

The Gospel of Rome:
Investigating the Claims of the Roman Catholic Church

Mark Edward Sohmer

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Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical quotations are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

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Introduction:

My first experience with the Roman Catholic Church came a few months after I became a Christian. I was 20 years old, and a new believer in Jesus. Everything was exciting about being a Christian. The Bible was new, my faith was new, and Jesus was new! I tried to learn all I could about my new Savior who loved me so much.

I was invited to attend Roman Catholic Mass, so I thought it would be worthwhile to check it out. After all, the Roman Catholic Church is the largest church on the planet with one billion+ members!



Since I didn't know much about Roman Catholicism, I looked forward to my first Mass with great anticipation.

Mass appeared on the exterior to be quite different than what I was used to at the Evangelical church I had been attending. In contrast to the informal worship service I was accustomed to, the Mass was very structured, with the priest and congregation reciting their lines from memory. There was a lot of standing and sitting, and everyone but me seemed to know the liturgy.

Despite those differences, I concluded that Mass was a lot more similar to my new faith than different.

They used the Bible, had communion, and, most importantly, talked about Jesus; all of which we did at my church as well!

I believe that many Christians come to a similar conclusion about the Roman Catholic Church: perhaps Rome is a bit more liturgical or formal than we're used to, but they're basically another Christian denomination.

The purpose of this essay is to test whether or not it is true that the Roman Catholic Church is basically another Christian denomination.

Please understand that this essay is not a "bashing" of Roman Catholics. My purpose is to bring to light truths about Roman Catholicism that are vital to understand, yet known by very few.

The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the true "Mother Church" and invites the "separated brethren" (non-Catholics) to return home. This essay seeks to serve as a

maternity test, subjecting Rome's maternal claim to the DNA testing of the Word of God. If it's true that Rome is the true "Mother Church," then all non-Catholics must run to her, forsaking our prodigal ways. If, however, the Word of God proves this claim to be false, then we owe Rome no allegiance, and must lovingly warn others from being lured into her embrace.

If you're a Roman Catholic and you're reading this essay, then I implore you to use the Bible to test what your church has infallibly decreed, because the Bible is what God has infallibly decreed.

This essay simply presents historical statements and positions of the Roman Catholic Church, many of which the church, particularly in America, is reluctant to reveal. When one understands the official beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church and compares them with the beliefs of the historic Christian church, one must conclude there is a mortal difference.

The stakes are very high. If the Roman Catholic Church is, as it claims, the true church of God founded on Saint Peter, then every Christian must run to Rome for salvation! If, however, Rome is found to be an imposter, then we must run from Rome with all vigor and haste.

There is no arguing against the fact that the Roman Catholic Church, with its history, art, and colossal number of followers, is one of the most impressive faiths in the history of mankind. But the measuring stick for truth is not found in these things. As Christians, we know that the measure of truth is found in the Bible, the Word of God.

My prayer is that this essay will be a blessing and encouragement to you, and that we will all glorify our God and King by not only studying and knowing the truth, but by following it and doing it as well.

God bless you!

Mark Edward Sohmer
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mark@sohmer.net

What Roman Catholics Are Supposed To Believe:

It can be very confusing to pin down what Catholics are supposed to believe because there is great diversity in what one priest teaches versus another. It is not uncommon for one priest to consider an act a “mortal sin,” for instance, while another priest considers the very same act to be merely a “venial sin.” So it is understandable that rank-and-file Catholics are sometimes confused as to what they are supposed to believe.

Despite differences in what individual priests may teach, the Church has been very clear throughout its history on the official doctrines that are to be believed by every Roman Catholic. As we will see, the Church has meticulously affirmed the official teachings in many councils, creeds, and proclamations.

The following doctrines are official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church as taught by official Catholic sources, and are required beliefs for Roman Catholics:

- Papal Proclamations, as well as Church Councils, are infallible, and equal to Scripture
- Salvation by Works
- Baptismal Regeneration (“Salvation by Baptism”)
- Substitution of “Penance” for “Repentance”
- We must confess to a priest
- We must be cleansed in Purgatory
- The Church can lessen Purgatory through indulgences
- Indulgences are possible because of Christ, Mary, and other saints
- The Pope is Christ’s representative on earth and is infallible in proclamations
- The bread and wine of communion are literally and miraculously Christ’s body and blood
- Christ’s sacrifice is repeated literally in every Mass over and over again
- Mary was sinless
- Mary’s body was brought to heaven
- Mary intermediates to Christ on behalf of man
- The Church encourages the worship of idols and dead saints
- Church tradition is equal to the Bible
- The Church has added an additional 7 books to the Bible called the “Apocrypha” or “Deuterocanonical” books
- The Roman Catholic Church is the only true church, and is infallible
- Condemns to hell anyone who disagrees with baptismal regeneration, salvation by works, the Pope, etc.

Not “Bashing,” But “Testing”:

The purpose of this essay is not to “bash” or demean Roman Catholics; quite the contrary! Out of love for Roman Catholics, this essay will go through each of the above doctrines, show where the church has taught each one, and show from the Bible whether or not each doctrine is actually something God wants us to believe. As Christians, our

goal should be to believe the things that God wants us to believe - and nothing more. It is unloving to see someone believing something wrong and not tell them about it.

The Bible tells us: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

The Bible commands us to “try the spirits whether they are on God.” We do this by testing what they teach against what God has revealed in His Word. As the Apostle John said, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). The purpose of this essay is to uncover the truth.

Papal Proclamations, as well as Church Councils, are Infallible, and Equal to Scripture:

In this essay we will be heavily quoting from Papal proclamations as well as ecumenical Church councils. The reason for this is because the Catholic Church has decreed that these instruments, when speaking on “faith and morals” are infallible.

In short, if you want to know what the Roman Catholic Church *officially teaches* about something, and what Roman Catholics are *supposed to believe*, you look to the papal proclamations and ecumenical councils.

The Catholic Encyclopedia defines “infallibility” as:

In general, exemption or immunity from liability to error or failure; in particular in theological usage, the supernatural prerogative by which the Church of Christ is, by a special Divine assistance, preserved from liability to error in her definitive dogmatic teaching regarding matters of faith and morals... more than exemption from actual error; it means exemption from the possibility of error.¹

The first Vatican Council decreed the following:

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 or 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 in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable.²

¹ Catholic Encyclopedia, Infallibility, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07790a.htm>

² Vatican I, Session 4, 1869 – 1870 AD

Here we see very clearly that the Pope, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, miraculously is preserved from even the possibility of error. Also important to note is that the decrees are irrefrangible; i.e. they can't be legitimately changed later.

In regard to the councils, the Catholic Encyclopedia asserts:

All the arguments which go to prove the infallibility of the Church apply with their fullest force to the infallible authority of general councils in union with the pope.³

That an ecumenical council... is an organ of infallibility will not be denied by anyone who admits that the Church is endowed with infallible doctrinal authority.⁴

So when testing the claims of the Roman Catholic Church, let us take great care to determine what Rome teaches based on official papal decrees and official ecumenical councils.

Roman Catholic Plan of Salvation:

Roman Catholicism offers a “plan of salvation” based on the individual Roman Catholic’s merits, or works.

The Council of Trent, in countering the Protestant teaching that we are saved by grace apart from works, made the following very clear proclamations:

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 its increase, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA⁵.

Notice the phrase “the cause of its increase.” The infallible council has proclaimed that it is our good works that *causes* justification to increase.

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, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA⁶.

Again, it is clear that Rome does not subscribe to salvation by “faith alone.”

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

³ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, General Councils, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04423f.htm>

⁴ *ibid*, Infallibility, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07790a.htm>

⁵ Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 6, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 24

⁶ *ibid*, Canon 9

that the one justified by the good works that he performs by the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, does not truly merit an increase of grace, eternal life, and in case he dies in grace, the attainment of eternal life itself and also an increase of glory, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA⁷.

With this canon, Rome has decreed that our salvation is due to our own merits.

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 ANATHEMA⁸.

Interestingly, "the gospel" could accurately be defined as, "confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, and it is this confidence alone that justifies us." Yet Rome emphatically anathematizes anyone who holds to that definition. We shall shortly see that the Bible holds the exact position Rome anathematizes.

Anathema:

As we read through many of the infallible councils, we will note that many of the canons end with the phrase "let him be anathema." The following is what the Roman Catholic Church means when they use the term "anathema."

Anathema signifies also to be overwhelmed with maledictions, as in I Cor., xvi, 22: "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." At an early date the Church adopted the word anathema to signify the exclusion of a sinner from the society of the faithful; but the anathema was pronounced chiefly against heretics. All the councils, from the Council of Nicea to that of the Vatican, have worded their dogmatic canons: "If any one says . . . let him be anathema". Nevertheless, although during the first centuries the anathema did not seem to differ from the sentence of excommunication, beginning with the sixth century a distinction was made between the two. A Council of Tours desires that after three warnings... he may fall into the curse of Judas, and "that he may be not only excommunicated, but anathematized, and that he may be stricken by the sword of Heaven". This distinction was introduced into the canons of the Church, as is proved by the letter of John VIII (872-82) found in the Decree of Gratian... "Know that Engeltrude is not only under the ban of excommunication, which separates her from the society of the brethren, but under the anathema, which separates from the body of Christ, which is the Church."⁹

⁷ *ibid*, Canon 32

⁸ *ibid*, Canon 12

⁹ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Anathema, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01455e.htm>

Anathema is more than mere excommunication, but goes further to actually be “stricken by the sword of Heaven,” separated from the body of Christ.

The Biblical Plan of Salvation:

We’ve seen that the Roman Catholic Church has been very clear in its infallible proclamations that our own merits are necessary for salvation, (i.e. being made right with God, or being justified.) The Bible likewise is very clear about what is necessary for salvation.

In countering the Galatian heretics who taught that one needed to follow the Law of Moses in order to be saved, the Apostle Paul infallibly wrote:

“Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be **justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law**: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16, emphasis mine).

The “works of the law” are acts that we perform, and Paul made it clear that nobody will ever be right with God based on his or her own works. Here “faith” is clearly contrasted with “works.”

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10).

Paul’s warning against trusting in your own works is even stronger here, calling anyone who trusts in the law “under the curse.” Why? Because it is impossible to fulfil the Law! Nobody is good enough, so it is a curse to seek to be justified that way. Compare this with what he wrote in Romans 3:10: “There is none righteous, no, not one.”

“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, emphasis mine).

This verse counters all that Rome has said on the subject. Indeed we are saved by grace, and not by works! And we should be very thankful for that because if salvation were by works, none of us would be good enough to achieve it. The Apostle Paul understood, as should we, that believing in salvation by works, as Rome does, is due to having an inappropriate and inaccurate view of man’s goodness. The Bible teaches that we have no goodness in and of ourselves that would impress God and prompt him to grant us eternal life. When we understand the Biblical concept of our total depravity, then we realize the ridiculousness of believing in works salvation.

To the church at Philippi, Paul wrote:

“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 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” (Philippians 3:8-9, emphasis mine).

Notice the wording “not having mine own righteousness.” If Paul, the great apostle, had no righteousness to earn salvation, then neither can we!

And there are many more Bible verses that show consistently and conclusively that salvation is by grace and not by works:

“**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; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That **being justified by his grace**, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7, emphasis mine).

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20).

“Being **justified freely by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24, emphasis mine).

“Therefore **we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law**” (Romans 3:28, emphasis mine).

In Romans, chapter 11, Paul concludes:

“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Romans 11:5-6).

The Bible is clear: grace plus works does not equal grace!!!

Bible teacher John MacArthur summed up the gospel as, “Christ’s righteousness imputed to you; your sin to Him.”¹⁰

¹⁰ MacArthur, John, *The Pope and the Papacy*, <http://www.gty.org>

Eternal Life:

Not only does Rome teach salvation by works, but also teaches that through our works we can lose our salvation.

Roman Catholicism teaches that the “grace of justification” can be gained and lost, gained and lost. Trent said,

“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. (Council of Trent, session 6, ‘Decree on Justification,’ chapter 14)”¹¹

Jesus promised eternal life based on what he had done. The Word of God promises: “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).

It’s that simple. We who know Jesus can **know** that we have (present tense) eternal life. You can’t have eternal life for a while and then not have it. Can you imagine someone saying, “Yeah, I had eternal life for ten minutes?”

What’s so eternal about that?

Jesus said: “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 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 6:39-40).

The Bible is clear that we can know that eternal life is our present possession. Yet Rome teaches that you can lose your salvation.

Implications of the Roman Catholic Plan of Salvation:

James White insightfully points out the implications of Rome’s plan of salvation:

“Works-salvation” would refer to the concept that human works are necessary for salvation; that is, that the work of Christ, in and of itself, without human works, actually saves no one at all. If it is asserted that Christ’s work is dependent upon the actions of humankind, and that God has simply made a way of salvation available that is still dependent upon

¹¹ White, James R., *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, Bethany House Publishers, 1996, p. 133

works (whether these be penances, baptism, whatever), this is “works-salvation.”¹²

White is spot-on; if Rome is correct, then Jesus doesn’t save anyone. If Rome is correct, then we can boast when we get to heaven.

John Ankerberg and John Weldon point out what is required for Roman Catholics to get into heaven:

In sharp contrast to the Bible, the Catholic doctrine of salvation teaches or implies that actual forgiveness of sins comes not only by faith in Christ, but also through many or all of the following: a) the sacraments, such as baptism and penance, b) participation in the Mass, c) the help of the virgin Mary, d) recitation of the rosary, and e) purgatorial suffering after death.¹³

D. James Kennedy summarizes this way:

I was just reading some of the things which [The Roman Catholic Church] tells a person they must do in order to receive the grace of justification. Consider these things: they must love and worship God, to pray, fasting, they must love one’s neighbor, they must 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.”¹⁴

Biblical Justification Versus Roman Catholic Justification:

White outlines four differences between Biblical Justification and Roman Catholic Justification:

1. We differ on the meaning and extent of the term “justification.”
2. We differ on the meaning of the term “impute” or “imputation.”
3. We differ on the means by which justification takes place. Is it faith alone, or faith plus works?
4. Finally, we differ on the grounds or basis upon which sinful people can be justified.

¹² White, pp. 130-131

¹³ Ankerberg, John & Weldon, John, *The Facts on Roman Catholicism*, Harvest House Publishers, 1993, p. 20

¹⁴ Kennedy, D. James, *Irreconcilable Differences - Catholics Evangelicals and the New Quest for Unity*, <http://www.gty.org>

When God imputes the righteousness of Christ to us, He is again acting as sovereign judge, crediting us with the works of another: Jesus Christ. He is not merely handing us something, for we could drop such a precious gift or in some other way fail to properly handle it. He is not infusing something into us, making a change in us as a person. Instead, as judge, He imputes to our account the righteousness of another, so that He can properly and rightly look at us and say, "This person is righteous. He is free and has peace with me."¹⁵

R. C. Sproul points out the dilemma of those who hold to Rome's plan of salvation:

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; the issue was "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.¹⁶

As when we analyze any religious system, it is vital that we define our words accurately. One error of Catholicism is that they make no distinction between *justification* and *sanctification*.

In Roman Catholic theology justification and sanctification are synonymous; in Protestant theology a very important distinction is made between the two terms. God changes us in regeneration and sanctification; God declares us righteous in justification. Anyone who is justified will be sanctified. It is impossible to separate justification and sanctification, but it is absolutely necessary to distinguish them.¹⁷

Luther's Dunghill:

Martin Luther used a dunghill to illustrate our salvation. Imagine an offensive, odorous dunghill. Luther used this image to describe how we are before salvation. Continuing the analogy, Luther described salvation as God covering the dunghill with a pure blanket.

James White writes:

...in the same way, the believer is not changed subjectively by justification, but is covered over with an 'alien righteousness,' the 'righteousness of another,' that being the righteousness of Christ...

¹⁵ White, pp. 141-142

¹⁶ Sproul, R. C., *Irreconcilable Differences*

¹⁷ White, p. 145

From Rome's viewpoint, the 'grace of justification' actually changes the dunghill into a pile of gold, so that, since it is now pleasing to God, it merits eternal life. As we noted from Karl Keating,

"The soul becomes objectively pleasing to God and so merits heaven. It merits heaven because now it is actually good." (Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, 1998, pp.167-168)

Now surely it would seem that such an illustration is far more attractive than Luther's dunghill. However, if we probe a bit further, we realize the subtle danger that Luther saw so clearly. In Rome's concept, that pile of gold can, by the commission of a mortal sin, be instantly transformed back into a pile of dung! Through the commission of venial sins and through the imperfect performance of penances, the pile of gold can become impure, so that spots of dung again cling to its shiny surface.¹⁸

In contrast to Rome's view of changing the dunghill into gold, the Bible teaches that God covers the dunghill.

Ankerberg and Weldon describe the situation this way:

The Bible teaches that justification is God's work of grace in Christ declaring the believer righteous. It is not God's work of grace in man to actually make him righteous, which is sanctification.¹⁹

In his excellent book, *Conversations with Catholics*, James McCarthy wrote:

Furthermore, what the Catholic Church calls grace is not grace at all. Roman Catholic grace is something that affixes to the soul. Catholics obtain it initially through baptism. It increases through reception of the Eucharist and other sacraments. Additional Catholic grace can be earned by performing good works. It can also be lost by committing a mortal sin, and regained through the sacrament of confession.²⁰

From the day that a Catholic is baptized until the day he dies, he is on probation with God. Life is a trial during which he must prove by his faith and obedience that he is worthy of heaven. His eternal salvation hangs in the balance.²¹

¹⁸ White, p. 157

¹⁹ Ankerberg & Weldon, p. 30

²⁰ McCarthy, James G., *Conversations with Catholics*, Harvest House Publishers, 1997, p. 47

²¹ *ibid*, p. 42

And C. D. Cole expressed the dire situation of the Roman Catholic like this:

Romanism is a complicated system of salvation by works. It offers salvation on the installment plan, then sees to it that the poor sinner is always behind in his payments, so that when he dies there is a large unpaid balance, and he must continue payments by sufferings in purgatory, or until the debt is paid by the prayer, alms, and sufferings of his living relatives and friends. The whole system and plan calls for merit and money from the cradle to the grave and even beyond. Surely the wisdom that drew such a plan of salvation is not from above.²²

Listen to the words of the Roman Catholic theologian Ludwig Ott:

The reason for the uncertainty of the state of grace lies in this that without a special revelation nobody can with certainty of faith know whether or not he has fulfilled all the conditions which are necessary for achieving justification.²³

Please note the language Ott uses: “uncertainty,” “conditions” and “achieving justification.”

Under the Roman Catholic system, one cannot know for certain that he or she is justified.

In stark contrast, the Bible teaches:

“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” (1 John 5:13).

As Christians, the Bible tells us that we can know for certain that we have eternal life, and that we are presently at peace with God.

Peace with God is the **present possession** of the justified believer. This is not a peace that is transient; it is not a mere truce in a war that might again erupt at any time. This is a lasting peace, based upon the permanent cessation of hostilities.²⁴

So the real issue is this: is God’s grace sufficient to bring about justification, or must human merit be added to the grace of God?²⁵

²² Cole, C. D., *Roman Catholicism*, pp. 257-258

²³ Ott, Ludwig, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, TAN, 1974, p. 262

²⁴ White, p. 160, emphasis mine

²⁵ *ibid*, p. 146

James Chapter 2:

The second chapter of James' epistle is a key scriptural hotbed when debating salvation by faith versus works.

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?... Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone... But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:14,17,20-21,24,26).

So there it is! The Bible says that Abraham was “justified by works!” And then it says, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” Shouldn't that be the end of the discussion?

Not exactly. As with any Bible passage, we must look at the context to understand what is being discussed. In Romans, chapter 4, Paul states explicitly that Abraham was justified by faith. To make his case, Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 at Romans 4:3.

“And [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

In James chapter 2, James says that Abraham was justified by works. But James did not appeal to Genesis chapter 15 like Paul did. To back up his claim, James appealed to the story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac, which happened in Genesis chapter 22.

Paul was speaking of Abraham being made right with God (salvation) which happened in Genesis chapter 15. James' use of the word “justify” is an entirely different thing than Paul. James referred to Genesis chapter 22, but Abraham had already been justified (in the sense of “being made right with God”) seven chapters before!

So there is no conflict between Paul's claim that Abraham was justified by faith and James' claim that Abraham was justified by works.

[In James chapter 2], to ‘justify’ does not mean to be reconciled to God but to demonstrate the truth of a prior claim.²⁶

Pastor John MacArthur sheds light on this passage as follows:

2:14 if someone says. This important phrase governs the interpretation of the entire passage. James does not say that this person actually has faith, but that he claims to have it...

²⁶ Sproul, R. C., *New Geneva Study Bible*

does not have. Again, the verb's form describes someone who continually lacks any external evidence of the faith he routinely claims...

Can faith save him? Better translated, "Can that kind of faith save?" James is not disputing the importance of faith. Rather, he is opposing the notion that saving faith can be a mere intellectual exercise void of a commitment to active obedience... The grammatical form of the question demands a negative answer.

2:21 justified by works. This does not contradict Paul's clear teaching that Abraham was justified before God by grace alone through faith alone (Rom. 3:20; 4:1–25; Gal. 3:6,11). For several reasons, James cannot mean that Abraham was constituted righteous before God because of his own good works:

1. James already stressed that salvation is a gracious gift (1:17,18);
2. in the middle of this disputed passage (v. 23), James quoted Gen. 15:6, which forcefully claims that God credited righteousness to Abraham solely on the basis of his faith... and
3. the work that James said justified Abraham was his offering up of Isaac (Gen. 22:9,12), an event that occurred many years after he first exercised faith and was declared righteous before God (Gen. 12:1–7; 15:6).

Instead, Abraham's offering of Isaac demonstrated the genuineness of his faith and the reality of his justification before God. James is emphasizing the vindication before others of a man's claim to salvation. James' teaching perfectly complements Paul's writings; salvation is determined by faith alone (Eph. 2:8,9) and demonstrated by faithfulness to obey God's will alone (Eph. 2:10).²⁷

Bible teacher R. C. Sproul makes James chapter 2 clear like this:

2:14 Can faith save. This introduces the crucial issue of the relationship between faith and works. The question under scrutiny is, What kind of faith is saving faith? James's question is rhetorical; the obvious answer is that faith without works cannot save. Faith that yields no deeds is not saving faith. The New Testament does not teach justification by the profession of faith or the claim to faith; it teaches justification by the possession of true faith.

2:21 justified. James appeals to Abraham as his chief exhibit of one who is justified by his works. This involves no conflict with Paul who also appeals to Abraham as the chief exhibit of one justified by faith. Note that James

²⁷ MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur Study Bible*

appeals to Gen. 22, while Paul appeals to Gen. 15. In the sight of God Abraham is justified in Gen. 15, long before he offers Isaac on the altar. God knew Abraham's faith to be genuine. Abraham is justified to us, to human eyes, in Gen. 22 when he shows his faith through his obedience.

Jesus used the same verb in Luke 7:35 when he declared "wisdom is justified by all her children" (i.e., shown to be genuine wisdom by its results). Here, to "justify" does not mean to be reconciled to God but to demonstrate the truth of a prior claim. Just as true wisdom is demonstrated by its fruit, Abraham's claim to faith is justified by his outward obedience. Yet his works were not the meritorious cause of his salvation; they added no merit to the perfect and sufficient merit of Christ.²⁸

Good Works:

Sometimes Roman Catholics believe that Evangelical Christians are against good works, but this is not the case! All Bible-believing Christians ought to be fully in favor of good works. Good works are the natural fruit of salvation!

"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. For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10, emphasis mine).

Both the Catholic and the Evangelical agree that good works are essential. The debate lies in where good works fit in relation to salvation. Do we perform good works *in order to get saved*? Or do we perform good works *as a result of being saved*?

We have been created in Christ Jesus unto good works - not by good works, not with the help of good works, but that we might perform good works! First comes full salvation from God, then, as a result, the works prompted by the Holy Spirit of God.²⁹

We have already looked at many Bible passages that consistently teach that we are not saved as a result of good works. Good works are the fruit of salvation, not the seed.

Good works, of course, are pleasing to God and they have an important and necessary place in the life of the Christian. They naturally follow if one has true faith, and they are performed out of love and gratitude to God for the great salvation that He has bestowed. Good works, in other words, are not the cause and basis of salvation, but rather the fruits and proof of salvation. "Not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves,

²⁸ Sproul, *New Geneva Study Bible*

²⁹ White, p. 151

but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5.) The born-again Christian produces good works as naturally as the grapevine produces grapes. They are a part of his very nature. He performs them not to get saved, but because he is saved.³⁰

Philippians 2:12:

Philippians 2:12 is a favorite verse for Roman Catholics to use to *prove* that salvation comes via good works.

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**” (Philippians 2:12, emphasis mine).

One Roman Catholic publication puts it this way:

“Are you saved?” asks the fundamentalist. “I am redeemed”, answers the Catholic,. “and like the apostle Paul I am working out my salvation in fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12) – with a firm hope but not with a false assurance – and I do all this as the Church has taught, unchanged, from the time of Christ.”³¹

So what are we to make of Philippians 2:12 where it says to “workout your own salvation with fear and trembling?” Is it a legitimate answer to the question “are you saved?” to say “I am working out my salvation with fear and trembling?”

