

# **Journal of Biblical Apologetics**

**Number 2, Summer 2001, Volume 3**

## **Front Cover Art**

The Ecumenical movement comes to a screeching halt over the issue of the nature and position of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The liberal theologians, who are so anxious to reunite with Rome, cannot swallow the deification of Mary that took her from being a humble maid servant of the Lord, and transformed her into a goddess to be worshiped. The Roman Catholic Church for many centuries had a church outside of Jerusalem where Mary was buried. Then, in the late 19th century, the Roman Church decided to padlock the church doors and to proclaim that Mary had actually ascended to Heaven like Jesus. The painting on the front cover is blasphemy as Mary becomes the center of the worship of Heaven and Earth.

## **Part1 Modern Roman Catholicism**

Journal of Biblical Apologetics,  
No. 2, Summer 2001, Vol. 3  
Copyright © CSP 2001 All rights reserved.

ISBN No. 1-931230-03-X

Published by:  
Christian Scholar's Press, Inc.  
1350 E. Flamingo Road, Suite 97  
Las Vegas, NV 89119-5263  
christianscholarspress@hotmail.com

# Table of Contents

## Introduction: An Open Letter to Roman Catholic Apologists

1. Roman Catholicism Today  
by Dr. Robert A. Morey
2. Why Does Rome Teach What It Does About Justification and Salvation?  
by Dr. Robert L. Reymond
3. How Rome ends up being so...Protestant  
by Timothy F. Kauffman  
Part I: The Canon  
Part II: Interpreting the Bible  
Part III: That Ye May Keep Your Own Tradition
4. Ten Reasons Why I Am Not A Roman Catholic  
by Dr. Robert A. Morey
5. The Forgotten Gospel of John Bunyan in The Pilgrim's Progress  
by Barry E. Horner
6. The Anti Christ Unveiled  
by Richard Bennett
7. Forensic Science and the Antichrist: Solving the Mystery of Iniquity  
by Rand Winburn
8. Book Reviews
  1. **Plain Reasons Against Joining The Church Of Rome**  
by **R. F. Littledale**; Reviewed by **R. K. McGregor Wright, Ph.D.**
  2. **The Gospel According To Rome**  
by **James G. McCarthy**; Reviewed by **R. K. McGregor Wright, Ph.D.**
  3. **The Promise, a New Bible Translation**  
put out by **Thomas Nelson Pub.**; Reviewed by **Dr. Robert Morey**
9. The Doctrine of Justification  
by Dr. Robert A. Morey
10. The Reformation Day Statement

# Introduction

## An Open Letter to Roman Catholic Apologists

by Dr. Robert A. Morey

Dear Catholic Apologists,

*The New Catholic Catechism* in Section 847 states that non-Catholics who “seek God with a sincere heart” and “try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience” will “achieve eternal salvation.”

The *Catholic Catechism* in Sections 839–845 says that sincere people from non-Christian religions such as Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Taoists, animists, etc. will make it to heaven without the necessity of hearing of or believing in Catholicism. As long as they are sincere in their faith and live a good life, they will make it to heaven.

Various modern Popes have also publicly stated that this means that sincere people who have no religious convictions such as agnostics, atheists, skeptics, etc. will make it to heaven without the necessity of hearing of or believing in Catholicism. As long as they are sincere and live a good life, they will make it to heaven.

The *Catholic Catechism* also says in Section 838 that the Orthodox, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, etc. will also make it to heaven without hearing of or believing in the Roman Catholic Church. As long as they are sincere in their faith and live a good life, they will make it to heaven.

Peter Kreeft, a well-known Catholic scholar, in his book, *Ecumenical Jihad* (Ignatius, 1996), describes an out-of-body experience during which he met Buddha, Confucius, and Muhammad in heaven (pgs. 79f). He also sees the Orthodox, Jews and Evangelicals making it to heaven *without believing in the Roman Catholic Church*. This has a profound impact on the question of the legitimate existence of Catholic Apologetics. Since your Church teaches that non-Catholics can make it to heaven without converting to Catholicism, we non-Catholics request that you stop trying to convert us. Why?

1. We do not need to hear of or believe in your church to make it to heaven. There is thus no rational basis for your existence.

2. Our “ignorance” of Catholicism is our salvation according to your Catechism. Thus if you try to convert us, you will endanger our souls! Your Catechism in Section 846 states that people go to hell if they come to believe that the Roman Catholic Church is the true religion but “refuse to enter it.” Thus you may cause us to lose our salvation if you convince us that your religion is true. So, please leave us alone. We are doing fine without you.

3. Section 846 also states that people who believe that the Roman Catholic Church is the true religion but “refuse to remain in it,” will go to hell. Those who leave the Roman Church and then are sincere in their new beliefs and live a good life will still make it to heaven. But, if you convince them that the Romanism is the true church, you will endanger their immortal soul! So, leave them alone! As sincere ex-Catholics, they are going to heaven. Don’t damn them by trying to convert them back to popery.

4. Section 856 of the Catechism states that a “respectful dialogue” with non-Catholics may be done. But you have failed to be “respectful.” Instead, you have repeatedly engaged in rude and offensive “Protestant bashing.” If Evangelicals are only “separated brethren,” then stop demonizing them.

## **Conclusion**

Since, according to your Church, we non-Catholics can get to heaven without becoming Roman Catholics, *there is no need for you to exist*. And, since we are quite happy in our own religion, *we do not want you to try to convert us*. Catholic apologetics will do more harm than good. It is thus time for you to seek gainful employment elsewhere. We suggest that you put your talents to work selling insurance, cars or shoes.

# **Roman Catholicism Today**

**By Dr. Robert A. Morey**

## **Introduction**

What was the Reformation all about? What was so terrible with the Roman Catholic Church that the Protestant Reformers went off and started their own churches? Why and what did they protest?

Today as never before there is a growing feeling among many mainline Protestants that the time has come for Roman Catholics and Protestants to unite into one church. This is the goal of the National Council of Churches (NCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). To see this happen, two things must be done.

First, the history of the Reformation must be rewritten:

1. to omit any reference to the three million Protestants killed by torture during the Inquisition run by the Jesuits;
2. to omit any reference to the millions who died during the Thirty Years War;
3. to describe the Reformers as crazy and as villains;
4. to remake Romanist villains into heroes or martyrs. Example, the recent rewrite of history to clear “Bloody Mary” of her crimes.

Second, the issues which created the Reformation must be:

1. never taught or studied even in seminary;
2. down played as unimportant;
3. viewed as resolved because the Church of Rome has supposedly changed.

In reality, the issues are still important enough to make any union with the Church of Rome impossible. Furthermore, the WCC not only wants all Protestant and Catholic Churches to unite into one super-church but all religions into a one world religion! This is a direct fulfillment of Bible prophecy that in the last days, when the false prophet and the anti-christ will rule the world, there will be a one-world religion as well as one-world government. It is for this reason

that evangelical Christians do not join the NCC or the WCC. In this light, it is important to remember why we are Reformed and not Roman Catholics.

## **The Essential Issues Between Catholics and Protestants:**

### **Issue #1**

*The Roman Catholic Church Is Structured According To O. T. Judaism Instead Of N. T.*

*Christianity*

O.T. JUDAISM

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

1. The High Priest

The Pope

2. Jewish Priests

Catholic Priests

3. Continous Sacrifices (Animal)

Continous Sacrifices (The Mass)

4. The Temple

The Cathedral

5. The Holy City (Jerusalem)

The Holy City (Rome)

6. Physical Discipline Even Unto Death

Physical Discipline Even Unto Death

7. Passive Laity

Passive Laity

8. Under Law/Good Works

Under Law/Good Works

9. O.T. Worship with incense, altar, etc.

Worship with incense, altars, etc.

10. Church/State As One

Church/State As One

Why should we continue to follow the Old Covenant of law / works when Christ has established a New Covenant of grace / faith? The book of Hebrews tells us that the Old Covenant with its priesthood, altars, ceremonies, sacrifices, etc., have all been fulfilled in the work of Christ. Hence they are GONE forever.

### **Issue #2**

#### ***The Issue of Religious Authority***

The central burning issue which divides the Reformed from the Romanist is the issue of religious authority, i.e. what is the final court of appeal and the ultimate judge of truth, justice and morals? This is where the line is drawn with every cult. In a cult the leadership always views itself as having equal or greater authority than the Bible. On this basis, we must conclude that the Church of Rome is a cult.

Now we recognize that some people do not view the Church of Rome as a cult because of its size and age. But the size or age of a religion cannot erase the fact of it being a cult if its authority structure is cultic.

To put it simply, the Church of Rome is the oldest and the biggest “super-cult” of all time. It has killed multiple millions more than the Christian Scientists, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hare Krishnas, Jim Jones and all the killer cults put together. It has burned more Bibles, destroyed more Protestant churches and murdered more Gospel preachers than the communists! For a thousand years it succeeded in burying the Gospel under a mountain of false doctrines and superstitious ceremonies. If it were not for the brave men and women of the Reformation, we might still be in bondage to the Church of Rome.

The following diagram contrasts the Romanist and Reformed views of authority.

**Religious Authority**

Romanist

1. The Church:
  - a. the pope and
  - b. the council of bishops
  - c. tradition
2. The Bible

Reformed

The Bible is the only final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

## **The Chief Problem: The Claim of Infallibility**

While the Church of Rome has changed some of the minor details of its ceremonies, its doctrines have not changed since the Council of Trent. Indeed, the Roman Church cannot change its doctrines because it claims to be infallible in doctrine. Thus if it ever admitted that it was at any time wrong on any doctrine, it could no longer claim to be infallible!

Since Romanists base their faith on the infallibility of the Pope and the Church, no one can doubt or question Catholic dogma. While the Bible is mentioned as being one of the sources for its authority, the Roman Church is actually the only and final authority because it will allow only its interpretation of Scripture. Thus when a doctrine is in conflict with Scripture, the Scripture is conformed to the doctrine!

The Bible has become a piece of putty that can be molded by the priests into any thing they want it to be. When pressed, modern priests will often attack the infallibility of the Bible in order to defend the infallibility of the Pope and the Church!

## **True Religious Authority**

**Principle #1** There can be only ONE ultimate final authority.

The attempt to have two, three or more “final” authorities is impossible. Ultimately one will win out over the others. Just as there can be only one captain of the ship or one head of the home, even so there is only enough room in this universe for One FINAL authority ([Matt. 6:24](#)).

**Principle #2** God is this one ultimate final authority. God has authority over all of life because He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things ([Matt. 28:18](#)).

**Principle #3** God has revealed His mind and will in Scripture and thus Scripture is the ultimate final authority. The Bible is not to be viewed as a collection of funny religious ideas from thousands of years ago. It is the present revelation of the heart and mind of the Creator

toward man, His image bearer. It is the last court of appeal, the final judge, the ultimate arbitrator, the absolute standard of truth, justice, morals and beauty:

- a. Isa. 8:20
- b. Acts 17:2, 10–12
- c. II Tim. 3:16
- d. II Pet. 1:19–21

***Principle #4*** Nothing can override the authority of Scripture. Churches, popes, bishops, pastors, priests, human traditions, kings, presidents, congress, civil judges, supreme courts and all human authorities must bow before the eternal Word of the Almighty. Nothing is to be added to or subtracted from the Word of our God.

- a. Deut. 4:2; 12:32
- b. Pro. 30:5–6
- c. John 10:35
- d. Rev. 22:18–19

### **Issue #3**

#### **The Holy Scriptures**

The leaders of the Church of Rome (such as its priests) have always viewed themselves as “the Church” and the congregation as “the laity.” This radical distinction has given them much power over the people.

When the priests say, “Only the Church can interpret the Bible,” they are claiming exclusive rights to the Bible. In every cult, the leadership cannot stand the idea of “the laity” interpreting the Bible on their own. If they do, they will find things in the Bible which clearly contradict the doctrines and authority of the leadership. Historically, how did the priests of Rome prevent this? ***First***, they kept the Bible away from the people:

- a. They kept the Bible in languages which people could not understand: Latin, Greek or Hebrew.
- b. They outlawed any vernacular translations.
- c. They destroyed any translations by burning them.
- d. They put to death all who dared to translate it.
- e. They made it illegal to have or read a Bible.
- f. They substituted other books in its place:

ex. prayer books, missals, devotionals, etc.

***Second***, they kept the people away from the Bible.

- a. They told them that the Bible was far too difficult for people to read.
- b. They warned them that the Bible was dangerous. It could destroy their faith and damn their soul.
- c. They discouraged people from learning how to read.
- d. They spoke out against the printing press. Why?

1. The Reformation followed the invention of the printing press. The resulting accessibility of Scripture posed a tremendous threat to “the Church.” This is why various Popes condemned the printing press as a work of the devil.
  2. Those countries where there was a high rate of literacy became Protestant. Thus “public” education was denounced by “the Church” as evil.
  3. While the Protestant countries became centers of education and industry, Catholic countries were kept ignorant and poor.
- e. They threatened them with death if they did read it.

But has not “the Church” changed? Does not it now allow people to read the Bible?

Yes, in Protestant countries such as the U.S., where there is freedom of religion and where Bibles can be purchased in every book store, it cannot do otherwise. But they cannot just let people read the Bible *per se*.

1. They have produced their own translations that, like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, mistranslate the original text to safeguard their doctrines. (ex. [Gen. 3:15](#))
2. Placed notes in the text that give the “official” interpretation. (ex. [Rom. 5:1](#))

In “Catholic” countries the story is different. The Bible is still shunned as “dangerous.” As documented by the Hefleys in their book, *By Their Blood: Christian Martyrs Of The 20th Century*, (Mott Media, 1979), wherever the Church of Rome has political power, it stills does all it can to keep the Bible away from the people. The Roman Church has never retracted its official denial of religious freedom and its right to use violence to force people to accept its doctrines.

## **Issue #4**

### **Salvation**

How can a sinner find acceptance before a Holy God? On what basis can we have any hope of escaping His just wrath?

Romanist

Reformed

God accepts us on the basis of our performance of certain religious duties such as baptism, confirmation, confession, attending mass, good works, etc., as well as by grace.

God accepts us solely on the basis of the performance of Jesus Christ in His sinless life, good works, death and resurrection. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

### **Salvation—Not by Works But by Grace**

The idea that our salvation depends on our participation in certain religious ceremonies and living a life of good works is the basis of all false religions past or present. The ancient Egyptian priests taught their people that their good deeds and their bad deeds would be weighed at death and that if the good outweighed the bad, they could go to paradise. This works mentality is the basis of all major religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. It is the basis of all the cults such as Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses. It is the basis of all liberal religion as found in mainline churches such as the United Methodist churches.



If you search the history of religion from the beginning of time you will discover that the religion of the Bible is the only religion that has ever taught that salvation is by the unmerited free grace of God. It is the only religion that teaches that God became a man in order to die in man's place and to do all that is necessary for man's salvation. It is the only religion which points man away from his own works to the works of Christ.

It is on this basis that we cannot view the Church of Rome as a Christian Church. It has always made salvation dependent on the doing of good works. It thus has the same view of religion that all pagan religions have.

***What can we say about the issue of works vs grace?***

1. One problem with trying to earn your salvation by good works is that you can never know if you have done enough to tip the scales in your favor. Does one big sin outweigh a hundred small good deeds? What if you are one good deed short? What if you piled up a lot of good deeds all your life but did a big sin just before you died?
2. The main problem with a works mentality is that it contradicts the plain teaching of Scripture.
  - a. [John 3:16](#)
  - b. [John 6:28, 29](#)
  - c. [Rom. 3:9–28](#)
  - d. [Rom. 4:1–8, 16](#)
  - e. [Rom. 5:1, 2, 6–11](#) etc.
  - f. [Rom. 11:6](#)
  - g. [Gal. 2:21; 5:4](#)
  - h. [Eph. 2:1–10](#)
  - i. [Tit. 3:4–7](#)

## **Issue #5**

### **The Finished Work of Christ Versus the Mass.**

- A. The O.T. Sacrifices (Leviticus)
  1. Numerous in number and kind.
  2. Continuously offered on altars by priests.
  3. The death of the sacrifice accomplished each time.
- B. The Catholic Sacrifices (The Mass)
  1. Numerous in number and kind.
  2. Continuously offered on altars by priests.
  3. The death of the sacrifice accomplished each time.
- C. The N. T. View of Christ's Death
  1. O. T. sacrifices were numerous and continuous because they did not spiritually or morally cleanse or save anyone ([Heb. 10:1–4, 11](#)).
  2. Their purpose was to predict, not to save ([Col. 2:17](#)).
  3. The book of Hebrews says that Christ's sacrifice was BETTER than the O. T. sacrifices. Why?
    - a. His Sacrifice was SINGULAR, not NUMEROUS ([Heb. 10:12, 14](#)). One sacrifice.

- b. His Sacrifice was FINAL, not CONTINUOUS (Heb. 9:24–28; 10:10, 18). For all of time.
- c. His Death was accomplished ONCE, not REPEATEDLY (Heb. 9:26–28; Rom. 6:9–10). He will never die again.

## **Issue #6**

### **The Priesthood of the Believers**

In Catholic theology, the “priesthood” is composed of the officials of the Church such as the Pope, the bishops, cardinals, priests, etc. The congregation is called the “laity” or laymen and are not viewed as priests.

Thus a Catholic priest is a mediator between God and His people. The priest is to hear their confession of sin and he is the one who “forgives” (absolves) them of sin and decides what works of penance they must perform. He is the one you must pay to get a suffering loved one out of purgatory. He can even sell you an “indulgence” or “time off” from suffering in purgatory - if the price is right.

At the Reformation, the Reformers revived the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. Once the common people understood this doctrine, the power of Rome was broken. The people realized that:

- They were the church;
- They were priests;
- Christ was the only mediator between God and man;
- They should confess their sins to God alone;
- Only God can forgive sins;
- Purgatory was a myth;
- The seven sacraments were a congame;
- Only God decides who goes into Heaven or Hell.

The Catholic priests could no longer rule by fear and intimidation. The people rose up and drove them out of the church!

This historic doctrine of the Reformation must be clearly emphasized today as one of the chief issues between Romanists and Christians.

### **I. Basic Theological Definition**

Under the New Covenant, every Christian is a priest of the most High God (Isa. 61:1–6; I Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:8, 9). All Christians have immediate access to God’s presence through Christ and thus have no need for human priests or mediators. There is now only one High Priest who is the mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ our Lord (I Tim. 2:5).

The High Priest and only Mediator is Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:17;

All Believers are priests and ministers of God (I Pet. 2:5) I Tim. 2:5)

### **II. The Basic New Testament Principle**

All the privileges and responsibilities of the Old Testament priests now belong to all believers - except those privileges and responsibilities fulfilled or abrogated by Christ or

delegated to the officers of the New Testament Church or explicitly denied them by the New Testament itself.

### **III. The Old Testament Priesthood**

- A. THE PRIVILEGES OF BEING A PRIEST
  1. Immediate access to God (II Chron. 26:16–21)
  2. Enjoying the dignity of the office (II Chron. 26:16–21)
  3. Exercising the authority of the office (Lev. 13:18)
- B. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEING A PRIEST
  1. Offering up sacrifices (Lev. 1–7)
  2. Worshipping God (Heb. 9:6)
  3. Interceding on behalf of others (Lev. 16:17)
  4. Church discipline (Neh. 8:13–18)
  5. The ministry of the Word (Neh. 8:1–8)
  6. Seeing to it that the ceremonies were properly observed (Neh. 8:13–18)

### **IV. The Priesthood of the Believer in the New Testament**

- A. OUR PRIVILEGES AS PRIESTS
  1. Immediate access to God’s presence (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 10:19–22)
  2. Enjoying the dignity of our office (I Pet. 2:5,9)
  3. Exercising our authority over:
    - a. Sin (Matt. 16:19 cf. John 20:23; Acts 8:20–23)
    - b. Satan (Lk. 10:17; Rom. 16:20; Acts 16:18)
- B. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS PRIESTS
  1. Offering up sacrifices to God:

“Spiritual” not animal sacrifices (I Pet. 2:5)

    - a. The sacrifice of obedience (Psa. 4:5)
    - b. The sacrifice of thanksgiving (Psa. 50:14, 23)
    - c. The sacrifice of a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart (Psa. 51:16–17)
    - d. The sacrifice of our body and mind (Rom. 12:1–2)
    - e. The sacrifice of the people we win to Christ (Rom. 15:16)
    - f. The sacrifice of our gifts to support the Gospel Ministry (Phil. 4:18)
    - g. The sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (Heb. 13:15)
    - h. The sacrifice of good works such as sharing with others in need (Heb. 13:16)
  2. Worshipping God (Jn. 4:23, 24; Phil. 3:3)
  3. Interceding for others (I Tim. 2:1; James 5:16)
  4. Church discipline (Matt. 18:15–17; I Cor. 5:4, 7, 11; II Thess. 3:14; Rom. 15:14)
  5. The ministry of the Word:
    - a. To the Unsaved: Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 8:4
    - b. To the Saved: Col. 3:16; Rom. 14:19
  6. Participation in the New Testament sacraments
    - a. Baptism:

Receiving: Acts 2:41  
Giving: Acts 8:12; 36–38

- b. Lord's Supper:  
Receiving: [Acts 2:46; 20:7](#)  
Giving: [Acts 2:46; 20:7](#)

### C. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OUR PRIESTHOOD

It overthrows the Romish doctrines of prayers to the “Saints” (and Mary) and the priest being our mediator before God. It establishes once and for all time the believer’s right to read and interpret the Bible and to pray directly to God through Christ as the only mediator between God and man.

