



GOD IS IN THE DETAILS CREATION REVELATION

THY WORD IS TRUE FROM THE BEGINNING: AND EVERY ONE OF THY
RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS ENDURETH FOR EVER. PSALM 119:160

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Apostate Christianity

It should be clearly understood that we are living in a time of great apostasy. Even though the thrust of this article is directed towards the false teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, one would have to be blind not to realize that there is something wrong within Christianity in general. All you need to do is turn on “Christian television” to realize that Christianity is being used to line the pockets of many televangelists with wealth gleaned from gullible Christian viewers that have been duped into belief in a distortion of the Gospel message. Many of these false teachers have been exposed over the past twenty years or so. Yet, many are still willing to believe their false messages of healing, health, and prosperity.

Today we also see the rise of the so-called mega-church that seems more interested in numbers of members than in the true repentance and salvation of souls. Focusing on growth as a means of salvation, one pastor wrote that “Crowds always flock to hear good news. There is enough bad news in the world that the last thing people need is to hear *more* bad news.”¹ While this seems commendable, the Word of God is much more than a “feel-good, “seeker-friendly” message. Some people need to hear the harsh things as well. The philosophy of the mega-church is not to confront sinners, but to lead them to a commitment to Christ without making them feel guilty. Under this system it seems that no repentance is required.² Speaking of the current idea of liberalism in the church, H. Reinhold Niebuhr wrote:

“A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”³

The interesting thing about these churches is the avoidance of teaching prophecy. According to this philosophy, “When the disciples wanted to talk about prophecy, Jesus quickly switched the conversation to evangelism. He wanted them to concentrate on their mission in the world. He said in essence, ‘The details of my return are none of your business. What is your business is the mission I’ve given you. Focus on that!.... If you want Jesus to come back sooner, focus on fulfilling your mission, not figuring out prophecy.’”⁴ This is an

outright falsehood. Jesus spoke at length regarding prophecy of the end-times in the Olivet Discourse found in detail in Matthew chapters 24 and 25. The real truth of the matter is church growth. If you ask many pastors why they don’t teach prophecy they often reply that “It is too scary and much too controversial.” Let me say that there are many Christians today that have come to belief in Christ because of a literal presentation of prophecy, in particular, the Book of Revelation. In order to get around the implications of a literal reading of prophecy, many will say it is allegory, or they will attempt to spiritualize it, or some will say that it has all been fulfilled during the persecutions of the first century. The Roman Catholic Church also takes this position.⁵

The Rise of Roman Catholicism

In the early era of Christianity all those holding the office of bishop were considered equals. It wasn’t until sometime between 313 and 450AD that the bishop of Rome gained the ascendancy over the other bishops. It was during the time period between 313 and 590AD that the church became the Roman Catholic Church and the ritual of the church became more elaborate, reflecting imperial Rome.⁶

When Constantine shifted the seat of the empire to Constantinople in 330AD the bishop of Rome became the strongest individual in Rome for extended periods. This resulted in Roman citizens looking to the bishop for temporal as well as spiritual leadership.⁷

The union of church and state under Constantine led to secularization of the church. The influx of barbarians and the growth of episcopal power resulted in changes of worship as the barbarians, used to worshipping images, were accommodated. The logical outcome was the veneration of angels, saints, relics, pictures, and statues. Because of the close association to the monarchical state, the church took on a more aristocratic form, with great distinctions between the clergy and the laity.⁸ Dr. John Walvoord writes:

“In the early centuries of the church in Rome, incredible confusion arose; attempts were made to combine some of the features of the mystery religion of Babylon with the Christian faith, a confusion which has continued down to the present day.”⁹



It was finally in the fifth century that the Bishop of Rome elevated himself to supremacy by assuming the “old heathen title *Pontifex Maximus*, the high priest of religion throughout the empire, and everyone understood. Leo, not the emperor, had shouldered responsibility for the Eternal City. Peter had come to power.”¹⁰

A number of deviations from the simple message of first century Christianity began to develop that formed what eventually became Roman Catholicism. These included the Mass (including Transubstantiation), and the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. These two will be addressed in this section while other deviations from the simple Gospel will be dealt with in separate sections, since as addressed in an argument from a Catholic (hereafter referred to as “the Catholic” or “he” in the sections titled “CATHOLIC ARGUMENT” and “REBUTTAL.”

1. The Mass

The Mass, or Eucharistic celebration, represents a representation of the sacrifice of Christ. Catholics believe that this is the same sacrifice that Christ made on the cross, except in an un-bloody manner. In this way the idea is that all those who participate are united as one.¹¹ The problem is that the Bible says that Christ’s once for all sacrifice is finished. Jesus cried from the cross “it is finished” (John 19:30). In the book of Hebrews we are told the following regarding the once for all sacrifice:

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, **can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.** For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, **Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me....** 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 10:1-5, 10-14

William Webster comments:

“The Bible teaches, that Christ’s death, His propitiatory sacrifice, and the offering of His body

as a sacrifice for sin was done once for all and cannot be repeated or perpetuated through time. As a result, the New Testament teaches there are now no more offerings or sacrifices for sin. Futhermore, the Roman sacrament cannot be a true propitiatory sacrifice because such a sacrifice requires the death of the victim and in the mass Christ does not die again. The Roman Catholic teaching undermines the sufficiency and exclusive nature of the atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. In addition, the early Church did not generally view the Eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin but as a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and as a memorial and commemoration of the once for all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the mass is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi 1:11 predicting a bloodless and pure sacrifice which would be universally offered throughout the world. However, the Fathers of the early Church taught that the sacrifice foretold by Malachi was not the renewed immolation Christ in the mass but the prayers and contrite, broken spirits of true believers throughout the world.”¹²

Protestants of various denominations and Catholics have differing denominational views on the subject of the Lord’s Supper. Lutherans believe in substantiation, the belief of the real presence of Christ in the elements of communion (the Eucharist; the bread and wine). Catholics believe in transubstantiation, that not only is Christ present, but the bread and wine are physically changed into the actual body and blood of our Lord. Still others believe that it is only a memorial. You can argue all points from the Scripture. I would only point out that, in the 9th century, due to the split between the Eastern and Western (Roman) Catholic Church, the idea of the Lord’s Supper as a sacrifice by the priest was considered a gain in power by the papacy. This was because only the Pope headed the clergy, who alone could perform the “miracle of the Mass.”¹³ “About 831, Paschasius Radbertus (ca.785-860), abbot of the monastery of Corbie near the city of Amiens, began to teach that by divine miracle the substance of the bread and the wine was actually changed into the body and blood of Christ.”¹⁴ Transubstantiation would not become a doctrine of the Catholic Church until 1215, and would not be fully defined until the Council of Trent in 1545.¹⁵

My research shows that the Catholic belief (transubstantiation) is a late addition, and that the Lord’s Supper was intended as a remembrance, as indicated by the Lord’s words in Luke 22:19, “this do in remembrance of Me.”

