared with at the Mormon Easter Pageant the last 13 years: they ask the same questions, over and over again, and are often far too impatient to allow a meaningful reply. "So what about the Book of Mormon, huh? Have you read it? Huh?" "Yes," I reply, "I have." "So, have you prayed about it?" "No," I reply, "I haven't, because...." And at that point a million objections start flying. Once in a while I can focus them enough to accomplish something, but most of the time, they are off to the races.

Mark Shea has written a book based upon that one question. I can see why he'd be a bit uncomfortable having to back up a bit and find out if this one question, that has so changed his life, is actually a valid and self-consistent one. But I don't know of anyone else here with quite the same vested interest, so addressing the fundamental issues would seem worthwhile.

I'm not going to re-write what I've written, either. But I am going to summarize some things, and add a lot of new things, too. And as God gives me grace, I'm going to fight verbosity to the death. :)

I'd like to start with a quote, if I might, from Athanasius' *Contra Gentes* 1:1: "For indeed the holy and God-breathed (Gr: theopneustos) Scriptures are sufficient (Gr: autarkeis) for the preaching of the truth."

If Protestants could have a patron saint, Athanasius would be mine. :) I spent most of yesterday editing an article I've written for the next edition of the CRI Journal titled, "What Really Happened at Nicea?" The article covers the council, the role of Constantine, the homoousion clause, and the Arian ascendancy in the decades following Nicea. And, of course, in the midst of all that, you can't help but to talk about Athanasius.

Here's one tenacious fellow. Kicked out of his see five times, on-the-outs with the majority of the church hierarchy of his day, Athanasius stood firm despite all the reasons *not to.* "Athanasius contra mundum" spoke to a real truth.

I feel a real kinship with Athanasius in many areas. I have dealt extensively with JW's, and his extensive refutations of the Arians are music to my ears. He wrote the first in-depth treatise on the atonement, too.

At one point in his life, Athanasius had to choose: would he bow to the organized church, or would he remain faithful to witness of Scripture? He chose the latter, much to our benefit today.

All of this brings me to point number one: I believe it is easily establishable that Athanasius viewed 2 Timothy 3:16 as I do. That is, he saw that the *nature* of Scripture places it upon a level that is above all other authorities. Scripture is theopneustos, God-breathed.

Sola scriptura is based upon the acceptance of this truth: that Scripture is God-breathed. Hence, one of the common arguments used *against* sola scriptura, that being that there are 23,000 denominations today, hence, sola scriptura can't be true, is obviously fatally flawed: not only does the argument provide internal consistency problems, but how many of those 23,000 denominations really believe the Bible is God-breathed? Very few, I'm sad to say. Be that as it may, if Roman apologists are going to provide a meaningful critique of sola scriptura, they are going to have to start here, for this is the source of the doctrine. Scripture is God speaking---it carries His authority, not derivatively, but personally. I do not believe there is any other source of authority, be that tradition or magisterium, that is theopneustos. Hence, point #1:

Scripture is theopneustos, that is, God-breathed.

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The doctrine of the Church should be proven, not announced; therefore show that the Scriptures teach these things. ----Theodoret

[To CATHOLIC@AMERICAN.EDU on 03-07-97]</

(Psalm 119:18) Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.

In a message dated 97-03-07 14:38:51 EST, you write:

- > > That isn't, actually, what Mark's question "boils down to." There is so much
- > > more to the question that goes far beyond that--the definition of
- > > "Tradition," as I pointed out in my original post, for example, is *vital.*

- > If you're uncomfortable with the idea of Tradition, then I'll rephrase the
- > question for you:
- >
- > In practice, how is someone to know what is, and what is not, Scripture?

You miss my point. "Tradition" is the *means* Mark uses--hence, what is meant by "Tradition" becomes central. Yet, answering the question of what is, and what is not, "Tradition," is quite a sticky subject, and I think Mark well knows that.

Let me illustrate: if you believe there is an apostolic tradition that defines the canon, do you believe it is actually traceable to the apostles themselves? If so, who gave this "tradition"? Who passed it on? Why did it take so long to surface? Why did Athanasius "miss" this tradition and give a different canon in his 39th Festal Letter of 369? Would such a tradition fit into how you view 2 Thessalonians 2:15? If so, then you should be able to trace it.

Of course, a lot of modern Roman Catholics don't hold to that view of "Tradition." The teaching authority of the Church, in essence, becomes the "Tradition." But we've just barely begun to scratch the surface of all the various views of "Tradition" at all. The problem is, if you say "Tradition" determines your canon, but you can't tell me exactly what "Tradition" is, how are you in any better position than I am?

- > This is key, whether you care to admit it or not. Come on, James. Give us a
- > direct answer to the question.

You've read my book, and well know I *do* give a direct answer. Why is everyone on this "you won't give a direct answer" kick? I don't appeal to an extra-biblical revelation, since I deny one exists. I don't believe the canon is a separate revelation, but is a function of Scripture itself--a function of inspiration. Now, logically, the next question would be, "Please define what you mean by that." But so far, all I've gotten is, "Just answer the question on the grounds *we* set." Strange, isn't it?

- > > Since you've read my book, and seem willing to answer some questions...
- >
- > In the past few days, you've tossed several questions off, and several of us
- > have gone to apparent trouble and time to answer them for you. I haven't
- > seen any sign that you care about considering our replies. Several of us
- > made some effort to take your questions seriously, and civil discourse
- > requires that you do the same. So before I answer you, please demonstrate
- > that you care for a rational discussion here by giving us a direct answer to
- > Mark's question.

I have clearly done so. I can't imagine what you are talking about.

- > > Rules? Since canon is a function of inspiration, are you seriously asking
- > > for rules that would apply to God? Or did you ignore the difference between
- > > the canon as a function of Scripture, and our own recognition of it?

- > Come on, James. We both agree that God does what he wants. The fact is that
- > we both use rules to help us discern what he has done and what he wants us
- > to do. If you deny this, then your own charges that the Catholic Church
- > behaves contrary to God's will are logically meaningless, since you yourself
- > admit no rules that you can use to tell whether anything adheres to God's
- > will.

Huh? I don't follow. You claimed to have read the section of my book where I discuss this, yet, when I answer on that basis, you don't follow. Is the canon a function of inspiration? Yes or no?

- > Either you're engaging in another straw man argument here, or you really do

- > misunderstand my question. Just in case it is the latter, I'll clarify for
- > you:
- >
- > What practical rules can a *person* use to determine what is, and is
- > not, Scripture?
- >
- > If you continue to avoid answering this, then we will have to assume that
- > you have no workable way of defining Scripture for yourself. The result is
- > that you simply have no logical basis for telling Catholics with any
- > certainty that they are un-Scriptural.

"If you don't answer this question right now, without providing a basis, and on the basis we define, you lose." OK, well, whatever. I'll continue laying the foundations in the posts I'm writing to the list in general. If that's not good enough for you, well, I'm sorry. Not much I can do about that.

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+           James White           +
+       http://www.aomin.org       +
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+-----<<<<<< Sola Scriptura! >>>>>>-----+
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Whatever they may adduce, and wherever they may quote from, let us rather, if we are His sheep, hear the voice of our Shepherd. Therefore let us search for the church in the sacred canonical Scriptures (Augustine, De unitate ecclesiae, 3).

[To CATHOLIC@AMERICAN.EDU on 03-07-97]</

In regard to the divine and holy mysteries of the faith, not the least part may be handed on without the Holy Scriptures. Do not be led astray by winning words and clever arguments. Even to me, who tell you these things, do not give ready belief, unless you receive from the Holy Scriptures the proof of the things which I announce. The salvation in which we believe is not proved from clever reasoning, but from the Holy Scriptures. --St. Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 350) _Catechetical Lectures_ 4:17.

Yesterday I noted a little bit concerning the *nature* of Scripture. It is God-breathed, theopneustos. This is the only use of this term in the NT, and it is vital to note that Paul says that it is the *Scriptures themselves* that are God-breathed. We often play fast and loose with the term "inspired" and "inspiration." We speak of the Apostles writing by inspiration, yet, biblically, the only thing that is truly "inspired" in this high manner is Scripture itself: the final product.

Paul was not alone, however, in saying that Scripture is God's speaking. The Lord Jesus had taught his before:

(Mat 22:29-33) But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. [30] "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. [31] "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: [32] 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." [33] When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

Note the specific assertion of the Lord: "have you not read WHAT WAS SPOKEN TO YOU BY GOD...." The juxtaposition of "read" and "spoken" is striking. Jesus held these Jewish men accountable for the very speaking of God in Scripture. This is plainly borne out by the phrase, "spoken TO YOU." Yet, of course, these words had been spoken to Moses centuries before. Yet in the Lord's view, they are living words, so that when we read them, they are spoken to *us* as well.

This background allows us to understand a passage that is often cited by Protestants in regard to sola scriptura:

(Mat 15:3-9) And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? [4] "For God said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.' [5] "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever I have that

would help you has been given to God," [6] he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. [7] "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: [8] 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. [9] 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"

Mark's parallel passage is useful, too:

(Mark 7:6-13) And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. [7] 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'" [8] "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." [9] He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. [10] "For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH'; [11] but you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),' [12] you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; [13] thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."

In most Roman apologetics works, these passages are dismissed in a cavalier manner with, "Well, this is talking about *human* traditions, not *divine* traditions." But such completely misses the point.

1) The Jews claimed the Corban tradition was divine in origin. As David Palm rightly points out, Tractate Aboth of the Mishnah makes explicit claims concerning the passing down of oral tradition through the leadership of the people of Israel. This is exactly what Mark notes in verse 13, "by your tradition which you have handed down." Yet, the Lord Jesus *rejects* the Corban rule, and on what basis? It's incompatibility with Scripture.

2) The point of Matthew 15/Mark 7 is not that all "tradition" of any kind be rejected; it is that all tradition of any kind---even that which is claimed to be "divine," is SUBJECT to and hence INFERIOR to, Scripture. No three-legged stools or anything of the kind.

Hence:

- 1) Scripture is God-breathed (theopneustos).
- 2) Because Scripture is God speaking, it is the standard by which all "tradition" is to be measured.

Soon we will need to discuss the epistemology involved in admitting that God has spoken, and how one could offer "proof" that would validate God's own truth claims. And, we need to look at Matthew 23 and "Moses' seat" as well: a passage often badly misused in this discussion.

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The doctrine of the Church should be proven, not announced; therefore show that the Scriptures teach these things. ----Theodoret

[To {N% } on 03-08-97]</

Psalm 119:18) Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.

In a message dated 97-03-08 11:12:31 EST, you write:

- > James: Who said "Read my book"? Only the bullying, bigoted,
- > shallow, lying, evasive, and uncivil Mark Shea says things like
- > that!

etc. and etc.