### Conclusion

The Reformation was not a mistake. It was not based on insignificant issues. The truths for which our Protestant fathers lived and died are just as important today as when they were first preached.

While we love Roman Catholics and do not hold any personal animosity toward them, we must still say that their religion is not true according to the Bible. The only way for them or us or anyone to be saved is to trust in the person and work of Jesus as providing all that is necessary for our salvation. All other ground is sinking ground.

## Why Does Rome Teach What It Does About Justification and Salvation?

**Dr. Robert L. Reymond**

After informing my Sunday School class at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Fort Lauderdale, Florida (9/19/99) about the teachings of the Council of Trent on justification, one of the members of the class asked me: “Since its teachings are so obviously non-Pauline, why does Rome teach what it does about justification and salvation?” My answer that morning was somewhat sparse: *Rome has followed its Tradition, and that Tradition has been bad Tradition.* But thinking that many Protestant Christians might have the same question, I have expanded upon my answer here.

From the vantage point of the great sixteenth-century magisterial Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church’s problems in the area of soteriology (and there are many) begin in the arena of authority. Protestantism has one authority—the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Rome has two authorities—Scripture and Tradition—and Protestantism disagrees with Rome’s understanding of and teaching on both.

### Scripture and Canon

With respect to its Scripture authority, Rome places twelve additional Apocryphal (“hidden,” then “obscure,” then “spurious”) books within the Old Testament, namely, *Tobit*, *Judith*, the (six) Additions to the *Book of Esther*, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the *Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach* (known also as *Ecclesiasticus*), *Baruch*, the *Letter of Jeremiah*, the *Prayer of Azariah and the*

*Song of the Three Young Men* (considered one work), *Susanna*, *Bel and the Dragon*, and 1 and 2 *Maccabees*. Bruce M. Metzger, in his editorial “Introduction to the Apocrypha,” in *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, explains how these books came to be included by Rome in its Old Testament canon: “At the end of the fourth century Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome, the most learned biblical scholar of his day, to prepare a standard Latin version of the Scriptures (the Latin Vulgate). In the Old Testament Jerome followed the Hebrew canon and by means of prefaces called the reader’s attention to *the separate category of the apocryphal books* [In the preface to his Latin Version of the Bible Jerome, after translating the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, says:” Anything outside of these must be placed within the Apocrypha,” that is, within the non-canonical books. Subsequent copyists of the Latin Bible, however, were not always careful to transmit Jerome’s prefaces, and during the medieval period the Western Church generally regarded these books as part of the holy Scriptures. [At one of its prolonged sessions which occurred on April 8, 1546, with only fifty-three prelates present, not one of whom was a scholar distinguished for historical learning—RLR] ... the Council of Trent decreed [in its “Sacrosancta”] that the canon of the Old Testament includes them (except the *Prayer of Manasseh* and 1 and 2 *Esdras*). And, I may add, Trent went on to anathematize anyone who “does not accept these entire books, with all their parts, as they have customarily been read in the Catholic Church and are found in the ancient editions of the Latin Vulgate, as sacred and canonical.” This decree was confirmed by Vatican I (1870).—RLR]. Subsequent editions of the Latin Vulgate text, officially approved by the Roman Catholic Church, contain these books incorporated within the sequence of the Old Testament books. Thus *Tobit* and *Judith* stand after *Nehemiah*; the *Wisdom of Solomon* and *Ecclesiasticus* stand after the *Song of Solomon*; *Baruch* (with the *Letter of Jeremiah* as chapter 6) stands after *Lamentations*; and 1 and 2 *Maccabees* conclude the books of the Old Testament. [Metzger could have also noted that the *Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men* is placed between *Daniel* 3:23 and 3:24; *Susanna* is placed either at the beginning of *Daniel* as an introduction to chapter 1 (this placement is that of the Greek text of Theodotian and the Old Latin, Coptic, and Arabic versions) or at the end of *Daniel* as chapter 13 (this placement is that of the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate); and *Bel and the Dragon* is placed either at the close of *Daniel* 12 in the Greek manuscripts of *Daniel* or at the end of *Daniel* as chapter 14 in the Latin Vulgate, *Susanna* being chapter 13.—RLR] An appendix after the New Testament contains the *Prayer of Manasseh* and 1 and 2 *Esdras*, without implying canonical status. ... Thus Roman Catholics accept as fully canonical those books and parts of books which Protestants call the Apocrypha (except the *Prayer of Manasseh* and 1 and 2 *Esdras*, which both groups regard as apocryphal).” (Emphasis supplied.)

How shall we respond to all this? To begin, these Apocryphal books were written predominantly in

Greek (*Tobit*, *Judith*, *Ecclesiasticus*, part of *Baruch*, and 1 *Maccabees* are the exceptions here, having been written in Hebrew or, in part at least, in Aramaic) during the last two centuries before Christ and the first century of the Christian era, *long after the Hebrew Old Testament canon was completed*. Interestingly, these books themselves, from first to last, bear testimony to the assertion of the Jewish historian Josephus (Against Apion, 1.8) that “the exact succession of the prophets” had been broken after the close of the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament. Nowhere in them is found the phrase, “Thus saith the Lord,” which occurs so frequently in the Old Testament. Accordingly, the Palestinian Jews never accepted these Apocryphal books as canonical, their canon being essentially the same as what the Protestant Old Testament is today (see Josephus, Against Apion, 1.41; *Babylonian Talmud*, Yomah 9b, Sota 48b, Sanhedrin 11a).

Nor did Jesus or the New Testament writers ever cite from these books. When Paul declared then that the Jews possessed “the oracles of God” (*Romans 3:2*), he was implicitly excluding the Apocrypha from those “oracles.”

According to Gleason L. Archer, Jr., the Septuagint—the pre-Christian Alexandrian Jewish translation of the Hebrew Old Testament—was the only ancient version which included in one manuscript tradition or another the books of the Apocrypha. This has led some scholars to speak of an “Alexandrian Canon” which held equal authority among Jews along with the “Palestinian Canon.” But, writes Archer, while Philo of Alexandria “quotes frequently from the canonical books of the ‘Palestinian Canon,’ he never once quotes from any of the apocryphal books.” Furthermore, Aquila’s Greek version, even though it did not contain the Apocrypha, was accepted by Alexandrian Jews in the second century a.d. Jerome explained the presence of the Apocrypha in the Alexandrian version by saying that the Alexandrian Jews included in their edition of the Old Testament both the canonical books and the books which were “ecclesiastical” (that is, considered valuable though not inspired). While it is true that the Septuagint served as the Greek “Bible” of the early church and of the apostles in their mission to the Gentiles, there is no evidence, as I just said, that a New Testament writer cites from any of the Apocryphal books.

These books abound in historical, geographical, and chronological inaccuracies and anachronism. Consider just two of the more apparent inaccuracies:

1. It is said in *Tobit 1:4–5* that the division of the kingdom under Jereboam I, which occurred in 931 B.C., occurred when Tobit was a “young man.” But Tobit is also said to be a young Israelite captive living in Nineveh under Shalmaneser in the late eight century b.c. This would make him a “young man” almost 200 years old at the time of the Assyrian Captivity and he lived into the reign of Esarhaddon (680–668 b.c.). But according to *Tobit 14:11* he died when he was 158 years old (according to the Latin text, he died when he was 102).
2. *Judith 1:1* declares Nebuchadnezzar reigned over the Assyrians at Nineveh at the time that Arphaxad reigned over the Medes in Ecbatana. But Nebuchadnezzar did not reign over the Assyrians at Nineveh; he was the second king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire reigning at Babylon. Arphaxad is unknown.

They also teach doctrines which are at variance with the inspired Scriptures. For example, 2 *Maccabees 12:43–45* teaches the efficacy of prayers and offerings for the dead. *Ecclesiasticus 3:30* teaches that almsgiving makes atonement for sin and justifies cruelty to slaves (*33:26, 28*). The *Wisdom of Solomon* teaches the doctrine of emanation (*7:25*) and the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of souls (*8:18–20*).

Accordingly, the Dutch Bible published by Jacob von Liesveldt at Antwerp (1526) placed the Apocryphal books after Malachi and identified the section as “the books which are not in the canon, that is to say, which one does not find among the Jews in the Hebrew.” The six-volume Swiss-German Bible (1527–1529) placed the Apocryphal books in the fifth volume, the title page of which volume reads: “These are the books which are not reckoned as biblical by the ancients, nor are found among the Hebrews.” Concerned to return to the sole authority of inspired, inerrant Scripture, Martin Luther in his German translation of the Bible (1534) placed the Apocryphal books once again between the Old and New Testaments with the title: “Apocrypha, that is, books which are not held equal to the sacred Scriptures and nevertheless are useful and good to read.” Miles Coverdale’s English translation of the Bible (1535) put them in the same position with the title: “Apocrypha. The books and treatises which among the fathers of

old are not reckoned to be of like authority with the other books of the Bible, neither are they found in the Canon of the Old Testament.” The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England (1562) state concerning the Apocrypha: “And the other books (as Jerome saith) the Church doth read for example of life, and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.” And the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1648) declares: “The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings” (I.3).

Then, because of its views on Tradition Rome also rejects most of the great attributes of Scripture that Protestantism holds in high esteem; namely, Scripture’s canonicity, its necessity, its self-attestation, its sufficiency, its perspicuity, and its finality. So historic Protestantism and Roman Catholicism do not share the same Bible, either extensively or intensively. For Protestantism the Bible alone (*sola Scriptura*) is self-validating and absolutely authoritative in all matters of faith and practice; for Roman Catholicism its enlarged Bible (and this applies to any given statement in it) has only the authority and meaning the Roman Church has determined to give to it.

## Tradition

With respect to its Tradition, which Protestantism rejects outright as its authority, Rome insists that its Tradition possesses an authority equal to that of Scripture itself and that the church should receive and venerate its Tradition with the same feeling of piety and reverence that it feels for the Old and New Testaments. Very cleverly, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) blurs the distinction between canonical revelation (which is indisputably authoritative) and Rome’s own later traditions (which are non-canonical and therefore not authoritative) when it declares in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus’ teaching and example, and what they learned from the Holy Spirit. The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament, and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition” (paragraph 83).

It is true, of course, that the first Christians did not have a written New Testament, but they did have the Old Testament and inspired apostles living among them to give them authoritative *revelational* instruction which is referred to as “the traditions” (*tas paradoseis*, literally, “the things passed on”) in 2 *Thessalonians 2:15*. But it is a giant leap in logic and theological reaching and equivocation of the worst kind simply to assert, because there was such a thing as “*apostolic* tradition” coming *directly* from the apostles in the New Testament age, that the fact of *that* “tradition” justifies Rome’s claim to an ongoing, perpetual “process of living Tradition” within its communion throughout the present age whose authority is on a par with Scripture’s authority.

The problem with this dual authority of Scripture and Tradition, of course, is that the Scriptures cannot (and in fact do not) really govern the content of Tradition, not to mention the fact that with this view of Tradition, given Rome’s view of itself as a *living* organism in its capacity as the “depository of Tradition,” there can never be a codification of or limitation placed upon the content of this Tradition, not even by Scripture. As Charles Elliot stated: “...so far as we are aware, there is no publication which contains a summary of what the Church believes under the head of tradition.” As a result, because Rome’s Tradition is ever free to include

doctrines which are the very antithesis of Scripture teaching while yet claiming divine authority—becoming thereby bad tradition as recent history will verify (consider the papal dogmas of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, papal infallibility in 1870, and the Assumption of Mary in 1950)—the Church is left vulnerable to every kind of innovation. Moreover, Rome’s teaching on Tradition impiously implies, since Protestantism self-consciously rejects one of the two “indispensable media of divine revelation,” that Protestantism cannot possibly be the church of Christ, when in fact it is Rome with its dogmatic deliverances from the Council of Trent to the present day that is perverting Christian truth by its “traditions of men.”

## Papal Infallibility

Before we say anything more I must discuss Rome’s doctrine of papal infallibility, which is a major aspect of its Tradition and thus contributes in a major way, for Roman Catholic belief, to the authority of Church Tradition. The Roman Catholic Church since the early Middle Ages has contended that in *Matthew 16:18* Jesus declared that Peter was to be the first Pope (of Rome, of course) and as such the supreme leader of Christendom, and that his supremacy would be transmitted to each Bishop of Rome who would succeed him. This contention is dramatically captured by the Latin inscription around the entablature just below the great dome of Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome: *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam*. Accordingly, the Roman Catholic *Baltimore Catechism* states: “Christ gave special powers in His Church to St. Peter by making him the head of the Apostles and the chief teacher and ruler of the entire Church. Christ did not intend that the special power of chief teacher and ruler of the entire Church should be exercised by St. Peter alone, but intended that this power should be passed down to his successor, the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, who is the Vicar of Christ on earth and the visible head of the Church.”

The Roman Catholic Church has employed this dogma to claim for itself the authority to bind men’s consciences by its interpretation of Scripture, to add new doctrines not taught in the Scripture, and to reinterpret the plain teaching of Scripture. It has done so, as we have suggested, by first distinguishing Peter from the other apostles and then by claiming that his apostolic authority is continued in the single line of Bishops of Rome.

Now it is true that in the early years of the New Testament era Peter was a leader among the apostles. A case can even be made that he was the “first among equals” (*primus inter pares*) in some sense. Consider the following data. There are approximately 140 references to Peter in the four *Gospels*, some 30 more than all the references to the other disciples combined. He stands at the head of the list of the twelve apostles in each of the lists given in the New Testament (*Matthew 10:2* [note Matthew’s “first” here]; *Mark 3:16*; *Luke 6:14*; *Acts 1:13*), and he is included among that “inner circle” of disciples (Peter, James, and John), which alone witnessed certain miraculous events such as Jesus’ transfiguration; he is the spokesman for the disciples on several occasions (*Matthew 15:15*; *17:24–25*; *19:27*; *John 6:68–69*); it is he who walked with Jesus on the sea (*Matthew 14:28–29*); it is he whom Jesus specifically charged to “strengthen your brothers” (*Luke 22:32*). He was in charge in the selection of the one to take Judas’ place in *Acts 1*; it was he who preached the first “Christian sermon” on the Day of Pentecost in *Acts 2*, converting many Jews to the Way; it was his activities (along with John’s) which Luke recounts in the first half of *Acts*; it was he whom God chose to be the missionary who would take the special action with regard to Cornelius’ household in behalf of Gentile salvation in *Acts 10*; his was the first testimony to be recounted by Luke at the assembly in Jerusalem in *Acts 15*; his



name appears first in Paul's "official list" of those to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15:5*); and Paul even refers to him (along with James and John) as a "pillar" (*stulos*) in the church at Jerusalem (*Galatians 2:9*). All this is beyond dispute. But to derive Rome's understanding of Peter's priority, which goes beyond what the New Testament actually teaches about it, from *Matthew 16:18* (Rome bolsters its position with a few related verses such as *Luke 22:31–32* and *John 21:16*) forces the verse to say something which it does not say. For the verse to bear such heavy doctrinal weight, the Roman Catholic apologist must demonstrate the following things *exegetically* and not simply assert them dogmatically:

**Proposition 1.** That by his reference to "this rock" in his explanation Jesus referred to Peter personally and exclusively in his office as an apostle to the total exclusion of the other apostles;

**Proposition 2.** That the uniqueness that belongs to the apostolic office in the New Testament and in this case to Peter in particular *could* be transmitted, that is, was *transmissible*, to his "papal successors," and was *in fact* transmitted to his successors; and that the unique apostolic authority which the other apostles also possessed *could not* be and in fact *was not* transmitted, that is to say, was *non-transmissible*, to their successors;

**Proposition 3.** That Jesus intended his promise to Peter *in fact* to extend in a repetitive way to Peter's "papal successors" throughout the entire period of the church to the end of the age; and

**Proposition 4.** That Jesus' promise to Peter, while it could and should be *chronologically* extended to his "papal successors," cannot be *geographically* extended but must rather be restricted in its transmissibility to only one (at a time) Bishop who ministers in only *one* particular city among the many cities in which Peter doubtless ministered, namely, to the Bishop of Rome. Calvin made this point this way: "By what right do [the Roman apologists] bind to a [specific] place this dignity which has been given without mention of place?" (Institutes, IV. 6:11).

The Roman Catholic apologist must also be able to demonstrate *historically* that Peter in fact became the first Bishop of Rome and not simply assert it dogmatically. But what are the facts? Irenaeus and Eusebius of Caesarea both make Linus, mentioned in *2 Timothy 4:21*, the first Bishop of Rome. That Peter may have died, as ancient tradition has it, in Rome is a distinct possibility (see *1 Peter 5:13* where "Babylon" has been rather uniformly understood by commentators as a metaphor for Rome), but that he ever actually pastored the church there is a blatant fiction which the more candid scholars in the Roman communion will acknowledge. Jerome's Latin translation of Eusebius (but not Eusebius' Greek copy) records that Peter ministered in Rome for twenty-five years, but if Philip Schaff (as well as many other church historians) is to be believed, this is "a colossal chronological mistake."

Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome in early A.D. 57, but he did not address the letter to Peter or refer to him anywhere in it as its pastor. And in the last chapter he extended greetings to no less than twenty-six specific friends in the Imperial city but he makes no mention of Peter which would have been a major oversight, indeed an affront to Peter, if in fact Peter were "ruling" the Roman church at that time. Then later when Paul was himself in Rome, from which city he wrote both his four prison letters during his first imprisonment in A.D. 60–62 when he "was welcoming all who came to him" (*Acts 28:30*), and his last pastoral letter during his second

imprisonment around A.D. 64, in which letters he extended greetings to his letters' recipients from ten specific people in Rome, again he makes no mention of Peter being there. Here is a period of time spanning about seven years (A.D. 57–64) during which time Paul related himself to the Roman church both as correspondent and as resident, but he says not a word which would suggest that he believed Peter was in Rome. What are we to make of Paul's silence? And if Peter was at Rome and was simply not mentioned by Paul in any of these letters, what are we to conclude about him when Paul declares to the Philippians: "I have no one else [besides Timothy] of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus" (*Philippians 2:20–21*); or when he writes to Timothy later and says: "Only Luke is with me. ... At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me" (*2 Timothy 4:11, 16*)? And what are we to make of an alleged extended ministry on Peter's part in Rome in light of Paul's statement in *Galatians 2:7–8* that the apostolate had entrusted Peter with missionary efforts to Jews? Are we to conclude that Peter had been disobedient to that trust? I think not. For just as Paul wrote several of his letters to churches he had founded, so it would appear that Peter also, writing from Babylon to dispersed Jewish Christians (see his use of *DIASPORA* in *1 Peter 1:1*) in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, was writing to people he had evangelized in those places. The one glimpse we have from Paul's writings concerning Peter's whereabouts and ministry is found in *1 Corinthians 9:5* where he suggests that Cephas, his wife with him (see *Matthew 8:14*), was an itinerant evangelist carrying out the trust which the other apostles had given him. From this data we must conclude, if Peter did in fact reach Rome as tradition says, that his purpose more than likely would have been only to pay the church there not much more than a casual visit, and that he would have arrived there only shortly before his death which, according to tradition, occurred during the Neronian persecution.

The Roman Catholic apologist must also be able to address, to the satisfaction of reasonable men, the following questions:

**Question 1.** Why do Mark (8:27–30) and Luke (9:18–21), while they also recount the Caesarea Philippi conversation between Jesus and Peter, omit all reference to that part of Jesus' conversation which grants to Peter his alleged priority over the other apostles, the point which for Rome is the very heart and central point of our Lord's teaching ministry?

**Question 2.** Why does the New Testament record more of Peter's errors after the Caesarea Philippi confession than of any of the other apostles? I am referring to

- a. his "satanic" and "man-minding" rejection of Jesus' announcement that he would die, *Matthew 16:22–23*;
- b. his "leveling" or "Arian" comparison of Jesus with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, *Matthew 17:4–5*;
- c. his ignorant and impetuous refusal to let Jesus wash his feet and then his self-willed dictating of the terms according to which Jesus would wash him, *John 13:8–9*;
- d. his sleepiness while Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, *Matthew 26:36–45*;
- e. his precipitous use of the sword, *Matthew 26:51–54*;
- f. his prideful protestation of unfailing faithfulness and then his three denials of Jesus, recorded in all four *Gospels*;

g. his impulsive curiosity about John's future, expressed no sooner than Jesus had restored him to fellowship, which netted him Christ's stern "That's none of your business," *John 21:21–22*; and

h. even after Christ's resurrection, the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost, and the role he played in the Cornelius incident, his betrayal of the truth of the Gospel of pure grace at Antioch by his compromising actions which called for Paul's public rebuke, *Galatians 2:11–14*.

Where is the infallibility and the guarantee of the purity and continuity of the Gospel in this man's actions? It will not do to respond, as Roman apologists do, that Peter was only infallible in what he taught *ex cathedra* and that these errors on his part only highlight the real oneness of the man with sinful humanity at large. For "actions speak louder than words," and surely in the last cited instance Peter's action, which more than likely was accompanied by some word of explanation from him to the church at Antioch about his action, betrayed the purity of the Gospel of grace, which action warranted Paul's public rebuke.

**Question 3.** Why can the disciples after the Caesarea Philippi incident still dispute among themselves concerning who was the greatest (*Matthew 18:1; 20:20–28; Luke 22:24*)? Apparently *they* did not understand that Jesus' statement had given Peter any priority over them. And if Christ had in fact intended by his Caesarea Philippi pronouncement that Peter was to be his vicar and the leader of all Christendom, why did he not clear up the disciples' confusion once and for all by telling them so straightforwardly?