The context makes it clear that Paul is here speaking about sanctification and not about justification. He exhorts the believers to be united together, humbly serving one another (2:1-11), and living blameless and innocent lives in the midst of an evil world (2:14,15). He is not telling them how to become right with God, but how to live righteously and thus fulfill God’s purpose for them...

Elsewhere in his letter, the apostle Paul discusses justification (Chapter 3:1-9). There, Paul emphasizes that nothing that he ever did could earn him a right standing before God. Since his conversion, he had ceased to depend on his personal obedience to the Law for righteousness. He was now trusting in Christ for justification. His desire was to “be found in Him (Christ), not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that

³⁰ Green, Keith, *The Catholic Chronicles*, <http://www.sohmer.net/media/KG-TCC.pdf>

³¹ Lee, John and Bompas, Frank, *Justification By Grace: Not By Faith Alone*, http://www.catholic-jhb.org.za/tracts/tract_2.htm

which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Philippians 3:9).³²

The Biblical “plan of salvation” is one of grace by faith. The Roman Catholic “plan of salvation” could not be any more different. Rome is very clear that salvation must be accomplished via the good works and merits of the individual Roman Catholic.

Baptismal Regeneration:

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that original sin is removed from an infant when that infant is water baptized in their church. The infant becomes “born again” at the baptism.

Pope Eugene IV proclaimed:

Holy Baptism holds the first place among the sacraments, because it is the door of the spiritual life; for by it we are made members of Christ and incorporated with the Church... The effect of this sacrament is the remission of all sin, original and actual; likewise of all punishment which is due for sin. As a consequence, no satisfaction for past sins is enjoined upon those who are baptized; and if they die before they commit any sin, they attain immediately to the kingdom of heaven and the vision of God.³³

The Council of Trent was very clear on the matter as well:

If anyone says that children, because they have not the act of believing, are not after having received baptism to be numbered among the faithful, and that for this reason are to be rebaptized when they have reached the years of discretion; or that it is better that the baptism of such be omitted than that, while not believing by their own act, they should be baptized in the faith of the Church alone, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA.³⁴

If anyone says that baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA.³⁵

This is what the Roman Catholic Church *means* when they say that they teach “salvation by grace.”

After all, the infant didn’t do anything to earn his or her baptism.

This is not even remotely close to what the Bible means by “salvation by grace.”

³² Mizzi, Joe, *Work Out Your Salvation*, <http://www.justforcatholics.org/a113.htm>

³³ Bull “Exultate Deo,” Pope Eugene IV, 1439 AD

³⁴ Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 7, Canons on Baptism, Canon 13

³⁵ *ibid*, Canon 5

Consistent Teaching of Scripture:

Read throughout the whole New Testament and ask the following questions:

- What is clear about water baptism? Where was it said? How often? By whom? To whom?
- What is said about faith and salvation and eternal life?
- What is the clear teaching about the road to Heaven?

1 Corinthians 1:17:

Let's start with 1 Corinthians 1:17: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

It is clear that Paul makes a distinction between the gospel and baptism; a distinction the Roman Catholic Church will not make. The Bible teaches that water baptism is associated with the gospel, but it is not part of the gospel.

Cornelius:

The story of Cornelius is one of the strongest arguments against baptismal regeneration. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost and showed gifts of the Spirit *before* he was water baptized.

Acts 10:44-47 reads:

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which **have received** the Holy Ghost as well as we? (emphasis mine).

It is clear that Cornelius and the other Gentiles had received (past tense) the Holy Ghost, the promise of what is to come (Ephesians 1:13-14), but were not yet baptized in water.

This is significant because if baptismal regeneration were correct, then this would be a blatant contradiction, rendering the whole Bible false! Either Jesus' death and resurrection are enough, or none of it is true. How could Cornelius have been baptized with the Holy Ghost and not water if the Roman Catholic Church were correct about water baptism? They are obviously mistaken. They are teaching another gospel.

Verses About Salvation:

The following are but a sample of what the Bible consistently teaches about salvation:

“In whom 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, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14).

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24).

Please note that it says “justified by faith,” and not the law (works.)

Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47).

If belief were not enough, then the Lord Jesus would be a liar.

The apostle Paul taught, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:9, 13).

Paul said to the Corinthian church, “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

No mention of water baptism in these verses. How odd if it were necessary for salvation, yet not mentioned.

What is mentioned?

- faith
- repentance
- trust
- belief
- confess that Jesus is Lord

Are any of these qualities that an infant can possess?

John the Baptist said: “I indeed have baptized you with water: but [Jesus] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost” (Mark 1:8). This is repeated in all four gospels, (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33).

John makes a distinction between baptism by water and baptism by the Holy Spirit.

When we look at what the Bible says about baptismal regeneration, we must conclude that it is not only heretical, but that it slaps in the face the grace offered by our Lord Christ, and adds to the gospel, which we are commanded not to do.

Penance:

The Bible has much to say about “repentance,” which means turning from one’s sin, but never does the Bible use the word “penance.” Despite the absence of “penance” in the Bible, Roman Catholics are commanded to perform works of penance as a core of their religious duty.

The Council of Trent declared:

If anyone says that in the Catholic Church penance is not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord for reconciling the faithful of God as often as they fall into sin after baptism, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA.³⁶

It is interesting to note the phrase “sin after baptism.” This underscores our previous discovery that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that it is through baptism that one’s “original sin” is removed. According to Rome, baptism merely provides relief from transgressions up to the time of the water, and not afterwards. So penance is required to help remove the guilt of transgressions done afterwards. We will see that not only is penance required, but also other means like confession, purgatory, and indulgences.

The easy way in which the Church of Rome deals with sin is seen in this doctrine of penance. The penitent receives pardon on comparatively easy terms. He is assigned some task to perform, usually not too hard, sometimes merely the recital of a given number of “Hail Mary’s.” The result is that he has no qualms about resuming his evil course. It shocked Martin Luther when he read the Greek New Testament edited by Erasmus, that Jesus did not say “do penance” as had been translated by the Roman Church, but “repent.”³⁷

Let us consider a few key verses in the Roman Catholic Douay-Rheims translation:

“But Peter said to them: **Do penance**, and be baptized” (Acts 2:38, The Douay-Rheims Translation, emphasis mine).

“And God indeed having winked at the times of this ignorance, now declareth unto men, that all should every where **do penance**” (Acts 17:30, The Douay-Rheims Translation, emphasis mine).

³⁶ Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 14, Canons Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of Penance, Canon 1

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“And in those days cometh John the Baptist preaching in the desert of Judea. And saying: **Do penance:** for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1-2, The Douay-Rheims Translation, emphasis mine).

So there it is; the Bible says, “do penance.” But is “do penance” an accurate translation?

In all cases, the original Greek word translated “do penance” was *metanoeo*. The *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon* defines *metanoeo* as follows:

3340 μετανοέω [metanoeo /met·an·o·eh·o/] v. From 3326 and 3539; TDNT 4:975; TDNTA 636; GK 3566; 34 occurrences; AV translates as “repent” 34 times.

to change one’s mind, i.e. to repent.
to change one’s mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one’s past sins.³⁸

Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words defines *metanoeo* as:

1. *metanoeo* (3340), lit., “to perceive afterwards” (meta, “after,” implying “change,” *noeo*, “to perceive”; nous, “the mind, the seat of moral reflection”), in contrast to *pronoeo*, “to perceive beforehand,” hence signifies “to change one’s mind or purpose,” always, in the NT, involving a change for the better, an amendment, and always, except in Luke 17:3, 4, of “repentance” from sin. The word is found in the Synoptic Gospels (in Luke, nine times), in Acts five times, in the Apocalypse twelve times, eight in the messages to the churches.³⁹

Finally, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* translates the Greek word as:

3340. μετανοέω *metanoéo*; contracted *metanoó*, fut. *metanoé*-so, from *metá* (3326), denoting change of place or condition, and *noéo* (3539), to exercise the mind, think, comprehend.

To repent, change the mind, relent. Theologically, it involves regret or sorrow, accompanied by a true change of heart toward God. It is distinguished from *metamélomai* (3338), to regret.⁴⁰

Clearly there is no legitimate reason to translate those passages with “do penance.” No mainstream Bible translation has “do penance” like the Roman Catholic Douay-Rheims. Furthermore, modern Roman Catholic translations have abandoned “do penance” for

³⁸ *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*, 1996

³⁹ *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 1997

⁴⁰ Zodhiates, Spiros, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, AMG Publishers

the correct “repent” in those passages, acknowledging the error of rendering “do penance” for *metanoeo*.

Penance is a wholly different thing from gospel repentance. Penance is an outward act. Repentance is of the heart. Penance is imposed by a Roman priest. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit. What God desires in the sinner is not a punishment of oneself for sins, but a change of heart, a real forsaking of sin, shown by a new life of obedience to God’s commands.

In short, penance is a counterfeit repentance. It is the work of man on his body; true repentance is the work of God in the soul. The divine Word commands, “Rend your heart and not your garments” (Joel 2:13.) Penance is “rending the garments” an outward form without inward reality.

But what God demands is not acts of penance, but repentance, which means turning from sin.

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55: 7.)⁴¹

Auricular Confession:

Confessing ones’ sins to a priest is a central aspect of Roman Catholicism. This practice was made mandatory at the Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215 AD.

Everyone who has attained the age of reason is bound to confess his sins at least once a year to his own parish pastor.⁴²

The Council of Trent, in the 16th Century, made the “infallible declaration” that confession dates back to Christ and the apostles.

If anyone denies that sacramental confession was instituted by divine law or is necessary to salvation; or says that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Catholic Church **has always observed from the beginning** and still observes, is at variance with the institution and command of Christ and is a human contrivance, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA.⁴³

In the 16th Century AD, the Roman Catholic Church infallibly decreed at Trent that auricular confession had been practiced “from the beginning” of the church. History, however, disagrees.

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⁴² Fourth Lateran Council, 1215 AD, Canon 21

⁴³ Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 14, Canons Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of Penance, Canon 7, emphasis mine

Confession was first introduced into the church on a voluntary basis in the fifth century by the authority of Leo the Great. But it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, under Pope Innocent III, that private auricular confession was made compulsory and all Roman Catholic people were required to confess and to seek absolution from a priest at least once a year. If they did not obey this command, they were pronounced guilty of mortal sin and damned for eternity to hell.⁴⁴

Trent also said:

If anyone says that the confession of all sins as it is observed in the Church is impossible and is a human tradition to be abolished by pious people; or that each and all of the faithful of Christ or either sex are not bound thereto once a year in accordance with the constitution of the great Lateran Council, and that for this reason the faithful of Christ are to be persuaded not to confess during Lent, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA.⁴⁵

Not only is confession essential, but the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that *only priests* have the authority to facilitate confession!

Only priests who have received the faculty of absolving from the authority of the Church can forgive sins in the name of Christ.⁴⁶

Auricular Confession is a vital doctrine for the Roman Catholic priesthood. They teach the following:

- confession is required at least once per year for salvation
- only the priest can facilitate confession

therefore:

- Roman Catholics need priests for salvation.

The priesthood generates great power via the doctrine of auricular confession.

Despite this, the concept is not a Biblical one.

We search in vain in the Bible for any word supporting the doctrine of “auricular confession” (the official title for confession to an authorized priest in a confession box. It is called “auricular” because it is spoken secretly, into the ear of the priest.) It is equally impossible to find any authorization or general practice of it during the first 1,000 years of the Christian era. Not a word is found in the writings of the early church

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⁴⁵ Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 14, Canons Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of Penance, Canon 8

⁴⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1495, http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/ccc_toc.htm

fathers about confessing sins to a priest or to anyone except God alone. Auricular confession is not mentioned once in the writings of Augustine, Origen, Nestorius, Tertullian, Jerome, Chrysostom, or Athanasius; all of these and many others apparently lived and died without ever thinking of going to confession. No one other than God was thought to be worthy to hear confessions or to grant forgiveness.⁴⁷

James 5:16:

Roman Catholics often attempt to defend the doctrine of auricular confession with James 5:16. James 5:6 in the Roman Catholic New Jerusalem Bible is translated as follows:

So confess your sins to one another.⁴⁸

Samuel Gipp, in his book, *An Understandable History of the Bible*, argues against this translation.

Confess your faults* one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16)

“The Greek word for ‘faults’ (*paraptomata*) is found in MSS E, F, G, H, S, V, Y, and Omega, plus the rest of the Receptus family and the greater number of all remaining witnesses. Nestle’s text inserts ‘sins’ (*taxamartias*) with NO manuscript authority.”⁴⁹

Here Gipp appeals to the original Greek text underlying the translation. Though a discussion of Textual Criticism is beyond the scope of this essay, a short introduction is appropriate.

There exists two distinct Greek manuscript families, from which the majority of our Bible translations come. Some Bible translations, like the *King James Version* and the *New King James Version*, come from the manuscripts known as the *Textus Receptus*, or “received text.” It has this name because it is the text that was received by the church and has been used by Christians throughout church history.

The second manuscript family is commonly referred to as the *Nestle-Aland* text, and is the manuscript family from where many other Bible translations come. The Nestle-Aland text claims to choose its Greek words based on evidence from the available manuscripts. When Gipp references “E, F, G, H, S, V, Y, and Omega,” he is referring to specific manuscripts from within the Nestle-Aland family. Gipp points out that in the case of James 5:16, the great majority of manuscripts **from both families** favor the Greek word *paraptomata*, which translates “faults” and not “sins.” Despite this evidence, the

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⁴⁸ James 5:16, *The New Jerusalem Bible*

⁴⁹ Gipp, Samuel, *An Understandable History of the Bible*, p. 215

Nestle-Aland text wrongfully included the word *taxamartias* (sin) despite not appearing in any Greek manuscripts.

Mortal vs. Venial Sins:

The Roman Catholic Church makes a distinction between what they classify as “mortal” versus “venial” sins.

According to Rome’s definition, mortal sin is described as “any great offense against the law of God” and is so named because “it is deadly, killing the soul and subjecting it to eternal punishment.” Venial sins, on the other hand, are “small and pardonable offenses against God, and our neighbor.” Unlike mortal sins, venial sins are not thought to damn a soul to hell, but with the committing of each venial sin, a person increases his need for a longer stay in the purifying fires of a place called “purgatory.” (Look that word up in your Bible dictionary you’ll find it right next to “venial!”)⁵⁰

Does the Bible make a distinction between “mortal” and “venial” sins?

The Bible teaches that all of us sin (Romans 3:23) and that the just compensation for sin is eternal death (Romans 6:23). Over and against the concepts of mortal and venial sin, the Bible does not state that some sins are worthy of eternal death whereas other are not. **All sins are mortal sins** in that even one sin makes the offender worthy of eternal separation from God in Hell.

The Apostle James articulates this fact in his letter (James 2:10), “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.” Notice his use of the word “stumbles”. It means to make a mistake or fall into error. James is painting a picture of a person who is trying to do the right thing and yet, perhaps unintentionally, commits a sin. What is the consequence? God, through His servant James, states when a person commits even unintentional sin he is guilty of breaking the entire law... It doesn’t matter if a person commits one small sin or several huge ones. The result is the same...The person is guilty of breaking God’s law. And the Lord declares that He will not leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3).

[The concepts of mortal and venial sins] *present an unbiblical picture of God’s payment for sin.* In both cases of mortal and venial sin, forgiveness of the given transgression is dependent upon the offender making restitution of some type. In Roman Catholicism, this restitution may take the form of going to confession, praying a certain prayer, taking communion, or another ritual of some type. The basic thought is that in order for Christ’s

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forgiveness to be applied to the offender, the offender must perform some work and then the forgiveness is granted. The payment and forgiveness of the transgression is dependent upon the offender's actions.

Is this what the Bible teaches regarding the payment for sin? The Bible clearly teaches that the payment for sin is not found in or based upon the actions of the sinner. Consider words of 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the just for the unjust*, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;..." Take note of the wording, "Christ also died for sins once for all..." This passage teaches that for the person who is believing in Jesus Christ, all of his or her sins have been taken care of on the cross...Christ died for all of them. This includes the sins the believer committed before salvation and the ones he has and will commit after salvation.⁵¹

1 John 5:16:

Roman Catholics will sometimes appeal to 1 John 5:16 in support of "venial" versus "mortal" sins.

"If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16).

According to some Catholics, this verse teaches that some sins are "unto death" (mortal), whereas others are "not unto death" (venial).

It will not do to appeal to the apostle John who speaks of 'a sin unto death' for this would prove too much. A mortal sin for Rome is one which can be forgiven, and for which therefore pardon should be sought. But the sin of which John speaks is one of such a serious character that he cannot even ask his hearers to pray for one who is guilty of it. It would seem therefore that he is referring to such a sin as apostasy, or final and persistent impenitence - the sin against the Holy Spirit for which the Lord says there is no forgiveness - and this is, in fact, recognized in the note in the Douay Version.⁵²

Bible teacher John MacArthur wrote:

John illustrates praying according to God's will with the specific example of the "sin leading to death." Such a sin could be any premeditated and unconfessed sin that causes the Lord to determine to end a believer's life. It is not one particular sin like homosexuality or lying, but whatever sin is the

⁵¹ GotQuestions.org, *Does the Bible teach mortal and venial sin?*, <http://www.gotquestions.org/mortal-sin-venial.html>, emphasis mine

⁵² Carson, H. M., *Roman Catholicism Today*, IVF, 1964, p. 93

final one in the tolerance of God. Failure to repent of and forsake sin may eventually lead to physical death as a judgment of God (Acts 5:1–11; 1 Cor. 5:5; 11:30)... The contrast to the phrase “there is sin leading to death” with “there is sin not leading to death” signifies that the writer distinguishes between sins that may lead to physical death and those that do not. That is not to identify a certain kind of mortal or non-mortal sin, but to say not all sins are so judged by God.⁵³

Purgatory:

According to the second Vatican council, there are two consequences of sin:

The full taking away and, as it is called, reparation of sins requires two things. Firstly, friendship with God must be restored. Amends must be made for offending his wisdom and goodness. This is done by a sincere conversion of mind. Secondly, all the personal and social values, as well as those that are universal, which sin has lessened or destroyed must be fully made good. This is done in two ways. The first is by feely making reparation, which involves punishment. The second is by accepting the punishments God’s just and most holy wisdom has appointed. From this the holiness and splendor of his glory shine out through the world.⁵⁴

According to Vatican II, as a result of sin, friendship with God must be restored, and amends must be made. One way this is done is through “punishment.” Vatican II continues:

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. 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 punishment designed to purge away their debt.⁵⁵

Please note the language of Vatican II: “even when the guilt of sin has been taken away.” So according to the Roman Catholic Church, one can have his or her guilt taken away, but still require cleansing in a place they have named “Purgatory.” This is a place for those “who died in the charity of God and truly repentant.”

We should wonder: if someone has died in God’s charity, and are truly repentant, and has their guilt taken away, then why is more cleansing necessary?

⁵³ MacArthur *The MacArthur Study Bible*

⁵⁴ Vatican II, p. 64

⁵⁵ *ibid*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

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.⁵⁶

The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire.⁵⁷

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, a person can die "in God's grace and friendship" yet still not be totally justified. In order to be more perfectly justified, a "cleansing fire" is necessary.

The Council of Trent decreed emphatically:

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.⁵⁸

We've seen what Vatican II, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the Council of Trent had to say about purgatory. But as Christians, we are interested in what the Bible has to say about it.

Scripture sets the believer's heart to rest. "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 Corinthians 6:11). It's not purgatory's flames that cleanse the sinner from evil. The Word of God teaches that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). The blood of Christ is thoroughly effective and purifies from all defilement. His blood really and actually cleanses "from all sin."

Nobody will ever be heard boasting that he succeeded to enter heaven because of his penances and sufferings. Heaven will be populated by those who trust completely in the Son of God.

This is the song that they joyfully sing: "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His

⁵⁶ *Catechism*, 1030

⁵⁷ *ibid*, 1031

⁵⁸ Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 6, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 30

God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:5,6). This is the Christians’ confession about their Lord Jesus Christ: “When He had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3).

Jesus Christ, and nothing else, is our purification, our purgatory.⁵⁹

Indulgences:

The doctrine of “indulgences” is one that is made possible as a result of the teaching of “Purgatory” previously discussed. If Purgatory were a true place, then a system would need to be constructed to determine how one gets released from Purgatory, so that the soul can move forward onto heaven. An indulgence is one of the ways the Roman Catholic Church has come up with to answer this.

One means of attaining salvation from the punishment of one’s sins is what the Roman Church calls indulgences. These may be purchased with money or through acts of penitence, acts of charity, or other pietistic means. The concept of indulgences is based on the idea that one’s good works merit God’s grace. Since Christ’s sacrifice was insufficient for the full payment of the penalty of sin, acts of piety and gifts to the Roman Church may be used as partial payment for one’s sins. The efficacy of an indulgence depends upon the merit attributed to it by the church. For example, one may pay to have a Mass said for a relative believed to be in purgatory. The Mass will then account for a certain number of days deleted from his purgatorial sentence.⁶⁰

Many Catholics believe that the church has reversed her position on indulgences, particularly at Vatican II. However, it is the case that the Roman Catholic Church most assuredly teaches indulgences today.

Vatican II stated definitively:

[The Roman Catholic Church] teaches and commands that the usage of indulgences -- a usage most beneficial to Christians and approved by the authority of the Sacred Councils -- should be kept in the Church; and it condemns with anathema [cursing by ecclesiastical authority] those who say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them.⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Purgatory or Christ?*, <http://www.justforcatholics.org/a93.htm>

⁶⁰ Biblical Discernment Ministries, *Roman Catholicism: Is It a Cult?*, <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Cults/Catholicism/isitcult.htm>

⁶¹ Vatican II, p. 71

Furthermore, the same council also stated:

For 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 to be fitting in the sight of the Lord). The merits of the Blessed Mother of God and of the elect... are known to add further to this treasure.⁶²

The Roman Catholic Church considers indulgences “a treasure” that is used for “salvation.” The Church has made it clear that it has the power to completely remit one's sins, or partially, as the Church decides. And please note the phrase “the merits of the Blessed Mother of God and of the elect... are known to add further to this treasure.” Here the Church is saying that it was not only Jesus who made indulgences possible, but Mary and other saints as well.

Pope Paul VI expounded on this in his *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, in 1967 (relatively recently):

This treasury also includes the truly immense, unfathomable and ever pristine value before God of the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, who following in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by His grace have sanctified their lives and fulfilled the mission entrusted to them by the Father. Thus while attaining their own salvation, they have also cooperated in the salvation of their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body.⁶³

James White rightly explains the conclusion of indulgences:

The “treasure of merit” is a concept that developed long after the time of the Apostles and eventually became a source of great corruption in the Roman Catholic Church. The concept is that Christ had “excess merit” - beyond that required to bring about the salvation of humankind. Consequently, this excess merit goes into the treasury and is available through the Church to be given to those in need of it. It is important to realize that it is not only Christ's merit that is in the treasury. Mary, likewise, had more “merit” than was required for her salvation; therefore her excess merit goes into the same treasury, adding to the superabundance

⁶² *ibid*, p. 70

⁶³ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution On Indulgences - *Indulgentiarum Doctrina* - Solemnly Promulgated By His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, January 1, 1967

of Christ's merit. But this is not all. The saints also had more merit than they personally needed to enter into heaven, so their excess merit is placed in the treasury along with that of Christ and Mary.

The treasury of merit presents a mixture of the merit of Christ, that of the Virgin Mary, and of the saints. As the document puts it, "The merits of the Blessed Mother of God and of all the elect... are known to add further to this treasure."

An indulgence, then, could be likened to a "withdrawal" of a portion of this merit and the application of it to the "account" of the person obtaining the indulgence. *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, quoting from the Papal bull of Boniface VIII, says,

For "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."⁶⁴

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that grace sufficient for salvation is tantamount to a bank account. If you have enough "merit," you can get in. If you don't have enough "merit," then the Church can provide that to you in the form of an indulgence, thanks to Mary and others who had more "merit" than they needed.

The question that must be asked is this: did Christ or did He not make propitiation for the sins of the people of God? And if in fact He did, why do I need to add to that work such concepts as indulgences, merits, or the "Suffering of atonement"?⁶⁵

Luther's 95 Thesis:

On October 31, 1517, German monk Martin Luther nailed his *95 Thesis* to the door of the Wittenberg Castle's Church.

Luther did not intend to break from Rome. Luther witnessed the abuses of "indulgence preachers," who were men sent by Rome to travel throughout Europe and sell indulgences to the people. Luther was ashamed of this practice, for he saw no Biblical precedent for it, and he knew that many of the people couldn't even afford food for their families, never mind paying for indulgences.

Luther was originally convinced that the Pope was shielded from such abuses, and didn't know this was happening. This is evident in Thesis #50, when Luther wrote, "if the pope knew the exactions of the pardon-preachers." Clearly Luther believed that the Pope didn't know what was going on. In time, Luther would come to learn the truth that the

⁶⁴ White, pp. 187-188

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p. 195

Pope was behind the abuses of the “pardon preachers,” or “indulgence preachers,” and that the Church benefited financially from such widespread abuses.