You seem far too distracted for much reasonable dialogue right now, Mark. Perhaps we should wait until you have less pressure on you. You don't seem to realize how you are screeching. If you must do all the personal stuff, well, go ahead. But I'll do my best to ignore it, OK?

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+-----<<<<<<< Sola Scriptura! >>>>>>>-----+
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Whatever they may adduce, and wherever they may quote from, let us rather, if we are His sheep, hear the voice of our Shepherd. Therefore let us search for the church in the sacred canonical Scriptures (Augustine, De unitate ecclesiae, 3).

In a message dated 97-03-10 12:41:45 EST, you write:

- > James, I don't think a day has gone by last week that you did not,
- > implicitly or explicitly, call me a liar. So I guess this is as
- > good a way to start a week as any.

I.e., "I've been caught; I can't find a single place where James has called me an anti-Protestant, despite the fact that I've said so a couple of times now. But darn it, I ain't gonna admit it. Let's see if we can blow a bit more smoke here, all the while hoping nobody notices that I took seventy or eighty pages in a book to get around to substantiating my position, but I'm not going to let James have *any* opportunity of laying such a foundation. If I keep at him long enough, at least some folks will buy into my tactic and I can do some damage control."

Mark, since you didn't bother to address in your book the fundamental beliefs Protestants present on the issue of Scripture, authority, canon, and the rest, I'm going to lay those foundations, if you don't mind. If you'd like to keep up the "you've called me this [can't document it, but I'll say it anyway], and you've called me that" stuff, well, you go ahead. Too much going on this week to play that game, though.

In a message dated 97-03-10 13:21:55 EST, you write:

- > Try as I might, I cannot see how the question "How do you tell
- > what Scripture is?" is invalid and self-contradicting.

Of course, I didn't say it was, Mark. This is the kind of "cheap debating trick" that Dr. Pacwa *avoided.*

I said your answer, which includes the wonderfully simple concept of "Sacred Tradition," is invalid and self-contradictory. Tell me, Mark, plain and simple now: how do you know what is, and what is not, Sacred Tradition?

Let me venture a guess: Rome tells you. So, Sacred Tradition his what Rome defines as Sacred Tradition. Is there an external means of verifying Rome's claim? Nope, since she's infallible. So, Rome defines ST, and, by this, also defines Scripture.

Let's follow this a bit further, Mark: who *interprets* ST? Isn't it Rome? Infallibly, no less. And who *interprets* the Scriptures? I hardly need to cite Trent of VII for that one: Rome.

So let's see: Rome defines, and interprets, ST; Rome defines, and interprets, Scripture.

Hence, it *looks* like Rome is your ultimate authority in all matters religious, and seemingly, epistemological as well.

So I guess you agree with Karl Keating's statement:

The Catholic believes in inspiration because the Church tells him so---that is putting it bluntly---and that same Church has the authority to interpret the inspired text. [_Catholicism and Fundamentalism_, p. 127]

Now, if we haven't jumped the track anywhere along the line, it seems your position then is "I know the canon of Scripture infallibly because Rome tells me what it is." Now, *most* folks immediately notice something: that really doesn't answer the question. It *assumes* Rome has the ability to *infallibly* provide such certainty. That is hardly a given, Mark. And on a simple epistemological basis, what you've done is move the ultimate question about ultimate authorities back one whole step: the Protestant invests the Scriptures with ultimate authority; you invest the Church with that ultimate authority, so that you can then allow the Church to define the canon for you. However, you are left answering the same question: why is *this* your ultimate authority?

Ultimate authorities are peculiar things, Mark: they are not liable to validation by a higher source. That's why they are ultimate authorities. Oh, you may provide arguments that support the claim of source X being ultimate, but none of those arguments can provide a *guarantee* of that ultimate authority, since if they did, then the argument itself would become the ultimate authority.

Now, the Protestant says that which is theopneustos is his or her ultimate authority. That's a pretty safe assertion: God's speaking is about as high an authority as you can find. But when you ask "how do you know?" you are melding two very distinct issues into one question: 1) what is the authority of God's speaking, and can external arguments be provided to guarantee the truthfulness of what God says? and 2) how do *I* come to knowledge of what is theopneustos?

The two issues are quite distinct. God's authority is supreme simply because God is God; my *knowledge* of God's authority is limited and fallible because *I* am limited and fallible. The Protestant owns up to the difficulties of directly encountering God's truth: that's what lies behind Sproul's statement about the canon. Unfortunately, Mark, I don't get the faintest hint from what you have said that you have really tried to enter into Sproul's position so as to understand it, and why it doesn't mean what you THINK it means.

Now, let me make something real clear here, Mark: every question you can throw at the Protestant position regarding Scripture, I can throw at the Roman position regarding the Church's authority. You haven't accomplished anything by giving up your personal responsibility to a hierarchy that claims infallible authority. Your decision to do that was a fallible one itself.

But let I get too wordy here, let's see if we can agree on *something.* Let's make a helpful distinction regarding the canon.

Canon1 = the canon as created by the action of God in inspiration

Canon2 = the canon as recognized and known by men

Let's not get too ambitious here, but can we agree that Canon1 is determined solely and completely by God? That is, God created the canon, not as a separate entity, but simply by choosing to inspire SOME but not ALL written books. Think we can agree on that fundamental assertion? If so, then maybe we can move on from there.

In a message dated 97-03-10 13:38:55 EST, you write:

- > We are getting to the epistemological foundations now: If God says
- > something, how can He guarantee its truthfulness?
- >
- > James:
- >
- > This is a dodge. The question is, How do you tell what is
- > inspired Scripture? Obviously if God has said something it
- > is the Truth (though not necessarily the whole Truth as
- > Hebrews 1:1 points out). Nobody disputes that God's word is
- > truth. Please answer the question. How do you tell what is
- > inspired Scripture?

Mark, has the thought occurred to you that an outside observer might get the feeling that you *really* don't want anyone to think through the implications of your pet question? Let me try one of your famous dialogues:

James: There are a lot of issues involved in this question, Mark.

Mark: Nope, it's real simple.

James: Questions of ultimate authorities and epistemology aren't normally real simple, Mark.

Mark: Just answer the question, James.

James: Without defining any of the issues, Mark?

Mark: Just answer the question.

James: How would a quick answer help anyone, Mark? If I said, "The canon is a function of Scripture, created by the act of inspiration, and I comet to have knowledge of it in the same way the believer did fifty years before Christ," how would that actually help things?

Mark: See, you guys just can't answer the question. We win by default.

James: But Mark, you are assuming a zillion things in your position, and in reality, are just moving the question back one step: you make Rome your ultimate authority. That may allow you to answer the canon question real easily, but now you have to answer the same question I have to answer about ultimate authorities.

Mark: Nah, that's just a dodge. Just answer the question, James.

And so on.

Now like I said, Mark, I can't force you to deal with the leaps you've made in your logic process so as to arrive where you have arrived. But unless you run this list, I don't think you can stop me from presenting my position, as I have begun to do in the "God's Authority" series of posts.

In a message dated 97-03-10 13:42:33 EST, you write:

>> We are getting to the epistemological foundations now: If God says
> > something, how can He guarantee its truthfulness?
>
> But this begs the question, "Where does God say this?" The basic
> question that you have been dancing around is, "How do you know which
> books of the Bible are in the canon of Scripture?" This is the question
> that people here are calling on you to answer.

Yes, John, I know. And to answer that question meaningfully, we have to do something a little more than provide a sentence response.

I have to admit, in my darker moments, I'm reminded of the constant drumbeat of the Jehovah's Witness:

James: So, you see, the doctrine of the Trinity is based upon three biblical teachings, monotheism, the....

JW: Just show me where the term Trinity appears in the Bible.

James: Well, the term doesn't appear in the Bible, but as I was saying, it is based upon three biblical teachings, monotheism, the existence of three divine Persons, and....

JW: See, you can't show me the Trinity from the Bible. This is just a dodge.

James: I'm trying to explain to you that if you take all the Bible says about the subject, you are forced to recognize the doctrine of the Trinity. Now, like I was saying, you have three biblical doctrines, mono.....

JW: Just show me where the Trinity is in the Bible.

etc. and etc.

It would be easy (if rather unfulfilling on an epistemological level) to say, "Hey, Mr. Jehovah's Witness, you believe in the Trinity because the Pope says to, OK?" But my unofficial patron saint, Athanasius, didn't do it that way (for some strange reason), and neither do I.

In the same way, you can ask a question that *assumes* a half dozen things (as Mark's question does), but unless you have the patience to allow a foundation to be laid, why ask the question at all?

In a message dated 97-03-10 15:06:32 EST, you write:

- > I said your answer, which includes the wonderfully simple concept of "Sacred
- > Tradition," is invalid and self-contradictory. Tell me, Mark, plain and
- > simple now: how do you know what is, and what is not, Sacred Tradition?
- >
- > I already told you in my first post. By the teaching of the
- > Church, whose life blood *is* the Tradition.
- >
- > Let me venture a guess: Rome tells you.
- >
- > No. Not just Rome. The whole Catholic Church in union with the
- > bishops and Peter. You do recall my quote from Augustine in _By
- > What Authority_ "I would not believe the gospel myself did not the
- > authority of the Catholic Church convince me to do so." The
- > Catholic Church is more than the bishop of Rome.

You believe things, Mark, that are uniquely Roman, and you do so because Rome teaches it, not because the "whole Catholic Church" does so. I am quite familiar with Augustine's quote (ever read Calvin's discussion of the passage?), but that doesn't change the fact that when it comes right down to the nitty-gritty, it is *Rome's* definition of ST that is final with you, correct? So let's be very specific here: when you speak of Sacred Tradition, you speak of it as it is finally determined and defined by the Roman Catholic Church, and specifically, by the Roman Catholic Church as she speaks through the Vicar of Christ on earth, the successor of Peter, the bishop of Rome, correct?

Now, I wrote you a pretty long post this morning. It contained a lot of discussion of the very issue you keep saying I *won't* get around to. Now it's possible that you fired off this one response to the first part, and will get to the rest later. I do the same thing. But, *just in case,* I remind you of what else I said:

So, Sacred Tradition is what Rome defines as Sacred Tradition. Is there an external means of verifying Rome's claim? Nope, since she's infallible. So, Rome defines ST, and, by this, also defines Scripture.

Let's follow this a bit further, Mark: who *interprets* ST? Isn't it Rome? Infallibly, no less. And who *interprets* the Scriptures? I hardly need to cite Trent of VII for that one: Rome.

So let's see: Rome defines, and interprets, ST; Rome defines, and interprets, Scripture.