**Question 4.** Why was Peter, if he was the head of the church, dispatched by the leaders of the Jerusalem church to investigate what was going on in Samaria (*Acts 8:14*) instead of sending other apostles to investigate the Samaritan revival?

**Question 5.** Why did the other apostles and the brotherhood in general feel they could challenge Peter's involvement in the Cornelius incident if he was in fact the undisputed and infallible head of the church (*Acts 11:1–18*)?

**Question 6.** Why does Paul list Peter as only one of the "pillars" in the mother church of Jerusalem, and second after James at that (*Galatians 2:9*)?

**Question 7.** Why at the Jerusalem Council in *Acts 15*, over which James quite obviously presided, is Peter merely the first speaker, assuming no special prerogatives in the debate that ensued, and not the president of that Council? Why was the entire matter not simply submitted to Peter rather than to the Council, and why did not the decision go forth as a "Petrine" deliverance rather than an "apostolic" decree?

**Question 8.** Why can Paul say of the Jerusalem leadership (James, Peter and John) who "seemed to be something": "What they were makes no difference to me; *God shows no partiality*" (*Gal. 2:6*)?

**Question 9.** Why, if Peter was the Bishop and Pastor of Rome, as the Roman Catholic Church maintains, and if it was Paul's established missionary practice "to preach the Gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation" (*Romans 15:20*; see *2 Corinthians 10:16*)—why, I ask, does Paul declare that

he had longed to come to Rome and had purposed many times to come there (but had been prevented before from doing so) “so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong” and “in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles” (*Romans 1:11–13*)? Would not such activity at Rome on Paul’s part have been both a denial of his own missionary policy and an affront to Peter, whom Rome alleges was pastor there at that time?

**Question 10.** Why does Peter describe himself as simply “an apostle of Jesus Christ,” as one among many “living stones” (*lithoi zontes*), and “the fellow elder” (*hō sumpresbuteros*) with other elders (1 *Peter 1:1; 5:1*)?

**Question 11.** Why, if Peter was the living, earthly head of the church at that time, does he disappear completely from Luke’s *Acts* after *Acts 15*, with very few references to him, apart from his own two letters, in the rest of the New Testament?

**Question 12.** Why does Peter, if he was the first pope, contradict Roman Catholic teaching that the purchase of indulgences will bring forgiveness of sin for oneself and will deliver one’s loved ones from Purgatory when he declares that “it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed...but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 *Peter 1:18–19*)?

**Question 13.** Why does Peter, if he was the first pope, contradict Roman Catholic teaching that the laity needs a priestly clergy to mediate between them and God when he teaches that in Christ all his readers are “a holy priesthood” (1 *Peter 2:5*, *hierateuma hagion*) and “a royal priesthood” (1 *Peter 2:9*, *basileion hierateuma*) who have direct access to God through Christ?

**Question 14.** Why does Peter teach, *contra* Rome’s teaching, in 1 *Peter 2:13* that the authority of the emperor, not his, is “supreme” (*huperechonti*) in secular matters?

**Question 15.** Why does Peter teach, in 1 *Peter 3:12*, *contra* Rome’s teaching, that Christians do not need to go to God through the mediation of Mary or any other saint, for God gladly hears the prayers of his true children when they pray: “The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayers”?

**Question 16.** Why does Peter teach, *contra* Rome’s teaching concerning the Mass as a necessary and essential *re-sacrifice* of Christ, in 1 *Peter 3:18* that Christ “died for sins *once for all* [*hapax*], the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God”?

**Question 17.** Why in the earliest Patristic literature is Paul venerated as often as Peter, a fact admitted by Roman Catholic scholars?

**Question 18.** Would John the “beloved disciple” and one of the original apostles, who apparently outlived Peter, have been subject to the Bishop of Rome (Linus or Clement?) who allegedly succeeded to Peter’s “throne”?

**Question 19.** Why did no Roman Bishop before Callistus I (died *c.* A.D. 223), who by the way countenanced the heresy of modalism, use the *Matthew 16* passage to support the primacy of the Roman bishopric; and when he did, why was he rebuked by such notable contemporaries as Tertullian who totally rejected the notion that Jesus’ saying applied to

later bishops at all, and Firmilian, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, who opposed the notion that the Roman bishopric is entitled by succession to the “throne” of Peter?

**Question 20.** This raises the larger question, namely, while the church at Rome was no doubt influential, why is there no indication in the first two centuries of the Christian era that the rest of the church recognized the Roman church as supreme or that the rest of the church acceded to Rome any claimed or recognized sovereignty over Christendom?

**Question 21.** Why did the first four ecumenical councils, which were held—two in the fourth, and two in the fifth century (whose doctrinal decisions are generally admitted by Christians everywhere, including Protestants, to have been orthodox)—neither say nor do anything which affords the slightest endorsement of the claim of the Roman Bishop’s supremacy but to the contrary in several instances actually passed decrees or canons which the Bishop of Rome (or his agents) opposed and protested against, with the first such council which explicitly asserts the Roman Bishop’s supremacy being the Fourth Lateran Council held under Pope Innocent III in A.D. 1215?

**Question 22.** How does Roman Catholic theology in this entire matter avoid the charge of “asserting the consequent” or of “begging the question” (*petitio principii*) when it makes a highly questionable dogma (based as it is upon exegesis which has been approved by only a small minority of fathers in the church), namely, its self-serving dogma of the primacy of the Roman Bishop, the basis for its claim that it alone is justified in proclaiming any dogma whatsoever, including the Roman bishop’s primacy over the entire church?

Needless to say, in my opinion Rome’s exegesis of *Matthew 16* and its historically developed dogmatic claim to authoritative primacy in the Christian world simply cannot be exegetically demonstrated and sustained from Scripture itself. Rome’s claim of papal infallibility is surely one of the great hoaxes foisted upon professing Christendom, which claim all the rest of Christendom—Orthodox and Protestant—has formally and officially rejected, upon which false base rests Rome’s entire sacerdotal system of salvation which is its chief engine of revenue.

Rome’s claim of papal infallibility is also a blatant rejection of the many significant opposing testimonies in church history. While Jesus, true enough, said that upon “this rock” (*taute te petra*) he was going to build his “assembly,” whether this phrase has for its antecedent Peter personally and exclusively and in what sense Jesus was going to build his “assembly” on Peter have been matters of considerable controversy in the church virtually from the beginning. Roman Catholic Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick prepared a paper to be delivered at Vatican I (1870), in which he noted that five interpretations of the word “rock” were held in antiquity:

1. The first declared that the church was built on Peter, endorsed by seventeen fathers.
2. The second understood the words as referring to all the apostles, Peter being simply the Primate, the opinion of eight fathers.
3. The third asserted that the words applied to the faith that Peter professed, espoused by forty-four fathers, some of whom are the most important and representative.
4. The fourth declared that the words were to be understood of Jesus Christ, the church being built upon him, the view of sixteen fathers.

5. The fifth understood the term “rock” to apply to the faithful themselves who, by believing in Christ, were made the living stones in the temple of his body, an opinion held by only very few (107–108).

These statistics show that the view that eventually became normative for Rome was a minority view in the ancient church, being held by about 20 percent of the fathers consulted, and thus far from certain. Where is Rome’s allegiance to *this* ancient tradition? It obviously does not suit Rome to follow its Tradition at this point.

As samplings of this divergence of ancient opinion, Origen, making his usual distinction between the letter and the spiritual intention of the text, urged that according to the letter the rock in Jesus’ explanation referred to Peter while the Spirit had in mind everyone who becomes such as Peter was. Tertullian explicitly declared that the power to bind and to loose was given to Peter *personally* then and there and was not passed on to the Roman Bishop. Cyprian held that Jesus was addressing the whole body of bishops in speaking of Peter since, he says, he later endowed all the apostles “with a like partnership both of honour and power.” He also contends that Jesus spoke specifically of Peter only to highlight the necessity of the *unity* of the church. Chrysostom, followed by Gregory of Nyssa, Isidore of Pelusium, the Latin father Hilary, and the later Greek fathers Theodoret, Theophanes, Theophylact, and John of Damascus, held that the “rock” in Jesus’ explanation was the faith of Peter’s confession. The later Augustine believed the rock was not Peter but Christ.

During the Middle Ages the Roman Bishop regularly employed *Matthew 16* to ground Rome’s claim to ecclesiastical primacy as though no other understanding were possible. But at the time of the Reformation Luther returned to Augustine at this point (“The rock is the Son of God, Jesus Christ himself and no one else”), and urged that Peter’s “rock-like” characteristic applied not to his person but only to his faith in Jesus who was the Rock. Calvin also held that the Rock was Christ and that in addressing Peter as “Rock” Christ was addressing both Peter and all other believers as well in the sense that the bond of faith in Christ is the basis on which the church grows. Zwingli taught that Peter is only the type of him who believes in Christ as the sole Rock. It can be safely said, I think, that all of the Reformers believed that the true Rock of the church is Jesus Christ, with Peter being the “Rock” not in respect to his person but in respect to his being the type of all who trust in Jesus as Messiah and God.

Given this divergence of opinion, what did Jesus mean then by his statement? I have argued in my *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness* for the authenticity of the pericope. I argued in the same work that by his confession Peter declared his conviction that Jesus was both the long-promised Old Testament Messiah and the divine Son of God. I pointed out there that it was in response to Peter’s exclamatory declaration, “You are [*su ei*] the Messiah, the Son of the living God!” that Jesus responded to Peter as he did: “And I am saying to you that you are [*su ei*] a “peter” [literally, ‘a rock’]!” I think it important to note that in his exclamation Peter did not employ a proper name to designate Jesus; rather, he ascribed to him two titles, the first functional (Messiah), the second ontological (Son of the living God). I would suggest from the parallelism in the two *su ei* clauses that Jesus may have intended to respond in kind. That is to say, he may not have employed *PETROS* as a proper name. Rather, he may have likewise ascribed to him only a title: “You are a rock!” And by capitalizing the Greek word *πετρος* as it does, the Greek rendering of the Aramaic *KEPHA*, which latter word Jesus almost certainly used, the editors of our critical editions of the Greek New Testament may have misled us. Jesus may have intended to say, in other words, not “You are Peter,” but “You are a rock!” by which exclamation I suggest he would have meant, “You are [truly] a rock [by describing me as you just did]!” If so,

when Jesus continued by saying, “and upon *this rock* [note: he does not say “upon *you*”] I will build my ‘assembly,’” I would suggest that he may have intended to say that it was upon Peter’s “rock-like” *description* of him as the Messiah and the Son of the living God, *which understanding the Father had just graciously revealed to Peter*, and not upon Peter *personally* that he would ground his church. This would mean, in sum, that the “bed-rock” itself of the church is the fact of Christ’s own messianic investiture and his ontological existence as the Second Person of the Godhead, just as Paul would later write: “No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (*1 Corinthians 3:11*; see also *1 Corinthians 10:4*: “...and the rock was Christ [ἡ πέτρα δε ἐν ἡο Χριστοῦ]”). In confessing the same Peter was himself “a rock.”

It is entirely possible, of course, that Jesus did intend to say that upon Peter he would build his church in some sense (I think sometimes that our “Protestant” reluctance to admit this possibility plays into the hands of the Roman apologist), a possibility that certainly receives support from the next verse where Jesus declared to Peter: “I will give to *you* [singular] the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever *you* [singular] bind upon Earth shall have been bound in Heaven, and whatever *you* [singular] loose upon Earth shall have been loosed in Heaven” (16:19). But in what sense?

Peter’s confession of Jesus as Messiah and Son of the living God, just revealed to him by the Father, cannot be excluded from Christ’s reference to Peter as “a rock.” Not Peter personally as the man but Peter as the *confessing apostle*—confessing specifically what he did, namely, the revealed truth about Jesus being the Messiah and the Son of the living God—is the foundation rock of the church: “This interpretation is demanded by the sequel in the passage which follows (*Mt. 16:22–23*). There Jesus calls Peter by another name: Satan. Just as Peter had spoken by revelation from the Father, he now becomes the mouthpiece of the devil. In confessing Jesus to be the Christ he was the rock, in tempting Jesus to refuse the cross he is Satan. He is called Satan only in direct reference to his word of seduction. Apart from that expression the designation does not apply. Jesus is not declaring that Peter the man is a Satan in terms of all his personal qualities, nor is satanicity a *character indelibilis*. Peter is Satan as he speaks for Satan. [This would require by analogy that] Peter is a rock as he speaks for God.”

This shows then that Peter was a “rock” *only* in his office as a confessing apostle speaking the Word of God. When he (or any pope) spoke something authoritatively other than the Word of God, he became not a rock but a “Satan” (may we also say an “Antichrist?”).

Furthermore, it must be noted in this connection that to the rest of the disciples (*Matthew 18:1*) several days later Jesus gave the same kingdom authority that he had given to Peter when he said, “Truly I say to *you* [plural], whatever *you* [plural] bind upon Earth shall have been bound in Heaven, and whatever *you* [plural] loose upon Earth shall have been loosed in Heaven” (18:18). He did the same thing on the night of his resurrection when he “breathed on [the ten disciples] and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. Whoever’s sins *you* [plural] forgive, they have been forgiven; whoever’s *you* [plural] retain, they have been retained’” (*John 20:22–23*). What should we make of this similar promise of the keys to the other disciples? I suggest that Jesus was implying on these two latter occasions what Paul would later state explicitly, namely, that Christ’s church would be “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (*Ephesians 2:20*; see *1 Corinthians 10:4*), and what John would later symbolically depict in *Revelation* as one aspect of the church as the “bride” of Christ: “And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (*Rev 21:14*).

In sum, the New Testament teaching grants a certain priority to Peter among the original Twelve, but this priority, to use Jack Dean Kingsbury's phrase, seems to have been "salvation-[or redemptive-] historical" in nature, that is, Peter occupied a *primus inter pares* position only during the specific time frame of the "salvation history" in which he lived. The New Testament does not restrict the church's foundation to him alone but founds the church on the entire apostolate, not in regard to their persons as such but in regard to their office in the church as authoritative teachers of doctrine who confess the truth about Jesus. I must conclude from all of the Scripture data that there is no warrant whatever for Rome's dogma of the exclusive primacy of "Peter's chair" in these words of Jesus.

What then can we safely say about Jesus' "assembly" or "church" on the basis of his words in *Matthew 16:18*? First, the disciples did not appear to have any difficulty comprehending Jesus' talk about building his *EKKLESIA*. They rather obviously did not find it a totally new or strange concept. This is surely to be traced to the fact that the concept had its roots in the Old Testament's recurring depiction of Israel as God's "congregation" or "assembly." Second, it is ultimately Jesus, not men, who "will build" his church. Like a wise master-builder who builds a house, so Jesus will build his church. Third, his "building," more specifically his "temple" (*Ephesians 2:20–21*), will be unconquerable: The very gates of Hades (the power of death?) will not prevail against it. Fourth, he would build it upon the "bed-rock" of his own person as the Messiah and divine Son of God as this "bedrock" comes to expression in both his and his apostles' authoritative teaching. Fifth, his *ἐκκλησία*, made up of those who like Peter confess his messianic role and divine Sonship, would be "the assembly [or "congregation"] of the Messiah." Sixth, his *ἐκκλησία* would become the vehicle of authority (see "the keys of the kingdom of Heaven") throughout this age for carrying out the predetermining will of Heaven (see the "shall have been's") by "binding" (that is, "retaining") the non-elect man's sins through the "smell of death" character for him (*2 Corinthians 2:16*) of the Gospel proclamation and/or of church discipline, and "loosing" (that is, "forgiving") the elect man's sins through the "fragrance of life" character for him (*2 Corinthians 2:16*) of the same Gospel proclamation and/or of church discipline. These two activities on the church's part ("binding" and "loosing" in accordance with the predetermining will of Heaven) would become then the means through the centuries by which Jesus would "build" his, the divine Messiah's, "assembly." Seventh, Jesus' statement suggests that his "assembly" would be a *world-wide* entity for this appears to be the connotation of the word here. Finally, the fact that the "foundation stones" of his "assembly" were given the keys of the *kingdom of Heaven* indicates that there is a direct connection between his church and the kingdom of God. In other words, by entrusting oneself in saving faith to the Christ espoused in the apostles' doctrine, one enters Messiah's church which is also the present redemptive expression of the kingdom of God among men. As Paul will write later: "[The Father] delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son of his love" (*Colossians 1:13*).

## The Apostate Fathers

The upshot of all this—and this is the first half of my response to the original question—is that Rome bases its soteriological teaching not primarily on Scripture but primarily on its own "infallible, unamendable" Tradition that virtually from the beginning began to exhibit great error.

With this last observation we come to the second half of my response to the class member's original question, for it is one of the saddest facts of church history that, with regard to its



tradition, from the post-apostolic age onward the church fell more and more into serious soteriological error, with grace and faith giving way to legalism and the doing of good works as the pronounced way of salvation. An unevangelical nomism runs virtually unabated through the writings of the church fathers. Only upon rare occasion, and not even fully in Augustine, was the voice of Paul clearly heard again before the sixteenth-century magisterial Reformation where it was heard in the preaching and writing of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin. Kenneth Escott Kirk writes: “St. Paul’s indignant wonder was evoked by the reversion of a small province of the Christian Church [Galatia] to the legalistic spirit of the Jewish religion. Had he lived half a century or a century later, his cause for amazement would have been increased a hundredfold. The example of the Galatians might be thought to have infected the entire Christian Church; writer after writer seems to have little other interest than to express the genius of Christianity wholly in terms of law and obedience, reward and punishment.”

J. L. Neve carefully documents in the apostolic fathers how quickly after the age of Paul—doubtless due to Jewish and Hellenistic influences without the tug of the Pelagian heart within—the emphasis in their preaching and writings on soteriology fell more and more upon human works and their merit and upon moralism. J. N. D. Kelly reaches similar conclusions. Richard Lovelace affirms: “By the early second century it is clear that Christians had come to think of themselves *as being justified through being sanctified*, accepted as righteous according to their actual obedience to the new Law of Christ.” And Thomas F. Torrance, in his *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers*—whose entire work is an inquiry into the literature of the apostolic fathers, that is to say, into the *Didache of the Twelve Apostles*, the *First Epistle of Clement*, the *Epistles of Ignatius*, the *Epistle of Polycarp*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and the *Second Epistle of Clement*, in order to discern how and why such a great divergence away from the teaching of the New Testament occurred in their understanding of salvation—concludes his research by saying: “In the Apostolic Fathers grace did not have [the] radical character [that it had in the New Testament]. The great presupposition of the Christian life, for them, was not a deed of decisive significance that cut across human life and set it on a wholly new basis grounded upon the self-giving of God. What took absolute precedence was God’s call to a new life in obedience to revealed truth. Grace, as far as it was grasped, was subsidiary to that. And so religion was thought of primarily in terms of man’s acts toward God, *in the striving toward justification*, much less in terms of God’s acts for man which put him in the right with God once and for all.

“...Salvation is wrought, they thought, certainly by divine pardon but on the ground of repentance, not apparently on the ground of the death of Christ alone. ... It was not seen that the whole of salvation is centred in the person and death of Christ, for there God has Himself come into the world and wrought a final act of redemption which undercuts all our own endeavours at self-justification, and places us in an entirely new situation in which faith alone saves a man, and through which alone is a man free to do righteousness spontaneously under the constraining love of Christ. That was not understood by the apostolic fathers, and it is the primary reason for the degeneration of their Christian faith into something so different from the New Testament.”

Thus the early post-apostolic church’s sub-Christian soteriological deliverances launched the church on a doctrinal trajectory that moved virtually the entire church (there was always a “remnant” that put up resistance) away from the pristine Pauline teaching on salvation by pure grace and justification by faith alone, a trajectory that eventually came to expression in Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, and Semi-Semi-Pelagianism, that then found formal expression

in the system of Thomas Aquinas, and finally became the hardened official position of the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent.

This naturalistic soteriological vision (for that is what it is) in its purest expression, which Benjamin B. Warfield designated “autosoterism” (“self-salvation”), the church has called “Pelagianism” named for Pelagius, the late-fourth/early-fifth-century British monk who formally taught it. This vision contends that men can save themselves, that is to say, that *their native powers are such that men are capable of doing everything that God requires of them for salvation.*

Over against this soteric plan, the supernaturalistic vision, designated “Augustinianism” after Augustine (354–430), Bishop of Hippo, who vigorously resisted Pelagius’ teachings, insists that *men are incapable of saving themselves and that all the powers essential to the saving of the soul must come from God.* Augustinianism triumphed formally, if not actually, over Pelagianism in A.D. 418 when Pelagianism was condemned at the Sixteenth Council of Carthage. In this conciliar triumph, Warfield notes, “. . .it was once for all settled that Christianity was to remain a religion, and a religion for sinful men, and not rot down into a mere ethical system, fitted only for the righteous who need no salvation.” In other words, the church of Jesus Christ, alone among all the religions of the world in this regard, in its best creedal moments is “supernaturalistic” or “Augustinian” in its soteric conception that God must save men, and every Christian *should be* in this sense “Augustinian” in his soteric beliefs.