2. Purgatory

According to Catholic doctrine:

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.*¹⁶

Nowhere in Scripture is this mentioned. We find instead that Christ's death was sufficient to make atonement for the penalty of our sins.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, **he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** 1 John 1:7-9

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1

One sacrifice was sufficient.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Hebrews 10:14

We have this promise that the minute a Christian dies he is present with the Lord.

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire **to depart, and to be with Christ;** which is far better: Philippians 1:23

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to **be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.** 2 Corinthians 5:6-8

The Catholic believes that even though he has been to confession and given absolution for his sins, and now in a state of grace, it is not sufficient to pay the temporal punishment required by the sins. If he was unable to work off his punishment due to his sins, he must then spend some unspecified time in purgatory to perfect him.¹⁷ The Catholic doctrine of purgatory is a denial of the sufficiency of Christ's death on the cross for your redemption.

Catholicism Today

Should a Catholic remain a Catholic once they realize the errors of Roman Catholicism? Being Catholic is often a family tradition, and the Catholic oftentimes will weigh his decision to leave against opposition within his family. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses face the same dilemma. Another frightening aspect of the Catholic decision to leave is possible loss of salvation. Since Vatican II the Catholic Church acknowledges that salvation is possible for the Protestant.¹⁸ However, the same cannot be said for a "fallen away" Catholic.

The Catholic Church considers that the "fallen away" Catholic has left the truth, and has no possibility of salvation other than to return to the fold. This is how the Catholic Church controls its flock - through fear.¹⁹

In discussing with Catholics please be aware that, like Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics have their own set of proof texts that support their particular beliefs. This is not simple, as the Catholic will often resort to Scriptures considered apocryphal by Protestants and also to Catholic Church traditions which they consider of equal weight with Scriptures. They thus can find "truth" for their arguments where the Protestant cannot go. They also resort to papal infallibility, and base it on the apostolic succession from Peter. It is therefore rather difficult to witness to a Catholic.

Some of the stronger "Scriptural" support for Catholic beliefs often comes from apocryphal texts, which the Catholic Church accepts as canonical. The Catholic believes that the Protestant Bible is not complete.²⁰ The Catholic Church claims that it established the canon of Scripture. However, Jerome in the fourth century stated that the apocrypha was not included in the Hebrew canon, and that the Church did not view them as canonical or authoritative for defining doctrine.²¹ In fact, the Catholic canon was established in answer to the Protestant reformation by the Council of Trent in 1546. That Council included as inspired the so-called apocryphal books excluded from the Protestant canon.²²

The canon of Scripture of the early church was complete by the second century AD, and possibly as late as the fourth century AD according to recent developments and arguments. It can be shown that the Hebrew canon was complete by "well before 100 AD," as attested by Jesus, Philo, and Josephus. Evidence actually suggests that the Hebrew canon was complete by the fourth century BC, and included the Law (Torah), the Prophets, and the Writings. The Hebrew canon is identical to the Protestant canon, although the arrangement is different. Also, the Protestant canon separates the Minor Prophets into separate books rather than combined as one.²³ This canon was described by both Philo and Josephus in the first century AD. Neither, Jesus, Philo, or Josephus made reference to any writing found in the apocryphal books.²⁴

The "Baltimore Catechism," that all Catholic children used to be indoctrinated with (I don't know if this is still true), omits the words of the Ten Commandments that refer to not making graven images. The catechism then splits the commandment not to covet into two parts to make up the Ten Commandments. You can Google "Baltimore Catechism" to see that this is true. The catechism goes on to justify the use of relics, statues, and images in as a means of expressing love for God through His friends (saints). The Catholic Douay Version of the Bible is more honest in the translation of the Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20. The substitution of the word "priest" for the word translated "elder" in the Catholic Douay New Testament is a distortion used to justify the Catholic hierarchical system.

As a former Catholic with a Jesuit education, I had studied Catholic doctrine and catechism and eventually realized that I was trapped in bondage to the Catholic "works system." I



became agnostic in my belief, and a want-to-be atheist. In my pursuit to prove God did not exist, I came face to face with the simple truth that Jesus was who He claimed to be, God in the flesh. I then began a life-long study of Scripture, trying to remain in the Catholic Church. I taught Bible to Catholics in a home fellowship, never once attempting to undermine their Catholic faith (the Holy Spirit is our truth teacher using solely the Word of God). It was the parish priest that finally made me decide to leave the Catholic Church. He objected to Bible study as “dangerous.” He asked me to instead teach Catholic doctrine, which I refused. I then realized that Catholics were not free. A few months later, a Catholic lay leader of that church phoned me to say that my problem was that I took the Bible too literally. “After all,” he said, “the Bible is just a story book.”

In my experience as a former Catholic, I know that the Catholic Church believes in the essential doctrines of the faith, such as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, and the virgin birth to name a few. As such, the Catholic has the truth. It is in the areas of man-made doctrine that the Protestant and Catholic would disagree.

The Catholic Church has made their traditions of equal weight with Scripture, and has allowed traditions to dictate much of what else it believes. While the Scriptures present absolute truth, tradition is a different story. The books of the New Testament are all firsthand eyewitness accounts all written during the first century AD. Much of what the Catholic relies on as evidence for their extra-biblical belief has been cherry-picked from their apocryphal sources, and tradition written outside the eyewitness testimony.

To maintain sound doctrine, the Christian should ask the following questions:

1. Did Jesus teach it in the Gospels?
2. Was it practiced in the book of Acts?
3. Do we receive instructions about it in the Epistles?

If the answer to any of the above questions is no, then it should be rejected. Adherence to this test prevents the danger of changing the pure message handed down from the eyewitnesses during the time of Jesus. Much of what is taught and practiced within the Catholic Church does not pass the test of these three questions. For this reason I would advise that Catholics consider seriously whether they should remain in such a church. I would strongly advise them to leave and to seek a good Bible believing church where the Word of God is honestly and consistently taught.