Hence, it *looks* like Rome is your ultimate authority in all matters religious, and seemingly, epistemological as well.

So I guess you agree with Karl Keating's statement:

The Catholic believes in inspiration because the Church tells him so---that is putting it bluntly---and that same Church has the authority to interpret the inspired text. [_Catholicism and Fundamentalism_, p. 127]

Now, if we haven't jumped the track anywhere along the line, it seems your position then is "I know the canon of Scripture infallibly because Rome tells me what it is." Now, *most* folks immediately notice something: that really doesn't answer the question. It *assumes* Rome has the ability to *infallibly* provide such certainty. That is hardly a given, Mark. And on a simple epistemological basis, what you've done is move the ultimate question about ultimate authorities back one whole step: the Protestant invests the Scriptures with ultimate authority; you invest the Church with that ultimate authority, so that you can then allow the Church to define the canon for you. However, you are left answering the same question: why is *this* your ultimate authority?

Ultimate authorities are peculiar things, Mark: they are not liable to validation by a higher source. That's why they are ultimate authorities. Oh, you may provide arguments that support the claim of source X being ultimate, but none of those arguments can provide a *guarantee* of that ultimate authority, since if they did, then the argument itself would become the ultimate authority.

Now, the Protestant says that which is theopneustos is his or her ultimate authority. That's a pretty safe assertion: God's speaking is about as high an authority as you can find. But when you ask "how do you know?" you are melding two very distinct issues into one question: 1) what is the authority of God's speaking, and can external arguments be provided to guarantee the truthfulness of what God says? and 2) how do *I* come to knowledge of what is theopneustos?

The two issues are quite distinct. God's authority is supreme simply because God is God; my *knowledge* of God's authority is limited and fallible because *I* am limited and fallible. The Protestant owns up to the difficulties of directly encountering God's

truth: that's what lies behind Sproul's statement about the canon. Unfortunately, Mark, I don't get the faintest hint from what you have said that you have really tried to enter into Sproul's position so as to understand it, and why it doesn't mean what you THINK it means.

Now, let me make something real clear here, Mark: every question you can throw at the Protestant position regarding Scripture, I can throw at the Roman position regarding the Church's authority. You haven't accomplished anything by giving up your personal responsibility to a hierarchy that claims infallible authority. Your decision to do that was a fallible one itself.

But let I get too wordy here, let's see if we can agree on *something.* Let's make a helpful distinction regarding the canon.

Canon1 = the canon as created by the action of God in inspiration

Canon2 = the canon as recognized and known by men

Let's not get too ambitious here, but can we agree that Canon1 is determined solely and completely by God? That is, God created the canon, not as a separate entity, but simply by choosing to inspire SOME but not ALL written books. Think we can agree on that fundamental assertion? If so, then maybe we can move on from there.

In a message dated 97-03-10 17:42:37 EST, you write:

- > I am, of course, confident that you will publically apologize for
- > accusing me of cheap debating tricks (as I am likewise confident
- > that you will publically apologize for calling me a liar in your
- > other post, now that you understand what your claims concerning my
- > supposed double standard in calling you anti-Catholic clearly
- > implies to all speakers of English).
- >
- > Consider forgiveness yours. You have only to appropriate for
- > yourself by a public apology.
- >
- > Then, no more shilly-shallying. Tell me how you can tell what is
- > inspired Scripture?
- >
- > It's a straight question. Give me a straight answer.

< chuckle > You *really* don't want this discussed in-depth, do you?

I've never seen anyone invest more energy into obscuring the issues, Mark, I really haven't. Nor have I found anyone so quick to take offense, so intent upon finding an insult behind every verb.

I didn't call you an anti-Protestant; you've done nothing but throw sand in the air to obscure that rather simple and plain fact. But like I said, I'm not going to pursue it---you must have a really good reason for *wanting* to think I called you that, and I'm not disposed to probing into your psyche to find out why.

Despite your best efforts, we are getting into the issue now, Mark, in case you didn't notice. I'm looking forward to your responses regarding the nature of the canon, etc.

In a message dated 97-03-10 17:44:16 EST, you write:

- >> Why? God worked with the Jewish people for 200-400 years in bringing about
- >> the OT canon. Why not the New? The simple fact of the matter is, sola
- >> scriptura is NOT dependent upon having a "golden index."
- >
- > How did God work with them James? Not through Scripture!

Dan, if I recall correctly, you indicated you are a fairly new convert to Roman Catholicism. Assuming you were like most Protestants, you probably never gave much thought to the issue of the canon, right?

A few points (I'm not the first to make them: others have already pointed some of these out):

- 1) It is a straw-man to say Protestants say the canon is "in" Scripture, as in an inspired table-of-contents or something. At its root, sola scriptura speaks to ultimate authorities, and canon is a side-issue (though one that some like to make the *main*

issue).

2) The canon considered in and of itself is the result of what God did in inspiring *some* books, and not inspiring *other* books. The canon, considered in its most basic and fundamental sense, is the *unavoidable* result of particular inspiration. As soon as God said "I'm going to inspire *some* books," the canon came into existence.

3) Please note, Dan, that the canon, in this sense, pre-existed *man.* That is, since it was eternally God's purpose to inspire a certain number of books, and not *all* books, then it follows that even before there was a man on the planet, the canon existed in the mind of God. And, what is important to remember, it did not depend upon men *knowing* it for its existence. If no man on earth knew the canon, it would still exist.

4) God's knowledge of the canon is perfect because God determined it. "God is the author of the canon" is a fundamentally true statement.

Now, Dan, Protestants believe that God led His people---both the people of Israel (in reference to the OT canon) and the Church (in reference to the NT canon) to *recognize* what He Himself had done in inspiration. Please note that the word "recognize" is to be taken in a passive sense: that is, the people of God are not invested with some power or ability to *define* the canon, as that is done by God's act of inspiration. Instead, as the obedient people of God, they recognize the voice of God speaking in His Scriptures. It was a gradual process---not overly miraculous in tone, either. No angels from heaven with golden indexes, just the long-term guidance of the people of God. With the OT, the process started producing results in about 200 years, and was pretty much over with in 400. Interestingly, the same is true with the NT: we find the Muratorian canon about AD 187, and see the process pretty much coming to completion by the end of the fourth century.

Now, for some reason, people want to say that unless the canon is a revelation itself that exists outside of Scripture, then sola scriptura isn't true. You may note a rather large logical disjunction there: sola scriptura refers to the fact that Scripture is the only infallible rule of faith for the Church. Why is it infallible? Because it is divine in origin. Well, someone says, that's fine and dandy, but without an infallible table of contents, you are up a creek without a paddle. Possibly---I'd like to discuss that some more and see if that charge really sticks.* But for now, I wish to point out that the real assertion is, "Unless I have infallible knowledge of a by-product of God's revelation, then His revelation is not useful, nor can it be bound upon anyone's conscience."

You see, Dan, right there is where I find a huge "rub"---that is, the nice, neat little argument runs smack dab into the wall known as "history and reality." That is, if that statement is true, then from the days of Moses till 1546, Scripture was a useless appendage! No one could be held accountable to Scripture until the Council of Trent provided an "infallible" definition of the canon. Now really, Dan, think about it---does that make any sense?

I asked someone else, but I'll ask you now: how did a believing Jewish man know that Isaiah and 2 Chronicles were Scripture in the year AD 50?

*BTW: do you have an infallibly defined, completed, easily obtainable "canon" of Sacred Tradition? If not, do you still hold people accountable to ST? If so, how?

In a message dated 97-03-10 18:43:33 EST, you write:

- > You said I applied a double standard in calling you
- > "anti-Catholic". This, being translated, means "If you call me
- > anti-Catholic, Mark, then why don't you call yourself
- > anti-Protestant?" or, in short, "You are anti-Protestant, Mark."
- > I say Protestants are Christian. You say Catholics are not.
- >
- > Let the reader judge.

Wow, indeed, let the reader judge. In fact, let the reader go back, read what I've posted, and try to follow the logic that goes into that position. It's amazing.

- > Mark, since you didn't bother to address in your book the fundamental beliefs
- > Protestants present on the issue of Scripture, authority, canon, and the
- > rest, I'm going to lay those foundations, if you don't mind.
- >
- > I tingle with anticipation, James.

Thanks, Mark. I love to make you tingle. :)

- > I presume that somewhere in
- > all of that, you will tell us how you know what inspired Scripture
- > is? That was the question at the heart of my book.

You know, Mark, some would say that if you were taking the time to read what I've posted, even to others, you would already have your answer.

- > It is the
- > question you have thus far refused to answer. I would appreciate
- > you doing so and not wasting more time on my deeply flawed and
- > sinful personality. God knows you are right about me, I am
- > more wretched than you can dream of, but it doesn't answer my
- > question (though I have answered yours).

Your ability at self-effacement and sarcasm puts me in awe! Do you practice this, or is it just a natural kind of thing? :)

You say you've answered my questions. In a sense you have---though, without allowing for more in-depth definition of your terms and the like. It's an easy answer, just like Keating's statement: "I know Scripture is inspired because the Church tells me so!" That's your answer all right. But, if you don't mind, I think there's a bit more that needs to be discussed. I'm one of those folks that goes, "Well, that may work for you, but it doesn't quite cut it for me." The same Church you say tells you what is, and what is not, Scripture, used to hand out indulgences for money, and engaged in the murder of believing Christians for a number of centuries, so those facts alone make me just a bit hesitant to immediately jump on the bandwagon. Besides, as I've pointed out, Mark, all you've done is move the real question back one step: how do you know the Church is infallible so as to be able to give infallible witness to the canon?

In a message dated 97-03-11 02:10:34 EST, you write:

- > Unless God spoke directly to YOU, and told you which books belong to the canon,
- > this would have to be your position too.

Well, no, Theresa, since 1) I don't claim direct revelation, and 2) I don't believe my knowledge of the canon is mediated to me by Rome. Hence, there is a third alternative.

- > Because even after the last apostle
- > had been dead for 300 years, the Council of Rome, included *all* the right
- > books and *only* the right books in the New Testament canon. HOW did they do
- > that? Luck?

You might want to look a little closer at the alleged "Council of Rome."

- > They did it by testing the various books and letters against oral
- > apostolic *tradition* as it was handed on and practiced from apostolic
- > times. This entire process was guided by God, who is infallible. So, if God
- > used the Catholic Church to infallibly declare the canon, then he can use
- > the Church to declare other infallible truths as well.

Could you provide me with a quotation from the first four centuries that says what you said above, specifically?

- > The Church is Christ's bride, she knows her husband's voice when she hears
- > it.

I agree a thousand percent--in fact, that's *my* argument. The bride doesn't have to be infallible to hear the voice of her Husband.