As I just intimated, Pelagianism did not die with its conciliar condemnation in a.d. 418, men being born as they are with Pelagian hearts, which fact makes it necessary to fight this battle in every generation. Rather, it only went underground, “meanwhile vexing the Church with modified forms of itself, modified just enough to escape the letter of the Church’s condemnation.” For example, it reappeared at once in the Semi-Pelagian denial of the necessity of *prevenient* grace for salvation. This was opposed by the Second Council of Orange—not an ecumenical council—in A.D. 529. Alister E. McGrath, after noting in his study, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, that the earlier pronouncements of the Sixteenth Council of Carthage were “vague at several points which were to prove of significance, and these were revised at what is generally regarded as being the most important council of the early church to deal with the doctrine of justification—the Second Council of Orange, convened in 529,” then observes: “No other council was convened to discuss the doctrine of justification between [529] and 1545, when the Council of Trent assembled to debate that doctrine, among many other things. There was thus a period of over a millennium during which the teaching office of the church remained silent on the issue of justification. This silence serves to further enhance the importance of the pronouncements of Orange II on the matter, as these thus come to represent the definitive teaching of the Christian church on the doctrine of justification during the medieval period, before the Council of Trent was convened. Recent scholarship has established that no theologian of the Middle Ages ever cites the decisions of Orange II, or shows the slightest awareness of the existence of such decisions. For reasons that we simply do not understand, from the tenth century until the assembly of the Council of Trent in 1545, the theologians of the western church appear to be unaware of the existence of such a council, let alone its pronouncements. The theologians of the Middle Ages were thus obliged to base their teaching on justification on the canons of the Council of Carthage, which were simply incapable of bearing the strain which came to be placed upon them. The increasing precision of the technical terms employed within the theological schools inevitably led to the somewhat loose terms used by the Council of Carthage being interpreted in a manner quite alien to that intended by those who originally employed them.”

So while the Second Council of Orange in A.D. 529 saved the church from Semi-Pelagianism, regrettably that same council betrayed the church into the Semi-Semi-Pelagian denial of the *irresistibility* of prevenient grace by human free will, which theological vision eventually came to expression in the popular medieval slogan: “God will not deny his grace to those who do what lies within their power” (see William of Occam’s *facere quod in se est*, “doing what in you is”). In spite of recurring protests through the centuries by such men as Gottschalk, Bradwardine, Wycliffe, and Hus, eventually Thomas Aquinas, as we have already noted, systematized this theological vision and the Council of Trent (1545) was to declare it the official position of those churches in communion with Counter-Reformation Rome. In doing so, the Council of Trent rejected the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone even though their own great humanist scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam and other of Rome’s brightest philologists by this time had uncovered the fact that Jerome’s Latin Vulgate had mistranslated the Greek word *METANOEO* (“repent”) as “do penance” and the Greek word *DIKAIOO* (“declare righteous”) as “make righteous.”

The Reformers of the sixteenth century, being Biblical scholars, rejected Rome’s soteriology with all of its concomitant errors and returned to the earlier best insights of the later Augustine and before him to the inspired insights, in particular, of Paul’s letters to the Galatians and to the Romans. But sadly where Protestantism placed its “either-or” or *solus* (“alone”) (see its *sola Scriptura, sola gratia, solus Christus, sola fide, soli Deo gloria*), Roman Catholic theology has continued to place its “both-and” or *et* (“and”) (see its doctrines of Scripture *and* tradition, Christ *and* Mary, grace *and* nature, faith in Christ *and* works, faith in Christ *and* indulgences, the sacred *and* the secular). All of these “ands” are outworkings of Rome’s theologico-philosophical commitment to Aquinas’ vision of the “analogy of being” (*αναλογια εντις*) between God and creation, the latter of which Rome regards, over against Reformation theology, as being still fundamentally good in spite of the *Genesis* Fall. For myself, standing with the Reformers who contended that the first principle of all true theology is the fact that “God is there and he has spoken with finality in Holy Scripture,” while I often disagree with the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, I do agree with him completely when he wrote: “I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of Antichrist, and think that because of it one cannot become Catholic.” For it is indeed the invention of Antichrist when one adds anything to the great *sola*’s of the Reformation. The “and” in “grace and...,” “Christ and...,” or “faith and...” brings the apostolic curse and damnation (*Galatians* 1:6–9; 5:2–6; *Romans* 11:6). For they who would trust in the work of Christ *plus* their own “good works” *plus* the righteousness and intercessory work of Mary and the saints *plus* their pilgrimages and their purchases of indulgences are, according to Paul, making Christ’s cross-work of no value (*Galatians* 5:2), alienating themselves from Christ (5:4a), falling away from grace (5:4b) abolishing the offence of the cross (5:11), trusting in a “different gospel which is no gospel at all” (1:6–7) at the peril of their souls and showing thereby that they have never been truly regenerated by the Holy Spirit (or they would submit to the teaching of the Holy Scripture) but are still lost in their sin.

Because Pelagianism, including all the modified forms it takes today (Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Arminianism), is always an attack on the *sola gratia, solus Christus, sola fide* soteric principle, claiming as it does that man deserves at least some measure of credit for effecting his salvation, if not in its initiation, at least in his cooperation with initiating grace, the true church of Jesus Christ must ever be on guard to ensure that the *sola gratia, solus Christus, sola fide* soteric principle of Holy Scripture and of Paul specifically continues to be proclaimed as the sole way of salvation.

Dr. Robert L. Reymond, Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Knox Theological Seminary, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, holds the B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from Bob Jones University. A prolific author, Dr. Reymond recently published *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson, 1998), which *The Trinity Review* reviewed earlier this year.

Copyright © 1995 by John W. Robbins, *The Trinity Foundation*, [www.trinityfoundation.org](http://www.trinityfoundation.org), P.O. Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692

# How Rome Ends Up Being So ... Protestant

by Timothy F. Kauffman

## Part I: The Canon

One need not read many Roman Catholic apologetics books before discovering that the mantra of the modern Romanist is “*Sola Scriptura* is self-refuting.” This phrase is on the lips of the professional and the amateur apologist alike. The proof for the allegation takes on many forms, but one of the most prominent is this: “The 66-book canon of the Bible cannot be found in the Bible.” What the Roman Catholic is attempting to demonstrate is that Christians must appeal to something outside the Bible and in addition to it. To show the canon of the Bible, the Protestant must appeal to the table of contents which in turn reflects the historical testimony of the Church. Both of these “sources” are outside of Scripture, and thus the Roman Catholic thinks to prove that *Sola Scriptura* fails. “See?” he says. “You have to appeal to something *outside* the Bible to support *sola scriptura*. Thus, *sola scriptura* is self-refuting.” The Roman Catholic then triumphantly produces the documents of an allegedly infallible Roman council (Trent, in this case) which show exactly what the 73-book canon really is. Thus have the apologists of Rome sought to show that while Protestants cannot prove the content of the Bible from the Bible, Rome can know definitively the canon of the Bible from its councils. Protestants, on the other hand, have no infallible source by which they may know they have the right 66 books, and therefore are members of a self-defeating religion. So thinks the Roman Catholic apologist.

Normally in a discussion like this one, the Protestant is all too quick to take the bait and begin to discuss the fact that the canon is received and not revealed, and therefore is not an additional part of revelation. True though it is, that line of thought allows the Roman Catholic apologist to sidestep a gaping hole in his own argument.

If the weakness of Protestantism is that the canon of our revelation exists outside the Bible (allowing the Roman Catholic position momentarily), then the strength of Rome should be that an infallible canon of its revelation can be produced on request. The Roman apologist thinks he has already satisfied this by providing the canon of Scripture from Rome’s infallible councils. But in Rome, revelation is not so limited because it includes other forms besides the Scriptures: Tradition and the teachings of the Roman Magisterium, including the infallible teachings of her popes. Roman Catholicism summarizes this as *Sola Verbum Dei*, or The Word of God Alone, and proposes this as the infallible alternative to *Sola Scriptura*. Very well then. Perhaps the Roman Catholic apologist can provide the canon of the Word of God, and we will start by requesting an infallible canon of *ex cathedra* papal statements. How many times has the pope taught *ex cathedra*, or “from the chair” of Peter? How many *ex cathedra* papal statements have

there been, and what are they? Producing this canon of *ex cathedra* papal statements will prove to be a very difficult task indeed, and the Roman Catholic will be forced to go outside his own definition of The Word of God to do it.

## An Elusive Canon

Different Roman Catholic apologists have asserted very divergent numbers of infallible papal statements. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and the doctrine of the Bodily Assumption of Mary were taught “infallibly” by Popes Pius IX and Pius XII in 1854 and 1950, respectively. Both popes taught that these doctrines were divinely revealed and were therefore part of Christian revelation and to be believed. But are these two the only infallible *ex cathedra* papal statements ever made? Perhaps they are. It depends on which apologist you ask. Roman apologist Scott Hahn says yes. In his talk on Pope Pius IX’s proclamation in 1854, Hahn stated that 1950 was the only other time an *ex cathedra* statement had ever been made by a pope:

“Now, we have to realize that the Holy Father has only stated dogmatically and infallibly a definition of a doctrine one other time: in 1950, with the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, both her body and soul.”<sup>1</sup>

Hahn has proposed a two-statement canon of *ex cathedra* papal statements. But apologist Tim Staples says there are at least four, and likely very many more. In his audio tape series, “All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed,” he berates those who claim that popes have only spoken infallibly on two occasions. Staples mentions the two *ex cathedra* statements to which Hahn refers, and then adds at least two more, referring first to pope Boniface VIII’s statement *Unam Sanctam* (1302), and second, to St. Leo’s letter to Flavian<sup>2</sup> which was examined and approved by the Council of Chalcedon in 451:

“We have infallible statements from popes all the way back. Pope Boniface VIII made an infallible statement in the 13th century concerning papal authority or papal primacy. In the year 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, Pope Leo I made an infallible declaration that was recognized as such by council Fathers concerning the hypostatic union of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

The Roman Catholic may not initially be concerned over the inability of his apologists or his religion to define an infallible list of *ex cathedra* statements, as long as there exists the fallible certainty that it may be limited to these four, or three, or two. But that fleeting disinterest spells disaster for the concept of a unified Roman Catholic religion with a defined canon of revelation. The Roman Catholic cannot simultaneously insist that the Protestant produce an infallible listing of the canon of God’s Word and ignore the fact that his own Church is unable to do the same with something as simple as a list of *ex cathedra* statements—statements which in Rome, are part of the Word of God. As evidence that the dilemma is not limited merely to a few teachings, the Roman Catholic is invited to consider the longer list compiled by Adam S. Miller in his book, *The Final Word*. Miller assures us that he has the right list when he says his booklet contains, “... a listing of *ex cathedra* Papal pronouncements on matters of doctrine.” And he joins us in recognizing the significance of the issue when he states that his work contains a listing of “what the Catholic Church has defined as those truths formally revealed by God and

---

<sup>1</sup> Hahn, Scott, “A Biblical Understanding of Mary,” tape 3 of 4, side 1

<sup>2</sup> Leo’s letter was actually written in 449. Staples is somewhat inaccurate when he says that Leo “made an infallible declaration” in 451. Rather, the council affirmed it in that year.

<sup>3</sup> Staples, Tim, “All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed,” tape 2 of 6, side 1

necessary for belief.” His proposed canon of *ex cathedra* statements is eleven.<sup>4</sup> But Roman Catholic priest Leslie Rumble would beg to differ. He has an even longer list in his book, *That Catholic Church*. In his opinion, there have been 18 *ex cathedra* papal statements throughout Roman Catholic history. Not only does Rumble’s list contain considerably more statements than Hahn’s, Staples’, and Miller’s, but it also contains two caveats indicating that the degree of certainty of the reliability of his (or any) list is in doubt. To his list of 18, Rumble added two caveats indicating that he is not quite sure. Next to items 12 and 13, he added this clarification:

“There are some Catholic theologians who hold that, although these two decrees of Pope Leo XIII are of the utmost authority, they still fall short of technical requirements for infallible ‘*ex cathedra*’ utterances.”<sup>5</sup>

And next to items 16 and 17, he added this:

“[These] Two utterances very probably comply with the requirements of an ‘*ex cathedra*’ decision ...”<sup>6</sup>

In an attempt to lay out exactly what it is that the popes have taught infallibly, Roman priest Leslie Rumble ends up deferring to what “some Catholic theologians” believe, and what “very probably” complies with *ex cathedra* requirements. This is very telling.

## Elusive Criteria

Perhaps if Roman Catholics knew with any certainty “the requirements of an ‘*ex cathedra*’ decision,” this matter could be easily resolved. Unfortunately, within Rome there is as much disagreement on the number of criteria as there is on the number of *ex cathedra* statements. Exactly what are the criteria by which a papal statement can be considered to have been *ex cathedra*? And how many criteria are there?

Roman Catholic apologist, Scott Butler compiled what he calls “A Scriptural Handbook on the Papacy” called *Jesus, Peter and the Keys*. In this book, he provides for his readers three criteria by which one may know that a pope has spoken infallibly. He cites the Vatican Council I statement, *Lumen Gentium* (brackets added by Butler):

“And this is the infallibility with which the Roman Pontiff, the head of the college of bishops, enjoys in virtue of his office, when [1] as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith, [2] by a definitive act [3] he proclaims a doctrine of faith or morals.”<sup>7</sup>

But in contrast to this, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* indicates that there are actually four criteria by which such a determination must be made. The *Encyclopedia*’s four criteria are not entirely

---

<sup>4</sup> Miller, Adam S., *The Final Word*, (Gaithersburg, MD: Tower of David Publications, © 1997), pg. 28

<sup>5</sup> Rumble, et al, *That Catholic Church: A Radio Analysis*, (St. Paul, MN, Radio Replies Press, ©1954), pg. 81

<sup>6</sup> Rumble, pg. 81

<sup>7</sup> Butler, Scott, et al, *Jesus, Peter and the Keys: A Scriptural Handbook on the Papacy*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing Company, ©1996), pg. 203. Brackets in original.

redundant to Butler's three, and further require that the statement must contain a binding condemnation of error.<sup>8</sup>

William G. Most, on the other hand, a Roman Catholic apologist and priest, believes there are only two criteria by which a papal definition is to be considered infallible:

“If a Pope intends to make anything definitive, that is infallible. No special form of words is needed ... We conclude that all that is required is [1] the intent to make an item definitive, plus [2] writing in such a way as to make that intent clear.”<sup>9</sup>

The problem which now arises for the Roman Catholic is to determine infallibly which set of criteria should be used to conclude that a doctrine has been taught *ex cathedra*. Should he use the three criteria or the four or the two? Which set of criteria is the infallible set? Whose interpretation of the two, three or four criteria is the infallible interpretation? The dilemma is severe. Those who prefer to downplay the significance of this are welcome to join the many Roman Catholics in the world who are at this moment debating the infallibility of various papal statements—because they cannot know infallibly which criteria to use. It is no wonder that Roman Catholic apologists will rarely proclaim *exactly* how many *ex cathedra* papal statements there have been, or exactly how they know for sure when it is that a Roman Pontiff will exercise this charism of infallibility in the first place. Even here, there is disagreement within Rome.

### **What Think Ye of Ex Cathedra?**

Roman apologist Karl Keating, founder of the apologetic ministry *Catholic Answers*, believes the pope normally only exercises the charism of infallibility when a controversial matter must be settled:

“An infallible pronouncement—whether made by the pope alone, by an ecumenical council, or by the constant teaching of the Church's magisterium through the centuries—usually is made only when some doctrine has been called into question.”<sup>10</sup>

But Roman apologist Hahn believes the exact opposite:

“Now, many people think that this *ex cathedra*, this official papal pronouncement defining dogma, is sort of like the ultimate way in which the pope resolves doctrinal controversies. That is the opposite of the truth. The pope is not an umpire. The pope is not a referee. ... we wrongly understand his office and his ministry if we think that he is just to call ‘fair’ and ‘foul,’ ‘safe’ and ‘out,’ and throw the flag and declare the penalty.”<sup>11</sup>

Which is it? When does a Roman pope speak or teach infallibly, and how can the sheep know infallibly that the shepherd has so taught? In view of all of this, it becomes clear that Roman

---

<sup>8</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, copyright © 1907, Vol VII, pg. 796

<sup>9</sup> Most, *Infallibility of Level Three Teachings*, (Published electronically for use in classes taught by Fr. Most and for private theological study. Brackets added for clarity)

<sup>10</sup> “Papal Infallibility,” a tract produced by Catholic Answers, (© 1996 Catholic Answers, Inc.), <http://www.catholic.com/ANSWERS/tracts/p-infall.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Hahn, Scott, “A Biblical Understanding of Mary,” tape 3 of 4, side 1

Catholics—even Roman Catholic apologists—do not know certainly or exhaustively what the pope has infallibly taught or exactly what it is that they are required to believe. Nor do Roman Catholics agree on when or why a pope speaks *ex cathedra*. Nor do Roman Catholics have an infallible set of criteria by which it can be determined that a pope has spoken infallibly, and neither do they have an infallible means of interpreting the criteria, be they two, be they three or be they four.

Perhaps the reader has begun to see the weakness of the Roman Catholic position. The Protestant has been asked to produce an infallible list of the canon of the Bible. If the Protestant produces such a list, it is a concession that an elementary part of Christian knowledge (i.e., the canon) is contained *outside* of Scripture. Thus, it is alleged to be a denial of *Sola Scriptura*. Rome, on the other hand (so it is supposed) does not have this problem because her infallible Council of Trent declared the canon of Scripture, and that is how a Roman Catholic knows with certainty that which the Protestant cannot—the canon of the Bible. But Roman Catholics cannot know the infallible canon of what comprises *Verbum Dei*, the Word of God. A very small portion of that canon would be a list of *ex cathedra* papal statements. Any Roman Catholic will gladly give you his opinion of how many times the popes have exercised this gift. Scott Hahn has affirmed a list of two. But that is Hahn’s opinion. Rumble has offered a canon of possibly 18, most likely 16, but possibly only 14, and Miller thinks it might just be 11. But these are mere opinions. Staples has offered a canon of at least four, and seems to suggest there might be more. But that is his opinion. These are all the fallible opinions of men. The truth is, the infallible list of *ex cathedra* papal statements exists nowhere within what Rome calls her three sources of revelation: the Bible, the Magisterium, and Tradition. Amazingly, this leaves the faithful to struggle through this issue, groping blindly on their own. In fact, their own teachers will not and cannot tell them.<sup>12</sup> Thus it can be said of Rome that something fundamental to her system of beliefs *exists outside of her revelation*. So while the Roman Catholic thinks to prove that *Sola Scriptura* is self-refuting because the list of the canon of the Bible exists outside of Scripture, by his own standards he instead proves the insufficiency of Rome because something fundamental to the belief of the Roman Catholic actually exists outside of Rome’s *only* sources of revelation. The Roman Catholic is therefore forced to rely on information which he gathers independently of the Magisterium, the Bible and Tradition in order to understand fallibly what it is that his religion might be teaching him.

### **Sola Verbum Dei is Self-Refuting.**

Rome’s answer to *Sola Scriptura* is *Sola Verbum Dei*, or “The Word of God Alone.” Rome believes that the Word of God is contained in the Scriptures, Tradition, in her Magisterium—including *ex cathedra* papal statements. But Rome cannot produce an infallible list of *ex cathedra* papal statements from within what she calls the Word of God. Thus, in order to convey the Word of God, Roman Catholics must appeal to something which is not contained in the Word of God. *Sola Verbum Dei* therefore becomes self-refuting by the standards of Rome’s own apologists. It is by this means that Rome has adopted the very practice of which she accuses Protestants so severely.

## **Part II: Interpreting the Bible**

---

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix I for evidence of this.



While Roman Catholic apologists are attempting to compile a final and infallible list of *ex cathedra* papal statements, perhaps we can formulate another challenging question. In a conversation with a co-worker—a Roman Catholic lay person—some time ago, I was showing him some verses from the Scriptures. He retorted, “That’s the problem with you Protestants! Every one of you is your own pope!” This quarter we shall see again how Roman Catholics’ criticism of Protestantism stings to the heart of their own religion. You will be introduced to a number of Roman Catholics who have become little popes unto themselves. And they have become so not from arrogance mind you, but from the habitual refusal of Rome’s own Magisterium to teach them.

We are reminded of at least four virtual popes in the men referenced above. Because Rome has failed to produce an infallible list of *ex cathedra* papal statements, her many apologists are left guessing at which ones are truly *ex cathedra*. Hahn, Miller, Staples and Rumble are all left to play the pope and determine for themselves that which the pope has taught infallibly. Merely to wave one’s hands and insist that whatever the popes have taught *ex cathedra* can be discerned from the Liturgy, Creeds and “ordinary teachings of the Church,” as Rumble did,<sup>13</sup> is to deny the need for a pope. To insist that a pope is necessary, yet to be unable to produce infallibly that which he has taught infallibly, is to deny the ability of the pope *to convey* his teachings, or his people *to discern* them..

But lest we weary the Roman apologist on this issue alone, let us proceed to a different but related subject. My co-worker accused me of being my own little pope because I had interpreted certain Bible passages “on my own.” He, in contrast, had a pope for such a task. That being the case, we ask, “What is the infallible interpretation of the verses in the Bible?” In order to know for sure, it would be appropriate to list authoritatively every single verse of Scripture that Rome has infallibly interpreted. In other words, we need an infallible list of infallibly interpreted Bible verses. Like we saw last quarter when we tried compiling a list of *ex cathedra* papal statements, this will prove to be a difficult task.