Reading Luther’s *95 Thesis* is a worthwhile endeavor. A selection of them is as follows:

- 11) This changing of the canonical penalty to the penalty of purgatory is quite evidently one of the tares that were sown while the bishops slept.
- 21) Therefore those preachers of indulgences are in error, who say that by the pope’s indulgences a man is freed from every penalty, and saved;
- 24) It must needs be, therefore, that the greater part of the people are deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of release from penalty.
- 32) They will be condemned eternally, together with their teachers, who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon.
- 33) Men must be on their guard against those who say that the pope’s pardons are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to Him;
- 36) Every truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without letters of pardon.
- 46) Christians are to be taught that unless they have more than they need, they are bound to keep back what is necessary for their own families, and by no means to squander it on pardons.
- 50) Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the pardon-preachers, he would rather that St. Peter’s church should go to ashes, than that it should be built up with the skin, flesh and bones of his sheep.
- 56) The “treasures of the Church,” out of which the pope grants indulgences, are not sufficiently named or known among the people of Christ.
- 76) We say, on the contrary, that the papal pardons are not able to remove the very least of venial sins, so far as its guilt is concerned.
- 84) What is this new piety of God and the pope, that for money they allow a man who is impious and their enemy to buy out of purgatory the pious soul of a friend of God, and do not rather, because of that pious and beloved soul’s own need, free it for pure love’s sake?
- 85) Why does not the pope, whose wealth is to-day greater than the riches of the richest, build just this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of poor believers?⁶⁶

When Luther posed these questions, he touched the nerve of the Roman Catholic Church, because indulgences represented the manner by which Rome built her empire financially. Luther was correct when he wrote in *Thesis #50* that indulgences represented “the skin, flesh and bones” of the people.

⁶⁶ Luther, Martin, *95 Thesis* (excerpts)

The Pope:

The Pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church. However, the Papacy is more than a position of earthly leadership. Roman Catholics are to believe that the Pope is Christ's actual representative on earth.

The Pope is said to be infallible whenever he makes an official decree on matters of faith and morals. According to Catholic doctrine, it is impossible for the Pope to teach false doctrine. Catholics are expected to obey the Pope without question even when he is not making an "infallible" statement about doctrine. They are expected to submit their wills and minds to the Pope without question. (Catechism 892, 2037, 2050)⁶⁷

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches the following:

Divine assistance is also given to the successors of the apostles, teaching in communion with the successor of Peter, and, in a particular way, to the bishop of Rome, pastor of the whole Church, when, without arriving at an infallible definition and without pronouncing in a "definitive manner," they propose in the exercise of the ordinary Magisterium a teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals. To this ordinary teaching the faithful "are to adhere to it with religious assent" which, though distinct from the assent of faith, is nonetheless an extension of it.⁶⁸

The Roman Pontiff and the bishops, as authentic teachers, preach to the People of God the faith which is to be believed and applied in moral life. It is also incumbent on them to pronounce on moral questions that fall within the natural law and reason.⁶⁹

The infallibility of the Magisterium of the Pastors extends to all the elements of doctrine, including moral doctrine, without which the saving truths of the faith cannot be preserved, expounded, or observed.⁷⁰

It was at the 1st Vatican Council when the infallibility of the Pope was initially pronounced.

So, then, if anyone says that the Roman pontiff has merely an office of supervision and guidance, and not the full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole church, and this not only in matters of faith and morals, but also in those which concern the discipline and government of

⁶⁷ Collins, Mary Ann, (former nun), *Mary Worship? A Study of Catholic Practice and Doctrine*, http://www.bereanbeacon.org/articles/mary_worship.htm

⁶⁸ *Catechism*, 892

⁶⁹ *ibid*, 2050

⁷⁰ *ibid*, 2051

the church dispersed throughout the whole world; or that he has only the principal part, but not the absolute fullness, of this supreme power; or that this power of his is not ordinary and immediate both over all and each of the churches and over all and each of the pastors and faithful: LET HIM BE ANATHEMA...

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 or 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 in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable.⁷¹

Not only did Vatican I clearly designate the Pope as the head of all Christians, with “supreme power” but anathematized anyone who thought otherwise. Vatican I also promulgated the doctrine that the Pope is infallible when he speaks *ex cathedra*.

The 1983 *Code of Canon Law* says of the Pope:

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 entire 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.⁷²

The same *Code of Canon Law* also states:

There is neither appeal nor recourse against a decision or decree of the Roman Pontiff.⁷³

Pope Bonafice VIII proclaimed of his own office:

Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Vatican I, Session 4, 1869 – 1870 AD

⁷² 1983 Code of Canon Law, Canon 331

⁷³ *ibid*, Canon 333

⁷⁴ Pope Bonafice VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, November 18, 1302

This same Pope also declared:

The Roman Pontiff judges all men, but is judged by no one.⁷⁵

And in what can only be described as blasphemous, he also affirmed:

That which was spoken of Christ... 'Thou hast subdued all things under His feet,' may well seem verified in me. I have the authority of the King of kings. I am all in all and above all, so that God, Himself and I, the Vicar of God, have but one consistory, and I am able to do almost all that God can do. What therefore, can you make of me but God?⁷⁶

Please remember that the Roman Catholic Church has made it very clear that Papal proclamations are infallible and irreformable. So these claims of Pope Bonafice, that he, with God, are "above all" is still official Catholic doctrine to this day.

Vatican I said:

If anyone says that blessed Peter the apostle was not appointed by Christ the lord as prince of all the apostles and visible head of the whole church militant; or that it was a primacy of honour only and not one of true and proper jurisdiction that he directly and immediately received from our lord Jesus Christ himself: LET HIM BE ANATHEMA.⁷⁷

Matthew 16:18:

The classic text that the Roman Catholic Church uses to support their doctrines on the Papacy is Matthew 16:18.

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

The context of Matthew 16:18 is as follows:

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter,

⁷⁵ ibid

⁷⁶ ibid

⁷⁷ Vatican I, Session 4, 1:6, 1869 – 1870 AD

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.” (Matthew 16:13-19)

“There it is!” the Roman Catholic says. “Christ built His church on Peter, making him the first Pope! Peter is the ‘rock’ of the church!”

Who Is the Rock?:

It can be demonstrated that the “rock” of Matthew 16:18 is not Peter.

Every single use of the word “rock” in the Bible figuratively is a direct reference to God: (Deuteronomy 32:4; 32:15; 32:18; 32:30; 32:37; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 22:2; 22:3; Psalm 18:2; 18:31; 18:46; 28:1; 31:2; 31:3; 42:9; 62:2; 62:6; 62:7; 71:3; 78:35; 89:26; 92:15; 94:22; 95:1; Isaiah 8:14; 17:10) and then in the New Testament: (Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:8 and 1 Corinthians 3:11).

That list is an exhaustive one, meaning that the above list contains every single reference to the word “rock” in the Bible when it is used figuratively. And in every single case, 100% of the time, “rock” refers to God.

It was a very common Jewish expression (and still is) to call God “my rock and my redeemer,” “the rock of my salvation” etc.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (Greek: *petros*), and upon this rock (Greek: *petra*) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

The *Petra* of Matthew 16:18 is not the same thing as *Petros* which means Peter. It’s a play on words, no doubt, but the Bible tells us that *Petros* means stone, not Rock.

“And when Jesus beheld [Peter], he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone” (John 1:42).

Given the overwhelming Old Testament precedence of “Rock” referring to God, Jesus is not only attesting to His Deity here, but is in fact making a distinction or a contrast between Himself and Peter. Yes, Peter is a stone, in the sense that every Christian is a lively stone (1 Peter 2:5), but, in contrast, Jesus is the “chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 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, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed” (1 Peter 2:6-8).

In contrast to Peter being a stone (*Petros*), Jesus is “The Rock” (*Petra*) of our salvation. Every hearer there, steeped in Old Testament Theology, would have understood well that “Rock” meant Lord or Messiah, and would never have interpreted the “Rock” to be Peter. They would have understood that Jesus was saying, “Yes, Peter, you are a stone, but I am The Rock, and I will build my church on myself.”

The Roman Catholic Church claims Papal authority based on their erroneous teaching that Christ built His church on Peter. When we consult the complete counsel of Scripture, the overwhelming Old Testament and New Testament references to “Rock” meaning God make the point clear that the church of Jesus Christ is not built on Peter, but built on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for this very reason that the Apostle Paul could truthfully say that “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). That’s why *Petros* is Peter but *Petra* is Jesus. And that’s why Jesus’ church is built on Jesus and everyone who names Him as Savior is part of the church.

The word for “Peter,” *Petros*, means a small stone (John 1:42). Jesus used a play on words here with *petra* which means a foundation boulder (cf. 7:24, 25). Since the NT makes it abundantly clear that Christ is both the foundation (Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Cor. 3:11) and the head (Eph. 5:23) of the church, it is a mistake to think that here He is giving either of those roles to Peter. There is a sense in which the apostles played a foundational role in the building of the church (Eph. 2:20), but the role of primacy is reserved for Christ alone, not assigned to Peter. So Jesus’ words here are best interpreted as a simple play on words in that a boulder-like truth came from the mouth of one who was called a small stone.⁷⁸

Matthew 16:19:

Roman Catholics claim that the Pope has power to “bind and loose” based on Matthew 16:19.

“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).

John MacArthur wrote:

Does Peter have an exclusive hold on the “keys of the kingdom?”

Compare Matthew 16:19 with Matthew 18:15-20:

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained

⁷⁸ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*

thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

All this must be understood in the context of 18:15–17, where Christ laid out specific instructions for dealing with sin in the church... The sum of it all means that any duly constituted body of believers, acting in accord with God’s Word, has the authority to declare if someone is forgiven or unforgiven. The church’s authority is not to determine these things, but to declare the judgment of heaven based on the principles of the Word. When they make such judgments on the basis of God’s Word, they can be sure heaven is in accord. In other words, whatever they “bind” or “loose” on earth is already “bound” or “loosed” in heaven. When the church says the unrepentant person is bound in sin, the church is saying what God says about that person. When the church acknowledges that a repentant person has been loosed from that sin, God agrees.⁷⁹

In his sermon, “The Pope and the Papacy,” MacArthur stated:

Peter was not given any authority that every believer was given. This is the authority to say to someone your sins are forgiven or your sins are not forgiven based on whether or not they believe, repent.

You have the right to say to someone “you can enter the kingdom” by how they respond to the gospel. You can say to someone “you’re loosed from your sins because you put your trust in Christ.” You can say to someone “you are bound in your sin because you refuse Christ.” You can say it as well as I can say it; Peter can say it; anyone can say it.⁸⁰

John 21:15-17:

Roman Catholics also point to John 21:15-17 as evidence that Peter was given a special office above the other disciples.

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou

⁷⁹ ibid

⁸⁰ MacArthur, *The Pope and the Papacy*

knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17).

Steve Rudd wrote:

“Feed my lambs.” “Feed my sheep.” “Feed my sheep.”

Was Jesus giving Peter a unique role as head shepherd?

Or was he reinstating Peter to the same shepherd status of all Christians, saying it three times, once for each denial of Jesus (John 18:17, 25, 27)?

To suggest this proves Peter is a pope is short sighted. Jesus was reversing, by ceremony, the three denials of Peter with three confessions of faith. Three times Peter denied the Lord, and three time Peter was asked to proclaim his love for the Lord. The emphasis was not on Peter “leading the church as a pope” being promoted to “top position” but rather accepting him back from the realm of condemnation into the common fold of the apostles who had not denied the Lord. Peter was told to be a shepherd of the sheep not a pope.⁸¹

Was Peter head of the Roman Church?:

Roman Catholics claim that Peter was head of the church in Rome during the New Testament period, yet the Biblical evidence is not there to support such a claim.

Consider the following:

- The Apostle Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans in AD 56. There was no reference to Peter.
- Paul greets a number of people in Romans chapter 16. Again, no mention of Peter.
- Paul never mentions Peter in the prison epistles. 2 Timothy, the last epistle written before his death, has no mention of Peter.
- Furthermore, according to Galatians 2:7-8, Peter was called to the Jews, not to the Gentiles.
- In 1 Peter 1:1, Peter referred to himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ,” not THE apostle.

⁸¹ Rudd, Steve, *The False Doctrine of Roman Catholic Papal Infallibility*, <http://www.bible.ca/catholic-infallibility.htm>

- In 1 Peter 5:1, Peter referred to himself as “an elder,” not THE elder.
- Peter disappears after Acts chapter 15.

James White pointed out:

Does the New Testament as a whole lead us to believe that Peter was considered the head of the church? Was Peter viewed as the Vicar of Christ on earth? Did Christians of his day think of him as the Holy Father? Did the other Apostles recognize Peter as their spiritual head and leader? Did they instruct people to obey Peter as the Pope? Does the New Testament lead us to believe that there was an office of Pope to which all Christians looked for guidance and one which the Church’s unity itself was founded? And do we find in the words, actions, and writings of Peter evidence that he interpreted Jesus’ words in Matthew 16:18-19 in the way modern Roman Catholics do?⁸²

Steve Rudd wrote:

Why Peter Was Not a Good Choice For the First Pope:

- Peter denied the Lord three times. (John 18:17, 25, 27)
- Peter was rebuked by the Lord (Matthew 16:23; John 21:20-22)
- Peter was rebuked by Paul (Galatians 2:11)
- Peter was not superior to the other apostles (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11)
- Jesus is the head of His church⁸³

James White concluded:

We find data from the page of inspired Scripture showing that the early Christians did not look to Peter or to any bishop of Rome as the head of all Christians.⁸⁴

Mary Ann Collins, a former Nun, wrote:

The history of the early Church shows that the Bishop of Rome was considered to be just another bishop. For example, Pope Gregory (590-604 A.D.) explicitly stated that all of the bishops were equal. He specifically repudiated the idea that any one bishop could be the supreme ruler of the Church. (William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 56-63)⁸⁵

⁸² White, p. 107

⁸³ Rudd

⁸⁴ White, p. 113

⁸⁵ Collins, Mary Ann, (former nun), *What Is Our Source of Authority?*, http://www.sounddoctrine.com/collins_sola.htm

Christian Response to the Papacy over the Years:

The following are various quotations from Christians over the years who have concluded from the scriptural evidence that the Roman Catholic teaching regarding the Papacy is wrong:

[The Pope] is called “Holy Father;” he’s usurped a title intended for God. He’s called “the head of the church;” he’s usurped a title intended for Christ. He’s called “the vicar of Christ”; “vicar” connected to the word “vicarious,” the one who stands in the place of Christ, and he has stolen that from the Holy Spirit. He has set himself in the place of God, he has set himself in the place of Christ, and he has set himself in the place of the Holy Spirit, and that is overstepping your bounds.⁸⁶

Christ did not redeem his church with his blood that the pope might come in and steal away the glory. He never came from heaven to earth, and poured out his very heart that he might purchase his people, that a poor sinner, a mere man, should be set upon high to be admired by all the nations, and to call himself God’s representative on earth. Christ has always been the Head of the church.⁸⁷

Really it is hard to say whether the claim to infallibility is more ridiculous or more wicked. Wicked because it attributes to man what belongs only to God. Ridiculous because Popes have been so wrong so often.⁸⁸

The Early Fathers, and the theologians and canon lawyers of the Middle Ages, never taught that the bishops or the Pope were infallible. This is demonstrated by the fact that in 680 A.D. the Sixth Ecumenical Council condemned a pope as a heretic. It was not until the fourteenth century that the theory of infallibility began to emerge. With the development of this theory came a change in the interpretation of some biblical passages. (William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 34-55)...

The claim for papal infallibility does not stand up to the test of history. For example, Pope Zosimus (417-418 A.D.) reversed the pronouncement of a previous pope. He also retracted a doctrinal pronouncement that he himself had previously made. Pope Honorius 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 here we have “infallible” popes condemning another “infallible” pope as a heretic. In 1870, the First Vatican Council abolished

⁸⁶ MacArthur, *The Pope and the Papacy*

⁸⁷ Spurgeon, Charles, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Volume 60*, p. 592

⁸⁸ MacArthur, *The Pope and the Papacy*

“infallible” papal decrees and the decrees of two “infallible” councils.
(William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 63-71)

In the seventeenth century, the Catholic church officially condemned Galileo as a heretic because he taught that the earth revolves around the sun. This did not conflict with the Bible or with the teachings of the Early Fathers. However, it was contrary to seventeenth century Catholic theology. The Greek philosopher Aristotle taught that the sun revolves around the earth. Aristotle influenced Thomas Aquinas, a thirteenth century theologian and “doctor of the Church” whose theology had a major impact on the Catholic Church. Some modern astronomers believe that Galileo was right. Others believe that Einstein’s theory of relativity makes the question irrelevant... Either way, Galileo was not a heretic for disagreeing with Aristotle. The “infallible” pronouncement of the Catholic Church regarding Galileo’s teaching was wrong.⁸⁹

I am persuaded that if at this time, St. Peter, in person, should preach all the articles of Holy Scripture, and only deny the Pope’s authority, power, and primacy, and say that the Pope is not the head of all Christendom, they would cause him to be hanged. Yea, if Christ himself were again on earth, and should preach, without all doubt the Pope would crucify him again.⁹⁰

The Pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against Christ because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power, which, nevertheless, is nothing, and is neither ordained nor commanded by God. This is, properly speaking to exalt himself above all that is called God... Therefore, just as little as we can worship the devil himself as Lord and God, we can endure his apostle, the Pope, or Antichrist, in his rule as head or lord.⁹¹

It is the bounden duty of every Christian to pray against Antichrist, and as to what Antichrist is no sane man ought to raise a question. If it be not the Popery in the Church of Rome there is nothing in the world that can be called by that name. It wounds Christ, robs Christ of His glory, puts sacramental efficacy in the place of His atonement, and lifts a piece of bread in the place of the Saviour, and a few drops of water in the place of the Holy Spirit, and puts a mere fallible man like ourselves up as the vicar of Christ on earth. If we pray against it, because it is against Him, we shall

⁸⁹ Collins, *What Is Our Source of Authority?*

⁹⁰ Luther, Martin, *Luther’s Table-Talk of the Antichrist DXXXIII*

⁹¹ Luther, Martin, *Smalcald Articles*, 1537

love the persons though we hate their errors; we shall love their souls, though we loathe and detest their dogmas.⁹²

He is in an emphatical sense, the Man of Sin, as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is, too, properly styled the Son of Perdition, as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes, both of his opposers and followers... He it is... that exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped... claiming the highest power, and highest honour... claiming the prerogatives which belong to God alone.⁹³

The oracles of God foretold the rising of an Antichrist in the Christian Church: and in the Pope of Rome, all the characteristics of that Antichrist are so marvelously answered that if any who read the Scriptures do not see it, there is a marvelous blindness upon them.⁹⁴

We here are of the conviction that the Papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist... personally I declare that I owe the Pope no other obedience than that to Antichrist.⁹⁵

Some persons think us too severe and censorious when we call the Roman pontiff Antichrist. But those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself, after whom we speak and whose language we adopt... I shall briefly show that (Paul's words in II Thess. 2) are not capable of any other interpretation than that which applies them to the Papacy.⁹⁶

This establishes the pope as the central figure for the Faith in the same way that the apostles of other cults are established. While they acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the central figure of the faith to which they adhere, there can be no true relationship with Him apart from the dictates of the hierarchical pronouncements. The cult of the papacy is in itself sufficient grounds to recognize the Roman Church as a cult. The display of adoration, the gaudy parade of a mere man as if he were a god, the pandering to idolatrous worship through bowing down and kissing his ring, the insistence that he be addressed as His Holiness the Pope (or Father) of all Christians cannot but confirm to any Christian -- let alone professed cult-watchers -- that Roman Catholicism is a cult.⁹⁷

⁹² Spurgeon, Charles, *All Roads Lead To Rome*, p. 183

⁹³ Wesley, John, *Antichrist and His Ten Kingdoms*, p. 110

⁹⁴ Mather, Cotton, *The Fall of Babylon*

⁹⁵ Luther, Martin, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers, Volume 2*, p.121

⁹⁶ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, volume 1*, pp. 219 - 220

⁹⁷ Biblical Discernment Ministries, *Roman Catholicism: Is It a Cult?*

In regard to the death of John Paul II,

We should grieve for that man, because he gained the whole world but lost his soul. The most loved and admired man by Catholics in the world, blinded by the prince of this world, never saw the light of the true gospel.⁹⁸

Cardinals:

After the Pope, the “college of Cardinals” is the highest-ranking office in the Roman Catholic Church. The Wikipedia defines “The College of Cardinals” as:

The Sacred College of Cardinals is the body of all Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church. The body plays two roles for the church:

1. participating in papal elections when the Holy See is vacant, and
2. advising the Pope about Church matters when he summons them to a consistory.

...There are three ranks of Cardinals: Cardinal Bishops, Cardinal Priests, and Cardinal Deacons. Almost all Cardinals are also bishops.⁹⁹

The *St. Joseph Messenger*, a Roman Catholic periodical, said:

Cardinals are chosen by the Pope to act as his principal assistants and advisors on affairs of the Church. Collectively they form the Sacred College of Cardinals. They, together with the Pope as the head of the Church and the Vicar of Christ, act as the guardians of the Church on earth.¹⁰⁰

Elevation of Clergy:

The Roman Catholic Church is guilty of inappropriately elevating its clergy. Consider the language the *Catholic Encyclopedia* uses in its article on “Cardinals”:

The honorary rights of the cardinals are also numerous. They come immediately after the pope, and precede all other ecclesiastical dignitaries. As Roman princes they follow immediately the reigning sovereign, and rank with the prince of reigning houses... They alone have the right to the name of cardinal and are addressed as Eminentia, Eminentissimi (Your Eminence or Your Eminences), a title formerly borne by the German ecclesiastical prince-electors and, to the present day, by the Grand Master of the Knights of St. John. Urban VIII instructed them (10 June, 1630) to cease correspondence with any sovereign who refused them this title.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ MacArthur, *The Pope and the Papacy*

⁹⁹ Wikipedia, *College of Cardinals*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College_of_Cardinals

¹⁰⁰ *St. Joseph Messenger*, *The Sacred College of Cardinals*, <http://www.aquinas-multimedia.com/stjoseph/church.html>

¹⁰¹ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Cardinal*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03333b.htm>

A cardinal, according to Rome, is to be referred to as “Your Eminence,” and they are to refuse correspondence with anyone, even a head of state, who refuses them that title.

The Bible, in contrast, offers no such elevation of clergy.

The Apostle Peter wrote:

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; **Neither as being lords over God’s heritage**, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-3, emphasis mine).

Peter very clearly told the elders not to use their position to lord over the people, and not to do it for “lucre” (money).

During the New Testament period, the Corinthian Church had a problem with elevating their leaders inappropriately. Paul straightened out this error with these words:

“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:3-6).

The Bible teaches that those called into ministry are no better than anyone else, and that calling is to help others, not promote the minister. Paul said he was nothing; Christ was everything! The Bible teaches that with God there is no “respect of persons” (Ephesians 6:9).

Charles Spurgeon had this to say about those who elevated themselves with the religious titles of the Roman Catholic Church:

When a fellow comes forward in all sorts of curious garments, and says he is a priest, the poorest child of God may say, ‘Stand away, and don’t interfere with my office: I am a priest; I know not what you may be. You surely must be a priest of Baal, for the only mention of the word vestments in Scripture is in connection with the temple of Baal.’ The priesthood belongs to all the saints... The very word “priest” has such a smell of the sulphur or Rome about it, that so long as it remains, the Church of England will give forth an ill savour.

Call yourself a priest, sir! I wonder men are not ashamed to take the title: when I recollect what priests have done in all ages — what priests

connected with the church of Rome have done, I repeat what I have often said: I would sooner a man pointed at me in the street and called me a devil, than called me a priest; for bad as the devil has been, he has hardly been able to match the crimes, cruelties, and villainies which have been transacted under the cover of a special priesthood.¹⁰²

Spurgeon lived in the 19th Century, but his words against the “villainies which have been transacted under the cover of a special priesthood” could easily have been lifted out of newspaper articles in the 21st Century.

Transubstantiation:

The doctrine of transubstantiation is often misunderstood by both Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Very, very few people know what the Catholic Church actually believes and teaches concerning [transubstantiation], and I am convinced that even fewer Catholics realize themselves what they are taking part in.¹⁰³

Transubstantiation teaches that the bread and wine of communion actually and physically transform miraculously into the actual and real flesh and blood of Jesus. The bread and wine are no longer present.

Pope Pius IV taught:

I profess, likewise, that in the Mass there is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead; and that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there is truly, really, and substantially, the Body and Blood, together with the Soul and Divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, which conversion the Catholic Church calls Transubstantiation.¹⁰⁴

According to this Pope, the Eucharist, that is, the bread and wine, “is truly, really, and substantially, the Body and Blood, together with the Soul and Divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Council of Trent taught:

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

¹⁰² Spurgeon, Charles, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Volume 21*, p. 177

¹⁰³ Green

¹⁰⁴ Pope Pius IV, *The Trentine Creed or The Creed of Pius IV*, 1564 A.D.

Christ, but says that He is in it only as in a sign, or figure or force, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA.¹⁰⁵

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.¹⁰⁶

Trent was very unambiguous that all Catholics must believe that the bread and wine actually and physically become the flesh and blood of the Savior, or suffer the condemnation of the church.

Matthew 26:26-28:

Matthew 26:26-28 is one of the passages a Roman Catholic might cite to argue the case for transubstantiation.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:26-28).

The Roman Catholic Church claims that Jesus was establishing the Mass, and teaching that the bread and wine are his actual body and blood.