The remainder of this article is a response to actual challenges from a Roman Catholic. The Catholic Argument was originally in a “texting” format, and has been rearranged for clarity, retaining the original thought.

A. Foundation of the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church is built on a foundation of the early church, secular aristocratic influence, and an influx of

paganism. How can the Catholic support a belief in the system thus morphed from the simple humble roots of first century Christianity into the feudalist authoritarian system it has become? The pomp and ceremony of today’s Roman Catholic Church is a far cry from the simple pure message of Jesus Christ and the apostles.

A. CATHOLIC ARGUMENT

The Catholic believes that the structure of the Catholic Church is Scripture based, and that there has been an unbroken link of apostolic succession from Peter, who Jesus made the first pope. Jesus chose special men to be his apostles and gave each their own mission. Jesus gave the apostles the kingdom (the Church). Jesus told Peter that the Church would be built on Peter as the foundation rock. The Catholic believes that the hierarchical system of the Catholic Church is Scriptural since the epistles define the roles of bishops, “priests,” and deacons. The Catholic then makes eight points to prove this assertion.

1. Jesus chose special men to be his apostles.

Ye have not chosen me, but **I have chosen you, and ordained you**, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. John 15:16

2. Jesus gave apostles their own mission.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, **even so send I you**. John 20:21

3. Jesus gave the apostles the kingdom (Church).

And **I appoint unto you a kingdom**, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Luke 22:29, 30

4. Jesus’ own words proclaim he will build his church on Peter.

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

5. There will be one shepherd (the pope) to shepherd Christ’s sheep.

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and **there shall be one fold, and one shepherd**. John 10:16



6. Peter is appointed chief shepherd.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But **I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:** and when thou art converted, **strengthen thy brethren.** Luke 22:31, 32.

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 21:17

7. Church leaders are arranged in an hierarchical order.

And he **gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;** Ephesians 4:11

8. The Catholic says that the Scriptures identify roles of bishops, priests and deacons (all present in the Catholic Church). He pointed to the offices of the bishop and deacon using 1 Timothy 3:1 and 8, but skipped verses 2 – 7.

This is a true saying, **If a man desire the office of a bishop,** he desireth a good work. 1 Timothy 3:1

[He then jumped over the following verses 2-7 and ended with verse 8]

A bishop then must be blameless, **the husband of one wife....** One that ruleth well his own house, **having his children** in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?).... Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 1 Timothy 3:2-7

Likewise must **the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;** 1 Timothy 3:8

Notice now how the Catholic justifies the priesthood by the mistranslation of the Scripture in his Douay Bible version.

Let **the priests** that rule well, be esteemed worthy of double honour: especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 1 Timothy 5:17 Douay (Catholic) Bible

The King James reads instead:

Let **the elders** that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 1 Timothy 5:17 KJV

A. REBUTTAL

In support of their various doctrinal positions, Catholics must seek extra-biblical sources, since many of their traditions are not mentioned in the Word of God. The interesting thing about traditions is that they are not necessarily so.

Eyewitness Testimony

The Scriptures are the most reliable source. As my Catholic friends would attest, the New Testament was written within the lifetime of the eye witnesses. Liberal skeptics have attempted, without success, to place the writing of the Gospels out of reach of the eyewitness period.

If you search the book of Acts (an historical account of the early church) you will find nowhere mentioned the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, nor the deaths of Peter or Paul in the mid 60s. Since Jerusalem was a center of Christian activity during the early church, don't you think it odd that there is no mention of that fact? The conclusion is that the book of Acts must have been **written before 70AD**. The Gospel of Luke can be dated even before the book of Acts since Dr. Luke mentions a **"former account"** in his opening in the book of Acts.

Going a bit further, the Gospel of Mark, which is considered to be Peter's Gospel, is considered to be the earliest written Gospel. Luke mentions that "many" wrote accounts of their beliefs (other Gospels). The implication is that very soon after the crucifixion, Gospel narratives were written down within the lifetime of the eyewitnesses who could refute them, including the Jewish and Roman leaders. Some theologians believe the Gospel of Mark to have been written by 40AD (not later than 50-60AD), and is the earliest Gospel account. No one disputes that Mark was written before the Gospel of Luke (early 60sAD).

The book of Revelation was the last written New Testament document, considered to have been written by the Apostle John not later than 96AD. Thus all New Testament books were written within the lifetime of eyewitnesses.

Since the New Testament books had been copied repeatedly by the believers in the early church, we have thousands of copies of New Testament texts. Using the tools of textual criticism we know for certain what the wording of these books actually were. These words are contained in your Bibles today. The handful of uncertain words do not add to or change the meaning of any essential belief in your Bible.

Tradition

With tradition it is a bit different. These traditions do not necessarily stem from any New Testament eyewitness



accounts as with the Gospels and Epistles. These traditions, as employed by the Catholic Church, stem from apocryphal literature, early Christian writers and thinkers, and legends; not eyewitnesses. The Catholic would say that, "The Bible achieves its full value as revelation when mediated by tradition, which serves as a kind of environment or atmosphere in which the Bible is read."²⁵ This is another way of saying that the Bible is only true when it lines up with the traditions of the Church. It is extremely difficult to debate with a Catholic when their source material is papal infallibility and tradition. Using these arguments, the Bible can be made to say anything they want it to say.

The Rock

The Catholic Church twists Scripture when it uses Matthew 16:18 to justify the papacy.

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, 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.** Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. Matthew 16:13-20

If the Catholic is going to use Matthew 16:18 to say that Peter was the rock on which he was to build the Church, he should then first study the context in which it is spoken. "That thou art Peter (petros – a piece of rock), and upon this rock (petra – a mass of rock) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The rock (petra) was the rock on which Christ was to build His Church. That rock (petra), in context, was the statement that Peter had made, not Peter the person himself. That statement was that He (Jesus) was the Messiah, the Son of God. Peter later, quoting Isaiah 28:16, refers to Christ as the "rock" when he wrote:

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, **I lay in Sion a 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 [petra] of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. 1 Peter 2:6-8

Paul clearly referred to Christ as the Rock.