To know what verses have been infallibly interpreted, we need an authoritative, infallible source. To inquire on this matter, a friend of mine went straight to Archbishop Montalvo, Papal Nuncio to the USA, and with good cause: there is no infallibly defined list of infallibly interpreted Bible verses anywhere to be found in Rome. My friend’s Roman Catholic acquaintances insisted that there are 42 verses which have been infallibly interpreted by Rome. Pope Pius XII, in his Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, stated that “there are but few texts whose sense has been defined by the authority of the Church.”<sup>14</sup> Roman Catholic apologists Paul Flanagan and Robert Schihl attempted to identify those verses in their book, *Catholic Biblical Apologetics*. They listed only seven verses which have been definitively interpreted: [John 3:5](#), [John 20:22](#) and [20:23](#); [Luke 22:19](#); [I Corinthians 11:24](#); [Romans 5:12](#); and [James 5:14](#).<sup>15</sup> With

---

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Rumble, et al, *That Catholic Church: A Radio Analysis*, (St. Paul, MN, Radio Replies Press, ©1954), pg. 80. In response to a question on whether or not the infallible list of *ex cathedra* papal decrees could be known, he answered: “Normally, of course, the doctrines of the Catholic Church are made sufficiently clear in the Creeds, in the Liturgy, and in the ordinary teachings of the Church.”

<sup>14</sup> Pope Pius XII, Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, paragraph 47. Promulgated September 30, 1943

<sup>15</sup> Flanagan, Paul & Schihl, Robert, *Catholic Biblical Apologetics*, © 1985–1997. See <http://www.cbn.org/apology/catholic/cabiapbk.htm>

such a lack of precision in the actual number of verses that Rome has infallibly interpreted, approaching the papal nuncio directly seemed to be the best course of action, short of a visit with John Paul II, himself.

So, what was the Papal Nuncio's answer to the inquiry? He responded that such a question ought to be answered by the Very Reverend J. Augustine DiNoia, Executive Director of the Secretariat for Doctrine and Pastoral Practices in the National Council of Catholic Bishops. In effect, he is the American equivalent of Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. And what was DiNoia's answer? DiNoia consulted an "eminent theologian" to help him answer the question. And what did this unidentified theologian say? He deferred to R. E. Brown's section on hermeneutics in his *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*.<sup>16</sup> Brown's list contained only six passages (though he referred to seven), and his list of six is not merely a subset of Flanagan's and Schihl's seven. In his letter to DiNoia, the theologian responded:

"Following Raymond Brown, I would think that a case could be made that the Church has defined something about the correct interpretation of the following seven (sic) passages:

[John 3:5](#)

- sacramental baptism (Trent)

[John 20:23](#)

- sacrament of penance (Trent)

[James 5:14–15](#)

- anointing of the sick (Trent)

[Matthew 16:16–19](#)

- Primacy of Peter (Vatican I)

[John 21:15–17](#)

- Primacy of Peter (Vatican I)

[Genesis 3:15](#)

- Immaculate Conception (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* and Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*)<sup>17</sup>

Note that Flanagan and Schihl cite [1 Corinthians 11:24](#) and [Luke 22:19](#) (Transubstantiation) and [Romans 5:12](#) (Original Sin). DiNoia does not. To combine the two lists (though hardly an infallible solution) gives us a total of nine verses on seven topics (baptism, penance, last rights, Petrine primacy, Transubstantiation, original sin and the Immaculate Conception), and this, still very, very far from an exhaustive interpretation of the Bible.

This small list is insufficient for several reasons. First, obviously, the list is not infallible, since it has not been declared *ex cathedra* by a pope or promulgated by an ecumenical council. We are no closer now to a list of verses than when certain Roman Catholics asserted that there were 42. Thus, in the shadow of Rome's silence on this topic, we can add Flanagan and Schihl to the list of little popes unto themselves in Rome. And since Archbishop Montalvo deferred to DiNoia who deferred to his theological consultant, who in turn deferred to Brown, perhaps all four have now acted as their own popes on this matter, or at least considered Raymond Brown to be their *papa du jour*.

Second, even DiNoia's theological consultant is unsure of what such a list can accomplish for the curious. Of Brown's list, he laments:

---

<sup>16</sup> See Brown, R. E., "Hermeneutics," *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (Prentice-Hall, 1990), 1146–65, 1163–64

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix II for a copy of the referenced letter.

“Whether the intention was to define the sense of Scripture in these passages is a difficult question. It is difficult, also, to say exactly what was defined—was the intention only to exclude a particular false interpretation, and if the intention was to say something positive, did the Pope or Council mean that this was the only meaning of the text?”<sup>18</sup>

Difficult questions, indeed! What we discovered in our search for an infallible list of *ex cathedra* papal statements, we discover again here. Even when a *fallible* list of interpreted verses can be compiled, we are left like the proverbial blind men describing an elephant: “What exactly have we found? We do not know! Perhaps a snake? A rope? A tree trunk? A spear?” The truth is, neither Montalvo, nor DiNoia, nor the theologian, nor Brown, nor Flanagan nor Schihl can know how many verses Rome has officially infallibly interpreted, or what the interpretation means. Nor can any of the world’s one billion Roman Catholics. Nor, apparently, has Rome any intention of telling them. She is unable to do so.

The third difficulty is that Brown has attempted to do something that *The Catholic Encyclopedia* says he cannot do: conclude *infallibly* something that was taught in the preamble to an infallible papal statement. Brown attempts to claim an infallible interpretation of [Genesis 3:15](#) (the sixth verse on his list) because two popes “interpreted” that verse in their infallible proclamations, *Ineffabilis Deus* (by Pius IX) and *Munificentissimus Deus* (by Pius XII). But neither of these two *ex cathedra* proclamations referred to [Genesis 3:15](#) in the section where the doctrines were actually *defined*. And *The Catholic Encyclopedia* says that this makes all the difference:

“It should be noted that not everything contained in a definition is infallibly defined. Thus, *arguments from Scripture*, tradition, or theological reason, do not come under the exercise of definitive authority. ... *Only the doctrine itself* ... is to be considered infallibly defined.”<sup>19</sup>

This statement alone would discount at least one of the verses on Brown’s list. And it is enough to prove that his list of six is quite fallible indeed. Perhaps now there are only five.

So how many Bible verses have been officially interpreted by Rome? Forty-two? Five? Six? Seven? Nine? Surely Rome can tell us, for if she cannot, she has abdicated her teaching responsibility and has left every Roman Catholic to be his own pope on this matter, and therefore for the entire Bible. To play down the need for an infallible list of infallibly interpreted verses is to miss the fact that the Roman religion claims to be the *sole* reliable teacher of all of Christianity. For Rome to leave her sheep as the interpreter of a fallible list of interpreted verses, as well as for the rest of the Bible, is to concede the Protestant position that no infallible human interpreter is necessary for Christ’s Church. And just as Rome’s faithful were left to grope blindly on their own to discover how many times the pope has taught *ex cathedra*, we find yet again that those whom Rome has presumed to teach are left not knowing infallibly what more than 99% of the Bible means—and there is no infallible consensus on the meaning of the remaining fraction, either. Thus Roman Catholics grope blindly to discover “on their own” what the meaning of the Bible’s tens of thousands of verses are. In fact, they become popes unto themselves, because their pope is unable to do what they thought he could. And just as my Roman Catholic co-worker thought I had become a pope unto myself, John Paul II, by failing to

---

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume III, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, © 1907), vol. IV, pg. 676c. Emphasis added.

infallibly interpret the Bible for his sheep, or at least provide an infallible list of interpreted verses, has pretty much become a little pope unto himself. He is scarcely more than that since he has yet to teach his followers a single Bible verse infallibly!

But even in this there is hope, for we know that no one born of God ever studies the Bible “on his own.” Just as Paul encouraged the people at Mars’ Hill, we can truly say of Roman Catholics that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; *That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him*, though he be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:26–27). His Holy Spirit attends to His children when they thirst for His Word (1 Thessalonians 1:5), and nothing can make the elect of God more thirsty after His Word than when teachers refuse to teach them. In failing to interpret the Bible infallibly, Rome has set many of her sheep (I was once among them) on a quest to read, to understand and to believe what He has written. In so doing, Rome has released them from the bondage of being forced to be popes unto themselves, and has unwittingly caused them to seek Someone who *will* teach them: The Holy Spirit by the Word.

Rome’s apologists will gasp at the thought of this, since in their eyes Protestantism is a fractured, broken religion with unnumbered denominations and factions. It defies the pen to describe the depth of Rome’s blindness on this matter. Where Protestantism is united in the understanding that God has given us His Word in the Bible alone as our guide for faith and morals, Rome’s faithful cannot agree on the *content* of their Revelation, much less on what it means. Rome’s blindness is that she fails to see how fractured she really is. How many times has the pope spoken infallibly? Two? Four? Eleven? Fourteen? Sixteen? Eighteen? How many criteria are there in determining the infallibility of a papal statement? Four? Three? Two? How many verses of the Bible has Rome infallibly interpreted? Five? Six? Seven? Nine? Forty-two? When will she interpret the rest? We will never know. But there are Roman Catholics who insist on any one of these numbers. This is very, very far from Rome’s pretenses of unanimity.

In the mean time, let it suffice to say that if anyone in this world has become his own pope, it is the lay Roman Catholic who cannot know what the pope has infallibly taught him from the Bible, and the apologist who must guess at how many times the pope has spoken infallibly. We Christians, however, will call no one on earth our Papa, neither shall we become popes unto ourselves, “for one is your Father, which is in heaven” (Matthew 23:9).

## **Part III: That Ye May Keep Your Own Tradition**

Rome claims that Divine Revelation takes on three forms of which she alone is the infallible custodian: The teachings of the Magisterium, the Scriptures and Tradition. This article showed Rome’s utter failure to live up to its own claims regarding the Magisterium and the Scriptures. Now we wrap up with a discussion on what is by far the most difficult and most expansive of the three: Tradition.

### **What Can Be Known?**

The condition of the average churchgoer in Roman Catholicism is not much different from that of the average trained theologian. The truth is that Roman Catholics are left to sort out the canon of *ex cathedra* papal statements on their own. Rome holds that she is the infallible

custodian of the teachings of the Church, but even in something as simple as a list of infallible papal statements, Roman Catholics are left to grope blindly. The same goes for the Scriptures. If Rome has only interpreted seven or nine verses of the Bible infallibly, then Roman Catholics are all left to sort out the rest of the Bible without an infallible interpretation. The irony is that when the Apocrypha is included in the text, each Roman Catholic is left to his own devices to sort out more “scripture” by his own reasoning than any Protestant ever has. Thus, two of Rome’s claims to be the infallible teacher of all Christendom have fallen short. But if the reader thinks these elements of revelation are hard for Roman Catholics to discern, they are nothing compared to what it takes for a Roman Catholic to interpret Tradition.

It should be noted that Roman Catholics make a distinction between “Tradition” (upper case T) and “tradition” (lower case t). “Tradition” is infallible truth received from the apostles, preserved in the Deposit of Faith and revealed in the liturgy and form of the Church, while “tradition” is more along the lines of Mardi Gras and Christmas trees. Only “Tradition” is considered to be infallible. Because “Tradition” in Rome is anything that may have been spoken by the Apostles and recorded somehow (orally?) and somewhere (in a stained glass window, or in a Roman catacomb?) in Church history, there is no single infallible compilation of “Tradition” anywhere within Roman Catholicism. Thus, even when a pope defers to Tradition—say, when he quotes Thomas Aquinas—he has no exhaustive infallible text or archive of Tradition which can be produced to prove that he has taught truth. He only has his belief that his citation is really *Tradition*, and not merely *tradition*. A sample of just how difficult it is to discern between the two will be found in the case of Roman Catholic priest and apologist, William Most. By a formula of demonstrated repetition, Most believed that he had found the means by which Tradition could be discerned. He wrote:

“We add that anything taught repeatedly on the ordinary magisterium level is infallible.”<sup>20</sup>

“A doctrine taught with multiple papal approval plus that of Vatican II should be called infallible, for these texts show the intention to make it definitive by their repetition.”<sup>21</sup>

Most used this reasoning over and over again to help him discern between Tradition and tradition. For example, when he was addressing the issue of Mary’s role as Mediatrix, he concluded that this title is part of Tradition because it appears repeatedly in church teachings.<sup>22</sup> When he was defending Mary’s title of Co-redemptress, he did so by pointing out that Vatican II on this topic “was merely restating a repeated teaching.”<sup>23</sup>

Will Most’s formula provide us with a start on gleaning Tradition from 2000 years of history? With two examples we shall see how Most exemplifies the plight of the Roman Catholic who desires to grasp Tradition, but finds that his Church refuses to help him—or more accurately, is unable to do so.

---

<sup>20</sup> Most, William G., *Mary’s Cooperation in Our Redemption*, (Manassas, VA: The Catholic Resource Network, © 1994 Trinity Communications). At the time of publication, this article was available on the internet at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/SCRIPTUR/COREDEMP.TXT>

<sup>21</sup> Most, *Our Lady’s Physical Virginity In The Birth Of Jesus*

<sup>22</sup> Most, *Our Lady In Doctrine and Devotion*

<sup>23</sup> Most, William G., “Unscriptural Marian Doctrine?”, from The Blessed Virgin Mary Apologetics Index Page, url: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/SCRIPTUR/MARSCR.TXT>

**Case 1:**  
***Did Mary Experience Pain in Childbirth?***

William Most spent his life greatly desiring to defend the various attributes of Mary, including the preservation of her physical virginity in the birth of Christ. On this topic, Most exerted considerable energy attempting to find out exactly what it is that his Church was teaching him through Tradition. In his tract, “Our Lady’s Physical Virginity In The Birth Of Jesus,” he attempted to show how the Church had infallibly taught as Tradition that Mary had not brought forth the Savior in the normal way, but had done so without pain, without blood, and without loss of her physical virginity. To prove this, he needed to show that it had been taught repeatedly and therefore that it belongs to the Deposit of Faith— Tradition with a capital T. In short, he was trying to show that his Magisterium had infallibly instructed him on the Tradition of Mary’s pain-free delivery of Christ. In his proof he cited five sources, not a one of which explicitly taught what he so desired to believe, and one of which was never even officially promulgated by the Magisterium proper.

Most began by citing canon 3 of the First Lateran Council, which states that Mary “incorruptibly bore Him, her virginity remaining indestructible even after His birth. . . .”<sup>24</sup> Most took this to mean something that the council did not explicitly state. He concluded from it: “It rules out lesions, blood and similar things.” But what does “indestructible virginity even after His birth” mean? Most continued by confessing that Lateran I had not been an ecumenical council (and therefore not infallible), but nonetheless it had been confirmed by Pope Martin I, which does lend some credibility.

He then proceeded by citing various popes and councils (ecumenical and otherwise) showing that his view of the virgin birth is compatible with what is taught by Rome. A viewing of his sources, however, would cause the reader to concede that nowhere is his belief explicitly taught:

**Pope Leo the Great**

“He was truly conceived of the Holy Spirit within the womb of His Virgin Mother, who bore Him while preserving her virginity just as, perserving her virginity, she conceived Him.”<sup>25</sup>

**Pope Paul VI, Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, November 21, 1964**

“This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest . . . at the birth of Our Lord, who did not diminish his mother’s virginal integrity but sanctified it . . .”<sup>26</sup>

These passages speak vaguely of Mary remaining a virgin. They say nothing specifically of blood, lesions and pain. Poor William Most ended his argument in support of a bloodless, painless birth of Christ by citing an unofficial, unpromulgated document from the Holy Office for the Propagation of the Divine Faith. Most wrote:

---

<sup>24</sup> Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, (Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., © 1957 by B. Herder Book Co.), pg. 102

<sup>25</sup> From *the Tome* of Pope St. Leo the Great, a letter to Flavian, the bishop of Constantinople, June 13, 449. *The Fathers of the Church*, Volume 34, (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., ©1957) pp. 93–94

<sup>26</sup> Pope Paul VI, Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution On The Church, *Lumen Gentium*, paragraph 57, November 21, 1964

“[The] Holy Office in July 1960, drew up a decree but did not publish it officially—it was sent to a certain number of bishops and religious superiors as a *monitum*. Several journals did publish it. . . . ‘This supreme Congregation has often observed recently, and with deep concern, that theological works are being published in which the delicate question of Mary’s virginity ‘in partu’ is treated with a deplorable crudeness of expression and, what is more serious, in flagrant contradiction to the doctrinal tradition of the Church and to the sense of respect the faithful have. Consequently in its plenary session of Wednesday, the twentieth of this month [July 1960], it seemed necessary to the eminent Fathers of the Holy Office, by reason of their serious responsibility to watch over the sacred deposit of Catholic doctrine, to see to it that for the future the publication of such dissertations on this problem be prohibited.’”<sup>27</sup>

From these extremely vague sources Most concluded quite definitely that, by the sheer repetition of this “teaching”—including an unpublished, unofficial proclamation of the Holy Office—the doctrine that Mary experienced no pain in childbirth is a Tradition infallibly taught by the Roman religion. He based his conclusion on a sincere and optimistic belief that his religion was able to teach Tradition infallibly even if finding it takes a little diligence. But did Most’s optimistic view of his religion’s ability to convey Tradition serve him well? As we shall see, Most’s criteria for determining what Tradition *is* (and what *is* Tradition) fell very far short of his expectations.

### **Case 2:** ***Is Mary the Woman of Revelation 12?***

We shall now have Mr. Most cast further light on the Roman Catholic teaching of Mary’s identity as the Woman of [Revelation 12](#). Although the Roman Catholic religion has not produced—and probably never will produce—an infallible compilation of Tradition, W. G. Most, as noted, thought he had a formula by which an infallible Tradition can be deduced from infallible councils and popes: the formula of repetition. For good reason, the objective reader would expect Mr. Most to apply his formula here. After all, the Roman Catholic religion has taught *repeatedly* that [Revelation 12:1–2](#) is a reference to Mary. It is noted from the below citations that the traditional interpretation of the Woman of [Revelation 12](#) as Mary is “not without foundation,” and that “everyone knows” it to be true. In this manner, anyone who would assert that the Roman Catholic religion does not really teach that Mary is the Woman of [Revelation 12](#) can be easily refuted:

#### **Pope Paul VI, *Signum Magnum*, May 13, 1967**

“The great sign which the Apostle John saw in heaven, ‘a woman clothed with the sun,’ is interpreted by the sacred Liturgy,[2] not without foundation, as referring to the most blessed Mary, the mother of all men by the grace of Christ the Redeemer.”<sup>28</sup>

#### **Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, November 1, 1950**

---

<sup>27</sup> Most, *Our Lady’s Physical Virginity in the Birth of Jesus*

<sup>28</sup> Paul VI, *Signum Magnum* (The Great Sign), Encyclical Letter of May 13, 1967, paragraph

“The Scholastic doctors have considered the Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God as signified not only in the various figures of the Old Testament, but also in that woman clothed with the sun, whom the Apostle John contemplated on the island of Patmos.”<sup>29</sup>

**Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, March 15, 1987**

“The Holy Mother of God, through the Church remains in that mystery as ‘the woman’ spoken of by the Book of Genesis (3:15) at the beginning and by the Apocalypse (12:1) at the end of the history of salvation.”<sup>30</sup>

**Pope Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum*, February 2, 1904**

“‘A great sign,’ thus the Apostle St. John describes a vision divinely sent him, appears in the heavens: ‘A woman clothed with the sun, and with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars upon her head’ (Apoc. xii., 1). *Everyone knows* that this woman signified the Virgin Mary, the stainless one who brought forth our Head.”<sup>31</sup>

Unlike the extremely vague references to the *in partu* virginity of Mary, these citations are quite specific, are they not? But W. G. Most was not unaware of the problems brought about by the regular and historical Roman Catholic teaching that Mary is the Woman of [Revelation 12](#). The problem is that [Revelation 12:2](#) says the Woman is laboring in the pains of childbirth—the very thing Most thought his Traditions denied—and Most is mindful of his religion’s inability to reconcile the glaring contradiction. If he applies his rule of demonstrated repetition here, it undermines all he sought to advance on the study of Mary’s pain-free delivery of Christ. This is evident when he addresses the fact that the Ordinary Magisterium of the Church has repeatedly taught on that Woman’s identity. Should not this doctrine, too, be considered Tradition since it has been taught repeatedly, and that by popes? In a complete reversal of his previous insistence that repeated teachings of the Magisterium are infallible Tradition, Most writes,

“We have statements on it by several Popes. St. Pius X (AAS 36. 458–59) ... Pius XII (AAS 41. 762–63) ... Paul VI (*Signum Magnum*, May 13, 1967) ... John Paul II (*Redemptoris Mater* #24). ... These Papal texts are not fully definite.”<sup>32</sup>

Not fully definite? When Popes say things like “*Everyone knows* that this woman signified the Virgin Mary,” and such a belief is “*not without foundation*,” it is hardly anymore a matter of question. As many Roman Catholics have loved to say, “Rome has spoken. The case is closed”.<sup>33</sup> So why did Most reverse himself? Because he knew that he really was not sure when

---

<sup>29</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*. AAS 41:762–63, November 1, 1950

<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* (Mother of the Redeemer), March 15, 1987, paragraph 24

<sup>31</sup> Pope Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum*, (Encyclical on the Immaculate Conception), ASS 36:458–59, February 2, 1904, emphasis added

<sup>32</sup> Most, *Mary’s Cooperation in Our Redemption*

<sup>33</sup> That these citations should have been sufficient for William G. Most is clear from Pope Paul VI’s *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964: “This loyal submission of the will and intellect must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* in such wise, indeed, that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect, and sincere assent be given to decisions made by him, conformably with his manifest mind and intention, which is made known principally either by the character of



his religion was teaching Tradition and when it was just teaching tradition, and in reality, he was not sure what to do with the possibility that his religion had taught him incorrectly. Most knew that his formula had failed him, so his fallback position was that the church had *clearly* taught that Mary is the Woman of [Revelation 12](#), and that the church had *clearly* taught that Mary did not experience pain in childbirth. And such prevarication as this one might expect from politicians, but not from men claiming to defend the truth of God and the honor of Mary.