Matt. 26:26 and 28: “This is My body ... this is My blood.” Catholics base their whole religious system on their interpretation of these two verses. They adamantly teach that right here Jesus is pronouncing the first priestly blessing that mysteriously changes the bread and wine into His body and blood. The absolute folly of such a conclusion is proved by this one observation: He was literally still there before, during, and after they had partaken of the bread and the cup! He was not changed into some liquid and bread. His flesh was still on His bones, and His blood still in His veins. He had not vanished away to reappear in the form of a piece of bread or a cup of wine!

Let’s look closer at His words. No one can deny that here we have figurative language. Jesus did not say *touto gignetai* (“this has become” or “is turned into”), but *touto esti* (“this signifies, represents” or “stands for”)

¹⁰⁵ Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 13, Canons on the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, Canon 1

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, Canon 2

(the New Testament was written in Greek.) It is obvious that Jesus' meaning was not literal but symbolic! And He wasn't the first in the Bible to claim figuratively that a glass of liquid was really "blood."

One time, David's friends heard him express a strong desire for water from the well of Bethlehem. In spite of extreme danger, these men broke through the enemy lines of the Philistines and brought the water to him. When David found out that these men had risked their lives in this way, he refused to drink the water, exclaiming, "Is not this the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" (II Sam. 23:17.)

Throughout the gospels we find similar metaphorical language: Jesus referring to Himself as "the Door," "the Vine," "the Light," "the Root," "the Rock," "the Bright and Morning Star," as well as "the Bread." The passage is written with such common language that it is plain to any observant reader that the Lord's Supper was intended primarily as a memorial and in no sense a literal sacrifice. "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19.)¹⁰⁷

John 6:48-57:

John 6:48-57 is another passage that the Roman Catholic Church often uses to support its doctrine of transubstantiation.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:48-57).

Rome argues, "Jesus said we must 'eat the flesh of the Son of man' and 'drink his blood!' See!?! Transubstantiation!"

Keith Green exposes the error of finding transubstantiation in these verses better than I could, so I quote him:

Catholics are taught here [John 6:54-55], that Jesus is explaining how He is literally offering them His flesh and blood, so that they may have eternal

¹⁰⁷ Green

life by physically eating Him. With just a little study of the whole passage (vs. 27-71), it is clear that Jesus was not talking about physical, but spiritual food and drink.

Food is eaten to satisfy hunger. And in verse 35 Jesus says, “He who cometh to Me shall never hunger.” Now, Jesus is not promising eternal relief from physical hunger pains. He is, of course, speaking of the spiritual hunger in man for righteousness and salvation. And He promises to those who will “come to Him” that He will satisfy their hunger for these things forever, therefore, to come to Him is to “eat!” (See also Matt. 5:6, 11:28, John 4:31-34.)

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” Matthew 5:6

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

“In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” John 4:31-34

We drink also to satisfy thirst, and again in verse 35 Jesus tells us, “He that believeth on Me shall never thirst.” Therefore, to believe on Him is to “drink!” (See also John 4:13-14) No one can say that here Jesus was establishing the eating and drinking of His literal flesh and blood to give eternal life, for in verse 63 He says, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Thus Jesus makes clear what we should be eating and drinking to have eternal life! (See also Matt. 4:4.)

“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” John 4:13-14

“But 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.” Matthew 4:4¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ ibid

John MacArthur argued against finding transubstantiation in Jesus' words:

Jesus' reference here to eating and drinking was not referring to the ordinance of communion for two significant reasons:

- 1) communion had not been instituted yet, and
- 2) if Jesus was referring to communion, then the passage would teach that anyone partaking of communion would receive eternal life.¹⁰⁹

The New Geneva Study Bible says:

6:51–58 Jesus' hearers continue to misunderstand His statements, taking them on a purely physical level (cf. v. 34). Understood literally, what Jesus said would be highly objectionable since it would involve cannibalism and a use of blood that was strictly forbidden in the Law (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 7:26, 27; 17:10–14; Deut. 12:23, 24). Jesus uses the language of eating and drinking to illustrate the intimacy of the union between Christ and the believer. This spiritual union, by which Christ imparts new life to the believer, is portrayed later in the Gospel as the union of a vine and its branches (15:1–8). It is sometimes called the “mystical union,” and is a recurrent topic in Paul's letters (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:3–14).¹¹⁰

Norm Geisler and Ron Rhodes handled this passage in their book, *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations*:

JOHN 6:53–54— What did Jesus mean when He said we should eat His flesh?

PROBLEM: Evangelical Christians believe in taking the Bible literally. But Jesus said, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). Should this be taken literally too?

SOLUTION: The literal (i.e., actual) meaning of a text is the correct one, but the literal meaning does not mean that everything should be taken literally. For example, the literal meaning of Jesus' statement, “I am the true vine” (John 15:1) is that He is the real source of our spiritual life. But it does not mean that Jesus is a literal vine with leaves growing out of His arms and ears! Literal meaning can be communicated by means of figures of speech. Christ is the actual foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20), but He is not literally a granite cornerstone with engraving on it.

There are many indications in John 6 that Jesus literally meant that the command to “eat His flesh” should be taken in a figurative way. First, Jesus indicated that His statement should not be taken in a materialistic sense

¹⁰⁹ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*

¹¹⁰ Sproul, *New Geneva Study Bible*

when He said, “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). Second, it is absurd and cannibalistic to take it in a physical way. Third, He was not speaking of physical life, but “eternal life” (John 6:54). Fourth, He called Himself the “bread of life” (John 6:48) and contrasted this with the physical bread the Jews ate in the wilderness (John 6:58).

Fifth, He used the figure of “eating” His flesh in parallel with the idea of “abiding” in Him (cf. John 15:4–5), which is another figure of speech. Neither figure is to be taken literally. Sixth, if eating His flesh and drinking His blood be taken in a literalistic way, this would contradict other commands of Scripture not to eat human flesh and blood (cf. Acts 15:20). Finally, in view of the figurative meaning here, this verse cannot be used to support the Roman Catholic concept of transubstantiation, that is, eating Jesus’ actual body in the communion.

It is not necessary to take these phrases physically. Jesus’ words need not be taken in the sense of ingesting his actual physical body and blood. Jesus often spoke in metaphors and figures of speech. He called the Pharisees “blind guides” (Matt. 23:16) and Herod a “fox” (Luke 13:32). Roman Catholic scholars do not take these terms literally. Neither do they understand Jesus to be speaking physically when he said, “I am the gate” (John 10:9). There is, therefore, no necessity to take Jesus in a literal, physical way when he said, “this is my body,” or, “eat my flesh.” Jesus often spoke in graphic parables and figures, as he himself said (Matt. 13:10–11).¹¹¹

3 Conclusions of Transubstantiation:

Why have we spent so much time on transubstantiation? What does it matter what we believe about the bread and wine?

It matters because the doctrine of transubstantiation, as taught by the Roman Catholic Church, leads to three dangerous Theological errors:

- 1) The Mass is an actual sacrifice
- 2) The Eucharist is to be worshipped
- 3) The priesthood is essential

We shall consider each of these conclusions one by one.

¹¹¹ Geisler, N. L., & Rhodes, R., *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations*

The Mass is an Actual Sacrifice:

When our Lord Jesus died on the cross, his spilled blood and broken body was an actual sacrifice. The Roman Catholic Church teaches, however, that since the bread and wine of communion are literally and miraculously transformed into Christ's literal body and blood, then every Roman Catholic Mass is every bit as much of an actual sacrifice as was when Jesus was crucified.

Trent said:

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.¹¹²

Vatican II said:

For it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, 'the work of our redemption is accomplished.'¹¹³

Hence the Mass, the Lord's Supper, is at the same time and inseparably: a sacrifice in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated.¹¹⁴

These words from Vatican II are important for two reasons: one) Vatican II agreed with the many proclamations before it, that every Roman Catholic Mass is "a sacrifice in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated," and two) because many people naively believe that Vatican II changed this teaching. Vatican II in fact did not change any prior doctrine of the Church whatsoever.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is very clear:

The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: 'The victim is one and the same: the same [Christ] now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the Cross; only the manner of offering is different.' 'And since 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... this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.'¹¹⁵

Please note the wording of this document. It says "The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice." It calls the bread and wine "the victim." And it says that the Mass "is truly propitiatory," (used to gain the goodwill of God.)

¹¹² Council of Trent, 1545-1563, 22nd Session, Canons on the Sacrifice of the Mass, Canon 1

¹¹³ Vatican II, p. 1

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 102

¹¹⁵ *Catechism*, 1367

Reverend John F. Whealon, Archbishop of Hartford, wrote:

The Mass is thus the same as the sacrifice of the cross. No matter how many times it is offered, nor in how many places at one time, it is the same sacrifice of Christ. Christ is forever offering Himself in the Mass.¹¹⁶

According to this Roman Catholic Archbishop, “Christ is forever offering Himself in the Mass.”

Every Roman Mass is a re-creation of Jesus’ death for the sins of the world. Not a symbolic re-creation! But a literal, actual offering of the flesh and blood of the Lord to make daily atonement for all the sins that have been daily committed since Jesus was crucified almost 2,000 years ago.¹¹⁷

James McCarthy wrote:

Most Catholics do not seem to realize that the Church teaches that the Mass is a real and true sacrifice, that a prime function of the Catholic priesthood is to offer sacrifice, that an altar is a place of sacrifice, and that the word host is from the Latin word *hostia*, meaning “sacrificial victim.”¹¹⁸

Reading through the gospels, one finds that Jesus said on the cross that “it is finished” (John 19:30). How then can the Roman Catholic Church teach that Jesus’ sacrifice must be perpetually performed?

But here, in the words of a Roman Catholic priest, is the “true meaning” of the words “it is finished!” “These words do not declare that His sacrifice was finished, but that He had finished His former, normal, earthly life and was now fixed in the state of a victim... He then began His everlasting career as the perpetual sacrifice of the new law.” (“The Sacrifice of Christ” by Fr. Richard W. Grace.) Hence, according to Rome, Jesus must be forever dying for sin, “perpetually.”¹¹⁹

What the Bible Says About Jesus’ Sacrifice:

We have seen that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that Christ’s sacrifice is performed perpetually in every Roman Catholic Mass. The Bible, however, teaches that His sacrifice was unquestionably a one-time event in history.

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood **he entered in once** into the holy place, **having obtained** eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9:12, emphasis mine).

¹¹⁶ Whealon, Reverend John F., Archbishop of Hartford, *This Is The Catholic Church*, pp. 20-24

¹¹⁷ Green

¹¹⁸ McCarthy, p. 104

¹¹⁹ Green

Note the verb tense, “having obtained.” The writer of the book of Hebrews is making it clear that Jesus’ sacrifice was an event that happened and finished in the past.

“[Jesus] 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**” (Hebrews 7:27, emphasis mine).

Again, note the words “he did once” and also the verb tenses. “He offered up himself” is an action that started and was completed in the past.

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: **Nor yet that he should offer himself often**, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So **Christ was once offered** to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:24-28, emphasis mine).

This verse is even clearer. This passage is contrasting Jesus to the priests of the Old Testament. Under the old covenant, the human priests had to continually offer sacrifices over and over. In contrast to those earthly priests, Christ performed one single sacrifice. The Roman Catholic Church treats Christ’s sacrifice like the imperfect Old Testament sacrifices.

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by **one offering** he hath perfected **for ever** them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:10-14, emphasis mine).

Keith Green pointed out:

Notice that throughout these verses occurs the statement “once for all” which shows how perfect, complete, and final Jesus’ sacrifice was! His work on the cross constituted one historic event which need never be repeated and which in fact cannot be repeated. As Paul says, “Christ, being raised from the dead dieth no more” (Romans 6:9.) Any pretense of a continuous offering for sin is worse than vain, it is blasphemy and true fulfillment of

the Scripture, “Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:6.)¹²⁰

Despite the fact that the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus’ sacrifice was a one-time event forever, the Roman Catholic Church continues to teach that through the Mass, Christ is sacrificed repeatedly. Remember, Vatican II said that every Roman Catholic Mass is “a sacrifice in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated.”

Now why would the Pope want to change the Scriptures? Why would he want his readers to think that the Bible teaches that Christ “constantly ‘enters into God’s sanctuary thus obtaining eternal redemption’” instead of what it actually teaches, that Christ “entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption”? Why? Because Rome holds that Christ must be constantly re-presented in His victimhood to God through the Mass for our salvation. With each offering of the Mass, some 120 million times a year, the Church says that “the work of our redemption is continually carried out.” The Pope, not finding Hebrews 9:12 to his liking, simply changed it. This was not a slip of the pen, but a calculated alteration of God’s Word to make the Sacrifice of the Mass appear biblical.¹²¹

Worshipping the Eucharist:

The second conclusion one must draw from transubstantiation is the worship of the bread and wine. If this sounds too incredible, listen to the words of Vatican II:

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 by any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten.¹²²

According to Vatican II, “this most holy sacrament” is to be given “the worship which is due to the true God.” And this makes sense if one believes the error that the bread and wine *actually* and *literally* becomes the body and blood of Christ.

Pope John Paul II said:

Indeed, since the Eucharistic Mystery was instituted out of love, and makes Christ sacramentally present, it is worthy of thanksgiving and worship. And this worship must be prominent in all our encounters with the Blessed Sacrament, both when we visit our churches and when the sacred species are taken to the sick and administered to them.

¹²⁰ Green

¹²¹ McCarthy, p. 109

¹²² Vatican II, p. 104

Adoration of Christ in this sacrament of love must also find expression in various forms of eucharistic devotion: personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, Hours of Adoration, periods of exposition—short, prolonged and annual (Forty Hours)—eucharistic benediction, eucharistic processions, eucharistic congresses.¹²³

This Pope said that in the Eucharist, Christ is “sacramentally present” and “worthy of thanksgiving and worship.”

John Paul II continued:

A particular mention should be made at this point of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ as an act of public worship rendered to Christ present in the Eucharist, a feast instituted by my predecessor Urban IV in memory of the institution of this great Mystery. All this therefore corresponds to the general principles and particular norms already long in existence but newly formulated during or after the Second Vatican Council... Eucharistic worship is therefore precisely the expression of that love which is the authentic and deepest characteristic of the Christian vocation.¹²⁴

What, according to Pope John Paul II, is the “authentic and deepest characteristic of the Christian vocation?” Worshipping the Eucharist.

Jesus Christ does not cease to exist under the appearances of bread and wine after the Mass is over. Furthermore, some hosts are usually kept in all Catholic churches. In these hosts, Jesus is physically and truly present, as long as the appearances of bread remain. Catholics therefore have the praiseworthy practice of ‘making visits’ to our Lord present in their churches to offer Him their thanks, their adoration, to ask for help and forgiveness; in a word, to make Him the center around which they live their daily lives.¹²⁵

Here Catholics are encouraged to visit Jesus during the week by visiting the Eucharist.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church instructs:

In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord.¹²⁶

¹²³ Pope John Paul II, *Dominicae Cenaee (On The Mystery And Worship Of The Eucharist)*, February 24, 1980

¹²⁴ *ibid*

¹²⁵ *The Spirit of Jesus: Catholic Home Study Instruction Course, Book 3*, p. 92

¹²⁶ *Catechism*, 1378

According to the *Catechism*, Roman Catholics are to *genuflect*, or bow to the bread and wine.

The Council of Trent declared:

If any one saith, that, in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored with the worship, even external of latria; and is, consequently, neither to be venerated with a special festive solemnity, nor to be solemnly borne about in processions, according to the laudable and universal rite and custom of holy church; or, is not to be proposed publicly to the people to be adored, and that the adorers thereof are idolators; LET HIM BE ANATHEMA.¹²⁷

Keith Green said of this canon:

In Canon VI, a rite of worship called “Latria” was spoken of. This is not just an “ancient custom,” it is thoroughly practiced today in every Mass. After the bread has been supposedly “changed” into Christ by the priest, it is placed in a holder called the monstrance. And before this monstrance the Catholic must bow and worship (this act is called “genuflecting”) the little wafer as God! Sometimes they have processions where they solemnly march, as the congregation bows and offers praise and worship to this piece of bread!¹²⁸

The Ten Commandments:

The bedrock of Christian virtue is found in Exodus, chapter 20, commonly referred to as “The Ten Commandments.”

¹²⁷ Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 13, Canons on the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, Canon 6

¹²⁸ Green

However, if one looks up the “Ten Commandments” in both non-Roman Catholic and Roman Catholic sources, one will find two slightly different lists:

The Ten Commandments:

- I. You shalt have no Other Gods
- II. You shall not make any graven images or worship them
- III. You shall not take the name of the LORD in Vain
- IV. Remember the Sabbath
- V. Honor your parents
- VI. You shall not kill
- VII. You shall not commit adultery
- VIII. You shall not steal
- IX. You shall not lie
- X. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or goods

Roman Catholic Ten Commandments:

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- X. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods

In the Roman Catholic list, the second commandment, “You shall not make any graven images or worship them” is removed, and the tenth commandment, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or goods” is split up into two to keep the list ten.

Naturally, the Roman Catholic Church will argue that its list is the correct one, but the text in Exodus 20 speaks for itself. The Roman Catholic list leaves out three crucial verses:

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:4-6).

It is very clear from the text in Exodus, that the commandment, “You shall not make any graven images or worship them” belongs in the list. It is this very commandment that Rome so often disobeys, as is evidenced by the worship of the bread and wine of communion.

Essential Priesthood:

The third conclusion that is drawn from the error of transubstantiation is that the priesthood becomes essential to the life of the Roman Catholic.

Vatican II said:

It is indeed the priest alone, who, acting in the person of Christ, consecrates the bread and wine, but the role of the faithful in the Eucharist is to recall the passion, resurrection and glorification of the Lord, to give thanks to God, and to offer the immaculate victim not only through the hands of the priest, but also together with him; and finally, by receiving the Body of the Lord, to perfect that communion with God and among themselves which should be the product of participation in the sacrifice of the Mass.¹²⁹

And the Council of Trent said:

If anyone says that by those words, Do this for a commemoration of me, Christ did not institute the Apostles priests; or did not ordain that they and other priests should offer His own body and blood, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA.¹³⁰

The Catholic Church teaches that through the miracle of transubstantiation we commune with God, and **only the priest** can perform this. Therefore the doctrine of transubstantiation gives tremendous power to the Roman Catholic clergy.

However, the Bible teaches that *all believers* are priests, and the only mediator we need to get to God is Jesus Christ!

“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:5-6).

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

History of Transubstantiation:

The Catholic Church claims that the doctrine of transubstantiation dates back to Jesus and the apostles, but this is historically not the case.

The teaching of transubstantiation does not date back to the Last Supper as most Catholics suppose. It was a controversial topic for many centuries before officially becoming an article of faith (which means that it is essential to salvation according to Rome.) The idea of a physical presence was vaguely held by some, such as Ambrose, but it was not until 831 A.D. that Paschasius Radbertus, a Benedictine Monk, published a treatise openly advocating the doctrine. Even then, for almost another four centuries, theological war was waged over this teaching by bishops and people alike,

¹²⁹ Vatican II, *Second Instruction on the Proper Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 12

¹³⁰ Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 22, Canons on the Sacrifice of the Mass, Canon 2

until at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D., it was officially defined and canonized as a dogma (A “Dogma” is a teaching or doctrine that can never be reversed or repealed. It is equal in authority to the Bible) by Pope Innocent III.

Where did this teaching and practice really come from? Like many of the beliefs and rites of Romanism, transubstantiation was first practiced by pagan religions. The noted historian Durant said that belief in transubstantiation as practiced by the priests of the Roman Catholic system is “one of the oldest ceremonies of primitive religion” (The Story of Civilization, p. 741.) The syncretism and mysticism of the Middle East were great factors in influencing the West, particularly Italy. (Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius, by Dill.)

In Egypt, priests would consecrate meat cakes, which were supposed to become the flesh of Osiris! (an ancient Egyptian god of the lower world and judge of the dead - Encyclopedia of Religions, Vol. 2, p. 76.) The idea of transubstantiation was also characteristic of the religion of Mithra whose sacraments of cakes and haoma drink closely parallel Catholic Eucharistic rites. (Ibid.)

The idea of eating the flesh of deity was most popular among the people of Mexico and Central America long before they ever heard of Christ; and when Spanish missionaries first landed in those countries, “their surpass was heightened when they witnessed a religious rite which reminded them of communion... an image made of flour... and after consecration by priests, was distributed among the people who ate it... declaring it was the flesh of deity.” (Prescott’s Mexico, Vol. 3.)¹³¹

Questions about Transubstantiation:

The following questions are legitimate ones that need to be asked about the doctrine of transubstantiation.

If the wafer and wine physically change into Jesus’ actual flesh and blood, then:

- 2 hours after Mass, does every faithful Catholic excrete our Lord in their bathroom?
- What if one vomits?
- What happens to the hosts that aren’t eaten? Is the Lord stored in a pantry until the next day?
- What if mice break in and eat it?

¹³¹ Green

Please understand that I mean no disrespect with these questions. We've already seen that transubstantiation can not be supported in the Bible. The previous questions illustrate that transubstantiation also can not be support by common sense. This is why the *Westminster Confession of Faith* rightly concluded:

That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant, not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense, and reason; overthroweth the nature of the sacrament, and hath been, and is, the cause of manifold superstitions; yea, of gross idolatries.¹³²

Mary:

The Roman Catholic Church teaches the following about Mary:

- Immaculate conception: She was conceived without original sin
- She is all holy, and lived a sinless life
- She was perpetually a virgin
- She is the mother of God
- She is the mother of the church
- Assumption: She was taken directly to heaven after her death
- She, with Jesus, is a co-mediator
- She is the queen of heaven
- She redeemed the human race with Jesus

We shall analyze each of these, one-by-one.

Immaculate Conception:

The Bible teaches the doctrine of "original sin." In Romans 5:12, the Bible clearly states, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Also, in the Old Testament, Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin.¹³³

Of this point, the Bible agrees.

In addition to teaching that all mankind inherit Adam's "original sin," the Bible teaches that our Lord Jesus was born via an "Immaculate Conception," meaning that He was unique in that He was born without the stain of "original sin." Non-Roman Catholics

¹³² *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 29, Of the Lord's Supper, verse 6

¹³³ *Catechism*, 404

and Roman Catholics agree on this point. However, when the Roman Catholic Church speaks of the “immaculate conception,” they are typically not referring to Jesus’ Immaculate Conception, but of Mary’s *alleged* Immaculate Conception! The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary, in addition to Jesus, also was born without “original sin.”

The *Catechism* states:

To become the mother of the Savior, Mary “was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role.” The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as “full of grace”. In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God’s grace.¹³⁴

Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.¹³⁵

Pope Pius IX described Mary with these words:

Immaculate in every respect; innocent, and verily most innocent; spotless, and entirely spotless; holy and removed from every stain of sin; all pure, all stainless, the very model of purity and innocence; more beautiful than beauty, more lovely than loveliness; more holy than holiness, singularly holy and most pure in soul and body; the one who surpassed all integrity and virginity; the only one who has become the dwelling place of all the graces of the most Holy Spirit. God alone excepted, Mary is more excellent than all, and by nature fair and beautiful, and more holy than the Cherubim and Seraphim. To praise her all the tongues of heaven and earth do not suffice.¹³⁶

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary “was redeemed from the moment of her conception.” Not only was Jesus born without “original sin,” but according to Rome, Mary was as well.

¹³⁴ *Catechism*, 490

¹³⁵ *ibid*, 491

¹³⁶ Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus (The Immaculate Conception)*, December 8, 1854

What the Bible Says about Mary's Immaculate Conception:

Luke chapter 1 records Mary's response to the news that she would bare the Son of God. "And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God **my Saviour.**" (Luke 1:46-47, emphasis mine)

Former Nun, Mary Ann Collins appropriately asked:

If Mary were sinless, then why would she need a savior?¹³⁷

She also pointed out:

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was first introduced by a heretic (a man whose teachings were officially declared to be contrary to Church doctrine). For centuries this doctrine was unanimously rejected by popes, Fathers and theologians of the Catholic Church. (William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 72-77)¹³⁸

Mary Was Sinless:

Not only does the Roman Catholic Church teach that Mary was born without "original sin," but they proclaim even further than she continued to be without sin her whole life.

The *Catechism* says:

Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ's victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life.¹³⁹

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". By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.¹⁴⁰

Notice Rome's clear teaching that Mary "committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life."

¹³⁷ Collins, *Mary Worship?*

¹³⁸ *ibid*

¹³⁹ *Catechism*, 411

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, 493

What the Bible Says about Mary Being Sinless:

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary never sinned in her life. In contrast to that, the Bible teaches, however,

“For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, emphasis mine).

Please note that “all have sinned.” This includes Mary.

“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; for thy judgments are made manifest” (Revelation 15:4, emphasis mine).

The Bible teaches that God alone is holy. Mary is excluded.

“As it is written, **There is none righteous, no, not one**” (Romans 3:10, emphasis mine).

Is Mary sinless? Not according to the Bible.

Mary Ann Collins pointed out:

Jesus is the only person who is referred to in Scripture as sinless. Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “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.” 1 Peter 2:22 says, “Who did no sin , neither was guile found in his mouth”.

In contrast, Mary said that God is her Savior. (Luke 1:47) If God was her Savior, then Mary was not sinless. Sinless people do not need a Savior.