- > Now, *most* folks immediately notice something: that really
- > doesn't answer the question. It *assumes* Rome has the ability to
- > *infallibly* provide such certainty.
- >
- > If you, James, had to determine what was to be included in the canon, how
- > would you do it? How would you go about sifting through all the letters and
- > books in circulation at that time to arrive at the canon we now have? What
- > would be your criteria? What resources would you use? Who would you consult?
- > Since you do not believe that any man or any Church is gifted by God with
- > the charism of infallibility, could you then declare your final decision to

> be absolutely final and infallible?

Since I don't claim infallibility, either for the church, or for myself, Theresa, I can't answer that question. I claim infallibility only for God's Word, not for my knowledge of them.

The fact remains, however, that claiming Rome gives you this infallible knowledge involves nothing more than moving the epistemological question back one single step. That doesn't solve the problem.

- > If you can't then....we are all in a big mess are'nt we? Somebody's got to
- > be the infallible interpreter of the infallible book That somebody is Rome, who
- > put the book together in the first place.

Whenever I hear someone laud Rome in that way, I remember Psalm 119:89, and wonder, "How did that believing Jew know that a thousand years before any man sat in Rome and allowed himself to be called the Vicar of Christ?"

- > Whence, is this doctrine? Does it come from the authority of the Lord and of the Gospel, or does it come from the commands and epistles of the apostles? For that those things must be done which are written God testifies and commands when He says to Joshua: 'The book of this law shall not depart out of your mouth, that you may observe to do all things which are written.' If therefore it is either commanded in the Gospel or contained in the epistles and the Acts, then also this sacred doctrine must be observed (Cyprian, Ad Pompeium).

In the previous two installments I've looked briefly at the nature of Scripture (it is theopneustos) and at the superiority of Scripture to tradition, even when that tradition is said to be divine by its proponents (Matthew 15:1-9). Indeed, we looked as well at the fact that for the Lord Jesus, Scripture was "God speaking." We saw this in Matthew 22:31ff. I'd like to expand on something important that comes from this passage.

I truly do not believe anyone can argue that the Lord Jesus did not hold men accountable to the Scriptures. Surely He upbraided even the religious leaders for their hard-heartedness and their ignorance of the Scriptures. But let me ask everyone: how could He do this? What I mean is this: it has been alleged, in various ways, that unless you have an *infallible* knowledge of the canon, provided by an infallible source (i.e., the Church, which, in turn, claims to be deriving this from ST), you can't have *any* meaningful knowledge of the canon, hence, SS is not a valid belief. Now, it would follow, logically, that the Jewish believer could not possibly be bound to Scriptural authority. Why? Because he had no "infallible authority" to look to on canon issues. Yet, the Lord Jesus held men accountable anyway. How can this be?

Well, some folks have said that the Jews *did* have an infallible authority, an "OT Magisterium." Yet, I find insuperable problems here. 1) The canon produced by the Jewish people themselves differs from that used by Rome, leading to a conflict between two allegedly infallible sources. 2) The Lord Jesus specifically denounced traditions that were touted by this same "OT Magisterium" (such as the Corban rule) as being void and contradictory to God's commands. Hence, any person presenting the "infallible OT Magisterium" argument has to then find an infallible means of determining what elements of Jewish teaching are actually taught by this "Magisterium." A sticky position indeed that basically reduces to a lot of wishful thinking.

Basically, you don't have an infallible hierarchical organization prior to the time of Christ to look to for canonical knowledge. You have a *fallible* group of godly men, to be sure, but not an *infallible* one. What's more, while some of the Jews claimed an oral tradition from Moses (as in Tractate Aboth), we well know that *if* such a tradition ever existed, it was hopelessly corrupted by the time of Christ, at the very least, for it included all sorts of traditions denounced by the Lord.

So, how can the Lord Jesus bind the consciences of men to Scripture without such an infallible source of canonical revelation? I'd like to suggest that the question is flawed (indeed---the question that everyone keeps asking me is flawed in the same way). The question assumes something that is in error, and it's this:

To be held accountable to Scripture, one must have infallible knowledge of the canon.

There's the problem: men don't have infallible knowledge of things. Example: the Trinity. I have a pretty good understanding of the Trinity. I've defended this basic doctrine for many years, and have read extensively on the subject, both in modern theological works, and in patristic sources. Yet, I do not have an *infallible* knowledge of the subject. I question the wisdom (or honesty) of any person who claims to have such knowledge in this life of the Trinity.

Now, let me ask everyone: if I do not have an *infallible* knowledge of the Trinity, is it still fair to call me a Trinitarian? I sure hope so. I have, I believe, a *sufficient* knowledge of the Trinity, but I do not have an *infallible* knowledge of it. Yet, I'm a Trinitarian.

In a message dated 97-03-11 17:15:22 EST, you write:

- > You believe things, Mark, that are uniquely Roman, and you do so because Rome
- > teaches it, not because the "whole Catholic Church" does so.
- >
- > In disputed matters, yes, I do remain with Peter. But as my book
- > points out, I came to this by observing the behavior of the whole
- > Church. I still regard the Church as a Body, not as the Pope.

I'll leave the issue of whether the bishop of Rome is, in fact, the successor of Peter for another day, another time, another place, whatever. For now, let me ask: when you say, "I do remain with Peter," does it not logically follow that, when it comes to any disputed point, you bow to the authority of the bishop of Rome as the Vicar of Christ on earth, the universal Pastor of all Christians? Do you not agree with Vatican II that the Church "subsists" in Rome, and that to the Roman Catholic Church has been entrusted the task of authentically interpreting the Scriptures? And is it not true that on dogmatic issues such as Papal Infallibility, the Immaculate Conception, and the Bodily Assumption of Mary, you believe these to be divinely revealed truths, dogmas of the Christian faith, and necessary for sound and true faith?

Now, I ask these questions, Mark, to provide substantiation for the statements I have made previously: that is, that Rome, in your view, has the authority to teach infallibly because Rome, par excellence, is the keeper of ST, is she not?

- > I am quite
- > familiar with Augustine's quote (ever read Calvin's discussion of the
- > passage?), but that doesn't change the fact that when it comes right down to
- > the nitty-gritty, it is *Rome's* definition of ST that is final with you,
- > correct?
- >
- > The overwhelming majority of ST is not defined.

A very fascinating statement---not in the sense of disagreement, but in what the statement *means.* I think we can see just how nebulous "ST" is when we ponder what it means that the "overwhelming majority of ST is not defined." I would love to pursue this some more, for I truly do wish to know how people can give so much authority to ST when, in point of fact, nobody knows for certain what it is (one thing is for sure---I have a whole lot better and clearer idea of what the canon of Scripture is than you do the canon of ST!), but that may be outside the parameters of the current discussion at the moment. Maybe when we both have lots of free time. (Yeah, like that will happen any time soon!).

- > However, when the
- > occasional dispute comes up and the Church cannot reach consensus,
- > I remain with Peter. It seems to me to be the biblical thing to
- > do. Sometimes Peter sin (like David) and sometimes he screws up
- > or holds an opinion which I do not (like concerning the justice of
- > the Gulf War).

I'm sorry, you lost me with the Gulf War. I'm obviously missing an inside comment there.

- > I do not break communion with him though. And
- > when he compels assent to some point of faith (an exceedingly rare
- > event), I intend, by the grace of God, to give it. It seems to me
- > that I ought to do so, based on Scripture and Tradition and the
- > testimony of the saints.

Well, again, leaving off the personification of Peter in the bishop of Rome, and the historical problems with such a viewpoint, does it not follow that *ultimately* your source for "infallible knowledge" of such things as the canon is found in the infallibility of the Church of Rome as the Mother of all churches?

- > So let's be very specific here: when you speak of Sacred Tradition,
- > you speak of it as it is finally determined and defined by the Roman Catholic
- > Church, and specifically, by the Roman Catholic Church as she speaks through
- > the Vicar of Christ on earth, the successor of Peter, the bishop of Rome,
- > correct?
- >
- > This is a very reductionist way of putting it. I repeat myself
- > in a different metaphor:
- >

- > I believe truth is symphonic. The Church, the whole Church, sings
- > the gospel. Sometimes there is discord (or dischord, if you
- > will). Most of the time the Church finds the right notes and gets
- > back on key itself. Sometimes a conductor is necessary to help
- > the Church find the right notes. The tradition is held
- > collegially, but when collegiality is just not functioning, then
- > yes, one remains with the conductor whom God has given.

And the infallible knowledge you claim to have of the canon, to get us back to the beginning, is found not collegially (since I can provide lots and lots of quotes demonstrating viewpoints other than that expressed at Trent) but in following this "conductor" who is, in fact, personifying the Church at Rome, right?

- > Is there an
- > external means of verifying Rome's claim?
- >
- > How about the Tradition, the bishops, and the witness of the Body
- > of Christ through the ages?

I really hope we can dig into this response, Mark. Who interprets "Tradition"? Recently, here on the list, Theresa rebuked me for even daring to suggest that Augustine might have held viewpoints not exactly in line with modern Roman Catholic dogma. I was told that not only is "private interpretation" of the Scriptures not allowed, but neither is "private interpretation" of the patristic sources! So, who, finally, interprets "Tradition"? I'm reminded of the words attributed to Pius IX at Vatican I, "I am the tradition." When you say the bishops, how do the "bishops" express any binding testimony outside the infallibility of the Roman curia? Who interprets the wishes of the bishops infallibly? And while the phrase "the witness of the Body of Christ through the ages" *sounds* very nice, what does it mean *functionally*? Many people I know define ST as just that: the witness of the Body of Christ through the ages. But that only brings us back to square one again, for who interprets THAT? In the final analysis, Rome, again.

So, I have to ask again: is there *really* an external means of verifying Rome's claim? You and I aren't up to it as individuals (or so it is said); you can't say, "Well, Rome has historically misread the Tradition of the Church at this point." Or can you say that? I truly wish to know.

- > It was not Rome alone, but Trent which defined Scripture
- > dogmatically. Before this, as my book and Deacon Ed have point
- > out, it was held by the *sensus fidelium* and determined by what
- > various communities used in their liturgies and believed to be
- > according to the Holy Faith. This looks to me a lot like Sacred
- > Tradition.

If Trent had taken a different view of the deuterocanonicals, say the one of Athanasius or Jerome of Melito of Sardis or Gregory the Great or Cardinal Cajetan, would you not today, likewise, be saying that *that* canon was held by the "*sensus fidelium*"? Or, to put it another way, wouldn't you agree with me that I could muster FAR more patristic support for *rejecting* the deuterocanonicals than you can from the same time period for substantiating the Bodily Assumption of Mary? If one is ST, why isn't the other ST? See, Mark, it seems to me that one is ST and the other is heresy simply because Rome, speaking at Trent (the control of both Trent and Vatican I by the Papacy is well known and documented), *said so.* *Sola ecclesia* again.