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of **that spiritual Rock [petra]** that followed them: and **that Rock [petra] was Christ.** 1 Corinthians 10:4

Much is usually said by the Catholic regarding "keys of the kingdom" and "binding and loosing" in regards to Catholic apostolic authority. Notice what *Barnes Notes* says about the "Keys" and "binding and loosing":

*"When the Saviour says, therefore, he will give to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, he means that he will make him the instrument of opening the door of faith to the world the first to preach the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. This was done, Acts 2:14-36; 10. The "power of the keys" was given, on this occasion, to Peter alone, solely for this reason; the power of "binding and loosing" on earth was given to the other apostles with him. See Matt 18:18. The only pre-eminence, then, that Peter had was the honor of first opening the doors of the gospel to the world."*²⁶

[Whatsoever thou shalt bind ...] The phrase "to bind" and "to loose" was often used by the Jews. It meant to prohibit and to permit. To bind a thing was to forbid it; to loose it, to allow it to be done. Thus, they said about gathering wood on the Sabbath day, "The school of Shammei binds it" - i.e., forbids it; "the school of Hillel looses it" - i.e., allows it. When Jesus gave this power to the apostles, he meant that whatsoever they forbade in the church should have divine authority; whatever they permitted, or commanded, should also have divine authority-that is, should be bound or loosed in heaven, or meet the approbation of God. They were to be guided infallibly in the organization of the church:

- 1. by the teaching of Christ, and,*
- 2. by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.*

This does not refer to persons, but to things - "whatsoever," not whosoever. It refers to rites and ceremonies in the church. Such of the Jewish customs as they should forbid were to be forbidden, and such as they thought proper to permit were to be allowed. Such rites as they should appoint in the church were to have the force of divine authority. Accordingly, they commanded the Gentile converts to "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20)[The first Church council in Jerusalem – 50AD]; and, in general, they organized



the church, and directed what was to be observed and what was to be avoided. The rules laid down by them in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, in connection with the teachings of the Saviour as recorded in the evangelists, constitute the only law binding on Christians in regard to the order of the church, and the rites and ceremonies to be observed in it."²⁷

Hierarchical Church

In the King James Version we have this translation of Titus 1:5:

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and **ordain elders** in every city, as I had **appointed** thee: Titus 1:5 KJV

The Catholic Douay version says "**ordain priests.**"

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldest **ordain priests** in every city, as I also **appointed** thee: Titus 1:5 Douay Version

The word translated priests in the Catholic version is "*presbuteros.*" The etymology of the Catholic word for "priest" is from this Greek word. The meaning is "elderly," or "senior." If "priest" was intended, then the word used by Paul should have been "*hierous*" which is one of two words used in the New Testament for "priest." The other word is "*archiereus*" usually meaning "high priest." This argument is the same for every place in the New Testament where "*presbuteros*" is used, especially in the book of Acts where it is used extensively. They were appointing leaders, or elders, not priests. Nowhere is a hierarchical system involving priests mentioned in the New Testament. The Catholic Douay translation is a convenient way to justify their system.²⁸ "The idea of a New Testament human mediating priesthood is not biblical. It undermines the biblical teaching of the exclusive nature of the person of Christ as priest and mediator between God and man."²⁹

For there is one God, and **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**; 1 Timothy 2:5

The word translated in the KJV and the Douay as "ordain" is "*kathistemi.*" It means "appoint," "designate," or "ordain." It does not mean ordain in the same sense as used in the Catholic Church; it simply means to appoint. The word translated in the KJV and the Douay as "appointed" is "*diatasso.*" *Diatasso* means appoint, command, institute, or ordain. It is correctly translated "appointed" in both versions.

The Catholic cannot substantiate the Catholic hierarchical system by referring to the Scriptures cited.

B. Statues and Images

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; Exodus 20:4, 5

B. CATHOLIC ARGUMENT

The standard Catholic response to Exodus 20:4 and 5 is taken from Exodus 25:18-19 (God himself told the Jewish people to make cherubim out of gold), Numbers 21:8-9 (Moses made a image bronze serpent and put on a pole), 1 Kings 6:23-29 (temple had engraved cherubim, trees, flowers), and 1 Kings 7:25-45 (temple had bronze oxen, lions, pomegranates). The Catholic would say that if Exodus 20:4, 5 applied, then the Jewish temples shouldn't have statues of any sort, but they did. According to the Catholic, the difference is that, like Catholics, the Jews didn't worship them.

B. REBUTTAL

In order to understand the Catholic position, an understanding of the word "venerate" is essential. To venerate means "to regard with reverential respect or with admiring deference." It also means "to honor (as an icon or a relic) with a ritual act of devotion."³⁰

Exodus 25:18-19 refers to the Cherubim on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant.

And **thou shalt make two cherubims of gold**, of beaten work shalt thou **make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.** And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall **ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof.** Exodus 25:18, 19

The high priest was the only one to see it. It was not an object of worship, and could not be accessed or venerated by the populous. The entrance to the Holy of Holies was by the high priest for the purpose of worshiping God, not in veneration of the Cherubim. "The context of Exodus 25 provides no support for the veneration of the image of the Cherubim."³¹

In Numbers 21:8 and 9, God told Moses to make a bronze serpent.

And **the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole:** and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And **Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole,** and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. Numbers 21:8, 9



It is interesting that Catholics use the bronze serpent of Numbers 21:8-9 as support for having statues in Catholic Churches since later the Israelites attempted to venerate it and they were condemned for it:

Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that **Hezekiah**.... And **he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord**, according to all that David his father did. He **removed the high places, and brake the images**, and cut down the groves, and **brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it:** and he called it Nehushtan. 2 Kings 18:1-4

God had a specific purpose in the use of this serpent. He never told the Israelites to worship or venerate it. He told them to look at it. God did many things in the Old Testament to teach His people to look to Christ in faith. God intended this serpent in the wilderness to point to the Cross of Christ (John 3:14). This serpent was not to be an object to venerate or worship. The lesson is that you are to look with faith on Christ for your salvation.³²

And within the oracle he made **two cherubims** of olive tree, each ten cubits high.... And he overlaid the cherubims with gold. And **he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, within and without.** 1 Kings 6:23-29

It stood upon **twelve oxen**... and the sea was set above upon them.... And on the borders that were between the ledges were **lions, oxen, and cherubims**.... For on the plates of the ledges thereof, and on the borders thereof, he graved **cherubims, lions, and palm trees**.... And **four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, even two rows of pomegranates** for one network, to cover the two bowls of the chapters that were upon the pillars.... And one sea, and **twelve oxen** under the sea.... for the house of the Lord.... 1 Kings 7:25-45

Cherubim are angels that serve around the throne of God. The temple was decorated with Cherubim, palm trees, and other specified decorations. They served strictly as decorations within God's Temple. There is no mention or command to venerate or worship any of them. There is a huge difference between what is mentioned in these verses and what goes on within the Catholic Church.