In the Book of Revelation, when they were searching for someone who was worthy to break the seals and open the scroll, the only person who was found to be worthy was Jesus. Nobody else in Heaven or on earth (including Mary) was worthy to open the scroll or even look inside it. (Revelation 5:1-5)¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Collins, *Mary Worship?*

Mary's Perpetual Virginity:

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary remained a virgin her whole life; that is, she never had sexual relations. *The Catechism* teaches:

the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the “Ever-virgin”.¹⁴²

Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus. The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, “brothers of Jesus”, are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls “the other Mary”. They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression.¹⁴³

According to the *Catechism*, Mary was an “Ever-virgin,” and the “brothers of Jesus” mentioned in the Bible are not *literal* brothers, but “close relations.”

What the Bible Says about Mary's Perpetual Virginity:

Mary Ann Collins provided thoughtful insight regarding this matter:

Matthew 1:24-25 says, “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.” “Till” (until) means that after that point, Joseph did “know” (have sexual relations with) Mary. (See Genesis 4:1 where Adam “knew” Eve and she conceived and had a son.)

Jesus had brothers and sisters. The Bible even tells us their names. Matthew 13:54-56 says, “And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hatch this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas ? And his sisters, are they not all with us?”

Other Scripture verses which specifically refer to Jesus' brothers are: Matthew 12:46; John 2:12; John 7:3; Acts 1:14; and Galatians 1:19.

I was always taught that “brothers” and “sisters” were general terms that really could refer to any kind of kinsman, including cousins. This is true in the Hebrew language. However, the New Testament is written in Greek,

¹⁴² *Catechism*, 499

¹⁴³ *ibid*, 500

which is an extremely precise language. It makes a clear distinction between the words used to describe family relationships. There is a Greek word which refers to people who are relatives but not of the immediate family, such as aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces and cousins. There are other Greek words which refer specifically to a person's brother or sister within a family.¹⁴⁴

Mary the Mother of God:

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary is not only the mother of Jesus in His humanity, but in His deity as well. Mary is often referred to as “the mother of God.”

The Catechism says:

The Virgin Mary... is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer¹⁴⁵

From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of ‘Mother of God,’... The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the rosary, an “epitome of the whole Gospel,” express this devotion to the Virgin Mary.¹⁴⁶

Holy Mary, Mother of God: With Elizabeth we marvel, “And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God!¹⁴⁷

What the Bible Says about Mary Being the Mother of God:

The above citations from *The Catechism* show that the Roman Catholic Church teaches error regarding the doctrine of the incarnation.

The Incarnation means that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. Mary was only the mother of Jesus as man, and not the mother of Jesus as God. According to the Bible, the world was created through Jesus. This was long before Mary was born.

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds “.

¹⁴⁴ Collins, *Mary Worship?*

¹⁴⁵ *Catechism*, 963

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, 971

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, 2677

Colossians 1:16-17 says, “For by him [Jesus] were all things created , that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things [including Mary] were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things [including Mary] , and by him all things consist”.

John 8:58 says, “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am .” Jesus existed before Abraham was born. That means that He also existed before Mary was born. In John 17:5, Jesus says, “And now O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was .” So Jesus existed even before the world began. Jesus came first - not Mary.¹⁴⁸

Mary the Mother of the Church:

The Roman Catholic Church ascribes to Mary the title, “the mother of the church.”

The Catechism says:

She is ‘clearly the mother of the members of Christ’ . . . since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head.” “Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church.”¹⁴⁹

We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ.¹⁵⁰

What the Bible Says about Mary Being the Mother of the Church:

The Bible paints no such place of preeminence for Mary.

Acts 1:13-14 gives a picture of a group of people praying together. Mary is mentioned as one of them, but nothing indicates any special prominence.

“And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Phillip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”

¹⁴⁸ Collins, *Mary Worship?*

¹⁴⁹ *Catechism*, 963

¹⁵⁰ *ibid*, 975

Mary was probably in the Upper Room when the tongues of fire fell upon the 120 disciples. However, she is never mentioned again in the Book of Acts, which is our only historical record of how the Church was born. She is also not specifically identified in the epistles. Paul did send greetings to “Mary”, but that was a common name. (In the Gospels and in the Book of Acts, she is referred to as “Mary the mother of Jesus” to distinguish her from other women named Mary.)

It is notable that John, who took Mary into his home after Jesus was crucified, does not mention her in his epistles, and he only mentions her on two occasions in his Gospel (the wedding at Cana and the crucifixion of Jesus). John mentions Mary Magdalene more than he mentions Jesus’ mother.¹⁵¹

Mary’s Assumption:

For years I naively assumed that when Roman Catholics referred to “The Assumption,” they were referring to Jesus’ assumption; i.e. the fact that Jesus was taken back into heaven after His resurrection. However, many times when a Roman Catholic talks of “The Assumption,” they are referring to Mary’s assumption!

The Catechism states:

Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians:

In giving birth you kept your virginity; in your Dormition you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death.¹⁵²

The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son’s Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Collins, *Mary Worship?*

¹⁵² *Catechism*, 966

¹⁵³ *ibid*, 974

What the Bible Says about Mary's Assumption:

When one searches the pages of Scripture for the assumption of Mary, one finds silence:

There is no biblical reference to the assumption of Mary. The Gospel of John was written around 90 A.D., which is more than 100 years after Mary was born. (Surely Mary was more than ten years old when Jesus was conceived.) If Mary had been supernaturally assumed into Heaven, wouldn't John (the disciple that Mary lived with) have mentioned it? When Enoch and Elijah were taken up to Heaven, the Bible recorded it. With Elijah it was recorded in some detail. (See Genesis 6:24 and 2 Kings 2:1-18.)

The Assumption of Mary was officially declared to be a dogma of the Roman Catholic faith in 1950. This means that every Roman Catholic is required to believe this doctrine without questioning it. However, as we will see, the teaching of the Assumption originated with heretical writings which were officially condemned by the early Church.

In 495 A.D., Pope Gelasius issued a decree which rejected this teaching as heresy and its proponents as heretics. In the sixth century, Pope Hormisdas also condemned as heretics those authors who taught the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary.

The early Church clearly considered the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary to be a heresy worthy of condemnation. Here we have "infallible" popes declaring something to be a heresy. Then in 1950, Pope Pius XII, another "infallible" pope, declared it to be official Roman Catholic doctrine. (William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 81-85)¹⁵⁴

Mary Is a Co-Mediator:

Christians believe that Jesus is our mediator to God, but Roman Catholics add that Mary also is our mediator. They refer to her as a "co-mediator."

The Catechism teaches:

Her role in relation to the Church and to all humanity goes still further. "In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Collins, *Mary Worship?*

¹⁵⁵ *Catechism*, 968

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 Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.¹⁵⁶

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary is our “Mediatrix” because she makes “manifold intercession” to bring about for us “the gifts of eternal salvation.”

Pope Leo XIII said:

With equal truth may it be also affirmed that, by the will of God, Mary is the intermediary through whom is distributed unto us this immense treasure of mercies gathered by God, for mercy and truth were created by Jesus Christ. Thus as no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother.¹⁵⁷

Here the Catholic position is even clearer. “Thus as no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother.”

Saint Alphonsus Liguori wrote:

“On this account it was,” says St. Bernard, “that the Eternal Father, wishing to show all the mercy possible, besides giving us Jesus Christ, our principal advocate with Him, was pleased also to give us Mary, as our advocate with Jesus Christ. There is no doubt,” the saint adds, “that Jesus Christ is the only mediator of justice between men and God; that, by virtue of His own merits and promises, He will and can obtain us pardon and the divine favors; but because men acknowledge and fear the divine Majesty, which is in Him as God, for this reason it was necessary to assign us another advocate, to whom we might have recourse with less fear and more confidence, and this advocate is Mary, than whom we cannot find one more powerful with His Divine Majesty, or one more merciful towards ourselves.” The saint says, “Christ is a faithful and powerful Mediator between God and men, but in Him men fear the majesty of God. A mediator, then, was needed with the mediator Himself; nor could a more fitting one be found than Mary.”¹⁵⁸

According to Rome, Jesus is our mediator to God, but because Jesus is harsh and mean, we get to Jesus by way of the mediator known as Mary. Said another way, Jesus is our mediator to God, but Mary is our mediator to Jesus.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid*, 969

¹⁵⁷ Pope Leo XIII, *Octobri Mense* Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, On the Rosary, September 22, 1891

¹⁵⁸ Saint Alphonsus Liguori, *The Immaculate Heart of Mary is the Refuge of Sinners*, pp. 195-196

What the Bible Says about Mary Being a Co-Mediator:

The Bible is quite clear that we indeed can and must approach Jesus directly and boldly.

“Having therefore, brethren, **boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus**, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; **Let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19-22, emphasis mine).

We are invited to draw near to God directly without the need of a human mediator! Ephesians 3:12 says, “In whom [Jesus] we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”

1 Timothy 2:5-6 says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus : Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

Hebrews 7:25 says, “Wherefore [Jesus] is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

The Bible is clear: There is only one mediator and that is Jesus. Mary is not even mentioned.

If Jesus is constantly interceding for us and He is able to save us “to the uttermost,” (utterly, completely) then He doesn’t need Mary’s help. If we can approach God with “boldness” and “confidence” because of our faith in Jesus, then we don’t need Mary’s help either.¹⁵⁹

Mary the Queen of Heaven:

The Roman Catholic Church ascribes the title “Queen of Heaven” to Mary.

The Catechism says:

Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things...¹⁶⁰

“All generations will call me blessed”: The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Collins, *Mary Worship?*

¹⁶⁰ *Catechism*, 966

¹⁶¹ *ibid*, 971

According to Rome, Mary is “Queen over all things” and our devotion to her ought to be “intrinsic to Christian worship.”

What the Bible Says about Mary Being Queen of Heaven:

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the King, and teaches nothing similar about Mary.

Psalm 148:13 says, “Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent ; his glory is above the earth and heaven.” This makes it quite clear that only God’s name (not Mary’s) is to be exalted. (In Catholic Bibles the numbering of the chapters and verses of some of the Psalms is slightly different.)

When people tried to give Mary special honor and pre-eminence because she was His mother, Jesus corrected them.

“And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” (Luke 11:27-28)

In chapters four and five of the Book of Revelation, we are given a quite detailed picture of Heaven. God is seated on the throne, surrounded by 24 elders and four living creatures. The Lamb (Jesus) is standing in the center of the throne.

Thousands upon thousands of angels circle the throne, singing God’s praises. And Mary is not in the picture at all.¹⁶²

Mary Is the Co-Redeemer:

Perhaps most blasphemous of all of Rome’s many errors concerning Mary is this one. Rome teaches that Mary redeemed mankind along with her Son.

Pope Benedict XV said:

With her suffering and dying Son she suffered and almost died, so did she surrender her mother’s rights over her Son for the salvation of human beings, and to appease the justice of God, so far as pertained to her, she immolated her Son, so that it can be rightly said, that she together with Christ has redeemed the human race.¹⁶³

This Pope said that Mary, “together with Christ has redeemed the human race.”

¹⁶² Collins, *Mary Worship?*

¹⁶³ Pope Benedict XV, *Epistle, Admodum Probatur*, June 20, 1917

Pope Leo XIII said:

By the fullness of grace which confers on her the most illustrious of her many titles, the Blessed Virgin is infinitely superior to all the hierarchies of men and angels, the one creature who is closest of all to Christ. “It is a great thing in any saint to have grace sufficient for the salvation of many souls; but to have enough to suffice for the salvation of everybody in the world. is the greatest of all; and this is found in Christ and in the Blessed Virgin.”¹⁶⁴

Mary not only had enough grace to merit her own salvation, but she also had enough grace to merit the salvation of the whole of humankind!

What the Bible Says about Mary Being the Co-Redeemer:

Shutting the door on this blasphemy are the perfect words of scripture:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had **by himself purged our sins**, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:1-3, emphasis mine).

Our Lord did not need help, nor did He enlist the help of Mary or anyone in securing the salvation of His elect. He “had by himself purged our sins.”

Dead Saints:

The Roman Catholic Church teaches its followers to pray to and for Mary and other “dead saints.”

The Council of Trent said:

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; or that it profits him only who receives, and ought not to be offered **for the living and the dead**, for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA.¹⁶⁵

According to Trent, it is profitable to offer Masses for both “the living and the dead.”

¹⁶⁴ Pope Leo XIII, *Magnae Dei Matris - On the Rosary*, September 8, 1892

¹⁶⁵ Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 22, Canons on the Sacrifice of the Mass, Canon 1, emphasis mine

Furthermore, Trent also proclaimed:

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.¹⁶⁶

The Catechism teaches:

The intercession of the saints. “Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness.... They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus.... So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped.”

Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life. (St. Dominic, dying, to his brothers.)

I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth. (St. Therese of Lisieux, *The Final Conversations*, tr. John Clarke (Washington: ICS, 1977), 102.)¹⁶⁷

Roman Catholic apologists claim that our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ that are in heaven are very much alive there, and it is good to ask them to pray on your behalf just like you would ask your brothers and sisters in Christ on earth to pray for you.

Dr. Joe Mizzi pointed out the flaw in this line of reasoning:

We note that praying to the saints is not equivalent to asking fellow Christians for prayer. This excuse may be convincing to some Christians who never had any personal experience of the Catholic religion. Otherwise, every Catholic (and former Catholic) knows that praying to Mary or the saints is completely different than asking a fellow believer for prayer.

Suppose a Christian brother comes and kneels before you, imploring you with great devotion to pray for him. Would you allow him? How would you react if he calls you his advocate, his hope and refuge? What if he thanks you for the many graces you conferred on him and for delivering him from hell? Suppose he tells you that he confines his salvation to your care and pleads with you to stay with him until you see him safe in heaven? Would you call that “asking a fellow Christian for prayer”? Of course not! That kind of prayer and confidence is nothing less than divine

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, Canon 5, emphasis mine

¹⁶⁷ *Catechism*, 956

worship and it should be directed only to the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet that is exactly the kind of prayer that Catholics offer to Mary and the saints.

We should underline the fact that death disrupts the interaction between saints on earth and saints in heaven. As Christians we also believe in the communion of the saints – whether we are on earth or in heaven... However that does not imply that death does nothing to the interaction between us! We all know something of the painful and terrible reality of death separating us from our loved ones... there is no communication between the departed and us. That's why the Bible forbids us from trying to communicate with the dead. Dead saints remain part of the body of Christ, but there is an effective separation from the living saints... We must face the sad consequence of death: separation!¹⁶⁸

Believers don't need to make contact with spirits of the dead to seek their intercession with God Almighty. As children of God, members of His family, we have the right to go boldly before the Throne of Grace with our petitions. We can appeal to our heavenly Father directly.¹⁶⁹

The Bible makes it clear that we do not need dead saints to intercede on our behalf. We can go boldly before the throne of grace because Jesus is our mediator.

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. **Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,** that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16, emphasis mine).

Also pertinent to this discussion is the immutable fact that God has forbidden communication with the dead at:

- Leviticus 19:31
- Leviticus 20:6
- Deuteronomy 18:9
- 1 Chronicles 10:13.

¹⁶⁸ Mizzi, Joe, *Praying to Dead Saints*, <http://www.justforcatholics.org/prayer.htm>

¹⁶⁹ *Catholics Commit Idolatry by Praying to Dead Saints*,
<http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Religions/Roman%20Catholicism/rcc5-saints.htm>

Lorraine Boettner insightfully asked:

How, then, can a human being such as Mary hear the prayers of millions of Roman Catholics, in many different countries, praying in many different languages, all at the same time?

Let any priest or layman try to converse with only three people at the same time and see how impossible that is for a human being... The objections against prayers to Mary apply equally against prayers to the saints. For they too are only creatures, infinitely less than God, able to be at only one place at a time and to do only one thing at a time.

How, then, can they listen to and answer thousands upon thousands of petitions made simultaneously in many different lands and in many different languages? Many such petitions are expressed, not orally, but only mentally, silently. How can Mary and the saints, without being like God, be present everywhere and know the secrets of all hearts?¹⁷⁰

Praying to Mary or any other dead saint is a foolish and blasphemous practice that is against both common sense and Biblical commandments.

Dulia vs. Latria:

To counter the claim that praying to dead saints is an unbiblical abomination, Roman Catholic apologists claim there is a difference between “dulia” and “latria.”

“Latria” is praise only to God.

“Dulia” is veneration of Mary and saints.

The Catholic Encyclopedia defines “dulia” as:

Dulia: (Greek *doulia*; Lat. *servitus*), a theological term signifying the honour paid to the saints, while latria means worship given to God alone, and hyperdulia the veneration offered to the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹⁷¹

Notice the distinction made between “dulia” and “latria.”

The Roman Catholic Church argues that its devotion to Mary and other saints are not idolatry because they are merely offering “dulia,” but not “latria.”

¹⁷⁰ Boettner, Lorraine, *Roman Catholicism*, pp. 142-143

¹⁷¹ *Catholic Encyclopedia*: Dulia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05188b.htm>

James White proved that Biblically there is no distinction:

When we come to the New Testament... we discover that there is absolutely no distinction made between [dulia and latria] relevant to religious worship. As an example, we note Galatians 4:8

However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

But when you did not know God, you served, or were slaves to, those which by nature are not gods. Paul is speaking of the former idolatry of the Galatians.

They served (*dulia*) idols, those which by nature are not gods at all. Are we to assume, then, on the basis of the Roman Catholic definitions, that since they only served these idols that they were free from the charge of idolatry, since they didn't give latria as well? Of course not! Their service of these idols was wrong whether the term latria or dulia was used. In fact, in the Latin Vulgate, both *duleuo* (to serve) and *latreuo* (to worship) are rendered by the same term, *servio*. No matter how the defender of Rome tries, no basis can possibly be found in Scripture for the distinction of latria and dulia.¹⁷²

Also, adding more weight to the argument that there is no distinction between dulia and latria is the fact that the Hebrew word, *avad*, (Hebrew for “worship”) is translated as both *dulia* and *latria* in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible).

Holy Relics:

Rome promotes the use of “holy relics” in the life of the Roman Catholic.

The Catholic Encyclopedia states:

The teaching of the Catholic Church with regard to the veneration of relics is summed up in a decree of the Council of Trent (Sess. XXV), which enjoins on bishops and other pastors to instruct their flocks that “the holy bodies of holy martyrs and of others now living with Christ—which bodies were the living members of Christ and ‘the temple of the Holy Ghost’... are to be venerated by the faithful, for through these [bodies] many benefits are bestowed by God on men, so that they who affirm that veneration and honour are not due to the relics of the saints, or that these and other sacred monuments are uselessly honoured by the faithful, and that the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are in vain visited with the view of obtaining their aid, are wholly to be condemned, as the

¹⁷² White, p. 211

Church has already long since condemned, and also now condemns them.”¹⁷³

So it is clear that Roman Catholics are supposed to venerate the bodies or clothing of dead saints in order to receive “many benefits.” In addition, those who teach otherwise are condemned.

According to the Roman Catholic Church, a relic is defined as:

- some object (body or clothes) of a dead saint
- to be venerated by “the faithful”
- used for obtaining aid of departed saint
- condemns anyone who teaches otherwise

St. Thomas Aquinas, arguably one of the most influential Roman Catholics of all time, wrote in his seminal work, *Summa Theologica*:

Objection 3. Further, a dead body is not of the same species as a living body: consequently it does not seem to be identical with it. Therefore, after a saint’s death, it seems that his body should not be worshiped.

Reply to Objection 3. The dead body of a saint is not identical with that which the saint had during life, on account of the difference of form, viz. the soul: but it is the same by identity of matter, which is destined to be reunited to its form.¹⁷⁴

So, according to Aquinas, it’s okay to worship the dead body of a saint because it’s not very different than when it was alive.

Problem: We shouldn’t be worshipping anyone: living or dead!

Aquinas also wrote:

It is written (De Eccles. Dogm. xl): “We believe that the bodies of the saints, above all the relics of the blessed martyrs, as being the members of Christ, should be worshiped in all sincerity”: and further on: “If anyone holds a contrary opinion, he is not accounted a Christian, but a follower of Eunomius and Vigilantius.”¹⁷⁵

In his influential work, *The City of God*, Augustine wrote the following anecdote:

When the Bishop Projectius brought the relics of Saint Stephen to the town called Aquae Tibiltinae, the people came in great crowds to honor them.

¹⁷³ *Catholic Encyclopedia*: Relics, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12734a.htm>

¹⁷⁴ Aquinas, St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, Part 3, Question 25, Article 6

¹⁷⁵ *ibid*

Amongst there was a blind woman, who asked the people to lead her to the bishop who had the holy relics. They did so, and the bishop gave her some flowers which he had in his hand. She took them, and put them to her eyes, and immediately her sight was restored, so that she passed speedily on before all the others, no longer requiring to be guided.¹⁷⁶

The superstitious worship of relics even dates back, according to some sources, to the time of Constantine himself.

Relics that are claimed to be the Holy Nails with which Christ was crucified are objects of veneration among some Christians. When Helena, mother of Constantine the Great discovered the True Cross in Jerusalem, the legend was told by and repeated by Sozomen and Theodoret that the Holy Nails had been recovered too. Helena left all but a few fragments of the Cross in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, but returned with the nails to Constantinople.

As Theodoret tells it in his “Ecclesiastical History, chapter xvii, “The mother of the emperor, on learning the accomplishment of her desire, gave orders that a portion of the nails should be inserted in the royal helmet, in order that the head of her son might be preserved from the darts of his enemies. The other portion of the nails she ordered to be formed into the bridle of his horse, not only to ensure the safety of the emperor, but also to fulfil an ancient prophecy; for long before Zechariah, the prophet, had predicted that ‘There shall be upon the bridles of the horses Holiness unto the Lord Almighty.’”¹⁷⁷

What the Bible Says about Relics:

Whereas the Roman Catholic Church encourages its people to worship “holy relics,” and condemns anyone who teaches otherwise, the Bible clearly teaches against this practice.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil to give worship to Satan, the Lord correctly responded, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10).

According to Jesus, we are to worship God only - nothing else.

Paul told the Thessalonians that they “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Christians are not to worship idols (created things) but God alone.

The true Second Commandment states, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth

¹⁷⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 5th Century, AD

¹⁷⁷ *Wikipedia*: Nail (relic), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Nails

beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:3-6). We have already discussed that this commandment is removed from the list of the Ten Commandments by Roman Catholics. It’s clear why this is the case, since Rome so brazenly violates this command.

“Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves... **Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image**, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest **be driven to worship them**, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven” (Deuteronomy 4:15-19, emphasis mine).

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness... Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened... And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into **an image made like to corruptible man... Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator**” (Romans 1:18, 21, 23, 25, emphasis mine).

In Acts chapter 14, Paul and Barnabus are mistaken as gods by the pagan Greeks. The Greeks even began offering sacrifices to them. Paul reacted harshly:

“Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein” (Acts 14:15).

Similarly, the Apostle John began to worship an angel. “And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God” (Revelation 19:10).

All of these scriptures have the same teaching in common: God is to be worshipped, and not created beings or created things! The worship of “holy relics” in order to receive “many benefits” is a concept foreign to scripture and likewise should be seen as abominable to Christians.

The Bible:

As Bible-believing Christians, we receive our truth from God from the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

This is not the case with the Roman Catholic Church.

Like other cults, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that is the basis for establishing truth, doctrine, and practice. But it also has other criteria that it says are equal to Scripture: tradition, and Magisterium (the teaching authority of the Church).¹⁷⁸

Vatican II said the following about the Bible:

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, move towards the same goal. Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. And 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 [the pope and bishops of the Roman Catholic Church] so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching. Thus it comes about that the Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone. Hence, both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal feelings of devotion and reverence.

But 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...

It is clear, therefore, 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 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.¹⁷⁹

Roman Catholicism on one hand says that the Word of God is what we need to know the truth, but then on the other hand teaches that it is only through the Magisterium that we can know the Word of God.

According to the official teaching of the Catholic Church, Catholic men and women are not allowed to believe what they read in the Bible without

¹⁷⁸ Biblical Discernment Ministries, *Roman Catholicism: Is It a Cult?*

¹⁷⁹ Vatican II, pp. 755-756

checking it out with the Catholic Church. They are required to find out how the bishops of the Church interpret a passage and they are to accept what the bishops teach as if it came from Jesus Christ Himself. They are not allowed to use their own judgment or follow their own conscience. They are required to believe whatever the bishops teach without questioning it. (Catechism 85, 87, 100, 862, 891, 939, 2034, 2037, 2041, 2050)¹⁸⁰

The Catechism says:

“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. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.” This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.¹⁸¹

Note the phrase, “the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition.” The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the “Word of God” exists in two forms, written and oral, and that these are equal. Also, please note that “the Church alone” can give “an authentic interpretation.”

The Catechism continues:

The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.¹⁸²

The same point is made here: only the Roman Catholic Magisterium can rightly interpret scripture.

Hence the Church teaches that “the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ.”¹⁸³

Please be aware of the teaching here. If you listen to the Roman Catholic clergy, you are listening to Christ. If you despise them, you are despising “Christ and him who sent Christ.” This is quite a claim!

¹⁸⁰ Collins, *Mary Worship?*

¹⁸¹ *Catechism*, 85

¹⁸² *ibid*, 100

¹⁸³ *ibid*, 862

The Catechism also says:

When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine “for belief as being divinely revealed,” and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions “must be adhered to with the obedience of faith.” This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself.¹⁸⁴

Here the Roman Catholic Church says that not only is scripture infallible, but doctrine proposed by the Magisterium is infallible as well!