- > So let's see: Rome defines, and interprets, ST; Rome defines, and interprets,
- > Scripture.
- >
- > No, James. The Body of Christ, in union with the bishops and
- > Peter does so under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is the
- > Catholic claim.

Yes, it is the Catholic claim. But in this claim, only one voice speaks infallibly and finally: Rome's. On disputed points, Rome's word is final, is it not?

Mark Shea was saying:

- > It, like all points of supernatural revelation
- > cannot, as St. Thomas tells us, be proven. But all arguments
- > against it can be rebutted. I did not come to believe the
- > Catholic claim because I could prove it, any more than I came to
- > believe in the Trinity because I could prove it. I came to
- > believe it because, in light of it, everything else made sense.

Mark, I believe in the Trinity because it is a revelation of God, and is inherently true, whether it makes other things "make sense" or not. I believe in the Trinity because one *must* in order to hold onto everything Scripture says about the nature of God.

But we are getting somewhere here, I think. It seems you are saying that your view of ST cannot be proven: that this viewpoint, since it forms the ultimate presupposition of your epistemology, is beyond logical proof, for that is the nature of all ultimate presuppositions. And, if I was correct in the previous post in pointing out that, in the final analysis, every statement you made boiled down to the authority of the Church of Christ *speaking through the Vicar of Christ, the Pope,* then it would seem that indeed you agree with Karl Keating's statement, noted below, that is, that you know the Bible is inspired because the Church tells you so. It is this position that logically underlies your question, "How do you know which books are inspired and which are not?" You claim to know, and you know because the Church says so.

Now, it seems to me that your question is meant to cause discomfort for the Protestant in that it makes he or she examine his or her ultimate epistemological presupposition: that God's speaking is, by nature, the ultimate authority. That when God says, "I am God, and there is no other," the proper question is not, "How can I know if God said this or not?" but rather, "I had better believe and obey." In fact, in the garden long ago, the first temptation included right along with it the line, "Has God *really* said....?" The Protestant is in a quandry: if he tries to find an external source of verification for God's own speaking (i.e., that which is theopneustos), he will be making his ultimate authority dependent upon something else---which logically makes that something else his ultimate authority. So, to maintain logical consistency, the Protestant refuses to go this route, and instead owns up to his or her decision to embrace---directly, without mediation---the authority of God's speaking *on the basis of its inherent nature as theopneustos.* [Please note, I'm not here even beginning to touch upon the many failures of Protestants to be consistent at this point, and the many times where, unwittingly, they do in fact try to find some external source of verification. I speak here of the "best" (in my view) of Protestant theology, which is not always the most *popular* form.]

The Protestant, then, makes a decision to invest final and ultimate authority in Scripture as God's speaking, and is willing (or should be willing) to own up to the questions that flow from that choice. As a fallible human being, I don't try to cover over my fallibility with a cloud of dust or smoke---instead, I own my fallibility, and do my best, by grace and by the Spirit, to grow in Christ and in obedience to God.

The Roman Catholic may well shake his or her head in pity for my plight. But, in reality, I think the Roman Catholic is in no better position, despite thinking he or she *is*! You see, while I admit the fallibility of my own decisions, the Roman Catholic *should* likewise admit the fallibility of his or her own decisions as well, even when it comes to final and ultimate authorities. You see, while it may provide some comfort to say, "I don't have to struggle with canon issues: the Church tells me what to believe about that," such doesn't really relieve you from the possibility of error. As anyone can see, all you've done is given over your responsibility to struggle in such areas to someone or something else. And what that means is, you've rolled all the many fallible decisions I as a Protestant has to make into one big, mondo-sized yet FALLIBLE decision: that the Church of Rome can function as your final and ultimate source of authority and certainty. You can't say your decision to choose Rome over, say, Salt Lake, or Brooklyn, or Mecca, is *infallible.* *You* made the decision to submit to *one* particular "ultimate authority." That decision is just as fallible and liable to error as mine. You can't anymore tell me, infallibly, why you can trust Rome as I can tell you that Esther is canonical. But, Mark, I'll tell you one thing: I don't have *nearly* as many hurdles to get over in struggling with Esther as you have struggling with Honorius or Liberius or Sixtus or....well, the list goes on.

So, Mark, you see why I can't accept the bare use of your famous question: it begs the issue, is based upon all sorts of other things (mainly, your epistemological presuppositions about Rome's authority), and quite simply, it isn't *fair* to demand an answer of a "loaded" question *without* the full discussion that places the issue in its proper setting.

- > You are aware of the ancient axiom that we understand more noble
- > things less clearly and less noble things more clearly? Likewise,
- > I cannot see the sun clearly for it is too bright, but I see
- > everything else *by* it. So with the Tradition. I did not come
- > to believe the Tradition because I fully understand it (for to do
- > so would be to understand God himself), but because in light of it
- > everything else was illumined.

I admit I struggle with such exalted views of "Tradition." Did this "Tradition" likewise exist and function in, say, the year AD 345?

- > You say "Rome" defines and interprets Scripture. My own grasp of
- > things is that the whole Body does so,

Mark, an honest question: is it possible that your "own grasp of things" is in error? If so, how would you come to know?

- > with the bishops and the
- > Holy Father at the head. There is an organic unity at work that

- > you are not seeing. It is, I came to conclude, useless to tell a
- > living Tradition that it does not know its own mind. It is even
- > more useless to borrow something from that Tradition and then
- > declare the rest of the Tradition false.

I confess I see no organic unity to the *historical* definition of "Tradition," and I see ST, as defined by Rome, as the invention *of* Rome. Let me offer an example: would you see the dogmatic decrees of Vatican I as an example of ST, or at least an infallible definition of some of the *content* of ST? If not, the following example will be meaningless, and you can ignore it. If you do, however, then I have to ask: when Vatican I says that it is the "ancient and constant faith of the universal Church" (secundum antiquam atque constantem universalis Ecclesiae fidem) that the "primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church of God was immediately and directly promised and given to blessed Peter" and to his successors, the bishops of Rome, how can I identify this as anything but an utter falsehood? I *know* beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is NOT the universal, or even the ancient, faith of the Church. This is not *apostolic tradition,* even if you call it "Sacred Tradition." So how can I do anything other than call this "tradition" false?

I certainly see, Mark, how, once one *accepts* the claims of Rome, and *embraces* her all-encompassing claim to infallibility, the rest just "slips into place." Once you've accepted the existence of ST (which you can't see, define, or hold Rome accountable to), and Rome's ability to define ST when she deems necessary, all other doctrines will, in time, fall into place.

- > So I guess you agree with Karl Keating's statement:
- >
- > The Catholic believes in inspiration because the Church tells him so
- > ---that is putting it bluntly---and that same Church has the authority
- > to interpret the inspired text.
- > [Catholicism and Fundamentalism, p. 127]
- >
- > Sound fair to me.

Well, I thought later, "What's he supposed to do, disagree with the editor of This Rock? What would happen to Corkscrew and Slimemold??" :)

- > Now, if we haven't jumped the track anywhere along the line, it seems your
- > position then is "I know the canon of Scripture infallibly because Rome tells
- > me what it is."
- >
- > No the whole Church, in big and little ways, bears witness to the
- > Tradition.

But in the final analysis, Rome's decision is the final one, correct?

- > No. You are taking a conclusion I have come to and saying that it
- > is an assumption. As my book makes clear, (chap 9) I ask is the
- > early Church and intelligent and reasonably honest bunch? I
- > begin, in short, from human premises, since I am, perhaps
- > unfortunately, only human.

Might I suggest that you might have some difficulty reasoning from such general bases to such specific conclusions?

- > Answering that question in the
- > affirmative based, not on divine insights, but on such human
- > resources as I have, I then pass on to the next inference.
- > Namely, if they are honest and intelligent (and the evidence is
- > good that they are) then the tradition they hand on, both written
- > and unwritten, is credible. Part of that tradition includes
- > Scripture which says things like "Jesus is the Son of God who told
- > the apostles 'He who listens to me listens to you' and 'I will
- > guide you into all truth and never leave or forsake you.' Another
- > part of that Tradition (borne witness to in the NT and by
- > subsequent patristic testimony) is that the apostles handed down
- > both Scripture and a nascent episcopal structure in union with a
- > Church called the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth. And so,
- > grace building on nature I come to the conclusion that the Church
- > is a human community (as Jesus is a human being) that is vastly
- > more than a human community (as Jesus is vastly more than a human
- > being) and that, by Jesus' promise, I can trust that he won't let

- > that community define error as dogma. I can also coincidentally
- > trust that the Scripture which they hold up as the trustworthy
- > written info about Jesus is trustworthy indeed.

And Robert Funk will accept this? :) No, he won't. But since I've about worn out my keyboard this afternoon, I'll try to be brief. When you say the "early Church," who are you talking about? You see, you have to pick and choose right from the start. Take Tertullian for example: you can only buy into half his stuff because of his later Montanism. Or even earlier with something like Barnabus---considered canonical by many in Rome for a long time, I might add!---there's all sorts of stuff in some of these books and writers that is just simply goofy. Even someone as sharp as Irenaeus thought Jesus was over 50 years old. Is this "tradition" or "Tradition"? Who is to say? In the final analysis, Rome says, and Rome picks and chooses what elements of the historical data will be defined as "tradition" or "Tradition" and which ones won't.

I, too, see Jesus founding a Church, a Church which is likewise the pillar and foundation of the truth. But I also find that church torn by strife inside and out *from the days of the apostles onward,* and I find the same man who wrote the phrase "pillar and foundation" warning that ravenous wolves would enter *into* the church, not sparing the flock (for more on this, see my response to an argument on infallibility at www.aomin.org/Roman.html). So I find an apostolic succession of *truth* to be far more comforting than an apostolic succession of *genealogy.* That is, I think the person who speaks the message the apostles spoke is in a far better position than one who *claims* descent from them, but who does not preach the same message they did.

Well, there was a bit more, but I don't want to wear out my welcome.

In a message dated 97-03-12 09:53:30 EST, you write:

Ø > So, Mark, you see why I can't accept the bare use of your famous question: it
Ø> > begs the issue, is based upon all sorts of other things (mainly, your
Ø> > epistemological presuppositions about Rome's authority), and quite simply, it
Ø> > isn't *fair* to demand an answer of a "loaded" question *without* the full
Ø> > discussion that places the issue in its proper setting.

Ø
Ø> Now we are getting somewhere James! You have finally admitted that you,
Ø> yourself, are your ultimate
Ø> authority (Not Scripture) and that you, in your ultimate authority, have
Ø> decided to place your faith in
Ø> James White's ability to make judgments in matters of faith and morals.