Has there ever been a man more in search of a teaching church than William G. Most? Did not Most concede the Protestant position when he relied on his own studies with the aid of the Holy Spirit to find truth in the “Word of God”? Did he not venture outside of *Verbum Dei* when he developed his own tool for interpretation—the theory of demonstrated repetition—a tool contained nowhere within Rome’s revelation? Most died on January 31, 1999 still desiring desperately that his church teach him on these matters, and yet to his death, Rome never promulgated an infallible decree stating that Mary had given birth to Christ without tearing the flesh, without loss of blood, and without pain. Nor had Rome infallibly clarified that the Woman of [Revelation 12](#) is Mary. What is remarkable is that Most’s article on the virginity of Mary uses such detailed anatomical language about Mary’s reproductive system as would make a sailor blush, which is precisely what the unpublished statement from the Holy Office would have intended to prevent. Yet, instead of following the clear intent of the unofficial decree—that is, “that for the future the publication of such dissertations on this problem be prohibited”—Most completely ignored it and instead published his own dissertation on the problem, so desperate was he to extract Tradition from the Deposit of Faith. His attempts to extract the last possible drop of Tradition from a Magisterium which clearly has no intention of ever resolving his question is a clear demonstration that Tradition, the third infallible pillar of Divine Revelation, has also failed Rome. There simply is no infallible way to determine what is Tradition and what is tradition. If any Roman Catholic denies the quandary, let him explain how meatless Fridays and the Latin Mass managed to make the transition from Tradition to tradition in one generation. There are many Tridentine Catholics, Old Catholics and Sedevacantist Catholics who would love to hear such an explanation, because they had been taught, and still believe, these teachings are Tradition.

### **What is the Canon of Tradition?**

The question for Roman Catholics remains unresolved: what is the canon of Tradition? Not only do Roman Catholics not know this, they also are unable to discern infallibly even by what criteria a tradition can be found to be Tradition, as Most discovered. Thus to answer the question, “What is the canon of Tradition,” the truth is that Roman Catholics cannot know with nearly the certainty they profess that which their Church has, or has not, taught them as such. Considering that the infallible Magisterium and the office of the Infallible pope is proposed as *the* solution to the confusion of sectarian Protestantism, it is odd that the Roman Catholic who desires to know what Tradition is finds himself with even more information to sort through than anyone could do in an entire lifetime. Is this not a religion more suited for skeptics than for Christians? With the enormous expanse of potentially infallible teachings, and the vast territory plowed by fallible Church Fathers, and a host of questions which Rome will never answer, can a Roman Catholic

---

the documents in question, or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated” (Paragraph 25).

ever be persuaded that he has believed or discovered all that is necessary for salvation? Until Rome provides a canon of *ex cathedra* papal statements, an infallible and exhaustive interpretation of the Scriptures and an infallible compendium of Tradition, the Roman Catholic is denied any certainty of knowledge about anything. Though one thing they can know with infallible certainty: that there is a terrible trade-off when men desire to hold to Tradition as Rome has:

“And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:9).

Holding to Tradition as Rome has requires a rejection of the commandment of God. Is there an infallible compilation of Tradition? Is there an infallible compilation of infallible interpretation of Scripture? Is there an infallible compilation of infallible papal teachings? If so, let the Roman Catholic produce the lists. If not, let all boasting cease and be replaced with repentance of prideful boasting and with an imitation of Christ, Who’s defense against error was, “It is written ...” rather than “It has been held by some that ...”

## Ten Reasons Why I Am Not a Roman Catholic

By Dr. Robert A. Morey

Having been invited on several occasions to become a Roman Catholic, I have thought deeply on this issue for many years. Now, it is not my intent to offend sincere Roman Catholics. All of us are traveling on our own spiritual road. But, for people like me, all roads do **not** lead to Rome!

While there are many more reasons why I cannot convert to Catholicism, the following ten reasons are of a practical nature drawn from my personal experience. Your experience may be different. But I can only speak to what I have seen and heard over fifty years of life.

Reason #1: *Since the modern Roman Catholic Church clearly teaches that it is not necessary to become a Roman Catholic to go to heaven, why then should I bother joining it?* If popes, priests, Mary, the saints, the mass, statues, novenas, etc. are not essential for salvation and I can make it to heaven through my own sincere faith in whatever I choose to believe, I simply don’t see why I should waste my time converting to Romanism. I am “Ok” where I am!

Reason #2: *The authority of the Roman Catholic Church seems completely arbitrary to me.* I am old enough to remember Catholic friends telling me that they were in danger of hell fire if they ate meat on Friday. Then the rule was dropped.

“Outside of the Church, there is no salvation” was a big doctrine at one time. A lot of Protestants were killed during the Inquisition under that dogma. But that has been changed to, “Outside of the Church, there is lots of salvation.” Which is right?

I remember how my Catholic landlady had a royal fit when the Pope announced that her favorite saint, for whom she and her local church were named, was no longer listed as a saint. They even changed the name of her church!

Obviously, the Bible and Catholic tradition cannot be cited as the authority for the above changes. So, when push comes to shove, the supposed twin authority of “Scripture and Tradition” is a myth. The true authority lies in the “Church” conceived of as the contemporary leaders beginning with the Pope at the top and working itself down to the local parish priest.

What this means is that the present generation of Catholic leaders can do whatever they want. They don’t need any higher authority because *they* are the highest authority on earth. If the present pope wished, he could declare Mary to be the fourth member of the Godhead. Past Popes did not need Scripture or Tradition to teach that she was sinless or that she ascended into heaven. Arbitrary authority produces arbitrary laws and doctrines.

Reason #3: *The Roman Catholic Church cannot give me an infallible list of infallible papal decrees.* Those Catholic apologists who come up with a list cannot get their list declared infallible by the Magisterium. Without an infallible list drawn up by the infallible Church, “infallibility” means nothing.

Reason #4: *The Roman Church cannot give me an infallible list of infallible interpretations of specific passages in the Bible.* Thus all the interpretations given by Popes, Bishops, prelates, priests, and apologists are not “infallible” *per se*, but only their own *private* opinion of what a specific passage means. Why then is the Protestant condemned for doing the same thing?

Reason #5: *It always amused me to no end when a Catholic apologist asked the people in the audience to turn to a passage in their Bible as proof for some Catholic doctrine.* How Protestant of him! Are not such appeals nothing more or less than the practice of *sola scriptura*? If you appeal to the Bible as your authority for popery, this means the Bible is a higher authority than popery.

Reason #6: *The doctrine of papal infallibility is an exercise in circular reasoning.* A pope is infallible whenever he is infallible. As soon as you catch a Pope in error, he is excused because he was fallible at that time. Thus you cannot prove or disprove papal infallibility.

Reason #7: *Most Catholics do in fact worship and adore the statues and relics of Mary and the saints. Thus they are guilty of idolatry.* It does not matter if a theologian uses different Latin words to defend the practice. The average Catholic does not know of or care about such fine distinctions in Latin. They kiss and adore the statues of the Virgin Mary or the saints as sincerely and fervently as a Hindu does the idols of his gods and goddesses.

Reason #8: *I have never heard the Gospel preached in a Roman Catholic Church.* In forty years, I have not found a single Roman Catholic apologist who understood the grace of God. All their hope of heaven is based on their being a loyal Catholic and a good person. Either the Roman Church does not preach the Gospel or it has utterly failed to teach it to the average member. I choose to go where the Gospel is preached with clarity.

Reason #9: *The pagan rituals and superstitious practices of Catholicism are a big turn off to me.* They are not only tolerated but encouraged and defended.

Candles, incense, beads, and bells,  
Priests, nuns and popes from hell;  
All these things mean naught to me,  
*For Sovereign grace has set me free.*

Reason #10: *I am complete in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:10). Thus I find no need for popery in any way.* Since Jesus died for my sins, rose for my justification, and intercedes for me in heaven, I do not need the pope, priests, masses, Mary, the saints, indulgences, pilgrimages, etc.

Jesus paid it all!  
All to Him I owe.  
Sin had left a crimson stain;  
But Jesus washed it white as snow.

## Conclusion

These ten reasons are why I cannot become a Roman Catholic. For more information on Roman Catholicism:

# The Forgotten Gospel of John Bunyan in the Pilgrim's Progress<sup>1</sup>

by Barry E. Horner

In hosting seminars on *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the second most widely circulated piece of English literature after the English Bible, on several occasions participants have confessed their ignorance or confusion concerning the exact identity of John Bunyan and his writings. For instance some have suggested that *The Pilgrim's Progress* was an account of the Pilgrim Fathers' journey from Europe to America. Other have confused John Bunyan with Paul Bunyan, the American folklore hero!

From another perspective, many misunderstandings have arisen today that have led to abysmal ignorance concerning what the English tinker's most famous allegory really intended to convey. To begin with *The Pilgrim's Progress* was not primarily written for children, even though it well adapts to their understanding and love for an adventure story. It certainly was not written for the titillation of academics, particularly University specialists found in history and English departments. Nor was it designed as a simple evangelistic tract, notwithstanding its clear presentation of the biblical gospel. And it was not intended to be a non-doctrinal novel that merely commended abstract ethics. Rather John Bunyan purposed to communicate, in a beguiling manner, four vital biblical truths. First, concerning the saving substitute righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ obtained through faith alone. Second, the progressive sanctification of

---

**1**

Much of this material is derived from the author's volume *The Pilgrim's Progress, An Evangelical Apologetic, Themes & Issues*, which more comprehensively deals with these and other doctrinal matters related to the matchless allegory and other writings of John Bunyan.

the saved sinner. Third, the vital importance of fellowship in an authentic local church under faithful pastoral leadership. Fourth, the incentive that a vision of reaching heaven provides for progressing pilgrims. The first of these emphases will now be the focus of our attention, and especially the more biblical character of the gospel that Bunyan so passionately proclaimed in the light of superficial modern day evangelism.

## **The Gospel of John Bunyan**

Of all the emphases concerning the truth of God incorporated in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, none is equal in importance to Bunyan's multifaceted representation of the authentic Christian gospel. In these days of spiritual declension as the twentieth century concludes, this foundational evangelistic thrust in allegorical form is of crucial importance since the contemporary presentation of the gospel has become so diluted of truth, and as a consequence so anemic, as to be in many cases utterly disqualified. Yet on the other hand, it needs to be understood that the predominant concern of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is with regard to sanctification rather than salvation, thus an apparent though unreal contradiction seems to arise. The gospel is of supreme importance in the allegory, yet sanctification is the major thrust of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

The explanation is this, that while the gospel is foundational to *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a whole, it is also of the essence of initial salvation and the ground of resultant sanctification. This formal distinction between salvation and sanctification on the one hand, and the inseparable relationship between salvation and sanctification on the other, is one which not only the sixteenth century Reformers upheld, but also their seventeenth century descendants. In this regard Bunyan was no exception. He explains this vital matter most clearly when, through the animated response of Christian to Ignorance, he yet expresses his own conviction concerning the gospel, both its root and fruit, very dogmatically:

Ignorance is thy name, and as thy name is, so art thou. ... Ignorant thou art of what justifying righteousness is, and as ignorant how to secure thy soul, through the faith of it, from the heavy wrath of God. Yea, thou art also ignorant of the true effects of saving faith in this righteousness of Christ, which is, to bow and win over the heart to God in Christ, to love his name, his Word, ways, and people, and not as thou ignorantly imaginest.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress* the gospel is a pervasive saving and sanctifying reality that manifests itself according to three related and important perspectives.

## **The Pilgrim's Progress is Christocentric**

Comprehensive proof of this assertion is provided elsewhere by the author.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, even a cursory review of the contents of Bunyan's *Works* will only reinforce the pervasive aspect of this claim. One might say, to coin an expression derived from Spurgeon, that if the tinker's "blood was bibline," then it circulated by means of a Christ animated heart. Of course the Christ that Bunyan worshiped was truthfully and explicitly revealed in the totality of the New Testament including both the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul. In *The Pilgrim's Progress* he is

---

<sup>2</sup> John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed., George Offor, III, p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> Barry E. Horner, *The Pilgrim's Progress, An Evangelical Apologetic, Themes & Issues*, pp. 172–83.

most frequently designated as the “Lord of the Hill,” that is the sovereign Savior of that hill called Calvary where full atonement for sinners was made.<sup>4</sup>

To begin with, like Bunyan’s own experience recorded in his autobiography *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, Christian’s early vision of Christ was ever so dim, and even at the Wicket-gate, which he was formerly unable to see. Thus his initial perception of the gospel was, although effectual, yet very basic. But following the revelation of the grace of Christ at the house of Interpreter and the Place of Deliverance, the pilgrim’s accelerated passion is to “see him alive that did hang dead on the cross,”<sup>5</sup> that is to “see him as he is” (I John 3:2), and this glorious goal he confesses to the enquiring inhabitants of the Palace Beautiful.

### **The Pilgrim’s Progress is Atonement Centered**

The pre-eminence of Christ for Bunyan is not measured simply in terms of perfectly wedded deity and humanity, not his divine incarnate person only but also his saving work and atoning sacrifice. Further, granted that Christ has come to deliver man from his overwhelming predicament, his hopeless bondage to sin and consequent judgment, more specifically the allegorist considered it of crucial importance as to how it is possible for a holy God to maintain His integrity and at the same time save the sinner. In simple terms, how could a just God pardon the ungodly? This was not so much a concern of the Latitudinarians and Quakers of Bunyan’s day who stressed an inward and gradual work of renovation in cooperation with grace that Christ’s atonement provided, resulting in justifying works. The Roman Catholic view of justification was virtually identical at this point.

However, for Bunyan the moral issue concerning God’s holy character (Is. 6:1–3) was vital since, to deal rightly with sin, satisfaction of His offended righteousness was absolutely necessary. Thus Richard Greaves comments:

The necessity of an atonement was based by Bunyan upon the assumption that grace could only be extended to the sinner in a way which was not contradictory to divine justice, hence the rhetorical question was asked: ‘If the Promise, and God’s grace without Christ’s Blood would have saved us, wherefore then did Christ die?’ For Bunyan there could be no thought of even the theoretical possibility that God could be gracious and merciful to sinners without an atonement for their sins.<sup>6</sup>

Hence in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* this penal, satisfactory, substitutionary understanding of the atonement is of pervasive importance, just as it is in *Grace Abounding*.

Of course, as with Luther and the other Reformers, the doctrine of Paul in particular was of crucial significance here. Concerning his own experience, the Bedford pastor relates in his autobiography:

One day, as I was passing in the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, Thy righteousness is in heaven; and methought withal, I saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God’s right hand there, I say, as my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was adoing, God

---

<sup>4</sup> The expression “Lord of the Hill” is used on eight occasions and in context refers to that Hill where Christian looked at the cross and was released of his burden, Bunyan, *Works*, III, pp. 105–7, 109–10, 143.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Greaves, *John Bunyan*, p. 36.

could not say of me, He wants [lacks] my righteousness, for that was just before him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed, I was loosed from my affliction and irons, my temptations also fled away.<sup>7</sup>

Hopeful also tells of the advice he received from Faithful: “He told me, that unless I could obtain the righteousness of a man that never had sinned, neither mine own, nor all the righteousness of the world, could save me. . . . He bid me say to this effect, God be merciful to me a sinner, and make me to know and believe in Jesus Christ; for I see, that if his righteousness had not been, or I have not faith in that righteousness, I am utterly cast away.” Finally revelation from Christ breaks through as he confesses: “From all which I gathered, that I must look for righteousness in his [Christ’s] person, and for satisfaction for my sins by his blood. . . . And now was my heart full of joy, mine eyes full of tears, and mine affections running over with love to the name, people, and ways of Jesus Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

### **The Pilgrim’s Progress is Justification Centered**

When Christian’s clothing of filthy rags, being representative of his shabby righteousnesses (Isa. 64:6), is taken away at the Place of Deliverance and replaced with a free coat, all of this being as a result of his look of faith at the crucified Christ, Bunyan graphically portrays the essential truth of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone. Christian further explains to Formalist and Hypocrisy: “As for this coat that is on my back, it was given me by the Lord of the place whither I go; and that . . . to cover my nakedness with. And I take it as a token of his kindness to me; for I had nothing but rags before.”<sup>9</sup>

The Latitudinarian, Edward Fowler,<sup>10</sup> a future Bishop, with whom Bunyan strenuously disputed over this matter in his *Defense Of The Doctrine Of Justification*, maintained that justification before God was a cooperative work whereby the sinner and internal grace produced justifying works. This synergistic gospel, being much like that of Roman Catholicism, meant that man was saved through gradual moral improvement. To this, and in stark contrast, Bunyan upheld an objective rather than a subjective atonement whereby the believing sinner, by looking to Christ’s complete and satisfactory sacrifice, was justified and accredited with Christ’s perfect righteousness. Pieter de Vries is right when he comments: “Bunyan was a staunch advocate of the forensic nature of justification. God clothes us with the righteousness that lies altogether outside ourselves and resides solely in the person of Christ. . . . The grounds of salvation lie in the work of Christ *for* us and not in that of the Holy Spirit *in* us.”<sup>11</sup> In contrast, Fowler maintained that cooperation with infused and subjective grace was the ground of human works that obtained

---

<sup>7</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, I, §§ 229–230, pp. 35–36.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, III, pp. 154–156.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Hill describes “Latitudinarians” as “liberal, rational, middle-of-the-road men.” He explains that in Edward Fowler’s *The Design of Christianity*, this Anglican moderate not only rejected the doctrine of imputed righteousness, but also propounded that, “a holy and a moral life was possible for everyone, because the principles of such a life were written in the hearts of all men.” *A Tinker and a Poor Man*, p. 130.

<sup>11</sup> Pieter de Vries, *John Bunyan on the Order of Salvation*, pp. 147, 148.

progressive justification. On the other hand, for Bunyan, faith in objective grace, that is the Calvary atonement outside of the sinner, was also works based, but these works were exclusively those of Christ's doing and dying.

In the detailed dispute between Christian and Ignorance on the Enchanted Ground, this objective/subjective conflict concerning the atonement is at the heart of their disagreement. Ignorance declares: "I believe that Christ died for sinners; and that I shall be justified before God from the curse, through his gracious acceptance of my obedience to his law. Or thus, Christ makes my duties, that are religious, acceptable to his Father, by virtue of his merits; and so shall I be justified."<sup>12</sup> To this Christian responds:

Thou believest with a false faith; because it taketh justification from the personal righteousness of Christ, and applies it to thy own. . . . This faith maketh not Christ a justifier of thy person, but of thy actions; and of thy person for thy action's sake, which is false. . . . True justifying faith puts the soul, as sensible of its lost condition by the law, upon flying for refuge unto Christ's righteousness, which righteousness of his is not an act of grace, by which he maketh, for justification, thy obedience accepted with God; but his personal obedience to the law, in doing and suffering for us what that required at our hands; this righteousness, I say, true faith accepteth, under the skirt of which, the soul being shrouded, and by it presented as spotless before God, it is accepted, and acquit from condemnation.<sup>13</sup>

In response to this, Ignorance recoils with the objection, "What! Would you have us trust to what Christ, in his own person, has done without [outside of<sup>14</sup>] us? This conceit would loosen the reigns of our lust, and tolerate us to live as we list; for what matter how we live, if we may be justified by Christ's personal righteousness from all, when we believe it?"<sup>15</sup> Such a response is not unlike that of Paul's unidentified opponent in [Romans 6:15](#).

## The Scenes of the Gospel

During the course of *The Pilgrim's Progress* there are numerous areas of focus where the content of the gospel is portrayed with distinctive emphasis. When this truth is considered as a whole, it can be concluded with the greatest certainty that the biblical gospel has abiding significance for the Christian; it is not merely initiatory, but perennially glorious.

## Evangelist Directs Christian to the Wicketgate

---

<sup>12</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 158.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Bunyan's meaning of "without" means the more archaic "external to" rather than the modern "exclusive of." Refer to *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Further support for this meaning is found in Bunyan's *Gospel Truth's Opened* where he distinguishes between a subjective and an objective atonement, even though in this instance he is opposing Quaker doctrine. "The new, false Christ, is a Christ crucified within, dead within, risen again within, and ascended within, in opposition to the Son of Mary, who was crucified without, dead without, risen again without, and ascended in a cloud away from his disciples into heaven without them ([Acts 1:9–11](#))." *Works*, II, pp. 134–5.

<sup>15</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 158.