On the one hand, Rome says the Word of God is infallible and our only authority, but when we look at what Rome *means* by that, we discover:

- The Word of God exists in two forms: written and oral
- The oral component is taught by the Roman Catholic Magisterium
- Only through the Roman Catholic Magisterium can anyone rightly interpret the Word of God.

In practice, the Roman Catholic Church has elevated its Magisterium above the Word of God.

According to Jesus, Scripture is the plumb line for measuring everything else. He judged religious traditions by comparing them to Scripture. When religious traditions contradicted Scripture, he condemned them. This shows clearly that nothing is equal in authority to Scripture. The Bible stands alone as the standard by which all other things are to be judged.¹⁸⁵

Sola Scriptura:

James White defined Sola Scriptura as follows:

The doctrine of sola scriptura, simply stated, is that the Scriptures alone are sufficient to function as the *regula fidei*, the infallible rule of faith for the Church... There is no necessary belief, doctrine, or dogma absolutely required of a person for entrance into the kingdom of heaven that is not found in the revelation of God in the pages of Scripture.¹⁸⁶

Everything we need to know about salvation is found in the written Word of God.

To summarize sola scriptura:

- Scripture is the sole infallible rule of faith.
- No other revelation is needed for the Church.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, 891

¹⁸⁵ Collins, *Mary Worship?*

¹⁸⁶ White, pp. 59-60

- There is no other infallible rule of faith outside of Scripture.
- Scripture reveals those things necessary for salvation.
- All traditions are subject to the higher authority of Scripture.¹⁸⁷

The phrase “all traditions are subject to the higher authority of Scripture” is an important one to consider. Holding to *Sola Scriptura* is not a rejection of all traditions. Many traditions are helpful! Lots of churches have it as a tradition to have “The Lord’s Supper” on the first Sunday of the month. This is not a bad tradition. But this tradition must be subservient to the Bible - meaning that we test the tradition by the Bible, and if we find a discrepancy, the Bible wins. Upon further Bible study, should it be demonstrated that the “Lord’s Supper” ought to be performed every week, then the tradition must change accordingly. That is what *Sola Scriptura* is saying.

Some Roman Catholics incorrectly characterize proponents of *Sola Scriptura* as “anti-tradition.” This is an error.

James White pointed out what *Sola Scriptura* **is not**:

- claim that the Bible contains all knowledge;
- claim that the Bible is an exhaustive catalog of all religious knowledge;
- denial of the Church’s authority to teach God’s truth;
- denial that God’s Word has, at times, been spoken;
- rejection of every kind or use of tradition;
- denial of the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding the Church.¹⁸⁸

Sola Scriptura vs. Tradition:

As discussed before, the Bible is not anti-tradition. Paul told the Thessalonians, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and **hold the traditions which ye have been taught**, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15, emphasis mine).

He also wrote, “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 he received of us**” (2 Thessalonians 3:6, emphasis mine).

Here we see that Paul passed on traditions and taught the Christians to value them. And so should we!

As James White aptly said:

Sola scriptura does not entail the rejection of every kind or form of “tradition.” There are some traditions that are God-honoring and useful in the Church. Sola scriptura simply means that any tradition, no matter how

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 62

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 59

ancient or venerable it may seem to us, must be tested by a higher authority, and that authority is the Bible.¹⁸⁹

Following traditions is a far cry from adding doctrines that clearly are absent from Scripture.

There are doctrines that Rome teaches as divine truth that are not found in Scripture, either directly or by any logical deduction or implication. For example, Rome teaches that Mary was bodily assumed into heaven. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that this doctrine is binding upon all Christians... And yet the Bible does not provide even a hint of the doctrine... hence, the Protestant says the doctrine is not binding upon the Christian; the Roman Catholic, having accepted the doctrine on the authority of the Roman Church, is forced to conclude the Bible is insufficient as a source of all divine truth.¹⁹⁰

It is one thing to have a tradition of singing a hymn during the offering, but an entirely different thing to hold to a tradition that Mary is a co-redeemer!

Scripture Is Not the Ultimate Authority For the Roman Catholic Church:

We discover, despite words to the contrary, the Word of God is not the final authority for the Roman Catholic Church.

Here is the “three-part” view of authority found so often in Roman Catholic writings: the Scriptures, tradition, and the Magisterium (the Church’s teaching power). Since the Magisterium defines the extent of the Scriptures (by defining the canon), claims sole right of interpretation of the Scriptures, tells us what is and what is not tradition, and defines doctrines on the basis of self-defined tradition, in reality we see that the only one of the three “legs” of this system that is not defined by one of the other is the Magisterium itself.

Because of this fact, the reasoning behind the often repeated Protestant assertion that the Scriptures are not the ultimate authority in Roman Catholic teaching is clear. While Rome loudly proclaims her fidelity to the Scriptures, she at the same time makes statements that plainly elevate her own Magisterium to the highest position of authority.¹⁹¹

The Word of God says, “thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Palm 138:2). God has placed His Word above even His own name, and the Roman Catholic Church has placed its Magisterium above God’s Word.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid*, p. 59

¹⁹⁰ *ibid*, pp. 66-67

¹⁹¹ *ibid*, p. 74

What the Bible Says about Itself:

“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever” (Psalm 12:6-7).

God says that His words are “pure” and that He will supernaturally preserve them forever.

“I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Psalm 138:2).

God’s Word is magnified even above God’s name. The Word of God is so holy. No Magisterium or any other body could possibly be higher than the Word of God!

“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” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Herein is *Sola Scriptura*. Scripture is all we need for “doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” The Bible “is given by inspiration of God” and is able to make us “perfect.” We do not need the Magisterium.

Please consider Jesus’ conversation with the Sadducees in Mark, chapter 16.

“And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures... have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, 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 the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err” (Mark 16:24, 26-27).

Jesus expected that they would have known the scriptures and believed every word, right down to the verb tense. Jesus’ high view of Scripture is evident.

If you want an idea of what the Bible claims about itself, read Psalm 119.

The Apocrypha:

The Roman Catholic Church has added an additional 7 books to the Bible called the “Apocrypha” or “Deuterocanonical” books.

These books are:

- Tobit
- Judith
- Wisdom
- Sirach
- Baruch
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees

In addition to these seven additional books, the Apocrypha also contains added chapters to established books.

Although the Roman Catholic canon has eleven more books than the Protestant Bible, only seven extra books appear in the table of contents of Roman Catholic Bibles... There are, however, four more books or pieces of literature that are added to other books that do not appear in the table of contents. There are the Additions to Esther, added at the end of the Book of Esther (Esth. 10:4f.); the Prayer of Azariah, inserted between... Daniel 3:23 and 24 (making it Daniel 3:24–90 in Roman Catholic Bibles); Susanna, placed at the end of Daniel 12... (as chap. 13); and Bel and the Dragon, which became chapter 14 of Daniel. So with seven complete books and four other pieces of literature found in Daniel and Esther, the Roman Catholic canon has eleven more books than does the Jewish Bible and Protestant Old Testament.¹⁹²

Webster defines the word “apocrypha” as follows:

secret, not canonical, from Greek *apokryphos* obscure, from *apokryptein* to hide away, from apo- + *kryptein* to hide...

writings or statements of dubious authenticity

capitalized a : books included in the Septuagint and Vulgate but excluded from the Jewish and Protestant canons of the Old Testament¹⁹³

Seeing that the word “apocryphal” means “not canonical,” or “writings or statements of dubious authenticity”, the Roman Catholic Church does not use this term to describe these 7 to 13 extra writings. The Roman Catholic Church typically refers to these disputed writings as “Deuterocanonical books.” “Deuterocanonical” means “second canon.”

¹⁹² Geisler, N. L., & MacKenzie, R. E., *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*

¹⁹³ <http://www.webster.com>

Facts about the books of the Apocrypha:

The following are important facts about the disputed books known as the *Apocrypha*:

- They take place before the New Testament
- They are not in the Hebrew Canon
- They were not recognized by any Hebrew authority in Jesus' day
- They appear in the Septuagint (the Egyptian-made Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible)

Arguments Against the Inclusion of the Apocrypha:

Josh McDowell and Don Stewart wrote the following about the Apocrypha:

It cannot be overemphasized that the Roman Catholic Church itself did not officially declare these books Holy Scripture until 1545-1563 at the Council of Trent.

The acceptance of certain books in the apocrypha as canonical by the Roman Catholic church was to a great extent a reaction to the Protestant Reformation. By canonizing these books, they legitimized their reference to them in doctrinal matters.

There are some other telling reasons why the apocrypha is rejected by the Protestant church. One of these deals with the unbiblical teaching of these questionable books, such as praying for the dead.

Praying for the deceased, advocated in II Maccabees 12:45–46, is in direct opposition to Luke 16:25, 26 and Hebrews 9:27, among others. The apocrypha also contains the episode which has God assisting Judith in a lie (Judith 9:10, 13).

The apocrypha contains demonstrable errors as well. Tobit was supposedly alive when Jeroboam staged his revolt in 931 b.c. and was still living at the time of the Assyrian captivity (722 b.c.), yet the Book of Tobit says he lived only 158 years (Tobit 1:3-5; 14:11).

Finally, there is no claim in any of these apocryphal books as to divine inspiration. One need only read these works alongside the Bible to see the vast difference.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ McDowell, Josh, and Stewart, Don, *Answers to Tough Questions*

Argument For the Apocrypha Rebutted:

The Catholic says:

The deuterocanonical books were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls! Therefore they should be included in the Canon.

Geisler and Brooks insightfully pointed out:

As for the Qumran finds, hundreds of books have been found there that are not canonical; this offers no evidence that they accepted the apocryphal books as anything other than popular literature.¹⁹⁵

Concluding Thoughts on the Apocrypha:

Many Christians are uncomfortable labeling the Roman Catholic Church a cult because of the mistaken belief that Roman Catholics and non-Roman Catholics use the same Bible. However, this is not the case. We have seen that the Roman Catholic Church has added to the Word of God significantly.

Of course Roman Catholics argue that we have subtracted from the Word of God by removing the writings they refer to as “deuterocanonical.”

John MacArthur concluded as follows:

With regard to the Old Testament, by the time of Christ all of the Old Testament had been written and accepted in the Jewish community. The last book, Malachi, had been completed about 430 b.c. Not only does the Old Testament canon of Christ’s day conform to the Old Testament which has since been used throughout the centuries, but it does not contain the uninspired and spurious Apocrypha, that group of 14 rogue writings which were written after Malachi and attached to the Old Testament about 200–150 b.c. in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament called the Septuagint (LXX), appearing to this very day in some versions of the Bible. However, not one passage from the Apocrypha is cited by any New Testament writer, nor did Jesus affirm any of it as He recognized the Old Testament canon of His era (cf. Luke 24:27,44).¹⁹⁶

The One True Church:

The Roman Catholic Church ardently maintains that it alone is the true church of Christ on earth, and all other churches are false.

¹⁹⁵ Geisler, N. L., & Brooks, R. M., *When Skeptics Ask*

¹⁹⁶ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*

Many Catholics and Evangelicals mistakenly believe that Vatican II softened this position, but this can be empirically shown not to be the case.

Vatican II asserted:

For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation. that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God.¹⁹⁷

According to Vatican II, which is the only church where the “fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained?” Vatican II's answer: “Christ's Catholic Church alone.”

Consider also the following Papal quotations:

Pope Innocent III said:

With our hearts we believe and with our lips we confess but one Church, not that of the heretics, but the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, outside which we believe that no one is saved.¹⁹⁸

Pope Bonafice was clear:

Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.¹⁹⁹

Pope Leo X, at the Fifth Lateran Council, wrote:

Where the necessity of salvation is concerned all the faithful of Christ must be subject to the Roman Pontiff, as we are taught by Holy Scripture, the testimony of the holy fathers, and by that constitution of our predecessor of happy memory, Boniface VIII, which begins *Unam Sanctam*.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Vatican II, p. 456

¹⁹⁸ Pope Innocent III, December 18, 1208

¹⁹⁹ Pope Bonafice VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, 1302

²⁰⁰ Pope Leo X, Fifth Lateran Council, 1512-1517

Pope Leo XIII decreed:

He scatters and gathers not who gathers not with the Church and with Jesus Christ, and all who fight not jointly with Him and with the Church are in very truth contending against God.²⁰¹

Vatican II also stated:

Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by God through Jesus Christ would refuse to enter her or to remain in her could not be saved.²⁰²

Please recall that these are infallible proclamations by infallible agents.

CWRC Ministries insightfully mentioned:

For now, let us see that all of the confusion within Rome stems from a faulty definition of the Church. There is but ONE CHURCH and it is THE BODY OF CHRIST. The Roman Catholic is so entrenched in his understanding of the Church as an institutional structure that he views all other “churches” in the same way. The reality is that the Body of Christ is the ONE and ONLY CHURCH though it meets in various local bodies as is mentioned in the Bible, i.e., the Church at Corinth, the Church at Ephesus etc. In today’s world there under different denominational names affixed to those who call themselves Christians. Sadly many of these denominational names are not Christian even though they take the name Christian. This is to be expected as the word Christian and the word Church are not patented.²⁰³

The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the only true Church of God today on earth.

The many false doctrines of Rome have proven that she is not the true church. We shall soon see that history works against the Roman Catholic Church as well.

Church History Overview:

The Roman Catholic Church often claims to be the first “church” and that all Protestant churches split from her. We shall see that this claim is historically inaccurate.

An exhaustive treatment on the subject of “Church History” is well beyond the scope of this essay. However, it is appropriate to consider “Church History” on some level when discussing the claims of the Roman Catholic Church. This section is meant as a “quick overview.”

²⁰¹ Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Sapientiae Christianae*, January 10, 1890

²⁰² Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 14

²⁰³ CWRC Ministries, *The Real Church*, <http://www.cwrc-rz.org/apologetics/az-001b.php>

Pagan Persecution of the Church:

In the Bible we learn that Jesus founded His church and has appointed elders to run it. We also learn from the Bible that members of His church have experienced persecution; even death, but God will not abandon His church, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

The first documented case of imperially-supervised persecution of the Christians in the Roman Empire begins with Nero (37-68). In 64 A.D., a great fire broke out in Rome which destroyed vast portions of the city and economically devastated the Roman population. Nero, whose sanity had long been in question, was widely suspected of having intentionally set the fire himself. In his *Annals*, Tacitus states that “to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace” (Tacit. *Annals* XV). By implicating the Christians for this massive act of arson, Nero successfully capitalized on the already-existing public suspicion of this religious sect and, it could be argued, exacerbated the hostilities held toward them throughout the Roman Empire.²⁰⁴

Within the Roman Empire, Christianity was banned and Christians were punished for many years. Feeding Christians to the lions was seen as entertainment in Ancient Rome.²⁰⁵

In 109 AD, the historian Tacitus published *The Annals*, which said:

Nero punished a race of men who were hated for their evil practices. These men were called Christians. He got a number of people to confess. On their evidence a number of Christians were convicted and put to death with dreadful cruelty. Some were covered with the skins of wild beasts and left to be eaten by dogs. Others were nailed to the cross. Many were burned alive and set on fire to serve as torches at night.²⁰⁶

The Conversion of Constantine:

A major turning point for Christianity under the Roman Empire occurred in the fourth Century, AD. It was then that the Roman Emperor Constantine allegedly “converted” to Christianity as a result of events surrounding the battle of Milvian Bridge.

The Battle of Milvian Bridge took place on October 28, 312 between the Roman Emperors Constantine the Great and Maxentius... Constantine, after arriving, realized he had made a miscalculation and that Maxentius had many more soldiers available than he did. Some sources say the

²⁰⁴ Wikipedia, *Persecution of Christians*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_persecution

²⁰⁵ *Rome and Christianity*, http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/rome_and_christianity.htm

²⁰⁶ Tacitus, *The Annals*, 109 AD

advantage was 10-to-1 in Maxentius' favor, but it was probably more like four to one. In any case, Constantine had a tough challenge ahead of him.²⁰⁷

According to the historian Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, before the crucial battle of Milvian Bridge, Constantine was convinced that he needed divine assistance. While he was praying for such assistance, God sent him a vision of a cross of light at midday, bearing the inscription "*in hoc signo vinces*" ("in this sign you will be victorious"). That night he had a dream that reaffirmed his earlier vision. God told him to use the sign he had been given as a safeguard in all of his battles. Thus, Constantine converted to Christianity and ordered the symbol of his Savior's name (the intersection of the Greek letter *chi* and *rho*) to represent his army. Constantine was victorious in the battle of the Milvian Bridge, and he continued to wear the symbol for Christ against every hostile power he faced.²⁰⁸

Was Constantine's Conversion Sincere?:

As Christians, it is inappropriate for us to judge the heart of another Christian, however, we are told that we can judge the fruit of salvation. We know from Jesus' own words that there are both true and false converts. (See "The Parable of the Sower" in Matthew chapter 13, Mark chapter 4, and Luke chapter 8.)²⁰⁹

When we examine the fruit of Constantine's alleged conversion, we find great reason to question the sincerity of his profession of faith.

Consider the following:

Constantine, following a widespread custom, was not baptized until close to his death in 337, when his choice fell upon the Arian bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia.²¹⁰

Please note that Eusebius of Nicomedia should not to be confused with his contemporary Eusebius of Caesarea, the church historian.

²⁰⁷ *Wikipedia*, Battle of Milvian Bridge, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Milvian_Bridge

²⁰⁸ WebChron: The Web Chronology Project, *Constantine Converts to Christianity*, <http://www.thenagain.info/WebChron/EastEurope/ConstantineConverts.html>

²⁰⁹ For an excellent treatment of this topic, please listen to Ray Comfort's sermon "True and False Conversions" at <http://www.livingwaters.com/listenwatch2.shtml>

²¹⁰ *Wikipedia*, Constantine I (emperor), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emperor_Constantine

Was Constantine even a Christian?

- He chose an Arian to baptize him. (Arian's denied the Trinity)
- He waited until near death to be baptized so he could continue to sin through his life.
- He continued in his pagan idolatries, incorporating Christ into them.

Whether Constantine's *conversion* was legitimate or not, it certainly welcomed the insincere to make and change doctrine.

The Emperor Constantine is one of the major figures of Christian history. After his conversion Christianity moved swiftly from the seclusion of the catacombs to the prestige of the palaces. The movement started the fourth century as a persecuted minority; it ended the century as the established religion of the empire.²¹¹

Before Constantine, a person faced the real threat of torture and death for professing faith in Christ. After Constantine, that same profession was the ticket to influence within the empire.

Marks of the New Testament Church:

In the introduction to J. H. Carroll's significant book, *The Trail of Blood: Following the Christians Down Through the Centuries*, Clarence Walker noted the marks of the New Testament Church:

- Its Head and Founder--CHRIST. He is the law-giver; the Church is only the executive. (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18)
- Its only rule of faith and practice--THE BIBLE. (II Tim. 3:15-17)
- Its name--"CHURCH," "CHURCHES." (Matt. 16:18; Rev. 22:16)
- Its polity--CONGREGATIONAL--all members equal. (Matt. 20:24-28; Matt. 23:5-12)
- Its members--only saved people. (Eph. 2:21; I Peter 2:5)
- Its ordinances--BELIEVERS' BAPTISM, FOLLOWED BY THE LORD'S SUPPER. (Matt. 28:19-20)
- Its work--getting folks saved, baptizing them (with a baptism that meets all the requirements of God's Word), teaching them ("to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"). (Matt. 28:16-20)
- Its financial plan--"Even so (TITHES and OFFERINGS) hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel," (I Cor. 9:14)
- Its weapons of warfare--spiritual, not carnal. (II Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:10-20)
- Its independence--separation of Church and State. (Matt. 22:21)

²¹¹ Shelley, Bruce, *Church History in Plain Language*, Word Books, Inc., 1982, p. 103

In any town there are many different churches -- all claiming to be the true church. Dr. Carroll did as you can do now -- take the marks, or teachings, of the different churches and find the ones which have these marks, or doctrines. The ones which have these marks, or doctrines, taught in God's Word, are the true churches.²¹²

True Bible-Believing Churches Existed Before the Roman Catholic Church:

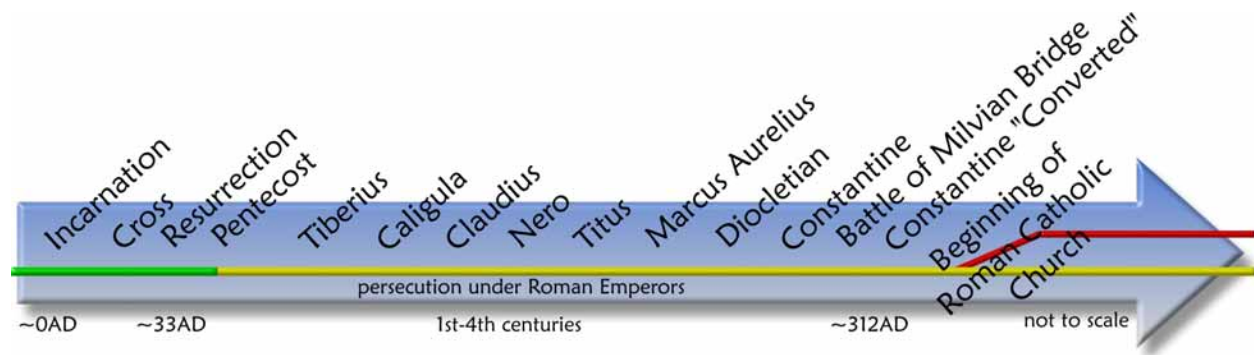
The Roman Catholic Church as we know it can trace its beginnings back to the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century, AD. The true Church of God started at Pentecost in the first century, and there have been true Bible-believing churches ever since.

Jesus said to the Apostles, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

NOTE: birth of the New Testament church began at Pentecost!

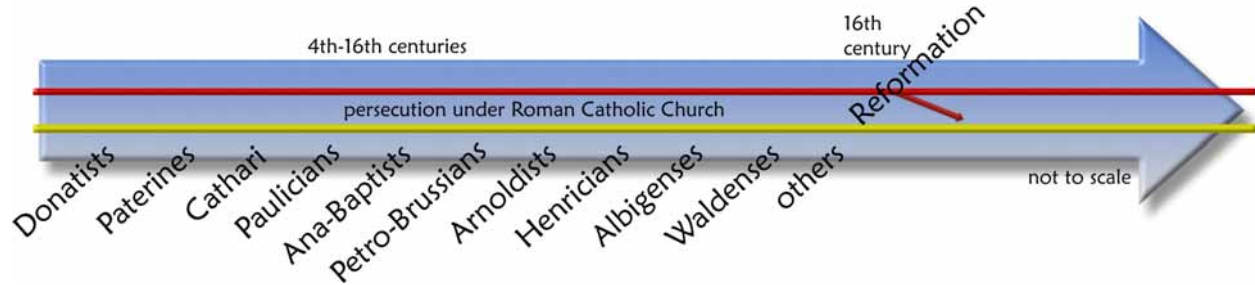
True Christians Throughout the Years:

Using the marks of a true New Testament church outlined above, J. H. Carroll showed that our Lord Jesus was true to His promise that there would always be true churches after Pentecost. This was outlined in Carroll's book, *The Trail of Blood: Following the Christians Down Through the Centuries*.



In the above timeline, the green line represents Old Testament people of God (Hebrews 11). The true church began at Pentecost (yellow line). Until the beginning of the fourth century, the church was persecuted by the Roman Empire under such notable Emperors as Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Titus, Marcus Aurelius, Diocletian, Constantine, and others. At 312 AD, Constantine "converted" to Christianity, and began what would become today's Roman Catholic Church, represented by the red line (top line).

²¹² Walker, Clarence, "Introduction" to J. H. Carroll's *The Trail of Blood: Following the Christians Down Through the Centuries*, http://www.baptistpage.org/Distinctives/Trail_of_Blood.html



True Bible-believing churches existed since Pentecost, and continued to exist after the formation of the Roman Catholic Church in the fourth century. These churches were called by different names as they scattered throughout Europe and Asia. In some places they were known as “Donatists.” In other places, “Paulicians,” or “Ana-Baptists,” or “Waldenses” or one of many other names. All of them had in common the fact that they stood apart from Rome, taught the biblical gospel of grace, and had the marks of a true New Testament church as identified in the Bible. Many of the members of these churches died at the hands of Roman inquisitors for that faith.

True Bible-Believing Churches Existed Before the Reformation:

On October 31, 1517, Luther’s *95 Thesis* were posted at Wittenberg, but there have been Biblical churches that stood apart from Rome well before that, going back to the Apostles. In fact, these churches existed before the formation of what became today’s Roman Catholic Church in the fourth century.

The true Church of God has existed well before Luther and Calvin and also well before the Roman Catholic Church came into being.

Pastor Bill Cornelison wrote the following:

I am not a Protestant because I am a member of the Church of God by virtue of salvation, and the Church of God is not a Protestant church. All Protestant churches can trace their origin to the Roman Catholic church. But the Church of God was founded and established by Jesus Himself, several hundred years before the Roman Catholic church ever came into existence.²¹³

We should be thankful to God for the “Reformation” because it brought to the forefront essential doctrines, but let us not think that there were not true Bible-believing Christian churches before the Reformation. There have been true New Testament churches that taught the true gospel and stood against Rome since the founding of the church at Pentecost.