Ø
< deep sigh > No, Dan, I never said any such thing.

Ø
ØUltimate authority for me: that which is theopneustos. My choice is to hold to that ultimate authority, period.
ØUltimate authority for RC: ST, defined and proclaimed by Rome; since no definition of ST is available, in practice, the ultimate authority becomes the ecclesia itself, Rome.

Ø
ØSola scriptura vs. sola ecclesia.

Ø
ØI do not disown my fallibility. Instead, I point out that passing off the same ultimate choice I have made to someone else is, itself, a fallible choice. We both have made our choices: I choose that which is God's speaking, period. You choose that which is "the Church speaking." I have to answer questions about not having an infallible canon. You have to answer questions about why Rome is infallible so as to give you an infallible canon. As I have said a dozen times now, all you've done is move the ultimate epistemological question back *one* step, nothing more.

Ø
Ø> In making those judgements
Ø> you will rely not solely on Scripture but also upon what you pick and
Ø> choose as truthful from the
Ø> writings of the Fathers and other Christians down through time.

Ø
ØJust as Rome, over time, has done as well: picking and choosing what, out of history, she will accept as ST, and what she will reject. Same process, one major difference: I can change my mind and admit error: Rome can't, due to the claim of infallibility.

Ø
Ø> This differs from Catholics in that we also acknowledge that we are our own
Ø> ultimate authority as far as
Ø> choosing where to place our faith in deciding matters of faith and morals.
Ø> Instead of placing our faith in
Ø> ourselves we have chosen to place our faith in the Roman Catholic Church.

Ø
ØQuite true: you have turned over your responsibility in making these final decisions to a hierarchy that claims the ability to

provide you with infallible assurance.

Ø

Ø> Now you should spare us another long-winded treatise based upon your

Ø> interpretations and get to the

Ø> core of the issue.

Ø

Ø Might I suggest you should consider being a little more kind in your terminology?

Ø

Ø> Why is placing trust in yourself on matters of faith and

Ø> morals more reasonable and

Ø> likely to lead to proper decisions than looking to the Catholic Church for

Ø> guidance?

Ø

Ø Correction: I have not placed my trust in myself, I have placed my trust in the Scriptures. Please at least *hear* what is being said.

Ø

Ø> The standard by

Ø> which to judge this decision would be consistency because God is immutable.

Ø

Ø One cannot speak of truth without using the word "consistency," most definitely.

Ø

> As we struggle to

Ø> understand revelation the only thing that we can look at without having to

Ø> subject it to our own

Ø> interpretation what is true is consistency.

Ø

Ø I do not disown the responsibility of interpreting that which God has revealed. The Scripture commands us to "test all things," to look to the Scriptures, and to rightly handle the word of truth. There is no command (despite the oft misused passage in Peter) against believers directly encountering, and interpreting, the Scriptures.

Ø

Ø> If some candidate for authority

Ø> has changed its teaching on

Ø> a matter of faith or morals that candidate has proven itself to fail against

Ø> the criteria of God's immutability.

Ø

Ø Insert the term "infallible" before "authority," and I'll agree with you wholeheartedly, and I'll cite it as one of the main reasons I am not a Roman Catholic.

Ø

Ø> I submit that the Catholic Church has never changed (altered from one

Ø> essential thing to another - not

Ø> developed and clarified) its teaching on any matter of faith or morals.

Ø

Ø And I will say you are in error. I can go to history to discuss this---you can't, since, in the ultimate scheme of things, you can't test Rome's claims separate from your commitment to her. That is, if I point out the condemnation of Honorius as an example, you *have* to interpret the historical data in light of what Rome commands you to do. Rome can't be wrong, so, Rome can't be wrong! If I point out to you the glaring contradiction between the 4th Lateran Council and Vatican II, again, these facts *can't* mean what they *look* like they mean because, again, Rome is infallible, and you must interpret facts in the light of that assumption.

Ø

Ø> This the Church claims and this I

Ø> believe. I also proclaim that if the Church can be proven to have changed

Ø> in these matters then the

Ø> Church is proven to be a false claimant and I would no longer be a Catholic.

Ø> So, your task should be

Ø> simple and not require a bunch of long-winded, pseudo scholarly elaboration.

Ø

Ø You *really* need an attitude adjustment, Dan: if you would like to prove I am a pseudo-scholar, I will await your rebuttals of my published works.

In a message dated 97-03-13 14:52:27 EST, you write:

> James requests a refresher on when exactly he said Catholics are

> not Christian. James, of course, knows that he wrote this:

>

> I am not saying that there are no professing Roman Catholics who
> are save d, nor that there are not Roman Catholic leaders who do
> not embrace God's grace in a saving manner. I speak of the
> official teachings of Rome, enshrined in her creeds, encyclicals,
> and conciliar documents, when I speak of Rome's "teachings."

>
> and he may even recall that I wrote this reply:

>
> <snip>

>
> Let me redefine the question: Is one who fully believes in the
> truth claims of the Catholic Faith (me, f'rinstance) a Christian?
> Your answer boils down to saying "Catholics are Christian insofar
> as they repudiate the Catholic Faith." This seems very much like
> saying "Catholics aren't Christian."

You know what, Mark, I think I'll be done with this thread soon, too. Mainly because I can't get you to be honest in representing almost *anything* I say. Your wonderful little editing always gives you a way to avoid the weight of anything I say. For example, you just said I asked for a little refresher. Yet, the archives say otherwise:

> 1) I am all in favor of discussing any issues you like, but how long do you
> intend to go on asking James White to explain his rational for Sola
> Scriptura when it is obvious he does not want to?
>
> As long as he want to use it as the basis for claiming that
> Catholics are not Christian.

YOU said I use SS as "the basis for claiming that Catholics are not Christian." I asked you to show me WHERE I ever said that. You didn't do that; instead, you snipped your comment out, so that no one could see what I was responding to, misrepresented what I said, and then went on from there to blow more smoke and again do your best to inflame emotions in this list. I could provide so many examples of how you have done this in only about a week or so that it's just slightly less than amazing.

I congratulate you on doing very well in "defending" your "home turf," so to speak. That is obviously how you see yourself and this encounter. It's a shame, but there's little I can do about it.

I will respond to your last long missive over the next few days, possibly even today, though time is running short. One thing is for sure: this brief interchange will be most helpful in writing a response to your book.

In a message dated 97-03-12 23:50:30 EST, you write:

> Mark, I believe in the Trinity because it is a revelation of God, and is
> inherently true, whether it makes other things "make sense" or not. I
> believe in the Trinity because one *must* in order to hold onto everything
> Scripture says about the nature of God.

> Arius felt very differently. And his views were dealt with
> by what authority? Certainly not by Scripture alone.

At this very point, Mark, you err badly. How, indeed, was Arius and Arianism defeated? By councils and the Roman Pope as the Vicar of Christ on earth? Certainly not. In point of fact, Arianism was defeated for one simple reason: it was untrue. Nicea was victorious not because the Pope said it would be---indeed, Liberius gave in under Imperial pressure and signed the Arianized Sirmium Creed---but because what it said about Christ was *true to Scripture.* This is why Arianism was defeated: not because of ST, not because of Magisteriums, but because the truth of God is eternal, and is sufficiently clear in His Word to be known by those whose hearts are sensitive enough to listen.

I'll tell you what, Mark: though you've snipped every single one of these questions out of your posts and ignored them, I'll ask anyway: show me where Athanasius pointed to ST as defined by an infallible Roman magisterium in defending Nicea and the deity of Christ. You should be able to find dozens of such references, *if* your position is true. I can point out *dozens* of passages where Athanasius argues *as I argue* against Arianism, but I can't find a one where he argues like YOU. And the amazing thing is, Athanasius managed to stand firm against Arianism not only without an infallible Pope, but without a canon, too! How in the world did he do it? Same way I do, actually.

> One is hard

- > pressed on the basis of Scripture alone to discover dogmatic
- > certainty concerning the deity of the Holy Spirit.

Really, Mark? I have no problems at all. So the Scriptures are really that muddled and unclear that you can't come up with sufficiently clear testimony to the deity of the Holy Spirit? Acts 5 isn't enough for you, nor Acts 13, nor 1 Corinthians 12, etc.? I see. I guess God mumbled alot when inspiring the Scriptures.

You see, here you provide the classic Roman argument against the sufficiency of Scripture. Keating makes the same allegation in his own works. Yet, the early Fathers who argued these points somehow went to Scripture themselves and managed to make a go of it--and without an infallible canon then, too! How did they do it?

- > Apart from
- > viewing Scripture through the lens of Sacred Tradition, Scripture
- > is rather fuzzy on this and can be read several different way (as
- > patristic period literature itself attests).

Ah, that great lens of Sacred Tradition----your ultimate epistemological presupposition which colors everything else. So thick is that lens in your eye, Mark, that you can see circles as lines, and lines as circles. And no amount of data on the page in front of you can help you to see that you are arguing in a very *small* circle, all the while saying you aren't. I don't want your lens, Mark. You can keep your ST glasses. I prefer this one:

(Psa 119:18) Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.

The Psalmist does not pray, "Oh place the lens of Sacred Tradition in my eye that I might be able to make out truth from the blurry, fuzzy mess that is Sacred Scripture." The "Wonderful things" are right there in God's law: it's spiritual insight that is needed, not Roman authority.

- > I agree the Trinity
- > is revealed (even though it is a development of doctrine).

The Trinity is revealed in the Incarnation: the NT is the record of its revelation. Creedal precision is a development based upon Scripture, not ST.

- > In
- > exactly the same way, I think the Immaculate Conception and all
- > the other developments of doctrine in the Catholic communion are
- > revealed (even though they too are later developments).

Not even an iota of similarity, of course.

- > What I
- > can't for the life of me understand is why the Trinitarian
- > developments are good while the others are bad and contrary to
- > Scripture and of such gravity that they actually make the Catholic
- > communion non-Christian. I daresay Arius said the same of the
- > post-Nicaea Church.

< chuckle > The Trinity is a revealed doctrine, based upon the broadest, deepest testimony of Scripture one can imagine. One can trace it to the most primitive of Christian writers after the Apostles. In contrast, Roman dogmas like the Immaculate Conception, Bodily Assumption, Papal Infallibility, indulgences, and the like, find no testimony in Scripture *whatsoever,* and are unknown in the very same documents I can point to in the post-apostolic period that testify to Trinitarian doctrine. And as for Arius, your church history needs some brushing up. Arius liked the post-Nicene Church, since it became Arian quite quickly. Haven't you ever read Jerome's statement, concerning that dark period of Arian ascendancy following Nicea? He described it as a time when "the whole world groaned and was astonished to find itself Arian" (Adversus Luciferianus, 19).