While reading the Bible in the City of Destruction causes Christian to experience an increasing load of guilt, it is Evangelist who first directs him to the gospel by way of his exhortation to flee toward the Wicket-gate, even though at that stage the distressed pilgrim is too dim of sight to identify this entrance into the narrow way. However, it is “yon shining light,” or “a lamp shining in a dark place” that shows the way ahead to Jesus Christ, “the morning star” (II Pet. 1:19). Upon his arrival at the Wicket-gate, the burdened pilgrim is confronted with a gospel montage, that is Jesus Christ as the door (John 10:9), the way (John 14:6), and Good-will (Luke 2:14). Thus his course is set and a short way ahead, at the Place of Deliverance, the clarity of the gospel of free grace through an imputed righteousness results in assurance that his sin has been borne away (Ps. 103:12). As Christian travels onward, numerous incidents cause him to recall his hope in a crucified Christ. These include boasting about his coat to Formalist and Hypocrisy, the supper at the Palace Beautiful, and his subsequent victory over Apollyon when he is strengthened by eating bread and drinking from the bottle of wine given to him by his former companions, Discretion, Prudence, Piety, and Charity.

### **Evangelist Rescues Christian from a False Gospel**

The seduction of Christian by Mr. Worldly-Wiseman is countered by the genuine pastoral interest of Evangelist who exposes this charlatan’s fraudulent gospel. Such a deceitful evangel, supposedly offering burden relief by means of Legality at the Village Morality just beyond a “high hill,” is in fact encouragement to attempt what is humanly impossible, that is the scaling of Mt. Sinai so as to attain its demands of a perfect righteousness (Gal. 5:3). Thus Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, while denouncing Christian’s book as well as free grace through the cross, is a proclaimer of “justification by the works of the law” (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16). Further, this false gospel or “administration of death” (II Cor. 3:7–11) only results in condemnation. Nevertheless Evangelist redirects Christian toward Christ at the Wicket-Gate with words of encouragement: “Yet will the man at the gate receive thee, for he has good-will for men.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Christian’s Encounter with the Wicket-Gate**

Although the apparent disjunction between the Wicket-gate and the Place of Deliverance is a reflection of Bunyan’s particular experience, explained in detail in Chapter 6, it ought to be understood that biblically speaking, and the author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* would heartily agree here, this entrance is the great gospel transition point from darkness to light, from condemnation to justification, from the broad road leading to destruction to the narrow road leading to eternal life (Matt. 7:13–14). Entrance requires a felt load of guilt before God and an earnest response to the gospel invitation (Matt. 7:7); this is simple though earnest faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation and reconciliation with God (Matt. 11:28; John 14:6). The gospel, when seriously approached, is not complex, but it does demand the prerequisite of a “broken and a contrite heart” (Ps. 51:17). Furthermore, in progressing beyond this gate, this same gospel retains ongoing importance since entrance through the Wicket-gate has become the fundamental insignia of a bona fide pilgrim, and by this means the illegitimacy of Formalist and Hypocrisy, and Ignorance, is identified.

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

If the specifics of the atonement seem to be missing at this juncture, Christian is certainly pulled through the Wicket-gate by the nail-pierced hands of Goodwill, who is later identified in Part Two of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

## **The House of Interpreter**

Of the seven scenes that instruct Christian, two in particular have a gospel emphasis that, being communicated by the Holy Spirit, enlarge the understanding of the new pilgrim concerning the narrow way along which he now travels.

### ***1. The distinction between the law and the gospel.***

This second scene, concerning the dusty room, illustrates the distinction between the law and the gospel which Bunyan, according to the particular influence of Luther, believed to be of great importance. In simple terms, the new Christian is to understand that having been initially saved by the gospel, he will also be maintained and sanctified by the gospel, and not the law. As he puts it, unlike the gospel, “it [the law] doth not give power to subdue.”<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere Bunyan writes:

That thou mayest know the nature of the love of Christ, ... be much in acquainting of thy soul with the nature of the law, and the nature of the gospel ([Gal. 3:21](#)). ... The law is a servant, both first and last, to the gospel ([Rom. 10:3–4](#)): when therefore it is made a Lord, it destroyeth: and then to be sure it is made a Lord and Savior of, when its dictates and commands are depended upon for life.<sup>19</sup>

### ***2. The grace of Christ conquers the assailed heart.***

This fourth scene, concerning the inextinguishable blaze, illustrates the surpassing greatness of the sustaining grace of Christ in the face of Satan's furious attempts to douse the flaming soul that has been ignited in the first place by Christ ([Rom. 5:20](#)). As Bunyan explains, “This is Christ, who continually, with the oil of his grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, gospel grace began the work in the soul, and only gospel grace can uphold that work in the soul to the end.

## **The Palace Beautiful**

This representation of a faithful non-conformist church indicates the pastoral centrality of the gospel in a number of ways. To begin with, there is careful investigation by the Palace Beautiful inhabitants as to whether Christian has had an authentic encounter with the gospel via the Wicket-gate, and that his new affections reflect genuine conversion. In testifying that he has occasional spiritual victories, Christian points out that these are obtained through meditation on the cross and his coat.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., III, p. 99.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., II, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., III, p. 100.

However, it is at supper time, when the Lord's Table is so graphically portrayed, that the gospel is seen to be of such sustaining influence for the residents. Here the details of Christ's atonement are explained in graphic and applicatory detail as the household partakes of "fat things, and with wine that was well refined."<sup>21</sup> In conversation around the table, they discussed that he [the Lord of the hill], had been a "great warrior" involving "the loss of much blood."<sup>22</sup> Further, "he had stripped himself of his glory, that he might do this for the poor. . . . They said moreover, that he had made many pilgrims princes, though by nature they were beggars born, and their original had been the dunghill."<sup>23</sup> Even at his departure, the strengthened pilgrim is given gospel tokens for the frequent and nourishing remembrance of Christ's saving work.

### **Faithful's Conversion and Witness**

Convinced by Christian's witness at the City of Destruction that he should go on pilgrimage, Faithful is propositioned by Wanton just outside the Wicket-gate. In resisting her, presumably he is also snatched in through the gate by Good-will as was Christian and thus savingly joined to Christ. In being at first inclined toward the seductive proposal of Old Man Adam the first, he incurs the severe condemnation of Moses yet is delivered by the man with holes in his hands and side.

Up to this point Faithful's apprehension of Christ seems weaker than that of Christian, though strengthening seems to rapidly increase as he disputes with Talkative and witnesses at Vanity Fair. Here he explains to Hopeful in the plainest possible terms that only the saving perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, received for justification through faith alone, could save him. This gospel witness and Faithful's subsequent martyrdom made a considerable impression upon the town of Vanity, as is evident in Part Two when Christiana finds fellowship there, and the populace is reported to have become less aggressive towards pilgrims.

### **Hopeful's Conversion and Witness**

This testimony of conversion given to Christian on the Enchanted Ground is the model presentation of the gospel in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In contrast with Christian's experience, there is no disjunction here between conversion and assurance. A summary of this testimony is as follows:

1. Worldly intoxication without guilt.
2. Conviction commences in various circumstances.
3. Self-reformation attempted with religious duties.
4. Conviction strengthens through Scripture truth.
5. Consultation with Faithful.
  - a. He needs a perfect righteousness.
  - b. The Lord Jesus is the only righteous man.
  - c. Believe on the Lord Jesus for justification.
6. Objections to Faithful's invitation.

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

- a. It is presumptuous to come to Christ.
  - b. What is it to come to Christ?
7. Christ is revealed from heaven and invites.
8. Objections to Christ's invitation.
- a. I am a great sinner.
  - b. What is it to believe?
9. Embrace of Christ as saving righteousness.
10. Confession of Christ to Christian.

## **The Testimony of Ignorance**

The stark contrast between the gospel attested to by Hopeful and that of Ignorance subsequently discussed at the Enchanted Ground is of the highest importance to Bunyan. Described as “a very brisk lad” at his first meeting with Christian and Hopeful, Ignorance is immediately identified as an apostate since he strenuously defends his entrance into the narrow way by means of “a little crooked lane,”<sup>24</sup> and not via the Wicket-gate. He is firmly religious and intent on entering the Celestial City. When the three pilgrims are reacquainted at the Enchanted Ground some distance ahead, the ensuing detailed dispute between Christian and Ignorance may be likened to Paul's animated concern for the purity of the gospel in [Galatians 1:6–9](#); likewise for Bunyan, at this point essential truth is at stake ([Gal. 2:5](#)).

As considered earlier in this chapter, the controversy may be reduced to a question as to whether justification is by an objective, imputed and complete work of Christ crucified outside of man, or a subjective, infused, and cooperative work with Christ within the heart of man as maintained by Roman Catholicism. Ignorance is constantly stressing his trust in what is going on within his heart, good thoughts, etc., so that he objects to the suggestion that he is a thorough sinner. Thus, he believes in a collaborative work with grace in his life whereby good works are produced that result in gradual justification before God. Christian is emphatic that faith alone must lay hold of what Christ has completed as an atonement on Mt. Calvary outside of the sinful heart. However, Ignorance is unwavering to the end in his belief in a mystical gospel, and it is significant that when he finally arrives at the entrance to the Celestial City, he declares his qualification for entrance to be, not Christ's righteousness but, “I have eat and drank in the presence of the King, and he has taught in our streets [[Luke 13:26](#)].”<sup>25</sup>

## **The Doctrine of the Gospel**

At this point, those today who merely have a sentimental, and broad evangelical regard for *The Pilgrim's Progress* will, when they correctly understand what Bunyan's gospel doctrine is all about, find themselves on the horns of a dilemma. Either they will have to walk away from their literary hero since their contemporary grasp of the gospel is admitted to be radically different from that portrayed in the famous allegory, or else they will have to change their understanding of the gospel in such a way that it will be likened to a theological Copernican revolution. For instance, the contemporary terminology that expresses

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

Christian conversion as, “inviting Jesus Christ into your heart” will not mesh with Bunyan’s representation of the Gospel. It is more akin to the Roman Catholic gospel where justification is by infused grace.

In this regard, another option would be a revisionist approach that attempts to contextualize the famous allegory’s gospel on the grounds of modern culture, outdated theology, a political cause, or particularly an ecumenical agenda. This author recalls teaching through *The Pilgrim’s Progress* to an adult Sunday School class many years ago. The participants had been provided with a paperback version published by Moody Press. In commenting on the incident in the Valley of Humiliation where Christian passes by the cave of nail-biting and decrepit Pope as well as deceased Pagan, it was discovered that the paperback edition in use, otherwise correct in its content, did not include this incident. Subsequent correspondence with Moody Press included their claim that they were ignorant of this omission. In a similar manner, the brilliantly illustrated version, *Dangerous Journey* published by Eerdmans, also omits Pope while Pagan remains alive and portrays Pope’s stiff joints and frustration.

First and foremost, Bunyan was a thorough biblicist who very conscientiously sought the truth in Holy Scripture for himself without relying upon many secondary sources. Of course, he had no knowledge of the original languages, and made no pretense that he did; however in no way did he disparage those more scholarly Puritans who were of like precious faith. Nevertheless his devotion to the English Bible was primary since he openly confessed his preference for not drawing from the wells of other men. Even so, other influences did impinge upon him, all of course claiming biblical roots. These shaped his theology in a secondary sense, particularly with regard to the gospel. At the same time it must be acknowledged that Bunyan was very much his own man and not one to fall in line with a system of doctrine for the sake of loyalty and acceptance in some church association. Hence the primary influences upon Bunyan’s doctrine of the gospel are now considered as follows:

### **Presupposition Concerning Sin**

Bunyan’s understanding of sin, its historic commencement in the Garden of Eden and universal consequences, is classically biblical and orthodox. He believed in an original, historic Adam who fathered the sinful human race:

He [Adam] ... made them [his children] sinners—‘By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.’ (Rom. 5:19). ... He [Adam] was the conduit pipe through which the devil did convey off his poisoned spawn and venom nature into the hearts of Adam’s sons and daughters, by which they are at this day so strongly and so violently carried away, that they fly as fast to hell, and the devil, by reason of sin, as chaff before a mighty wind.”<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere he writes of a person presently being, “under the wrath of God because of original sin (Rom. 5:12).”<sup>27</sup>

Thus he believed in the doctrine of original or congenital sin whereby even from birth and the cradle sin is inherently present.

Furthermore, “[sin] is that which hath stupified and besotted the powers of men’s souls, and made them even next to a beast or brute in all matters supernatural and heavenly (II Pet. 2:12). For as the beast minds nothing but his lusts and his belly, by nature, so man minds nothing but

---

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.iconbusters.com/iconbusters/lechery/currentlechery1.htm> That source links also to Roman Catholic sources that further show the mystery of iniquity at work.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., II, p. 166.

things earthly, sensual, and devilish, by reason of iniquity.”<sup>28</sup> This pollution is not only universal but thorough and has resulted in man being infected in all of his faculties, intellect, will, and affections, so that every individual can only move with the freedom of this corrupt nature. “[Sin] has alienated the will, the mind, and affections, from the choice of the things that should save it, and wrought them over to a hearty delight in those things that naturally tend to drown it in perdition and destruction (Col. 1:21).”<sup>29</sup> Consequently, man retains no inherent ability to take pleasure in and obey the righteousness of God, such as via “free-will.”<sup>30</sup> Any holy response on man’s part, even saving faith, can only be generated by particular grace sovereignly imparted (Eph. 2:8).<sup>31</sup>

## Martin Luther

It is not difficult to understand Bunyan’s feelings of spiritual kinship here with the great Reformer Martin Luther. As a tinker, newly married, he became increasingly aware of his own inner ungodliness; the misery was excruciating. Moreover he then read a book that described this struggle and at the same time prescribed the remedy with great animation and jealous regard for the supremacy of free and sovereign grace. Hence, it is not surprising that Bunyan wrote in *Grace Abounding* concerning Luther’s *Commentary On Galatians* that, “I found my condition, in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my heart. . . . I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians, excepting the Holy Bible, before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience.”<sup>32</sup>

Of course, as an Augustinian monk, Luther had faced the same struggle concerning his inward corruption and the great question as to how reconciliation might be made with a righteous God. So it seems that Bunyan felt forever indebted to Luther for his ministration of gospel truth, especially its description in Pauline terms of the free, objective, substitutionary “righteousness of God” (Rom. 1:17), that is “the gift of righteousness” (Rom. 5:15), or “the righteousness which is by faith” (Rom. 9:30). To illustrate this dependence on Bunyan’s part, consider the conclusion of that turbulent period of over two years following his conversion when he came to a point of immediate enlightenment and stability. In *Grace Abounding* he writes:

Suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, *Thy righteousness is in heaven*; and methought withall, I saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God’s right hand; there, I say, as my righteousness. . . . Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed, I was loosed from my affliction and irons, my temptations also fled away; . . . So when I came home, I looked to see if I could find that sentence, *Thy righteousness is in heaven*; but could not find such a saying, wherefore my heart began to sink again, only that was brought to my remembrance, *he of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*; by this word I saw the other Sentence true (I Cor. 1:30).<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 512.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> “[I]t is no error to say, that a man naturally has Will, and a Power to pursue his will, and that as to his salvation [his own way]. But it is a damnable error to say that he hath will and power to pursue it, *and that in God’s way* [emphasis added].” Ibid., p. 241; cf. also pp. 312, 756.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., I, §§ 129–130, p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., I, §§ 229–30, p. 72.

Now compare Luther's *Lectures on Galatians* where he comments on, "For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness" (5:5):

I conclude that perfect righteousness has been prepared for me in heaven. ... in this hope I am strengthened against sin and look for the consummation of perfect righteousness in heaven. ... [Devout Christians] know that they have eternal righteousness, for which they look in hope as an utterly certain possession, laid up in heaven, when they are most aware of the terrors of sin and death; and that they are the lords of everything when they seem to be the poorest of all.<sup>34</sup>

Thus it is the Reformer from Wittenberg rather than Calvin from Geneva who made such an indelible impression, and there is general agreement that this influence persisted throughout the length of the tinker's ministry. Although Bunyan was a strong predestinarian, there was a doctrinal motif that guided him which was far more influential than divine determinism, namely the reign of grace. Richard Greaves describes this dominion of gospel grace as follows:

The influence of Luther on Bunyan's concept of the nature of God can be seen especially in Bunyan's view of God fundamentally in terms of the wrath grace dichotomy rather than in terms of the Calvinist emphasis on the sovereign will of God. The controlling motif in Bunyan's theology was not the more philosophical principle of the divine will exercising supreme control in the universe, but the more personal and experiential conflict which raged in both the convicted sinner and the converted pilgrim who sensed on the one hand the dread of God whose wrath could not be mitigated because of the wrong done to his holiness and justice, and on the other hand the all-sufficient grace of a God whose love and mercy had triumphed in the salvation of his elect.<sup>35</sup>

How then does this perspective find its outworking in *The Pilgrim's Progress*? It is evidenced in a consideration of the far greater degree to which sin and grace find emphasis in contrast with the sovereignty of divine will. Of course this is not an either/or situation but rather a matter of primacy, and in this respect, beyond doubt, *The Pilgrim's Progress* does manifestly give greater place to that sovereignty of grace which is greater than all our sin (Rom. 5:20). It is the grace of *sola scriptura*, *sola christos*, *sola fide*, of free justification, of imputed righteousness.

## Law and Gospel

This emphasis clearly confirms the dominant influence of the German Reformer over the Bedford pastor, and as Hill points out, along with the impact of John Foxe, John Owen, and William Dell.<sup>36</sup> For Luther, law and gospel were antithetical, reactive, though both in necessary tension. Law, as the declaration of God's perfect righteousness, thunders against incapacitated sinful man. More than that, it magnifies and arouses sin in whatever crevice it hides. It offers no extenuating circumstances, no middle ground, no relativity, no truce, only relentless and accusatory demand.

On the other hand grace rightly quenches and satisfies and has dominion over all that the law requires. It justly pardons sinners and thereby silences the condemnatory voice of the law. Whatever the law is able to arouse and terrify through guilt, grace is able to cleanse, quench and bring peace through pardon. The law, as represented by Moses, is a ministry of condemnation

---

<sup>34</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, 27, pp. 22, 27. Cf. a similar comment on 2:15–16, p. 225.

<sup>35</sup> Greaves, *John Bunyan*, p. 155.

<sup>36</sup> Hill, *A Tinker And A Poor Man*, pp. 157–160.

and death while grace, as embodied in Jesus Christ, is a ministry of free righteousness and life and peace (John 1:17; Rom. 5:1, 17–21; II Cor. 3:7–18).

So in *The Pilgrim's Progress* there are several indications of the major importance of this truth for Bunyan. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman counsels Christian to lose his burden at the Village of Morality just beyond “yonder high hill.”<sup>37</sup> However, this representation of Mt. Sinai only thunders at the pilgrim's attempt to scale the impossible heights of the law. Then at the house of Interpreter, the second scene there is a precise portrayal of the opposite roles of law and grace. The dusty room is man's thoroughly polluted heart which the sweeper only magnified. But then the damsel sprinkles the settling and cleansing influences of the gospel.

Further on Faithful is inclined to heed Old Man Adam the first. For this reason Moses mercilessly and repeatedly beats him down until Christ comes to the rescue and drives away the accuser. Surprisingly, although Bunyan deals with this whole doctrinal matter in great detail in his *The Doctrine Of The Law And Grace Unfolded* published in 1659,<sup>38</sup> and that in modified covenantal terms when he refers to the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, yet he declines to use these covenantal designations in any way in *The Pilgrim's Progress* later published in 1678, as well as Part Two in 1684. This may well have been for the purpose of not involving his readers with more intricate terminology.

## Calvinism

In consideration of more exact doctrinal definitions, while it is unquestionably true that Bunyan was a strict Calvinist, yet to be far more precise he was really a predestinarian as was Luther, probably being more familiar with the German's *Bondage Of The Will* than the Frenchman's *Institutes Of The Christian Religion*. Bunyan's Works express no regard for Calvin that is comparable to his confessed reliance upon Luther. In this vein Greaves explains:

On this Lutheran foundation Bunyan built an essentially Calvinistic superstructure with the ideas which he assimilated from the writings of Bayly and Dent,<sup>39</sup> the teaching of Gifford and Burton, his ministerial association with men such as Owen [and Dell], and his contact in general with the recurrent and often controversial discussion of basic Christian principles which absorbed the minds of so many in the seventeenth century. . . . In the Westminster Confession and the writings of Owen, to use two obvious examples, predestination was a doctrine derived from the prior principles of the absolute sovereignty of the divine will and the concomitant decrees pronounced by that will, whereas in the writings of Bunyan the doctrine of predestination originated primarily in a soteriological concern, with men being predestined more on the basis of foreknowledge [forelove, not prescience?] and gracious love than as the result of abstract philosophical principles. In order that predestination be accomplished there had to be the effectual and irresistible calling of those predestined to glory, and in stating this doctrine Bunyan continued to draw upon his Calvinist mentors and associates. The remainder of his soteriology manifested consistent if not especially noteworthy Calvinist influence.<sup>40</sup>

From a twentieth century perspective, Bunyan would undoubtedly be regarded as a thoroughgoing, five point baptistic Calvinist rather than a Lutheran, and especially with regard to

---

<sup>37</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 94.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 492–575.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> Greaves, *John Bunyan*, pp. 156–157.



church structure and the ordinances. His belief in unconditional particular election, and rejection of free will as popularly understood, would mark him out as very different from the broad stream of evangelical Christendom.<sup>41</sup> Greaves also indicates that Bunyan seems to have professed belief in a limited or definite atonement while not writing at length on this issue as did his friend John Owen.<sup>42</sup> Refer to Chapter 9 for a more detailed consideration of this matter of sovereignty, election, and free will.