²¹³ Cornelison, Bill, *Why I Am Not A Protestant*, <http://www.churchofgodcarmichael.org/Tracts/NotAProtestant.html>

True Christians Persecuted by Rome:

The true New Testament church of Bible-believing Christians were persecuted by Pagan Rome in the first three centuries of Christendom, and have been persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church ever since.

No group has killed more Christians than the Roman Catholic Church. To read an account of some of the vicious acts of the Roman Catholic Church against Bible-believing Christians, read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.

Evolution of Catholic Doctrine:

The Catholic Church maintains that it is the same Church it has always been, dating back to the Apostles. But this is plainly not the case.

The following are the dates that many modern Catholic doctrines were introduced:

2nd century:	Presbyter (or elders) were first called priests by Lucian
200:	Immersion of infants who are dying, but considered sinless. (Tertullian V.12)
300:	Prayers for the dead
325:	Council of Nice: prohibition of clerical marriage was rejected
375:	The veneration of angels and dead saints and the use of images
379:	Praying to Mary and Saints
385:	first prohibition of clerical marriage in West
394:	Mass as a daily celebration
416:	Council of Mela: infant baptism by immersion commanded for all infants
431:	Council of Ephesus: first use of term "Mother of God"
500:	Priests began to dress different from the laity and to wear special clothes
526:	Extreme Unction, a.k.a. "last rites"
593:	The Doctrine of Purgatory popularized from the Apocrypha by Gregory the Great
600:	Prayers began to be offered to Mary, dead saints, and angels
607:	First Pope: Boniface III is the first person to take the title of "universal Bishop" by decree of Emperor Phocas.
709:	Kissing of Pope Constantine's feet
787:	2nd Council of Nicea: veneration of the cross, images, and relics authorized
850:	Holy water
890:	Veneration of Saint Joseph
927:	College of Cardinals begun
995:	Canonization of dead saints, first by Pope John XV
1022:	Penance
1079:	Celibacy enforced for priests, bishops, presbyters (Pope Gregory VII)

- 1090: The rosary, or prayer beads (copied from Hindus and Mohammedans) was introduced by Peter the Hermit
- 11th century: The Mass developed gradually as a sacrifice, attendance was made obligatory
- 1184: Council of Verona: Inquisition of heretics instituted
- 1190: Sale of Indulgences
- 12th century: Seven sacraments defined by Peter Lombard
- 1215: Fourth Lateran Council: Transubstantiation, Auricular Confession, Mass a Sacrifice of Christ, The "Inquisition" legalized and promoted
- 1217: Adoration and Elevation of Host: ie. communion bread (Pope Honrius III)
- 1268: Priestly power of absolution
- 1311: Council of Ravenna: Baptism by sprinkling accepted as the universal standard
- 1414: Council of Constance: Laity no longer offered cup at communion
- 1439: Council of Florence: purgatory proclaimed a dogma
- 1546: Council of Trent: Apocrypha added to the canon, tradition is declared of equal authority with the Bible
- 1854: The Immaculate Conception of Mary (Pope Pius IX)
- 1864: Condemnation of all scientific discoveries not approved by the Roman Catholic Church (Pope Pius IX)
- 1870: Vatican I: Infallibility of Pope
- 1930: Condemnation of public schools (Pope Pius XI)
- 1950: Assumption of the body of the Virgin Mary into heaven shortly after her death (Pope Pius XII)
- 1965: Mary "Mother of the Church" (Pope Paul VI)
- 1996: Catholics can believe in Evolution (Pope John Paul II)²¹⁴

The Roman Catholic Church claims that her understanding of doctrine has developed over time and God has used His True Church to teach us what may not be immediately evident in Scripture.

This, however, is evidently not the case. James White was correct when he noted:

One cannot speak of doctrinal development when attempting to defend the Marian doctrines, for example, or the concept of Papal Infallibility. They are not developments based upon a further study of the Bible but a departure from Scripture based upon exterior sources of authority.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ List taken from Steve Rudd, *Roman Catholic Doctrinal Evolution*, <http://www.bible.ca/cath-new-doctrines.htm>, and Loraine Boettner, preface to the fifth edition of his book, *Roman Catholicism*.

²¹⁵ White, p. 85

But it was not a process of the development of Christian doctrine but rather a process of slowly departing from Christian doctrine.²¹⁶

Anti-Semitism Within Roman Catholicism:

Roman Catholicism is guilty of centuries of anti-Semitic behavior. How strange since the Bible knows no such anti-Semitism. Jesus Himself was Jewish, and He clearly taught that He was for the Jews. He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). Similarly, the Apostle Paul said, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites" (Romans 9:3-4). Not to mention that the New Testament was written by Jews, and most of the first disciples were Jewish.

Despite this overwhelming testimony, the Roman Catholic Church made the following pronouncements regarding the Jewish people:

- Jews may not appear in public during Holy Week (Council of Orleans, 538).
- Jews may not be judges, tax collectors (Council of Macon, 581) or hold public office (Council of Paris, 614, Council of Toledo, 633).
- Jewish children are to be brought up by Christians (Council of Toledo, 633).
- Jews must pay tithes to the Christian church (Council of Gerona, 1078).
- Jews may not build new synagogues (Council of Oxford, 1222).
- Jews must live in ghettos (Synod of Breslau, 1267)²¹⁷

In addition to those:

- Distinctive round patch for Jews were ordered at the Council of Narbonne (1227), Council of Arles (1234), Council of Béziers (1246), Council of Albi (1254), Council of Arles (1260), Council of Nîmes (1284), Council of Vienna (1289), Council of Avignon (1326), Council of Vabres (1368)
- The Synod of Ofen decreed that Christians could not sell or rent real estate to Jews (1279)
- The Council of Basel decreed that Jews could not obtain academic degrees (1434)
- Pope Callistus III banned all social communication between Christians and Jews (1456)
- Pope Leo XII decreed that Jews were to be confined to ghettos and their property was to be confiscated (1826)²¹⁸

²¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 83

²¹⁷ Chancey, Mark A., *An Unacknowledged Passion*,
http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Chancey_Unacknowledged_Passion.htm

²¹⁸ Darring, Jerry, *A Catholic Timeline of Events Relating to Jews, Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust From the 3rd Century to the Beginning of the Third Millennium*,
<http://www.sullivan-county.com/news/mine/timeline.htm>

The Fourth Lateran Council made the following canons:

Jews and Saracens (Arabs) of both sexes in every Christian province must be distinguished from the Christian by a difference of dress. On Passion Sunday and the last three days of Holy Week they may not appear in public.²¹⁹

Jews are not to be given public offices. Anyone instrumental in doing this is to be punished. A Jewish official is to be denied all intercourse with Christians.²²⁰

The dates of these *infallible* proclamations show that Rome's anti-Semitism was not a few isolated events. The dates range from 538 AD up into the 19th century!

“Saved” Roman Catholic:

It is common for members of the Roman Catholic Church to claim that they are born-again saved Christians. The following are questions to ask a member of the Roman Catholic Church who claims to be truly saved:

1. When were you converted?
2. How were you converted?
3. To what, or to whom, were you converted?
4. What do you believe now that you did not believe before your conversion?
5. What does it mean to be saved?
6. On what Scriptural promises do you base your salvation?
7. What does it mean to be born again?
8. Are you sure today that if you die tomorrow, or at any time in the future, you will be in heaven immediately after death?
9. What do you believe about Purgatory?
10. What do you believe about the Mass?
11. Do you still participate in the Mass?
12. Do you believe that to miss Mass voluntarily on Sunday would be a mortal sin, so that if you did not confess it before you died, you would not go to heaven?
13. Do you believe that any sinner can be saved who dies without trusting in Jesus Christ alone for the salvation of his soul and forgiveness of his sins?
14. Do you believe that Mary and Roman Catholic saints can help you get to heaven?
15. How do you believe that the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ is applied to your soul?
16. Have you told your priest you have been saved (converted)?
17. Do you believe you will still go to heaven if you leave the Roman Catholic Church, receive believer's baptism and join a fundamental Protestant church?
18. When and where do you plan to do this?²²¹

²¹⁹ Fourth Lateran Council, 1215 AD, Canon 68

²²⁰ *ibid*, Canon 69

“When were you converted?” Was it at your baptism? “How were you converted?” Was it through the blood atonement of Jesus Christ alone? Or was it, as Rome has clearly taught, through your good works along with the help and intercession of Mary, along with a stay in Purgatory? “What does it mean to be born again?” A Roman Catholic must answer this as, “being born again means your original sin is removed as a result of the water of baptism.” Et cetera.

As these questions, and others you can think of, are discussed in detail, you will quickly see that the person is trusting in his work, merits, baptism, confirmation, sacraments, or something besides - or plus - Jesus Christ and not in Christ and Christ alone. He can then be shown the difference between his unbiblical form of salvation and the saving faith of the Bible.²²²

If however, a Roman Catholic answers those questions Biblically, then he or she is really not a Roman Catholic. If someone believes in the Biblical gospel of grace, then he or she is not a Roman Catholic. He or she is merely a Christian attending the wrong church.

Having concluded from the Scriptures that the Roman Catholic Church is not the church founded by Christ, but rather an apostate form of Christianity, the new believer must leave. He cannot remain, without being disobedient to God, in an institution that teaches a false gospel.²²³

James McCarthy tells the story of “Mike and Nadine,” two Roman Catholics who left the church.

Though neither Mike nor Nadine realized it at the time, they both left Roman Catholicism the moment they began to place the plain teaching of Scripture over the teachings of the Church. No longer willing to allow Rome to interpret God’s Word for them, they were no longer Roman Catholics.²²⁴

Rome clearly teaches a gospel radically different than the Biblical one. In addition, Rome has placed its own Magisterium above the Bible. No true Christian can stay a member of the Roman Catholic Church any more than someone saved out of Mormonism can stay in that church.

Evangelical Compromise:

Keith Green wrote:

There has never been such widespread acceptance of Catholicism among Protestants and evangelicals as there is today. I don’t mean that there are

²²¹ 18 Questions For “Saved” Roman Catholics, <http://www.biblebelievers.net/Romanism/kjc18qst.htm>

²²² ibid

²²³ McCarthy, p. 64

²²⁴ ibid, p. 128

large numbers of main line evangelicals becoming Catholics. But today, for the first time in church history, an increasing majority of Protestants are regarding the Roman Catholic Church as simply another valid Christian denomination. Meanwhile, gleeful shouts of “unity” are being heralded worldwide in ecumenical gatherings, festivals and conventions.²²⁵

Please note that Green died in 1982, so this was written before that. Despite this quotation being over 20-years-old, it is even truer today than when Green noted it.

Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT):

Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium (ECT) is a 26-page, double-spaced document released in 1994. It was written by well-known Evangelical and Catholic scholars, and claims Catholics and Evangelicals are “brothers and sisters in Christ.”

Evangelical supporters included: Chuck Colson, Pat Robertson, J. I. Packer, and Bill Bright. Catholic supporters included: Richard John Neuhaus, and Peter Kreeft.

Critics included: John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, D. James Kennedy, John Ankerberg, and James White.

ECT said:

All authentic witness must be aimed at conversion to God in Christ by the power of the 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.²²⁶

Please note what this paragraph is claiming. It makes a distinction between two types of “converted” people:

1. those who “received the new birth for the first time,” or
2. those “having experienced the reawakening of the new birth originally bestowed in the sacrament of baptism.”

As we have seen, the Bible does not recognize the second group of people. It is unbiblical to believe that one can receive the “new birth” in the sacrament of baptism. This is the heresy of baptismal regeneration, dealt with in this essay.

²²⁵ Green

²²⁶ *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* (ECT)

ECT continues:

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.²²⁷

ECT is saying that it is an inappropriate use of resources for Evangelicals to share the gospel with Roman Catholics, since “opportunity and means for growth in Christian discipleship” is available in the Roman Catholic Church. “Opportunity and means for growth in Christian discipleship” is available through the Roman Catholic Church? How? By visiting and praying to pieces of bread? By praying to and worshipping dead saints? By paying for indulgences to lessen your stay in Purgatory?

ECT continues:

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.²²⁸

ECT says that sharing the gospel with Roman Catholics is engaging in “sheep stealing.” How tragic! How unloving to see one billion+ Roman Catholics who do not know the light of the gospel of grace, and turn away from them under the delusion that they’re growing in Christ in their own way.

²²⁷ ibid

²²⁸ ibid

InterVarsity Press:

The following is from the website for InterVarsity Press:

As an extension of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA, InterVarsity Press serves those in the university, the church and the world by publishing resources that equip and encourage people to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord in all of Life.²²⁹

Despite claiming to publish resources that “encourage people to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord in all of Life,” IVP publishes a booklet called *One Catholic to Another* by Peter Kreeft. This booklet is commonly disseminated by InterVarsity staff members on university campuses. The booklet is a fictional conversation between two Catholics.

Dusty: Why do you go [to Mass], Sonny?

Sonny: Jesus is there.

Dusty: How is he there?

Sonny: He’s really present in the Eucharist and he’s really present in his people. They’re both called the body of Christ, you know.²³⁰

Here we see the heretical doctrine of transubstantiation, which we covered in detail. This heresy, which leads to the worshipping of bread and wine, is clearly promulgated by a booklet published by a so-called Christian publishing house. Shame on IVP.

Evangelical Response to the Death of the Pope:

Shortly after the death of Pope John Paul II, John MacArthur rightly said:

The doctrinal ignorance of the Evangelical church is shocking, matched only by its cowardice, I fear. And that has certainly been revealed to everybody in the recent response to the death of the Pope and the installation of his successor.²³¹

In regard to the death of Pope John Paul II, self-proclaimed Evangelical George W. Bush said:

The Catholic Church has lost its shepherd, the world has lost a champion of human freedom, and a good and faithful servant of God has been called home.²³²

²²⁹ http://www.ivpress.com/about_us/

²³⁰ Kreeft, Peter, *One Catholic to Another*, IVP, p. 8

²³¹ MacArthur, *The Pope and the Papacy*

²³² Bush, George W., President, *Massachusetts Family Institute E-Alert*, April 6, 2005, <http://www.mafamily.org>

Evangelist Franklin Graham said of Pope John Paul II:

We did agree on the fundamentals that Jesus Christ is the son of the living God who came to this earth to die for our sins and when he died on that cross and shed his blood he took the sins of the world with him on the cross; and if we confess our sins and repent and by faith receive Christ into our hearts God will forgive us and cleanse us. These are fundamentals of the faith we agreed on and support and we appreciate this man and the stand he has taken on so many of these moral issues.²³³

When a Mormon prophet dies, should we say:

- he was a “man of God”
- he believed in salvation by grace?
- he was a faithful shepherd?
- he was a great leader?

Of course not! Neither should we say that of a Roman Catholic Pope.

In regard to the death of John Paul II, John MacArthur said:

We should grieve for that man, because he gained the whole world but lost his soul. The most loved and admired man by Catholics in the world, blinded by the prince of this world, never saw the light of the true gospel.²³⁴

The Foundation of Christian Unity:

James White asked the following pertinent question:

What is the foundation of Christian unity? Can the bare confession “Jesus is Lord,” without any reference to what that means, function as a solid basis for unity? Or do we have to go beyond that to ask questions about who Jesus is, what He did, and how we come to know Him?²³⁵

Lorraine Boettner wrote:

The ‘Constitution on the Church’ makes it abundantly clear that Rome has no intention of revising any of her basic doctrine, but only of updating her methods and techniques for more efficient administration and to present a more attractive appearance. This is designed to make it easier for the Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant churches to return to her fold.

²³³ Graham, Franklin, *Friday Church News Notes*, “Pope John Paul II Dies,” Fundamental Baptist Information Service, April 8, 2005

²³⁴ MacArthur, *The Pope and the Papacy*

²³⁵ White, p. 24

There is no indication that she has any intentions of entering into genuine give-and-take church unity negotiations. Her purpose is not union, but ABSORPTION.

Church union with Rome is strictly a one-way street. The age-old danger that Protestantism has faced from the Roman Church has not diminished; in fact, it may well have increased. For through this less-offensive posture and this superficial ecumenicism, Rome is much better situated to carry out her program of eliminating opposition and moving into a position of world dominance. AN INFALLIBLE CHURCH SIMPLY CANNOT REPENT.²³⁶

Divisiveness:

One cannot talk of the Roman Catholic Church as a cult for long without being leveled with the charge of being divisive and/or mean-spirited.

This is an “ad hominem” attack.

An “ad hominem” attack is when an argument is responded to by attacking the person or the character of the person making the argument, rather than by answering the objections of the argument.

The following is an exaggerated example of an “ad hominem” attack for the purpose of illustration:

Mary tells Bob that she thinks that space exploration is a good idea because it leads to new scientific discoveries, is good for the economy, and inspires a whole nation. Bob responds that Mary only thinks that because her dad works for NASA.

It may be the case that Mary’s dad works for NASA, but Bob did not address the legitimate points that were raised. The fact that Mary’s dad may or may not work for NASA has no bearing on whether or not space exploration indeed leads to new scientific discoveries, is good for the economy, and inspires a nation.

In the same way, this essay has brought to light major points of doctrinal division between the Roman Catholic Church’s official teachings and those of the Bible. These charges must be addressed, and it is an *ad hominem* fallacy to counter these legitimate objections by labeling this essay “divisive” or “mean spirited.”

As Keith Green said:

We are not attacking, but examining. We are not angry, but deeply concerned. We are not on the “war-path”, but on the path of the search

²³⁶ Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, Preface to the 5th Edition

for what is right. And we are not out to divide anything but to “divide accurately the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15.)²³⁷

John MacArthur astutely pointed out:

In a time like this of tolerance... false teaching will always cry “intolerance!” It’ll always say, “You’re being divisive,” “you’re being unloving,” “you’re being ungracious,” because it can only survive when it doesn’t get scrutinized. And 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. And listen carefully when you hear the cry for unity, because it may be the cover of false doctrine encroaching, and if ever we should follow 1 Thessalonians 5 and examine everything carefully, it’s when someone is crying “unity, love, and acceptance.”²³⁸

The Apostle Paul no doubt was accused of being intolerant in his day, else he would not have said to the Galatian church, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16).

The fact is that we are commanded in scripture to “contend for the faith” (Jude 3).

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3-4).

The context shows that the reason we must “contend for the faith” is because of false teachers!

It was not unloving or divisive of Paul to lovingly point out the errors of the Galatian church, or the Pagans at Mars Hill, or for Jesus to show the errors of the Pharisees.

The loving thing is to correct/warn/rebuke.

²³⁷ Green

²³⁸ MacArthur, John, *Irreconcilable Differences - Catholics Evangelicals and the New Quest for Unity*, <http://www.gty.org>

Concluding Thoughts:

James McCarthy concluded:

What it means to be a “good Roman Catholic” is defined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. There you will find a false gospel of infant baptismal justification, good works and sacraments that improve one’s standing before God, a merit system whereby Catholics working in cooperation with grace can earn eternal life, and a reaffirmation of purgatory as a place where Catholics must atone for their sins. Roman Catholicism rejects justification by faith alone through the imputed righteousness of Christ.²³⁹

James White concluded:

Rome’s official teachings continue to deny justification by faith alone, and when other teachings are allowed into the discussion - such as the Mass and Purgatory - there are fundamental and basic differences between Protestants and Roman Catholics on the central issue of the Gospel itself...

I conclude that the official teachings of Rome have compromised the Gospel through both addition and subtraction. Not only are the central places of grace and faith replaced with a human-centered concept, but additions are made that likewise violate the spirit of the Gospel of grace.²⁴⁰

Keith Green concluded:

Not only does Paul warn that an authentic angel from heaven should not be heeded while preaching a “different doctrine,” but he gives the ultimate warning, “even though we!” Paul strictly warned the Galatians not even to listen to him, the chief apostle and master of true doctrine, if he should reverse himself on any of the fundamental teachings of the gospel. How much more then, should we reject the appalling traditions and practices of a system that is not only unbiblical, but is actually steeped in mysticism, bordering dangerously on the occult!

To merely call such a system “a cult,” would be to throw it into the vast category of religions and quasi-religions that are currently making the rounds of our college campuses and city streets, snatching up many-an-unsuspecting youth. No, the Roman Church is not a cult. It’s an empire! With its own ruler, its own laws, and its own subjects! The empire has no borders; it encompasses the globe with its eye on every person who does not vow allegiance. It calls the members of other faiths “separated

²³⁹ McCarthy, p. 176

²⁴⁰ White, pp. 220-221

brethren” (The term used by Vatican II to describe the members of Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant churches) and has as its goal the eventual bringing together of everyone under its flag.²⁴¹

Social Roadblocks to the Gospel:

Many Roman Catholics are born into “strong Catholic families” and wouldn’t dream of questioning it or leaving it!

They are Catholic because they were born Catholic. They remain Catholic because they “like it.” Unconcerned about doctrine, they pass through life without ever having seriously questioned the veracity of the institution to which they have entrusted their eternal souls.²⁴²

Often the reason that Catholics react so strongly when a family member converts has more to do with family and culture than it has to do with theology.²⁴³

A Roman Catholic must allow the Bible to sway his/her Theology more than his/her upbringing.

Sad Conclusion of Being a Catholic:

Keith Green aptly described the dire situation for Roman Catholics:

The first consequence of the doctrine of penance (as well as the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences) is that the Roman Catholic, though baptized and confirmed, can never have that assurance of his salvation and that sense of spiritual security which is such a blessing to the true Christian. In proportion as he is spiritually sensitive, the person who holds to a works religion knows that he has not suffered as much as his sins deserve, and that he can never do as much as he should in order to be worthy of salvation.

A dying Roman Catholic, after he has done all that he can do, and after the last rites have been given to him, is told that he still must go to purgatory. There he will suffer unknown torture, with no assurance as to how long it will continue, but with the assurance that if his relatives pray for his soul, and pay with sufficient generosity to have candles lit and have special Masses said for him, that his sufferings will be shortened somewhat.

Oh what a contrast with all of that, is the death of the true believer who has the assurance that he goes straight to heaven into the immediate

²⁴¹ Green

²⁴² McCarthy, p. 145

²⁴³ *ibid*, p. 63

presence of Christ! (Phil. 1:23.) What a marvelous blessing is the true faith of the Christian, both in life and especially at the time of death!²⁴⁴

Contending with Roman Catholicism; Not Attacking Roman Catholics:

Please remember that the purpose of this essay is not to attack individual Roman Catholics. We are interested in Biblically understanding the stated doctrines of the church and testing them against the Bible.

The Apostle John told us, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

The same Apostle said, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). That is exactly what we are after: the truth. It is a joyful thing to learn, know, and follow the truth.

How we are to treat Roman Catholics:

Sadly, Roman Catholics can be on the receiving end of harsh treatment, even by those who claim to be Christians. This should never be.

The Bible tells us how to treat all people, (including Roman Catholics.) We are to love them, serve them, be kind to them, be respectful to them, and lovingly guide them into the truth (which means warning them).

Conclusion:

Thank you for taking the time to read this essay. I appreciate your willingness to consider what the Bible has to say about the claims of the Roman Catholic Church.

Despite what people are inclined to believe, the Roman Catholic Church is not “another denomination” or a more liturgical form of Christianity.

It is a dangerous cult that leads 1 billion+ people to hell.

Believing/Saying this does not make one mean or divisive; it prods us to lovingly reach out to this mission field.

The bedrock of Biblical faith is the 10 Commandments. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Have we always put God first in our lives? Of course not.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Have we ever used God’s name as a swear-word? Even if we haven’t, all of us have failed to give God’s Holy name the reverence it is due.

²⁴⁴ Green

“Thou shalt not steal.” Had we ever taken anything that didn’t belong to us? A pen? A paperclip? *Creative* tax preparation? The value of the object doesn’t matter. Who of us can honestly say we’ve followed this command always?

“Thou shalt not kill.” Jesus said that when we think evil thoughts towards someone without cause, we are guilty of murder.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Jesus said that when we think lustful thoughts we are guilty of adultery. Who of us can say we have never had lustful thoughts?

And there are others: “Do not covet,” “Honor your mother and father,” “Do not lie.”

The truth is that whether we like it or not, we are accountable to God just like a criminal is accountable to the criminal justice system. We have broken God’s law, the Ten Commandments, and we stand guilty before the judge. There is coming a day when God will judge us all. There will be no appeals, no technicalities, and no evidence thrown out. We are all guilty; none of us even comes close to the standard that God demands. If we trust in our own works and merits to save us, we will be condemned to hell forever.

The Roman Catholic Church presents a gospel that is radically different than the one offered by the God of the Bible. The Roman Catholic gospel is one that depends on works and merit. But this is bad news because the Bible teaches that nobody is good enough to merit salvation on his or her own works. It is only by the grace of our Lord Jesus that anyone can be saved.

The Bible Teaches, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10).

Can we merit our salvation as the Roman Catholic Church teaches? The Bible says, “But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

Be warned: The Apostle Paul said, “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” (Galatians 1:8). Those who do not cling to the true gospel of Christ will be found guilty on Judgment day. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

Acts 17:31 warns us that God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.” On that day, those who trust in the Roman Catholic false gospel of works and merits will be found guilty of not being good enough. “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). And God will be just in casting that person out forever. “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Hebrews 10:31).

The most important question everyone must answer is: “If you were to die today, do you know that you have eternal life? Are you certain that you will spend all eternity with God the Father?”

Despite the impressive zeal and devotion of many, many Roman Catholics, following the wrong gospel is a serious matter.

The Biblical gospel is that we are all guilty of transgressing the Law of the One True God. All our works are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). If we try to reach God on our merits, we will fail every time.