- > But we are getting somewhere here, I think. It seems you are saying that
- > your view of ST cannot be proven: that this viewpoint, since it forms the
- > ultimate presupposition of your epistemology, is beyond logical proof, for
- > that is the nature of all ultimate presuppositions.

- > It is not a presupposition. It is a conclusion. God is the
- > source of all authority. He cannot be grasped by the human mind.
- > It does not follow from this that a human being can therefore say
- > (as you do) "Because Tradition cannot be proven, my Bible is from
- > God. Don't ask why I think so. It's an ultimate presupposition

> and that's that."

It is a presupposition, whether you wish to admit it or not, Mark. It is the "lens in your eye," as you put it. That lens gives shape and form to everything else. How can it be a conclusion, when you admit it is the grid through which you read everything else? Also, I didn't say, "Don't ask why I think so." I've never said such a thing, and by now, you should know that. More straw-men.

> Your book came from somewhere. It came from the Body of Christ (a
> body which extends back in time before the Incarnation, since the
> Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world).

It came from the mouth of God, not the Body of Christ. It is God's message *to* the Body of Christ. Your lens is in the way again, Mark.

> You have been
> telling us, in essence, that you know somehow this Book is from
> God. You have yet to tell us how you know this. You just do.
> It's an ultimate presupposition thing and I wouldn't understand.

Oh, you *should* understand, Mark, but you've invested your life and reputation in a different viewpoint, so you *won't* understand. I can just see someone standing in the audience when Jesus uttered those words you've ignored in Matthew 22 (indeed, you've ignored all the Scripture passages I've cited as far as I can see) and saying, "Hey, well, that's your opinion, Rabbi. You need some external infallible authority, say, off in Rome somewhere, to tell you that God really spoke those words back in Genesis." I guess Jesus' word wouldn't be good enough for you: you need to put a mediator inbetween that is what, more trustworthy or something?

"Yeah, hath God said?" is an old saw, Mark. I wouldn't want to be caught using it with such regularity. What's more, since you don't answer that question with any more infallible certainty than *I* do, what's the beef?

> Meanwhile, the Catholic Faith says its revelation is clearly and
> *publically* handed down in both written and unwritten form under
> the guidance of bishops who were consecrated in full view of
> everybody (cf. Irenaeus comments on the credentials of Polycarp
> and his standing in all the Churches of Asia, as well as
> Irenaeus' account of the Roman succession).

Publically handed down, Mark? Great---how about showing us, then, since it was *publically* handed down, a few Fathers in the 2nd century who believed as you believe about the Bodily Assumption or the Bishop of Rome? How about Irenaeus there, or Polycarp? I'd like to see this *public* record of this handing on of these few defined elements of ST. Strange feeling, knowing that something you just wrote is going to be snipped so fast even a Pentium 200 with 64 megs of RAM couldn't keep up.....

> Where'd these bishops and their Scriptures come from?
>
> They tell us: the apostles.
>
> Where'd they get *their* authority? From Jesus. Where's *his*
> authority from? God.
>
> This seems clear to me. Your posts about theopneustos Scripture
> and how it's self-attesting and greater than Tradition and how
> this is all proof that Catholic teaching has mutated into a false
> gospel is, well, not all that clear. Could you make you posts
> more to the point?

Oh Mark, you know the point---that's why you ignore the point. You ignored it in your book, though you must know it is at the heart of the issue. I can say one thing, Mr. Shea: at least I represent my opposition in my published works a whole lot better than you do in yours.

> You compare the attempt to find out what Scripture is with the
> work of Satan ("Has God really said?") and then say...

< groan > My goodness, Mark, do you *practice* creating these misrepresentations? I'd never think to twist someone's words so blatantly and publically!

> So, to maintain logical consistency, the Protestant refuses to go
> this route, and instead owns up to his or her decision to embrace---directly,
> without mediation---the authority of God's speaking *on the basis of its
> inherent nature as theopneustos.*

> I *think* this is closest you've come to an answer. In
> translation, it means "Scripture is that which is god-breathed and
> you can tell what is god-breathed because it's Scripture."

No, Mark, your "translation" is little more than a vain attempt to avoid the obvious, sad to say.

> Yesterday, you chided me for turning my brain over to Rome and not
> being willing to ask the Tough Questions. I am comforted in my
> choice, if this is the best that you have to give. *How* *do*
> *you* *know* *that* this book and not that has an
> inherent theopneustos nature? I know because the Body of Him who
> is Truth has guaranteed it to me. This does not strike me as
> satanic.

> The Roman Catholic may well shake his or her head in pity for my plight.
> But, in reality, I think the Roman Catholic is in no better position,
> despite thinking he or she *is*! You see, while I admit the fallibility of
> my own decisions, the Roman Catholic *should* likewise admit the fallibility
> of his or her own decisions as well, even when it comes to final and
> ultimate authorities.

> Catholics can give *reasons* (based on Sacred Tradition and the
> authority of the Church, which derives from Christ) for believing
> in the authority they do.

> You see, while it may provide some comfort to say, "I don't
> have to struggle with canon issues: the Church tells me what to believe about
> that," such doesn't really relieve you from the possibility of error. As
> anyone can see, all you've done is given over your responsibility to struggle
> in such areas to someone or something else.

> Yes, to God, who promised to guide the Church (not just me) into
> all truth.

> "ultimate authority." That decision is just as fallible and liable to error
> as mine. You can't anymore tell me, infallibly, why you can trust Rome as I
> can tell you that Esther is canonical.

> So, Mark, you see why I can't accept the bare use of your famous question: it
> begs the issue, is based upon all sorts of other things (mainly, your
> epistemological presuppositions about Rome's authority), and quite simply, it
> isn't *fair* to demand an answer of a "loaded" question *without* the full
> discussion that places the issue in its proper setting.

> Okay. So we now know that you have no idea why you believe
> Scripture to be Scripture, and you are certain Catholics are not
> Christian. Catholics, on the contrary, do have good reasons why
> they have a canon of Scripture (reasons I sketch in By What
> Authority?) and are also quite willing to say you are Christian.

> This is clarity... of a sort. It reminds me of the argument
> between Chesterton and the man who was not sure he existed.
> Chesterton was quite sure *he* existed and so told the man that
> he won by default since the other fellow might not be there.

> As I told Greg, I'm not looking for *infallibility* concerning
> your knowledge of what constitutes Scripture. I'm looking for a
> *reason*, any reason at all, why you accept these books of
> Scripture as inspired that does not depend ultimately on the

- > authority of the Church and the Tradition you despise. You seem
- > to be saying above that you regard the books as Scripture for no
- > reason whatsoever. You can do that, of course. But you cannot be
- > expected to be taken seriously when you say "These books which I
- > regard as the word of God for no reason whatsoever condemn all
- > Catholics to hell." Especially since Catholics *do* give reasons
- > for why they hold these books to be Scripture.

In a message dated 97-03-13 14:52:27 EST, you write:

- > This is now the third time this week that James has either said or
- > implied that I am a liar. Each time I have responded with
- > documentation and each time James has simply maintained the
- > assault without the slightest hint of penitence.

This is purely untrue, and anyone with a scintilla of honesty (and a decent archive file) well knows it. You (to slip into a Clintonesque mode) spoke inaccurately when you said I called you an anti-Protestant; when faced with this reality, you lied. You have consistently misrepresented what I have said by refusing to quote me directly and "re-writing" what I said; I have re-posted what I actually wrote, and you have consistently ignored the re-posting of the actual words. This is a classic tactic: when caught being dishonest, attack the other guy, whine and complain about other things, and hope like anything no one will notice. All of this has only one purpose: obscure the fact that you can't, and won't, respond to meaningful criticism of your position.

- > In the meantime,
- > James has evaded, avoided, begged the question, and generally
- > carried on, wriggling under awareness that sooner or later he was
- > going to have to say what he finally said yesterday. To wit:
- >
- > So, to maintain logical consistency, the Protestant refuses to go
- > this route, and instead owns up to his or her decision to embrace---directly,
- > without mediation---the authority of God's speaking *on the basis of its
- > inherent nature as theopneustos.*
- >
- > This, gentle reader, is the "explanation" which James heaped scorn
- > on my head for being ignorant of.

I.e., I pointed out that Mark Shea has gone into print without taking the time to study the issue carefully and to read responsible presentations that are relevant to his conclusions. A terrible thing for me to do, to be sure!

- > This is what James chided me
- > for not having a firm grasp of when I said in my reply to him that
- > there are no good reasons for sola scriptura. Yet what does
- > James' statement come down to but the proud boast that God's word
- > cannot be verified and that therefore... there are no reasons for
- > sola scriptura and that, indeed, there cannot, by the nature of
- > the case, *be* reason!

The sad thing is, Mark, that there will be people who will accept your contorted and twisted misrepresentations and inane reasonings without a second thought. But really, Mr. Shea, do you think *everyone* is so gullible as to read what I wrote (in its context---something you are masterful at ignoring!) and then read your re-writing of it, and *not* come to the conclusion that you can't possibly be taken seriously? Come now, you've got to be kidding!

- > We know Mark is theopneustos how? "Directly, without mediation."
- > We just know. It's an ultimate presupposition thing, you wouldn't
- > understand. By this same "ultimate presupposition" we know that
- > Scripture is the sole source of revelation. How? "Directly,
- > without mediation." It is because I say it is. It's another
- > ultimate presupposition thing and you wouldn't understand (but I
- > should read The Roman Catholic Controversy so I can clearly
- > *know* that James says there is no reason, there can *be* no
- > reason for believing Scripture since it just *is* Scripture. If I
- > don't I'm astonishing ignorant to assert that there can be no good
- > reasons for sola scriptura.)

On the slightly off-hand chance that you are *really* as confused as the above paragraph makes you look, I should try, one last time, to disabuse you of your false conceptions. It is possible, I guess, that you have never studied epistemology. It is possible, though highly unlikely, that you really don't get the issue at hand, really don't understand that your alleged infallible knowledge of the canon or nature of Scripture is really based upon a fallible acceptance of an external authority. Hence, you *may* be twisting everything I say simply due to a massive case of confusion, lack of reading and study, etc. I say it's *possible,* but Mark, after this past week or so of reading your posts, I'm highly skeptical.

- > I said that it seemed to me that my Evangelical friends were
- > saying "We know Scripture is the totality of revelation because we
- > know the totality of revelation is Scripture." This seems to me
- > to be circular. James now purports to give a philosophical basis
- > for it. God's word written need not (and apparently cannot) be
- > verified.
- >
- > That's it. That's all.