Regarding statues in Catholic Churches, the Jewish use is **not** the "same like Catholics." Catholics kneel down and light candles to statues; making repetitious prayers, without thinking what they are saying. Many are in actual adoration as they gaze into the ceramic faces of the Catholic Mary and saints. The Catholics kiss the feet of unfeeling statues.

Nowhere in Scripture does God condone veneration of saints or Mary, or any image or statue that is not later condemned by God. Can the Catholic truly say that Catholics do not venerate, or some even worship, saints and Mary through their use of statues and images? As a former Catholic, I can truly say from experience that veneration (admitted) and worship of statues and images by Catholics does in fact take place within the Catholic Church.³³

Similarly, although this is not a direct reference to Mary as Queen of Heaven, the prophet Jeremiah wrote of an abdominal practice that had crept in.

The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women **knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven**, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may **provoke me to anger.** Jeremiah 7:18

But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to **burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem:** for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to **burn incense to the queen of heaven**, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. And when **we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her**, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men? Then Jeremiah said unto all the people.... therefore is your land a desolation.... **Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the Lord**, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore **this evil is happened unto you**, as at this day. Jeremiah 44:17-25

C. Rosary

In Matthew chapter 6 we are told by Jesus not to use vain repetitious prayers.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But **when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.** Matthew 6:6, 7

An example of heathen vain repetition is shown in 1 Kings 18:25-29.



And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, **and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered.** And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and **they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.** 1 Kings 18:25-29

C. CATHOLIC ARGUMENT

In this discussion, the Catholic supports repetitious prayer by pointing out that Jesus used repetitious prayer in Matthew 26:44.

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, **O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.** And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And **he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.** Matthew 26:42-44

For further support, the Catholic then pointed out Luke 18:13 saying that the publican “kept beating his breast and praying ‘be merciful.’”

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but **smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.** Luke 18:13

He then referred to Revelation 4:8 where the four beasts (angelic beings) around the throne worship God day and night with the same words.

And **the four beasts** had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and **they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.** Revelation 4:8

Finally, He used 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to drive home his point.

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Oddly enough, he added the following regarding 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “The Rosary is that prayer.”

C. REBUTTAL

There are repetitious prayers and then there are repetitious prayers. If I have a great need, such as “Father, please heal my sick child.” I’m going to pray that prayer over and over until my child is healed. This same thing Jesus did as he asked His Father if the cup might pass from Him. Now, if I have a set formula, ritual prayer (Rosary), that I say over and over again like “Hari-Krishna” then it is vain repetition. In Revelation 4:8, the scene is in Heaven. The subject is worship of God, not **vain** repetition.

Where in Scripture did Jesus teach us to pray the Rosary? Jesus was asked by His disciples to show them how to pray. He showed them the **elements** of prayer when He said the Lord’s Prayer. But, He did not say to ritualize it in continuous repetition. Granted, the Rosary contains the Lord’s Prayer, but it also asks the dead (Mary) to pray for the living. It also assumes that Mary can hear prayers, giving her an elevated status not accorded her in Scripture.

Praying “without ceasing” does not mean continuous vain repetition. It does mean to talk with God at every opportunity. I talk to God all day long, but I don’t employ a set ritualistic prayer. Where in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 does it mention to pray the Rosary?

D. Mary

Catholics believe that Mary was conceived without the stain of Original Sin (Immaculate Conception). However, Paul makes it clear that all have sinned, including Mary.

For **all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.** Romans 3:23-26

Mary acknowledges that she needs a Savior when she says:

And my spirit hath rejoiced in **God my Saviour.**
Luke 1:47

D. CATHOLIC ARGUMENT

The Catholic defends the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception with Luke 1:28 saying that the words of the King James, “highly favored,” are the same as “full of grace.”



And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art **highly favoured**, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Luke 1:28

Catholics maintain that “full of grace” indicates that she was fully filled with God’s grace so that no sin existed in her being. She was redeemed by God from the moment of her conception. In fact, she had no sin nature.³⁴

Next, the Catholic introduces Genesis 3:15 saying that “Mary will one day put complete enmity between the woman, Satan and sin; she bore the savior, in essence, she helped crush Satan through her obedience to God.”

And I [God] will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.
Genesis 3:15

The Catholic now uses Exodus 25:11-21 saying that the ark is a symbol of Mary and God’s Word (testimony) is a symbol of Jesus.

And thou shalt overlay it [**the ark**] with pure gold.... And **thou shalt put into the ark the testimony** which I shall give thee.... And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and **in the ark thou shalt put the testimony** that I shall give thee. Exodus 25:11-21

Finally, the Catholic says, “Referring back to Luke 1:47 (Mary proclaims that her spirit rejoices in God my Savior). If she was with sin, she isn’t saved yet or purified, since Christ didn’t die yet, how can she proclaim she is saved, unless God who can do all things made her so? In addition, Luke 1:42 (Elizabeth proclaims Mary is blessed among women) and Luke 1:48 (Mary says all generations will call me blessed), is prophecy that is being fulfilled even today, since Catholics honor her for her obedience.”

D. REBUTTAL

Mary was a very special lady chosen of God to bear His Son. The problem Protestants have is with the position that the Catholic Church has given her. She was indeed blessed, but, still a sinner saved by the grace of God. The words of the King James, “highly favoured,” are correct. The Catholic Latin Vulgate rendering, “full of grace,” is a mistranslation. “That our translators have given the right sense of it here seems plain not only from the import of verbs of that termination, but from the next clause, **the Lord is with thee**, and v. 30, ‘Thou hast found favor with God.’ The Vulgate’s mistaken rendering- ‘full of grace’ (gratia plena) – has been taken abundant advantage of by the Romish Church.”³⁵ “For the participle [highly favoured], which Luke employs, denotes the undeserved favour of God.”³⁶ In any case, being saved does not imply that she was sinless. Let’s briefly examine three points regarding Mary which are Catholic doctrine.