But in God's great love and mercy, He came down in the form of a man and died on the cross in our place, taking upon Himself our punishment, providing for our salvation! "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). This is the good news, no, great news!

I invite you to repent of and forsake the false gospel of works and merit, and turn to and worship the True and Living God, who offers salvation and full atonement because of Jesus' work and merit.

May God bless you as you consider this gravely important matter.

Mark Edward Sohmer
March 2006
mark@sohmer.net

Appendix A: Doctrinal Overview:

Salvation by Merit/Works:

RC Doctrine:

“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 its increase, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 6, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 24).

“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” (Trent, Session 6, Canon 12).

“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, whose living member he is, does not truly merit an increase of grace, eternal life, and in case he dies in grace, the attainment of eternal life itself and also an increase of glory, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Trent, Session 6, Canon 32).

What the Bible Teaches:

“Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the law**, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and **not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified**” (Galatians 2:16, emphasis mine).

“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, emphasis mine).

“**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; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7, emphasis mine).

“Therefore **by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified** in his sight” (Romans 3:20).

“Being **justified freely by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24, emphasis mine).

“Therefore we conclude that **a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law**” (Romans 3:28, emphasis mine).

Saved by Baptism/Baptismal Regeneration:

RC Doctrine:

“Holy Baptism holds the first place among the sacraments, because it is the door of the spiritual life; for by it we are made members of Christ and incorporated with the Church... The effect of this sacrament is the remission of all sin, original and actual; likewise of all punishment which is due for sin. As a consequence, no satisfaction for past sins is enjoined upon those who are baptized; and if they die before they commit any sin, they attain immediately to the kingdom of heaven and the vision of God” (Pope Eugene IV, Bull “Exultate Deo,” 1439 AD).

“If anyone says that baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Trent, Session 7, Canon 5).

What the Bible Teaches:

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 1:17).

It is clear that Paul makes a distinction between the gospel and baptism; a distinction the Roman Catholic Church will not make. The Bible teaches that water baptism is associated with the gospel, but it is not part of the gospel.

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also **was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost**. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, **Can any man forbid water**, that these should not be baptized, **which have received the Holy Ghost** as well as we?” (Acts 10:44-47, emphasis mine).

It is clear that Cornelius and the other Gentiles had received (past tense) the Holy Ghost, the promise of what is to come (Ephesians 1:13-14), but were not yet baptized in water.

Penance:

RC Doctrine:
What the Bible Teaches:

“If anyone says that in the Catholic Church penance is not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord for reconciling the faithful of God as often as they fall into sin after baptism, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Trent, Session 7, Canon 5).

The Bible is completely silent on “penance.”

However, the Bible does talk about “repentance.”

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1-2).

You Can Lose Your Salvation:

RC Doctrine:

“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” (Trent, Session 6).

What the Bible Teaches:

Jesus promised eternal life based on what he had done. The Word of God promises: “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).

It’s that simple. We who know Jesus can know that we have (present tense) eternal life. Jesus said: “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 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 6:39-40).

The Bible is clear that we can know that eternal life is our present possession. Yet Rome teaches that you can lose your salvation.

Auricular Confession:

RC Doctrine:

“Everyone who has attained the age of reason is bound to confess his sins at least once a year to his own parish pastor” (Fourth Lateran Council, 1215 AD, Canon 21).

“If anyone denies that sacramental confession was instituted by divine law or is necessary to salvation; or says that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Catholic Church has always observed from the beginning and still observes, is at variance with the institution and command of Christ and is a human contrivance, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Trent, Session 14, Canon 7).

What the Bible Teaches:

“We search in vain in the Bible for any word supporting the doctrine of “auricular confession” (the official title for confession to an authorized priest in a confession box. It is called “auricular” because it is spoken secretly, into the ear of the priest.) It is equally impossible to find any authorization or general practice of it during the first 1,000 years of the Christian era. Not a word is found in the writings of the early church fathers about confessing sins to a priest or to anyone except God alone. Auricular confession is not mentioned once in the writings of Augustine, Origen, Nestorius, Tertullian, Jerome, Chrysostem, or Athanasius; all of these and many others apparently lived and died without ever thinking of going to confession. No one other than God was thought to be worthy to hear confessions or to grant forgiveness” (Keith Green, *The Catholic Chronicles*, <http://www.sohmer.net/media/KG-TCC.pdf>).

Purgatory:

RC Doctrine:

“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. 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 punishment designed to purge away their debt” (Vatican II).

“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” (Trent, Session 6, Canon 30).

What the Bible Teaches:

Purgatory is never mentioned in the Bible.

The Bible does say, however:

“but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“Wherefore [Jesus] 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 7:25).

Indulgences:

RC Doctrine:

“[The Roman Catholic Church] teaches and commands that the usage of indulgences -- a usage most beneficial to Christians and approved by the authority of the Sacred Councils -- should be kept in the Church; and it condemns with anathema [cursing by ecclesiastical authority] those who say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them” (Vatican II).

“This treasury also includes the truly immense, unfathomable and ever pristine value before God of the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, who following in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by His grace have sanctified their lives and fulfilled the mission entrusted to them by the Father. Thus while attaining their own salvation, they have also cooperated in the salvation of their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body” (Pope Paul VI, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, 1967).

What the Bible Teaches:

Indulgences are never mentioned in the Bible.

The Bible does say, however:

“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 blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

The Pope:

“We teach and define that it is a dogma Divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks ex cathedra... is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable” (Vatican I).

“There is neither appeal nor recourse against a decision or decree of the Roman Pontiff” (1983 Code of Canon Law, Canon 333).

“Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff” (Pope Bonafice VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, November 18, 1302).

“The Roman Pontiff judges all men, but is judged by no one” (*Unam Sanctam*).

“That which was spoken of Christ... ‘Thou hast subdued all things under His feet,’ may well seem verified in me. I have the authority of the King of kings. I am all in all and above all, so that God, Himself and I, the Vicar of God, have but one consistory, and I am able to do almost all that God can do. What therefore, can you make of me but God?” (*Unam Sanctam*).

RC Doctrine:

The classic text that the RCC uses to support the Papacy is Matthew 16:18. It can be demonstrated that the “rock” of Matthew 16:18 is not Peter.

Every single use of the word “rock” in the Bible figuratively is a direct reference to God: (Deuteronomy 32:4; 32:15; 32:18; 32:30; 32:37; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 22:2; 22:3; Psalm 18:2; 18:31; 18:46; 28:1; 31:2; 31:3; 42:9; 62:2; 62:6; 62:7; 71:3; 78:35; 89:26; 92:15; 94:22; 95:1; Isaiah 8:14; 17:10) and then in the New Testament: (Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:8 and 1 Corinthians 3:11).

It was a very common Jewish expression (and still is) to call God “my rock and my redeemer,” “the rock of my salvation” etc.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (Greek: *petros*), and upon this rock (Greek: *petra*) I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

Given the overwhelming precedence of “Rock” referring to God, Jesus is contrasting Himself and Peter. Peter is a stone, just as every Christian is a lively stone (1 Peter 2:5), but, in contrast, Jesus is the “chief corner stone, elect, precious” (1 Peter 2:6).

When we consult the complete counsel of Scripture, the overwhelming Old Testament and New Testament references to “Rock” meaning God make the point clear that the church of Jesus Christ is not built on Peter, but built on the Lord Jesus Christ.

What the Bible Teaches:

Transubstantiation:

RC Doctrine:

“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 in a sign, or figure or force, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Trent, Session 13, Canon 1).

What the Bible Teaches:

The Roman Catholic Church uses Matthew 26:26-28 and John 6:48-57 to support transubstantiation.

“Jesus did not say *touto gignetai* (“this has become” or “is turned into”), but *touto esti* (“this signifies, represents” or “stands for”) (the New Testament was written in Greek.) It is obvious that Jesus’ meaning was not literal but symbolic!” (Green).

“Understood literally, what Jesus said would be highly objectionable since it would involve cannibalism and a use of blood that was strictly forbidden in the Law (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 7:26, 27; 17:10–14; Deut. 12:23, 24)” (*New Geneva Study Bible*).

“It is not necessary to take these phrases physically. Jesus’ words need not be taken in the sense of ingesting his actual physical body and blood. Jesus often spoke in metaphors and figures of speech. He called the Pharisees “blind guides” (Matt. 23:16) and Herod a “fox” (Luke 13:32). Roman Catholic scholars do not take these terms literally. Neither do they understand Jesus to be speaking physically when he said, “I am the gate” (John 10:9). There is, therefore, no necessity to take Jesus in a literal, physical way when he said, “this is my body,” or, “eat my flesh.” Jesus often spoke in graphic parables and figures, as he himself said (Matt. 13:10–11)” (Geisler, N. L., & Rhodes, R., *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations*).

If the wafer and wine physically change into Jesus’ actual flesh and blood, then:

- 2 hours after Mass, does every faithful Catholic excrete our Lord in their bathroom?
- What if one vomits?
- What happens to the hosts that aren’t eaten?
Is the Lord stored in a pantry until the next day?
- What if mice break in and eat it?

The Mass is an Actual Sacrifice:

RC Doctrine:

“For it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, ‘the work of our redemption is accomplished’ (Vatican II).

“Hence the Mass, the Lord’s Supper, is at the same time and inseparably: a sacrifice in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated” (Vatican II).

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: ‘The victim is one and the same: the same [Christ] now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the Cross; only the manner of offering is different.’ ‘And since 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... this sacrifice is truly propitiatory’” (*The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church*, 1367).

What the Bible Teaches:

“[Jesus] **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” (Hebrews 7:27, emphasis mine).

“**Nor yet that [Jesus] should offer himself often**, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now **once** in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So **Christ was once offered** to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:25-28, emphasis mine).

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had **offered one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by **one offering** he hath perfected **for ever** them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:10-14, emphasis mine).

Worshipping the Eucharist:

RC Doctrine:

“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 by any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten” (Vatican II).

“Indeed, since the Eucharistic Mystery was instituted out of love, and makes Christ sacramentally present, it is worthy of thanksgiving and worship. And this worship must be prominent in all our encounters with the Blessed Sacrament...

Adoration of Christ in this sacrament of love must also find expression in various forms of eucharistic devotion: personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, Hours of Adoration, periods of exposition—short, prolonged and annual (Forty Hours)—eucharistic benediction, eucharistic processions, eucharistic congresses” (Pope John Paul II, *Dominicae Cenae* (On The Mystery And Worship Of The Eucharist), February 24,1980).

What the Bible Teaches:

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:4-6).

Interestingly, this commandment “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” is taken out of the official Roman Catholic list of “The Ten Commandments.” Instead, the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet” is split into two: “Thou shalt not covet your neighbor’s wife” and “thou shalt not covet your neighbor’s goods” so that the list will still add up to ten.

Mary Was Product of an “Immaculate Conception”:

RC Doctrine:

“Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin” (Catechism, 491).

“Immaculate in every respect; innocent, and verily most innocent; spotless, and entirely spotless; holy and removed from every stain of sin; all pure, all stainless, the very model of purity and innocence; more beautiful than beauty, more lovely than loveliness; more holy than holiness, singularly holy and most pure in soul and body; the one who surpassed all integrity and virginity; the only one who has become the dwelling place of all the graces of the most Holy Spirit. God alone excepted, Mary is more excellent than all, and by nature fair and beautiful, and more holy than the Cherubim and Seraphim. To praise her all the tongues of heaven and earth do not suffice” (Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus - The Immaculate Conception*, December 8, 1854).

What the Bible Teaches:

Luke chapter 1 records Mary’s response to the news that she would bare the Son of God. “And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God **my Saviour**” (Luke 1:46-47, emphasis mine).

Former Nun, Mary Ann Collins, appropriately asked:

“If Mary were sinless, then why would she need a savior?” (Mary Ann Collins, *Mary Worship? A Study of Catholic Practice and Doctrine*, http://www.bereanbeacon.org/articles/mary_worship.htm)

She also pointed out:

“The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was first introduced by a heretic (a man whose teachings were officially declared to be contrary to Church doctrine). For centuries this doctrine was unanimously rejected by popes, Fathers and theologians of the Catholic Church. (William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 72-77)” (Collins).

Mary Was Sinless:

RC Doctrine:

“Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ’s victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life” (*Catechism*, 411).

“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’. By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long” (*Catechism*, 493).

What the Bible Teaches:

“For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, emphasis mine).

Please note that “all have sinned.” This includes Mary.

“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; for thy judgments are made manifest” (Revelation 15:4, emphasis mine).

The Bible teaches that God alone is holy. Mary is excluded.

“As it is written, **There is none righteous, no, not one**” (Romans 3:10, emphasis mine).

Mary Remained a Virgin:

RC Doctrine:

“the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the ‘Ever-virgin’” (*Catechism*, 499).

What the Bible Teaches:

“Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not **till** she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (Matthew 1:24-25, emphasis mine).

“‘Till’ (until) means that after that point, Joseph did ‘know’ (have sexual relations with) Mary. (See Genesis 4:1 where Adam ‘knew’ Eve and she conceived and had a son.)” (Collins).

“And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not **his mother called Mary?** and **his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?** And **his sisters**, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?” (Matthew 13:54-56, emphasis mine).

Mary the Mother of God:

RC Doctrine:

“The Virgin Mary... is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer” (*Catechism*, 963).

“Holy Mary, Mother of God: With Elizabeth we marvel, ‘And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’ Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God” (*Catechism*, 2677).

What the Bible Teaches:

“The Incarnation means that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. Mary was only the mother of Jesus as man, and not the mother of Jesus as God. According to the Bible, the world was created through Jesus. This was long before Mary was born” (Collins).

Mary’s Body Taken to Heaven/Assumption:

RC Doctrine:

“Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians” (*Catechism*, 966).

What the Bible Teaches:

“There is no biblical reference to the assumption of Mary. The Gospel of John was written around 90 A.D., which is more than 100 years after Mary was born. (Surely Mary was more than ten years old when Jesus was conceived.) If Mary had been supernaturally assumed into Heaven, wouldn’t John (the disciple that Mary lived with) have mentioned it? When Enoch and Elijah were taken up to Heaven, the Bible recorded it. With Elijah it was recorded in some detail. (See Genesis 6:24 and 2 Kings 2:1-18.)

The Assumption of Mary was officially declared to be a dogma of the Roman Catholic faith in 1950...

In 495 A.D., Pope Gelasius issued a decree which rejected this teaching as heresy and its proponents as heretics. In the sixth century, Pope Hormisdas also condemned as heretics those authors who taught the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary.

The early Church clearly considered the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary to be a heresy worthy of condemnation. Here we have ‘infallible’ popes declaring something to be a heresy. Then in 1950, Pope Pius XII, another ‘infallible’ pope, declared it to be official Roman Catholic doctrine. (William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 81-85)” (Collins).

Mary Is a Co-Mediator:

RC Doctrine:

“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 Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.” (*Catechism*, 969).

“With equal truth may it be also affirmed that, by the will of God, Mary is the intermediary through whom is distributed unto us this immense treasure of mercies gathered by God, for mercy and truth were created by Jesus Christ. Thus as no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother” (Pope Leo XIII, *Octobri Mense* Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, On the Rosary, September 22, 1891).

What the Bible Teaches:

We are invited to draw near to God directly without the need of a human mediator!

“In whom [Jesus] we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him” (Ephesians 3:12).

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus : Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

“Wherefore [Jesus] is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Mary Is the Co-Redeemer:

RC Doctrine:

“With her suffering and dying Son she suffered and almost died, so did she surrender her mother’s rights over her Son for the salvation of human beings, and to appease the justice of God, so far as pertained to her, she immolated her Son, so that it can be rightly said, that she together with Christ has redeemed the human race” (Pope Benedict XV, *Epistle, Admodum Probatur*, June 20, 1917).

“By the fullness of grace which confers on her the most illustrious of her many titles, the Blessed Virgin is infinitely superior to all the hierarchies of men and angels, the one creature who is closest of all to Christ. ‘It is a great thing in any saint to have grace sufficient for the salvation of many souls; but to have enough to suffice for the salvation of everybody in the world. is the greatest of all; and this is found in Christ and in the Blessed Virgin’” (Pope Leo XIII, *Magnae Dei Matris - On the Rosary*, September 8, 1892).

What the Bible Teaches:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had **by himself purged our sins**, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:1-3, emphasis mine).

Prayers to Dead Saints:

RC Doctrine:

“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” (Trent, Session 22, Canon 5).

“The intercession of the saints. ‘Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness.... They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus.... So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped’” (*Catechism*, 956).

What the Bible Teaches:

God has forbidden communication with the dead at Leviticus 19:31, Leviticus 20:6, Deuteronomy 18:9, and 1 Chronicles 10:13.

“How, then, can a human being such as Mary hear the prayers of millions of Roman Catholics, in many different countries, praying in many different languages, all at the same time?

Let any priest or layman try to converse with only three people at the same time and see how impossible that is for a human being... The objections against prayers to Mary apply equally against prayers to the saints. For they too are only creatures, infinitely less than God, able to be at only one place at a time and to do only one thing at a time.

How, then, can they listen to and answer thousands upon thousands of petitions made simultaneously in many different lands and in many different languages? Many such petitions are expressed, not orally, but only mentally, silently. How can Mary and the saints, without being like God, be present everywhere and know the secrets of all hearts?” (Lorraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, pp. 142-143).

The Bible:

“But 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...

It is clear, therefore, 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 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” (Vatican II).

On the one hand, Rome says the Word of God is infallible and our only authority, but when we look at what Rome *means* by that, we discover:

- The Word of God exists in two forms: written and oral
- The oral component is taught by the Roman Catholic Magisterium
- Only through the Roman Catholic Magisterium can anyone rightly interpret the Word of God.

“Here is the ‘three-part’ view of authority found so often in Roman Catholic writings: the Scriptures, tradition, and the Magisterium (the Church’s teaching power). Since the Magisterium defines the extent of the Scriptures (by defining the canon), claims sole right of interpretation of the Scriptures, tells us what is and what is not tradition, and defines doctrines on the basis of self-defined tradition, in reality we see that the only one of the three ‘legs’ of this system that is not defined by one of the other is the Magisterium itself” (James R. White, *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, p. 74).

In practice, the Roman Catholic Church has elevated its Magisterium above the Word of God.

RC Doctrine:

“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” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever” (Psalm 12:6-7).

“I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Psalm 138:2).

God has placed His Word above even His own name, and the Roman Catholic Church has placed its Magisterium above God’s Word.

What the Bible Teaches:

The Only True Church:

RC Doctrine:

“For it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation. that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God” (Vatican II).

“With our hearts we believe and with our lips we confess but one Church, not that of the heretics, but the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, outside which we believe that no one is saved” (Pope Innocent III, December 18, 1208).

“He scatters and gathers not who gathers not with the Church and with Jesus Christ, and all who fight not jointly with Him and with the Church are in very truth contending against God” (Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Sapientiae Christianae*, January 10, 1890).

What the Bible Teaches:

We have seen that the Roman Catholic Church is not God’s true church. It fails the test of comparing its teachings with that of the Bible.

Evolution of Catholic Doctrine:

The Catholic Church maintains that it is the same Church it has always been, dating back to the Apostles. But this is plainly not the case.

- 200's: Presbyter (or elders) were first called priests by Lucian
- 200: Immersion of infants who are dying, but considered sinless. (Tertullian V.12)
- 300: Prayers for the dead
- 325: Council of Nice: prohibition of clerical marriage was rejected
- 375: The veneration of angels and dead saints and the use of images
- 379: Praying to Mary and Saints
- 394: Mass as a daily celebration
- 416: Council of Mela: infant baptism by immersion commanded for all infants
- 431: Council of Ephesus: first use of term "Mother of God"
- 526: Extreme Unction, a.k.a. "last rites"
- 593: The Doctrine of Purgatory popularized from *Apocrypha* by Gregory the Great
- 600: Prayers began to be offered to Mary, dead saints, and angels
- 607: First Pope: Boniface III is the first person to take the title of "universal Bishop"
- 709: Kissing of Pope Constantine's feet
- 787: 2nd Council of Nicea: veneration of the cross, images, and relics authorized
- 850: Holy water
- 995: Canonization of dead saints, first by Pope John XV
- 1022: Penance
- 1079: Celibacy enforced for priests, bishops, presbyters (Pope Gregory VII)
- 1090: The rosary, (copied from Hindus and Muslims) was introduced by Peter the Hermit
- 1100's: The Mass developed gradually as a sacrifice, attendance was made obligatory
- 1190: Sale of Indulgences
- 1200's: Seven sacraments defined by Peter Lombard
- 1215: Fourth Lateran Council: Transubstantiation, Auricular Confession, Mass a Sacrifice of Christ, The "Inquisition" legalized and promoted
- 1217: Adoration and Elevation of Host: ie. communion bread (Pope Honorius III)
- 1268: Priestly power of absolution
- 1311: Council of Ravenna: Baptism by sprinkling is universal standard
- 1414: Council of Constance: Laity no longer offered cup at communion
- 1439: Council of Florence: purgatory proclaimed a dogma
- 1546: Council of Trent: *Apocrypha* added to the canon, tradition is declared of equal authority with the Bible
- 1854: The Immaculate Conception of Mary (Pope Pius IX)
- 1864: Condemnation of all scientific discoveries not approved by the Roman Catholic Church (Pope Pius IX)
- 1870: Vatican I: Infallibility of Pope
- 1950: Assumption of Mary (Pope Pius XII)
- 1996: Catholics can believe in Evolution (Pope John Paul II)

(List taken from Steve Rudd, *Roman Catholic Doctrinal Evolution*, <http://www.bible.ca/cath-new-doctrines.htm>, and Loraine Boettner, preface to the fifth edition of his book, *Roman Catholicism*)

“Saved” Roman Catholics:

It is common for members of the Roman Catholic Church to claim that they are born-again saved Christians. The following are questions to ask a member of the Roman Catholic Church who claims to be truly saved:

1. When were you converted?
2. How were you converted?
3. To what, or to whom, were you converted?
4. What do you believe now that you did not believe before your conversion?
5. What does it mean to be saved?
6. On what Scriptural promises do you base your salvation?
7. What does it mean to be born again?
8. Are you sure today that if you die tomorrow, or at any time in the future, you will be in heaven immediately after death?
9. What do you believe about Purgatory?
10. What do you believe about the Mass?
11. Do you still participate in the Mass?
12. Do you believe that to miss Mass voluntarily on Sunday would be a mortal sin, so that if you did not confess it before you died, you would not go to heaven?
13. Do you believe that any sinner can be saved who dies without trusting in Jesus Christ alone for the salvation of his soul and forgiveness of his sins?
14. Do you believe that Mary and Roman Catholic saints can help you get to heaven?
15. How do you believe that the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ is applied to your soul?
16. Have you told your priest you have been saved (converted)?
17. Do you believe you will still go to heaven if you leave the Roman Catholic Church, receive believer’s baptism and join a fundamental Protestant church?
18. When and where do you plan to do this?

“As these questions, and others you can think of, are discussed in detail, you will quickly see that the person is trusting in his work, merits, baptism, confirmation, sacraments, or something besides - or plus - Jesus Christ and not in Christ and Christ alone. He can then be shown the difference between his unbiblical form of salvation and the saving faith of the Bible” (*18 Questions For “Saved” Roman Catholics*, <http://www.biblebelievers.net/Romanism/kjc18qst.htm>).

Thoughts to Consider:

Appendix B: Resources for Further Study:

The following resources are recommended and listed in no particular order:

- *The Catholic Chronicles* – Keith Green – <http://www.sohmer.net/media/KG-TCC.pdf>
- *The Roman Catholic Controversy* – James R. White, Bethany House Publishers, 1996
- *Conversations with Catholics*, James G. McCarthy, Harvest House Publishers, 1997
- *Roman Catholicism*, Lorraine Boettner, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, order at www.amazon.com
- *The Facts on Roman Catholicism* – John Ankerberg & John Weldon – Harvest House Publishers, 1993
- *The Pope and the Papacy* (sermon) – John MacArthur – <http://www.gty.org>
- *Irreconcilable Differences: Catholics, Evangelicals, and the New Quest for Unity* (audio) – John MacArthur, R. C. Sproul, D. James Kennedy, John Ankerberg – <http://www.gty.org>
- Grace to You – <http://www.gty.org>
- Alpha and Omega Ministries - <http://www.aomin.org>
- Biblical Discernment Ministries – <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/>
- Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry - <http://www.carm.org>
- Berean Beacon – <http://www.bereanbeacon.org/>
- Contender Ministries – <http://www.contenderministries.org>
- <http://www.christiananswers.net>
- <http://www.biblebelievers.net>
- Just For Catholics - <http://www.justforcatholics.org>
- Notes and Files from a “Cults” class I taught in 2005 – <http://cults.sohmer.net>

About the Author:

Mark Edward Sohmer has been a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ since September 25, 1993. He attends a Bible-believing church where he seeks to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). He loves God’s Word and is convinced that everything we need to know about God and salvation can be found there.



He is a Graduate of the University of New Hampshire, where he majored in English, and earned a minor in Greek and Latin.

He is not a Pastor, nor a professional writer, though he is excited about God’s “good, and acceptable, and perfect” will for him, whatever that may be (Romans 12:2).

He can be reached and welcomes comments, questions, and/or any correspondence:

Mark Edward Sohmer • mark@sohmer.net • <http://www.sohmer.net>

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