You admit you cannot provide an external verification for the ultimate authority of ST; I point out why: ultimate epistemological presuppositions do not admit of external verification. I say the same about Scripture. You don't address this---perhaps you cannot, or will not, for it sheds too much light on your own position, I don't know. But in either case, you confuse the epistemological discussion of ultimate authorities with the idea that no arguments can be given in support of a particular position. Seemingly you don't understand the difference between providing an internal critique of your opponents position based upon his own presuppositions and the presuppositions themselves. Likewise, you errantly assert that the Protestant cannot provide a defense of the internal consistency of his beliefs based upon his presuppositions simply because the Protestant is honestly willing to admit the *place* of those presuppositions. All of this only proves, Mark, that you have rushed into print without doing your homework. Your book is badly flawed for this reason, and perhaps that is why you are so dead-set against allowing this discussion to take place honestly and fairly without the blatant attempts at ad-hominem and "lets get the emotional level of things as high as possible here" tactics.

- > Yet Scripture itself testifies that God's Word *Incarnate*
- > positively *surrounds* himself with verifications. The witness of
- > the Baptist, of his miracles, of the Father, of the apostles, of
- > the Spirit, of the Prophets, of the Church down through the ages.
- > He doesn't seem to mind having his claims verified a bit ("If you
- > do not believe me, believe the miracles," he says in John.) But
- > James' God will brook no inquiry (a strange thing for a Professor
- > of *Apologetics* to say.)

Indeed---it should strike you as strange indeed. Perhaps you have misrepresented me? Misunderstood? Deleted too many of my points in the editing process? Something like that.

- > He compares the question "How can you
- > tell what is Scripture?" to the words of Satan "Has God really
- > said?"

I compared your demand for an exterior verification of the ultimate authority of God's speaking to Satan's temptation---it is not my fault you can't tell the difference, Mark.

- > He hems, he haws, he buries us in prose and he hopes that
- > people will not notice that the theologian has no clothes. God's
- > word (what's that, James?) is theopneustos (how do you tell what
- > is theopneustos?).

I gladly hand you the title of chief of rhetoric, hemming, hawing, and the like. I can't hold a candle to you on that level.

- > James has cited irrelevancies like the fact that the canon of
- > Scripture is fuzzy for centuries in order to prove somehow that
- > our knowledge of Scripture does not depend on Tradition and the
- > authority of the Body of Him who is Truth.

I would LOVE to have you come out and debate the canon of Scripture in public against me, Mark. That would be *so* enjoyable. Gerry Matatics did it at Boston College a few years back---how about you? You see, your rhetorical skills in writing in a catholic list might allow you to throw about such terms as "irrelevancies," but in a public debate with the audience right in front of you---well, such tactics don't work very well. I'm sure you hope that everyone will think that those historical facts (which you have consistently ignored throughout this dialogue) are "irrelevant," since your book assumes the canonicity of the

Apocrypha from the first time you mention it.

- > He has waved
- > infallibility around as though it were germane to the argument.

Hmm, you claim an infallible knowledge of the canon because of the word of an infallible Church, but infallibility is not relevant. I see.

- > It is not. I am (as my book shows) fully and completely aware
- > that the Church's grasp of what was and was not Scripture is
- > rather blurry at first and only come into focus sharply at Trent.
- > Big deal.

Yeah, Big Deal! Just because everyone from Pentecost to 1545 had to function as de facto Protestants is IRRELEVANT to the fact that the MUST now function on a different basis! Everyone close your eyes to this glaring historical inconsistency! Todo, I don't think we are in Kansas anymore. Is this Rome?

- > I repeat: I am not wondering whether James can know the canon
- > *infallibly* apart from Tradition and the authority of the Body
- > of Him Who is Truth, I am wondering how the hell he knows it *at
- > all*.

How the what, Mark? Oh, I forgot: RC's don't sweat language like that. I keep forgetting that part of things. Anyway, since you won't discuss Tradition (or even define it meaningfully), nor the "authority" of the "Body" and all, but simply accept what Rome tells you all those things mean, there is no meaningful answer to your question. Of course, it's designed that way: it's not meant to promote truth in the first place. And obviously, as this dialogue has shown, neither is your book.

< further straw men, misrepresentations, and the like, deleted, as all were addressed above >

- > My reply to this is threefold:
- >
- > A) The Jesus Seminar says, "Thank you, James. We agree with you
- > that there is no *reason* for calling this Scripture. You just
- > do. We just don't.

No, the Jesus Seminar reads Mark Shea's book and says, "Oh, I see: this is Scripture because a bunch of prelates got together in a small town called Trent, took orders from headquarters in Rome, and wrote down a canon. We see. Sorry, we don't buy that. And at least today, we can do so without getting burned alive for our refusal to do so."

- > B) The Catholic Church says Scripture is the written aspect of the
- > Tradition and cannot be separated from the life of the Church
- > without catastrophe such as James has demonstrated by abandoning
- > any reason at all for calling it inspired and simply declaring it
- > so.

I've already shown that it is a lie to say there is no reason---your unwillingness to honestly portray the facts only militates against your position.

- > C) I say, I have now finished my contribution to this thread.
- > James came on the list, spoiling for a fight, brimming with
- > sarcasm, contempt, insults and repeated assaults on my character,
- > ready to rip Sacred Tradition apart.

I will gladly allow God to determine my motivations and the truth of your accusations, Mark. The archives don't lie.

- > He has, instead, been
- > forced, after persistent questioning by a number of list members
- > (and an amazingly vast and varied attempt at evasion) to expose
- > his own non-existent "reasons" for holding the position he does.
- > His answer to the question "How do you tell what is Scripture?"
- > is, in the final analysis, "I can't. I just *say* it's
- > theopneustos. It's an ultimate presupposition thing and you
- > wouldn't understand."
- >

- > It's true, James. I don't understand. I will never understand.
- > Especially when the Church *can* give a coherent account of its
- > Scripture based on Tradition and the divinely delegated authority
- > of Christ she has received.
- >
- > You are welcome to the last word. I'm done talking about this
- > stuff now.

I'm sure you are, Mark, and so am I. But I close with this: I believe you are the one who has resorted to insults, evasion, and all sorts of dishonesty, from your very first post. What's more, I can document that claim. Now, I believe you have done so because your position can't stand up to real scrutiny. So I leave you with this: I will gladly engage you in a three-hour, moderated, public debate, audio and video recording welcome for distribution of tapes, on the topic of sola scriptura, or the canon of Scripture. One on one, no means of hiding behind cheap shots and an electronic screen. I am confident of the outcome. How about you, Mark?

In a message dated 97-03-17 12:43:35 EST, you write:

- > I have not seen any of your posts since I finished my
- > contributions on last week. However, a friend has contacted me to
- > tell me (if I understand him correctly) that you have said
- > something to the effect that our conversation has provided you
- > with material for some future book. When you came on this list,
- > you did so ostensibly because you were planning on a "review" of
- > By What Authority for your Web page. I had and have no intention
- > of assisting you in writing another anti-Catholic book. If, by
- > your remarks, you mean to imply that you intend to take anything I
- > have written on b.l.catholic and publish it in a book for profit,
- > I wish to point out the following.

< rofl >

Paranoia seems to be at epidemic portions. I'd suggest you read the replies yourself, Mark. Relying on others is a dangerous route to take. I only intend to do exactly as I said: to review your book. Needless to say, the review will hardly be any more positive than it would have been otherwise, but in reality, little has changed from when I first read it: my first impression was that your arguments are surface level, and, my impression upon trying to get you to honestly deal with a criticism of your position is the same: your arguments are surface level.

- > This being so, as sole holder of copyright on everything I have
- > written on b.l.catholic, I expressly deny you permission to
- > publish anything I have written here in any form whatsoever,
- > whether print or electronic, audio or visual media.
- >
- > I am cc'ing this notice to Charles Smith, the manager of
- > b.l.Catholic and to the list itself. I am confident that you will
- > observe United States Copyright Law.

I'd do that if I were you: the persona you present in your book is vastly different than the one you have presented here. BTW, you have my permission to post everything I wrote to you anywhere you'd like to post it. *I* am not ashamed of anything I have written.

I will simply note in my review that 1) Mark Shea was so concerned that his responses to my questions not be made available in any other forum, he specifically e-mailed me, citing copyright law, and denying any permission to reproduce anything he wrote; 2) I gave him permission to reproduce all of my posts at any time he wanted, noting that I was not ashamed of anything I had written; 3) note that, as of the date of my review, the messages could still be accessed through www.dejanews.com; 4) provide the listserv@american.edu address for information on how to access the archives.

BTW, what *I* write in response to you in those same messages *is* my property, according to those same laws, and I have full ability to post *that* material in my review.

I repeat my challenge to you to public debate on this issue (since you didn't bother to read anything more I had to say, you probably missed that); I further challenge you to written debate on the same topic--except such a debate would require that both sides allow what they write to actually be *read* by a wide audience. Again, *I* have no problems with allowing what *I*

write to be disseminated as widely as is practically possible. How about you, Mark?

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ISSUE AND INTERCHANGE

The goal of this regular feature is to provide our readers with opposing arguments on topics pertinent to the Christian life. We normally omit the names of the authors in this feature, but the topic of debate for this special issue -- the doctrine of Sola Scriptura -- is no typical inter family-of-faith dispute, but rather it is one which challenges the foundations of any such debate. This interchange, therefore, is particularly conducive to dropping the usual practice of anonymity.<

Presenting a Biblical case against Sola Scriptura is Gerald Matatics, a former minister in the Presbyterian Church in America and currently a full-time staff apologist for Catholic Answers in San Diego, CA. Mr. Matatics holds a B.A. in classical, NT, and patristic Greek, an M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Seminary, and is completing his dissertation for a Ph.D. in biblical studies at Westminster Theological Seminary. He, together with his wife and children, was received into the Catholic Church in Easter of 1986.

Presenting a Biblical case for Sola Scriptura is Douglas Jones, an elder in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the editor of *Antithesis*. Mr. Jones holds a B.A. in philosophy from the University of California and an M.A. in philosophy from the University of Southern California. He currently teaches Greek at New St. Andrews College and philosophy at the University of Idaho and Lewis-Clark State College.

As usual, the burden of proof in the interchange is placed on the advocate of the affirmative, in this case Mr. Jones. For that reason, Mr. Jones opens and closes the debate.

ISSUE: Does Scripture Teach *Sola Scriptura*?

- [Jones: Scripture Teaches That the Word of God is the Supreme Norm](#) (28k)
 - [Matatics: The Word of God is the Supreme Norm, but According to Scripture Itself, God's Word is Not Entirely Contained Within Scripture Alone](#) (22k)
 - [Jones Responds](#) (26k)
 - [Matatics Responds](#) (26k)
 - [Jones' Closing Statement](#) (7k)
-

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