First – The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception states that Mary was conceived, in her own birth, without the stain of original sin. “The dogmatic definition of Mary’s Immaculate Conception was announced on December 8, 1854 by Pope Pius IX before he himself was declared personally infallible at Vatican Council I...” This idea is not derived from Scripture. This developed from theological presupposition, but was not proclaimed until 1854.³⁷ If God could preserve Mary from the stain of original sin then why couldn’t He do so with Jesus? In other words, why did Jesus need to be born in a spotless vessel for Him to be born sinless? Mary was born to sinners, yet the Catholic Church declares she was born without the stain of “original sin.” There is nothing in Mary’s words, upon hearing the news, which claims she was not a sinner. In fact, the words of Mary confess that she was a sinner in need of a Savior, not that she was made sinless. She says that it is God who saves. It is Emmanuel, God with us, which saves. If Christ had not risen, we would all have remained in our sins with no hope.

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 1 Corinthians 15:17-19

Second – The doctrine of the Assumption of Mary did not become an official doctrine until it was declared by Pope Pius XII on November 1, 1950. This doctrine states that Mary was taken body and soul to Heaven.³⁸ Also, other than theological presupposition, there is no proof to substantiate this claim. The fact is that the pope said it, so that settles it. After all he is “infallible,” at least officially since 1870 (Vatican Council I).

The interesting point to ponder is this; in the Gospels, Mary has secondary roles other than the nativity narrative and the incident at Cana. She is only mentioned one other time outside the Gospels, in the book of Acts, at Pentecost, she is with the others in the upper room. Her very last biblical words are found in John 2:5, “Whatever He [Jesus] says to you, do it.” Her role, in Catholic eyes, seems to have increased with the passing of time and memory.

Third – Was Mary a perpetual virgin? It has always seemed to me to be unfair to both Joseph and Mary herself to require this. The Catholic Church interprets the “brothers and sisters of Jesus” passages as being cousins rather than true brothers and sisters. It seems pointless to argue with them over the issue. Their idea is to keep Mary free from the stain of sin. In this context, “sin” implies sexual contact. *An American Catholic Catechism* defends this doctrine thus: “Life-long or perpetual ‘virginity’ is an early instance of a growth in understanding, **beyond the biblical evidence.**”³⁹ In other words, there is no evidence except theological presupposition, apocryphal literature, or “stories, tales, and myths.”



The Woman of Genesis 3:15

In **Genesis 3:15** it is the woman's seed (Messiah) that is in a cosmic battle, at enmity with the serpent's seed. In the context of Genesis it is Eve that is "the mother of all living." God is speaking and is the one that will "put enmity between the Seed of the woman and the seed of Satan." Mary is not the woman of Genesis 3:15 other than that at the proper time, as a child of Eve, she will eventually produce the Messiah of Israel who will crush Satan. The phrase "seed of the woman" is prophetic of the virgin birth since a woman does not have seed, man does.⁴⁰

By the same token the woman of Revelation 12 is not Mary. That woman is a depiction of Israel which would bring forth the Messiah. Although, in fact, she was the woman that gave birth, but the woman of Revelation 12 is Israel, whom Satan will pursue and God will protect as you see in a complete reading of the chapter in context. The chapter deals with Satan's attempt to destroy the Messiah and his determination to destroy God's chosen people, the Jews. This has been the cosmic battle that has been waged beginning with Genesis 3 (as prophesied in Gen 3:15), and the attempt throughout time by Satan to destroy the Seed of the woman (Messiah) by destruction of the Jewish people and Scriptures by corruption.

E. Salvation (Are You Saved?)

A Catholic is never sure of his or her salvation. They live their lives in fear and hope that they have done enough works to earn their salvation. Of course, there is always the hope that if they don't make it the first time, they can work it off in purgatory. In this, they fail to understand the full import of what Christ has accomplished.

E. CATHOLIC ARGUMENT

The Catholic says that salvation is an ongoing process, from the beginning of life to the end. In fact, the Catholic might say that it is a threefold process.

1. I have been saved.

a. In hope we are saved.

For **we are saved by hope**: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? Romans 8:24

b. We are saved by grace through faith.

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (**by grace ye are saved**:)... For **by grace are ye saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Ephesians 2:5, 8

c. He saved us through bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

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; Titus 3:5, 6

2. I am being saved.

a. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

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**. For it is **God which worketh in you** both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12, 13

b. ... as you attain the goal of your faith, salvation.

Receiving **the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls**. 1 Peter 1:9

3. I will be saved.

a. He who endures to the end will be saved.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but **he that endureth to the end shall be saved**. Matthew 10:22

b. He who perseveres to the end will be saved.

But **he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved**. Matthew 24:13

c. Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but **whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it**. Mark 8:35

E. REBUTTAL

Romans 8:24 simply put is that we are kept preserved and sustained in our trials with patience; by our hope of future deliverance by the soon return of Jesus in His glorious rapture of the Church.

Philippians 2:12 states in part "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." This seems to imply that you must do something to be saved, and that salvation is an ongoing process. But, Romans 3:20, 28 and Ephesians 2:8-9 indicates that your salvation is not by works.

Therefore **by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight**: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.... Therefore we conclude that **a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law**. Romans 3:20-28



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 way to view Philippians 2:12 is that the Philippians were to work out (bring to conclusion) the salvation already wrought in them by God (Phil 2:13). In this sense, they were obliged to carry their salvation to its logical conclusion (they were already saved), not for their own benefit, but for the benefit (salvation) of others. Because they were saved, they were to work, not for their own salvation, but for that of others. This is the context of Philippians 2:12-13. This then harmonizes with Romans 3:20, 28 and Ephesians 2:8-9.

Matthew 10:22; Matthew 24:13; Mark 8:35 all speak of persevering to the end. The first two argue that by staying faithful to the end, even in the face of persecution, the Christian will not lose his or her salvation. The last one indicates directly that the Christian should be ready to die rather than deny Jesus. These verses provide hope to the faithful believer to stand firm in his faith, without fear, secure in his salvation.

I received salvation in 1975 and became born-again. I committed my life to following Christ as Lord of my life. Regeneration (born again) consists of an initial change (a commitment) followed by an on-going (life-long) process. We can say with assurance, "Jesus is really Lord!" I was saved, but not perfect. It is that perfection that one strives for after initially being saved.

Paul says in his epistle to the Romans: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed." (Romans 12:2 J.B. Phillips). Suddenly I was aware that the world did not think as I now did. In fact, I now was walking contrary to the world, and many in the world didn't like the new me. John Wesley wrote:

*"[The] wisdom of God is foolishness to the world...Occasionally it is branded as downright lunacy and distraction."*⁴¹

Wesley continues, saying that receiving warning, the non-Christian, thinking himself wise,

*"... would say that his head (the Christian's head) was out of order. Much religion has surely made him mad!"*⁴²

We must be different. We must not be swayed to walk and think as the world thinks. The message of the Gospel may seem contrary to man's nature or the world system, but as Paul says:

For **the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing**, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "**I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.**" Where is the wise?

Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?** For since, in the wisdom of God, **the world through wisdom did not know God**, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but **we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness**, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because **the foolishness of God is wiser than men**, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that **not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise**, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

A Catholic booklet belittles Christian fundamentalists by saying that the fundamentalists place too much emphasis on being born-again.⁴³ However, it was Jesus Himself, not the fundamentalist, who placed "heavy emphasis" on being born again as follows:

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Do not marvel that I said to you, '**You must be born again.**'" John 3:1-7

I can relate that my own experience was one of eye opening joy. I suddenly realized the truth of the Gospel. I knew that Jesus was Lord and that I must ask and allow Him to be Lord of my life. I once aimlessly followed the rituals and repetitive prayers of the Catholic Church without much



enthusiasm or conviction. Also, much fear was involved as I struggled to “work” out my own acceptability to God. God, to me, was high and out of reach. No one had told me that I could have a personal relationship with the King of Glory. I was set free of the bonds of ritual and tradition and brought into the light of the glorious truth of the Gospel, a very joyful experience. I continued in the Catholic Church another seven years after this “Spirit filling” experience, believing that I could make a difference.

In Acts chapters 1 and 2, there was some real excitement taking place after the Pentecost experience, so much so that the citizens of Jerusalem thought the disciples were drunk. Charismatic Catholics, including priests, brothers, and nuns can attest to that excitement. It is hoped that all Christians can get excited about knowing Christ.

It was Jesus Himself who put “heavy emphasis” saying, “You **must** be born again.” If Jesus really did say that, then shouldn’t heavy emphasis be placed on that event as an indicator of salvation?

When I was “born again” I realized that I had been saved. I wanted to live for Christ. I was not perfect, and was still a sinner, but my sins had been paid for, past, present, and future. Did that mean that I could go on sinning? Certainly not! I knew that I was made acceptable to God because of what Christ had suffered in my stead. He took my penalty. I do not have to pay the penalty in an imagined purgatory. Christ has already suffered in my place. He paid the price, once for all. To say that I still need to suffer in purgatory for what He has paid for is to say that His sacrifice is not sufficient. If purgatory is true, then it seems to me that there will be very few that attend the wedding of the Lamb as the Bride of Christ, since His bride will still be paying the penalty in purgatory.

Today I still fight sin, but the difference is that I don’t make sin a pattern in my life. I trust in what Christ has done for me. When I sin, I acknowledge my sin and ask forgiveness. But, I no longer live in fear; I know that I will one day be with Jesus. I fear God, but sin does not hold me in bondage. Read Paul’s struggles in Romans chapters 6 thru 8. As a former Catholic, Paul’s struggles set me free from that bondage when I realized that we are not under the law, but saved by God’s grace. The Catholic “works” system traps by placing false bondage, tying the sinner to the church and confessional, and causing doubt in one’s own salvation that is actually a free gift of God (Eph 2:8, 9).

F. Faith Alone or Faith Plus Works

One of the reasons that a Catholic can never be assured of his salvation is that he believes that he cannot accept the all sufficiency of what Christ has done for him on the cross. The Catholic would say that he is justified by faith plus works.

F. CATHOLIC ARGUMENT

The Catholic would say that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. He uses James 2:24 and 26 as his Scriptural support.

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 2:24, 26

He then says that the only thing that counts is faith working in love, and cites Galatians.

For in Jesus Christ **neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.** Galatians 5:6

Next, he says that faith without love is nothing citing 1 Corinthians 13:2.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and **though I have all faith,** so that I could remove mountains, **and have not charity [love], I am nothing.** 1 Corinthians 13:2

He appeals to Jesus to show the importance of works by keeping the commandments.

If ye love me, **keep my commandments.** John 14:15

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but **if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.** Mathew 19:16-17

The Catholic argues that Jesus stressed a works salvation when He separated the sheep from the goats saying:

... And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: **For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me....** Verily I say unto you, **Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.** Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: **For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited**



me not.... Verily I say unto you, **Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.** And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. Matthew 25:31-46

F. REBUTTAL

Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me keep **my** commandments." The Catholic interprets this statement as works. However, is it really? Let's see. Jesus defined what He meant by His commandments in Matthew 22:36-40.

Master, which is **the great commandment** in the law? Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.** This is **the first and great commandment.** And **the second** is like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** On **these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.** Matthew 22:36-40

Jesus said, "Love God" and "love your neighbor." That doesn't sound like working for your salvation. But, it does sound like something a saved Christian is supposed to do because he is saved, not because he is fearful of his salvation.

Martin Luther suddenly came to a realization of what was meant by the Apostle Paul's statement, "the just shall live by faith." Eve was deceived by the serpent by doubting God ("Did God really say...?"). This is why faith is important to God. In contrast, Abraham's faith was accounted as righteousness.

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something of which to boast, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "**Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.**" Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But **to him who does not work but believes on Him** who justifies the ungodly, **his faith is accounted for righteousness,** Romans 4:1-5

It is not our righteousness, but righteousness from God through faith that saves, as we can see from the following:

But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, **not having my own righteousness,** which is from the law, **but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;** Philippians 3:8, 9

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. Isaiah 64:6

We are saved by God's grace through faith...

For **by grace you have been saved through faith,** and that **not of yourselves;** it is **the gift of God, not of works,** lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8, 9

... because we believe.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to **salvation for everyone who believes,** for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "**The just shall live by faith.**" Romans 1:16, 17

It is as simple as confessing our belief that is in our heart.

But what does it say? "The word is near you, even **in your mouth and in your heart**" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that **if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** Romans 10:8, 9

Faith comes by hearing the Word and studying the Scriptures.

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

But the Catholic would stress works and say, as James himself said:

Thus also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." **Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.** Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 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? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that **by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.** Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?



For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. James 2:17-26

Because of their works system, the Catholic has a difficult time understanding that James was not saying that justification is by works and faith. He was saying that if you are truly trusting in God as His disciple, then works will surely accompany faith. In other words, because I love God I do the works. In this sense, works are a fruit of faith. Faith without the accompanying works is not true faith. Salvation is not obtained by my works but what Christ has done on my behalf. If a man is truly “born-again” then he should be bearing fruit. Being “born-again” is not an option, it is essential – Jesus said “ye must be born again.” (John 3)

The Catholic system is a faith/works system. They confess their sins to a priest and do penance prescribed by the priest. In effect, the penance is the works system to justify the sinner.

Sadly, the Catholic cannot be sure of his salvation because of this works system. He cannot simply say that he has been saved by the shed blood of Christ who paid the penalty in his place. He must somehow be made worthy by his works, rather than trusting in what Christ has done. It is a rather distorted view, and it is similar to pagan religious practices regarding salvation. We should do works because we are saved, not work to obtain our salvation. It's a free gift (Ephesians 2:8).

Conclusion

Should the Catholic leave the Roman church and find one that is Biblical based and preaches the Word of God? I believe the answer is yes. The Catholic should prayerfully consider whether what he is doing matches what Scripture teaches. The Roman Catholic Church through its traditions and hierarchical system has invented a ritualized form of mystery religious practices. They have added to the Word of God unbiblical inventions of their own making. This is dangerous and leads to a cult like form of Christianity interspersed with great power, wealth, and just enough truth to give it respectability. A sample of a few of the things that the Catholic Church has added is as follows:⁴⁴

- 607 AD First Pope – Boniface III (or Gregory I (590-604))
- 709 AD Kissing of Pope's foot
- 786 AD Worshipping of images and relics
- 850 AD Use of "holy water"
- 995 AD Canonization of dead saints
- 998 AD Fasting on Fridays and during Lent
- 1079 AD Celibacy of the priesthood
- 1090 AD Prayer beads
- 1184 AD The Inquisition
- 1190 AD Sale of Indulgences
- 1215 AD Transubstantiation
- 1220 AD Adoration of the wafer (Host)
- 1229 AD Bible forbidden to laymen
- 1414 AD Cup forbidden to people at communion

- 1439 AD Doctrine of purgatory decreed
- 1439 AD Doctrine of seven sacraments affirmed
- 1508 AD The Ave Maria approved
- 1534 AD Jesuit Order founded
- 1545 AD Tradition granted equal authority with the Bible
- 1546 AD Apocryphal books put into Bible
- 1854 AD Immaculate Conception of Mary
- 1864 AD Syllabus of Errors proclaimed
- 1870 AD Infallibility of Pope declared
- 1950 AD Assumption of the Virgin Mary
- 1965 AD Mary proclaimed Mother of the Church

Look at the above list and consider whether this is the Christianity that Jesus and the Apostles taught. Because of tradition being considered equal with Scripture and the infallibility of the pope, the Catholic Church can proclaim anything to be truth. Is this true Christianity where the very vestments of the Catholic bishops and popes are taken from pagan religions?⁴⁵

We are living in the time of the end. The time is urgent. Notice what Jesus says about these times:

And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Take heed that no man deceive you.** For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and **ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.** And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And **many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.** And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet [Daniel 9:27], stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Matthew 24:4-15

For Protestants and Catholics alike, it is time to wake up and get serious! Study the Scriptures. Find a church that teaches the whole Word of God from Genesis through Revelation. You should be also aware that not all churches teach the whole Word of God from the Scriptures. So be careful.

We should pray for our Catholic friends that they might come to the knowledge of the truth and have enough courage to forsake the false teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. God loves them.



¹ Rick Warren, THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN CHURCH, Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995, p. 225.

² Warren, THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN CHURCH, Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission, pp. 302, 303.

³ <http://dancersnotesandquotes.wordpress.com/category/richard-niebuhr/>

⁴ Rick Warren, THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN LIFE, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002, pp. 285, 286.

⁵ Philip St. Romain, CATHOLIC ANSWERS TO FUNDAMENTALISTS' QUESTIONS, Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1984, pp. 48-51.

⁶ Earle E. Cairns, CHRISTIANITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES, Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books, 1954, 1981, p. 157. See also: Loraine Boettner, ROMAN CATHOLICISM, Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962, p. 126.

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⁸ Cairns, CHRISTIANITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES, pp. 159, 160.

⁹ John F. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966, p. 248.

¹⁰ Shelley, CHURCH HISTORY IN PLAIN LANGUAGE, p. 140. See also: Boettner, ROMAN CATHOLICISM, p. 125.

¹¹ Ron Rhodes, REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES WITH CATHOLICS, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2000, p. 174. CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994, pp. 370, 380, 381.

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¹³ Cairns, CHRISTIANITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES, p. 200.

¹⁴ Cairns, CHRISTIANITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES, p. 200.

¹⁵ Cairns, CHRISTIANITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES, p. 200.

¹⁶ CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, p. 291.

¹⁷ Rhodes, REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES WITH CATHOLICS, pp. 234, 235. Schroeder, O. P., (translator), THE CANONS AND DECREES OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT, p. 46.

¹⁸ CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, pp. 235, 236, 244.

¹⁹ CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, p. 244.

²⁰ STATUES OR IDOL?, *CRUSADE Magazine*, March/April 1999.

²¹ Webster, ROMAN CATHOLIC TRADITION, Claims and Contradictions, p. 21. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (editors), NICENE AND POST-NICENE FATHERS, The Principal Works of St. Jerome, preface to Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994, Second Series, Vol., 6, p. 492. William Webster, THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON AND THE APOCRYPHA, Battle Ground, WA: Christian Resources, Inc., 2002, pp. 53-55.

²² Rev. H. J. Schroeder, O. P., (translator), THE CANONS AND DECREES OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT, Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1941, 1978, pp. 17, 18.

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²⁵ George J. Dyer, et al., ed., AN AMERICAN CATHOLIC CATECHISM, The

Seabury Press, NY, 1975, p. 12.

²⁶ Albert Barnes, BARNE' NOTES, Notes on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1884-5, reprinted 1996, Matthew 16:19, p. 171.

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²⁸ James Strong, (Warren Baker, editor), STRONG'S COMPLETE WORD STUDY CONCORDANCE, Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2004. Bruce L. Shelley, CHURCH HISTORY IN PLAIN LANGUAGE, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982, 1995, p. 135. Boettner, ROMAN CATHOLICISM, p. 47. Webster, ROMAN CATHOLIC TRADITION, Claims and Contradictions, pp. 52, 53.

²⁹ Webster, ROMAN CATHOLIC TRADITION, Claims and Contradictions, p. 53.

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