However, when we come to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the author, while dealing with issues related to the sovereignty of God in many instances, yet causes his tone in most cases to be mellow and winsome rather than direct and dogmatic as in his other writings. This bares out the comment of Samuel Coleridge that, "Calvinism never put on a less rigid form, never smoothed its brow and softened its voice more winningly than in *The Pilgrim's Progress*."<sup>43</sup> However, what are these more gentle representations of a gospel that exalts in the truth that salvation is wholly of the grace of God? There is the simple expression, "But as God would have it," which explains the ability of Christian to regain his lost sword, though almost vanquished, and give Apollyon a deadly thrust.<sup>44</sup>

Likewise following the martyrdom of Faithful, Bunyan relates, "But he that overrules all things, having the power of their rage in his own hand, so wrought it about, that Christian for that time escaped them, and went his way."<sup>45</sup> Then there is the despairing Reprobate in the Iron Cage, portrayed in the house of Interpreter, who explains that, "God has denied me repentance. His Word gives me no encouragement to believe; yea, himself hath shut me up in this iron cage; nor can all the men in the world let me out. O eternity! eternity! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity!"<sup>46</sup> The Shepherds declare to Christian and Hopeful, concerning the status of the way ahead, that it "is safe for those for whom it is to be safe; but transgressors shall fall therein (Hos. 14:9)."<sup>47</sup>

However, with more specific regard to the gospel, Bunyan makes it quite clear that a saving understanding of this message is only possible by means of sovereign revelation from heaven. When Hopeful seeks counsel from Faithful in Vanity, he is told to go to Christ, at which Christian asks of his companion on the Enchanted Ground, "And did the Father reveal his Son to you?" Hopeful responds, "Not at the first, nor second, nor third, nor fourth, nor fifth; no not at the sixth time neither." Then, having related how he eventually believed, Christian responds, "This was a revelation of Christ to your soul indeed."<sup>48</sup>

In the succeeding incident, when Christian disputes with Ignorance, at the conclusion of this encounter Hopeful interrupts with the question as to whether "he [Ignorance] ever had Christ revealed to him from heaven." Ignorance is offended at such a doctrinal emphasis to which Hopeful responds: "Why, man! Christ is so hid in God from natural apprehensions of the flesh, that he cannot by any man be savingly known, unless God the Father reveals him to them."<sup>49</sup> To

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 51–61.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 41–45.

<sup>43</sup> Roger Sharrock, ed., *Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, A Casebook*, p. 54.

<sup>44</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 113.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 155, 156.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 155, 158.

Bunyan then the grace of God and His uncompromised sovereignty are inseparable elements (Rom. 11:5–6). He portrays the gospel in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as being strongly urged upon all men, yet the authentic embrace of this saving message will ultimately and only be the response of those, “as God would have it.”

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that John Bunyan’s preaching, teaching, and writing had a vibrant quality about them, not unlike the animation and intensity one senses when reading the writings of Luther. Such a style was both infectious and captivating insofar as his hearers were concerned. And it is important to ask why? For instance, consider Bunyan’s concluding exhortation in his *A Few Sighs From Hell*, based upon an exposition of Luke 16:19–31 concerning the destiny of Dives and Lazarus:

Reader, here might I spend many sheets of paper, yea, I might upon this subject write a very great book, but I shall now forbear, desiring thee to be very conversant in the Scriptures, ‘for they are they which testify of Jesus Christ’ (John 5:39). The Bereans were counted noble upon this account: ‘These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily’ (Acts 17:11). But here let me give thee one caution, that is, have a care that thou do not satisfy thyself with a bare search of them, without a real application of him whom they testify of to thy soul, lest instead of faring the better for they doing this work, thou dost fare a great deal the worse, and thy condemnation be very much heightened, in that though thou did read so often the sad state of those that die in sin, and the glorious estate of them that close in with Christ, yet thou thyself shouldst be such a fool as to lose Jesus Christ, notwithstanding thy hearing, and reading so plentifully of him.<sup>50</sup>

Such Pauline earnestness demonstrates a vital, heartfelt compassion that is to be found in all of Bunyan’s writings, and yet sadly is so rare today. Greaves provides some help in our search for the reason for this fervency. It provokes careful thought concerning what ought to be at the heart of our gospel proclamation at this needy hour:

Because grace was [Bunyan’s] dominating motif, his thought retained a personal element which was often lacking in the writings of many Calvinists, notably those of Owen and the *Westminster Confession*. This sense of personal contact and vibrancy was, however, perhaps due more to the style of his writing than to his concern with grace; yet the concept of grace must be considered an important contributing factor to this personal element which pervaded his writings, since grace per se lent itself to a more personal treatment than did, for example, the more abstract concepts of sovereignty and will which were the basic principles of contemporary Calvinist theology. It was precisely this personal and living quality which made his sermons and writings so popular, for through the spoken and the printed word he made the workings of divine grace come alive.<sup>51</sup>

In conclusion, consider but another impassioned plea whereby Bunyan exudes the dominance of this divine grace in his life and ministry.

Coming sinner, the Jesus to whom thou art coming is lowly in heart, he despiseth not any. It is not thy outward meanness, not thy inward weakness; it is not because thou art poor, or base, or deformed, or a fool, that he will despise thee: he hath chosen the foolish, the base, and despised

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 709–710.

<sup>51</sup> Greaves, *John Bunyan*, pp. 159–160.

things of this world, to confound the wise and mighty. He will bow his ear to thy stammering prayers, he will pick out the meaning of thy inexpressible groans; he will respect thy weakest offering, if there be in it but thy heart (Matt. 11:20; Luke 14:21; Prov. 9:4–6; Isa. 38:14–15; S. of S. 5:15; John 4:27; Mark 12:33–34; Jas. 5:11). Now, is not this a blessed Christ, coming sinner?<sup>52</sup>

## The Anti Christ Unveiled

by Richard Bennett

On October 8th, 2000, Pope John Paul II, under the assumed title of Vicar of Christ, consecrated the world and the new millennium to “Mary Most Holy.”<sup>1</sup> This blasphemous “Act of Entrustment to Mary Most Holy” of that which belongs to God alone is a mockery of the First Commandment. The Pope’s official and offensive act ought to warn Christians that while the Pope formally claims to be “the true vicar of Christ,”<sup>2</sup> he in fact opposes Christ by false worship. What is equally serious is the title under which he performs. The True Vicar of Christ is the Holy Spirit. He alone is sent to take the Lord’s place, testifying not to Himself but to Christ. (John 15:26) The gravity of teaching and purporting to act in this divine role is that it denigrates the divine Person of the Holy Spirit. The Antichrist is also anti Holy Spirit.

With self-assurance, on September 5th 2000, the Church of Rome claimed, “the very fullness of grace and truth [of the Lord Jesus Christ is alone] entrusted to the Catholic Church.”<sup>3</sup> While aping His divine prerogatives, this was explicitly speaking against Christ, the only One who is full of grace and truth. The Scripture declares it necessary to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ alone, from Whom one receives “*abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness.*”<sup>4</sup> Over and against Him is the present day decree of Rome, “The Church affirms that for believers **the sacraments** of the New Covenant **are necessary for salvation.** ‘Sacramental grace’ is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament.”<sup>5</sup> What is not said here is that Rome’s physical sacraments, tightly gripped in the Pontiff’s hand and declared indispensable, are thereby substituted for the Lord of Glory and His Gospel. Unwaveringly, in the present day, too, Church of Rome has upheld *Unum Sanctum*, “We declare, say, define, and proclaim to every

---

<sup>52</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, I, p. 297.

<sup>1</sup> “The culminating moment of the Jubilee of Bishops was the Mass concelebrated by the Pope and Bishops in St Peter’s Square on Sunday morning, 8 October. Tens of thousands of the faithful gathered for the sacred liturgy, which concluded with the Act of Entrustment to Mary Most Holy.” *L’Osservatore Romano* Weekly edition in English 11 October 2000.htm

<sup>2</sup> Henry Denzinger, “Unam Sanctum”, Nov. 18, 1302, *The Sourcer of Catholic Dogma*, Tr. By Roy J. Deferrari, 30th ed. of *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, rev. by Karl Rahner, S. J. (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1957) #694. See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994) #882 & #936.

<sup>3</sup> Dominus Iesus, Section 16 [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000806\\_dominusiesus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominusiesus_en.html)

<sup>4</sup> [Romans 5:17](#).

<sup>5</sup> *Catechism*, #1129. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

human creature that they by necessity for salvation are entirely subject to the Roman Pontiff.”<sup>6</sup> Depending on these physical signs instead of direct faith on the Lord Christ Jesus is the deception of the papacy, which subtly deflects faith from the person of Christ to signs that are claimed to be powers.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, there are many other events wherein the Pope has officially contradicted the Gospel, as on May 13th of this “Jubilee Year 2000.” There are also historical events wherein is revealed horrendous sin, as the now documented involvement of Pope Pius XII in Hitler’s reign of death.<sup>8</sup> These things ought to make Christians consider carefully if their eyes have seen in the Office of the Papacy the line of men that the Scripture calls the Man of Sin for the Papacy gives the title of Vicar of Christ to its Pope.

## One Lord, One Holy Father

The Church of Rome authoritatively teaches that her Sovereign Pontiff is rightly called “Most Holy,”<sup>9</sup> and “the most holy Roman Pontiff.” This, together with usual titles of “Holy Father”<sup>10</sup> and “Vicar of Christ” is the full sense of the definition of the Antichrist given by the Apostle John. “*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.*”<sup>11</sup> The Pope, in assuming these titles to himself, is against the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Father in heaven by purporting to possess these very offices. Such haughtiness also blatantly breaks the New Covenant Law of the Christ, “*call no man your father upon the earth: for One is your Father, which is in heaven.*”<sup>12</sup> Christ Jesus declared, “*One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren*”<sup>13</sup> The Pope declares himself “Most Holy,” “Holy Father,” and “the true vicar of Christ.” The Pope’s claim is similar to that recorded in [Isaiah 14:14](#), “*I will be like the Most High.*” The Scripture speaks of such a one denying the Father and the Son by assuming the titles of both. In the words of Scripture we proclaim, “*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...*”<sup>14</sup>

## The Historical Origins of the Antichrist

Throughout history, circumstances concerning the coming and character of Christ have corresponded so brilliantly to prophecy that in the past the Lord’s people praised His name for it. Likewise, the Lord’s flock thanked Him for clearly depicting the Antichrist.

---

<sup>6</sup> Denzinger, #469.

<sup>7</sup> *Catechism*, #1116 states, “**Sacraments are ‘powers that come forth’** from the Body of Christ [i.e., The Roman Catholic Church] which is ever living and life-giving...”

<sup>8</sup> John Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (New York, NY 10014: Viking, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Denzinger, #649.

<sup>10</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Robert Broderick, ed. (Nashville, TN: Thos. Nelson Inc., 1976) p. 217.

<sup>11</sup> *1 John* 2:22.

<sup>12</sup> [Matthew 23:9](#).

<sup>13</sup> [Matthew 23:8](#).

<sup>14</sup> [Revelation 15:4](#).

The Lord Himself confirmed the understanding that there would be a specific fulfillment in the Antichrist's role when He stated, "*for the ruler of this world is coming.*"<sup>15</sup> Similarly Christ Jesus said, "*I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.*"<sup>16</sup> John the Beloved, following in the Master's footsteps, states emphatically, "*ye have heard that antichrist shall come...*"<sup>17</sup> John confirms that while there were contemporary opponents of Christ (many antichrists), these forces of opposition would eventually center in one entity.

Contrary to flawed popular belief, the popes are not the successors to the Apostle Peter. They are, however, the successors to the Roman Emperor. History shows that the title of "Supreme High Priest" was officially bestowed on the bishop of the church at Rome by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the office of "supreme high priest" of the Roman Catholic Church, perpetuated now for nearly 1,500 years, came from an apostate secular source, whereas the Bible proclaims one Supreme High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ appointed by God. The pagan Emperor Justinian also bestowed on the bishop of the church at Rome the universal oversight of the entire Christian world. That was when the bishop of the church at Rome became known as the Pope, arising as Spiritual Head of the pagan Roman Empire. The authority of this historical fact alone ought to be seen as clearly designating the Antichrist.

### **The Cloud of Witnesses from Christian History**

From the time of persecution of the Vaudois and the Waldenses, and throughout the long era of the Inquisition, the Lollards, the Bohemians, and the believers of the Reformation understood both the Office of Christ and also its counterfeit, the Antichrist. The zeal and courage of many of these martyrs were based on their conviction that they were withstanding the Antichrist. Today, however, it is "religiously correct" to declare one's ignorance of the identity of the Antichrist. As the ecumenical movement gains momentum, it is imperative to regain a Biblical understanding of Scriptural prophecy, which has been and still is being played out in time, rather than simply relegating it to some future cataclysmic period.

Bible believers of old recognized the Roman Catholic institution as the Antichrist. This identification was known and spoken of even through the Middle Ages by, among others, Dante Alighieri, John Wycliff, John Huss, and Savonarola; during the Reformation, by Martin Luther, William Tyndale, John Calvin, Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, John Bradford, and John Foxe; in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, by John Bunyan, the translators of the King James Bible, and by the men who published the Westminster and Baptist Confessions of Faith; Sir Isaac Newton, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley; and in more recent times, by Charles Spurgeon, Bishop J. C. Ryle and Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones. All these men and many more knew the precision of Scripture regarding both Christ and the Antichrist. The Written Word has been fulfilled in history, in both Light and darkness. As a silk glove over the hand, so the events of history clothe the prophecy of the Scripture. Today, it is "religiously correct" to refrain from speaking about the Antichrist, except in some futuristic scenario that cannot be

---

<sup>15</sup> *John 14:30.*

<sup>16</sup> *John 5:43.*

<sup>17</sup> *I John 2:18.* The Greek text says that **the** antichrist shall come.

<sup>18</sup> LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1978) Vol I, pp. 511–517.

analyzed since he has not yet occurred. This is an application of “the tolerance principal” of today that has all but blunted the edge of the accuracy and distinctness of the Biblical sword. Such tolerance holds that the warnings of Christ and the Apostles John and Paul are not to be seen historically, but rather applied to some future political leader at the end of the last times. While much modern Biblical teaching assumes a future political leader to be the coming Antichrist, the Biblical Antichrist is first apostate, and then political only from his apostate seat of power. This perfectly describes every Roman Catholic Pope in his Pontifical office.

This paper deals particularly with [II Thessalonians 2:3–12](#), one of the many texts that unveils the Antichrist and serves as an introduction to the other texts.

## **The Man of Sin Appears**

The Apostle clearly states, “*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.*” (v. 3) The Man of Sin would appear as the outworking of the “falling away,” or “apostasia” (“apostasy” in English). Clearly, there was to be a large-scale apostasy that would lead to the emergence of the Man of Sin. Apostasy can only take place in the professing church of God, since there must be something from which to fall away. The embryo of the iniquity that would lead to this apostasy and the revealing of the Man of Sin was already at work in the Apostle’s day—thus he says, “*For the mystery of iniquity doth already work.*” (v. 7) The Scriptures elsewhere speak of the “*mystery of godliness*”, “*great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh...*” ([1 Timothy 3:16](#)) By contrast, in verse 7 the exact opposite is spoken of, “*the mystery of iniquity*,” that is, the disclosure of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition.

The “*mystery of iniquity*” was soon to show itself visibly in the form of the Man of Sin. The outcome of this apostasy would be “*all deceivableness of unrighteousness.*” Such apostasy was to be marked, not by open hostility, but by hypocrisy and deceit, which to the world appears righteous and holy. Apostasy by definition is duplicity and falseness, a withdrawal and defection from the Gospel and true godliness.

## **The “Who” And the “What” That Held Back the Man of Sin (vv. 3, 6, & 7)**

There was something withholding or hindering the appearance of Man of Sin, a constraint, keeping back his emergence. Notice this constraint is a thing, “what,” in verse 6 and a person, “he,” in verse 7. The Apostle’s unusual reserve to spell out the identity of this constraint is to be noticed, although he clearly realized that the Thessalonians would understand when he said, “*now ye know what withholdeth.*” Of great importance is the historical background to the second letter to the Thessalonians which is outlined in [Acts 17:1–10](#). There the events that took place when Paul was at Thessalonica previous to this letter are explained. At that time, the Jews brought a political charge against Paul and Silas, “*these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.*” This was not a religious charge, but one against “Caesar,” that is, the Roman Empire. All of that had been clear to the Apostle and to the Thessalonians. Had the Apostle written that the constraint was the Roman Empire, it would have appeared that he was supporting political revolt. The “what” of verse 6 and the “he” of verse 7 made it abundantly clear to the Thessalonians that he was speaking of the Roman Empire and its

Emperor, respectively. The Roman Empire and Emperor providentially impeded the appearance of the Man of Sin for a time.

To know the time, therefore, at which the Man of Sin will appear, the whole passage (from verse 1 through 12) must be taken in context. The Man of Sin is set forth, appears at the removal of him “*who is now holding back*” (v. 7). In the previous verse, Paul reminds the believers “*now you know what holds him back.*” What was it that the believers then knew? They knew that the Roman Empire kept all and everyone in check. In the Thessalonian mind, Rome, and only Rome, restrained. (That early believers like Tertullian and Jerome had such convictions is documented.)<sup>19</sup> The course of history precisely fulfilled what was stated in Scripture. First, the Emperor Constantine removed the seat of the empire to Constantinople. This removal gave all the opportunity that could be desired for the growth of the power-seeking Roman bishops. Internal corruption and external pressures destroyed the Empire. It was only after the break-up of the Roman Empire that the Papacy gained ascendancy over the civil powers, and the Man of Sin became more apparent. When the Roman Papacy acquired the dominion that the Empire had had for centuries, which was rule in both the civil and religious spheres, then the Antichrist was seen and recognised by the Vaudois and others. In all history it is hard to find a series of events corresponding more accurately with a prophetic statement than this.

### **The Place Where the Man of Sin Appears**

The Apostle states unmistakably the place where the Man of Sin would become visible “*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*” (v. 4) He would appear in the “temple of God.” The word “temple” is constantly used by the Apostle to describe the people of God themselves. For example, “*If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*”<sup>20</sup> This testifies that the Man of Sin would emanate from among the people of God as a result of the falling away, i.e. the apostasy, outlined in the preceding verse.

### **Presenting Himself as God**

The authority and truth of the Lord’s Written Word is of such importance that Scripture declares, “*thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*” (Ps 138:2) The Lord Jesus Christ said, “*the Scripture cannot be broken,*” speaking of the absolute character of God’s Written Word that He has magnified above His name. While many are unaware of it, the substance of II Thess. 2:4 is both the official claim and practice of the Papacy. This is documented in primary Roman Catholic sources. Verse 4 in the Scripture teaches, “*...he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*” Consistently in Roman Catholic teaching and practice, the Pope is called “His Holiness.” Such a title applies solely to God. God is the only Being whose very nature is holy.<sup>21</sup> Concerning the Pope’s assumed title, “His Holiness,” the Roman Catholic Church claims the following divine attributes,

---

<sup>19</sup> Froom, Vol. I, pp. 257–258, pp. 443–444.

<sup>20</sup> I Corinthians 3:17; cf Ephesians 2:21, II Corinthians 6:16.

<sup>21</sup> Revelation 15:4, 1 Samuel 2:2.

“The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful...he proclaims with a definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held as such.”<sup>22</sup>

In the papal claim to “infallible teaching authority,” it is this very quality of God’s infallibility that is at stake. Thus Rome’s official claim exalts the Pope “*above all that is called God.*”<sup>23</sup>

Likewise, the earned righteousness of Christ Jesus after the Resurrection gave Him “*All power ... in heaven and in earth.*” (Matt 28:18) The papal claim is officially expressed thus, “The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, ‘supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls.’”<sup>24</sup> In this assertion to a power given to the Lord Christ Jesus alone, the Pope again exalts himself “*above all that is called God*”. How many extra marital affairs make it common sense to cry adultery? How much official blasphemy is needed for the one who calls himself “His Holiness” to be identified correctly as the “Man of Sin?”

Extravagantly, apparently without trembling, the Roman Catholic Office of the Papacy in itself fulfills the Thessalonians text and the definition of “Antichrist.” It is important to note that the Greek word for antichrist in the Bible means not simply against Christ, but more significantly, substituting for Him. That the Papacy in a real sense has been living out this two-fold meaning of the Greek word, one who is against the Lord Jesus Christ by presuming to take His place, is seen in its attempt to usurp His power and position as Prophet, Priest, and King. Full and supreme power belongs solely to the God-man Christ Jesus, Who acts freely on each one in His church. This is evidenced in Ephesians 1:22–23, “*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.*”

The Roman Catholic Church purports to take for itself His Divine position, according to her official teaching, “For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.”<sup>25</sup> He is the worst and greatest enemy of Christ, who under the pretense of service to Christ presumes to undermine His unique offices by covertly usurping His position and power.

The wickedness within the Roman Catholic system has reached such horrendous proportions that it is difficult to keep up with the documented evidence.<sup>26</sup> While conviction regarding the nature of this apostate church comes from God’s Word, present day evils show the mystery of iniquity at work.

## Capitulation of Mind and Will

---

<sup>22</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-Eng. ed. (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983) Can. 749, Sect. 1. All canons are taken from this source unless otherwise stated.

<sup>23</sup> The Greek word for “above” can mean “in a place of” or “as much as”. It seems to be this meaning that applies the text rather than superior to God, cf. Strong’s *Hebrew-Greek Dictionary*, # 1909.

<sup>24</sup> *Catechism*, # 937.

<sup>25</sup> *Catechism*, #882.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.iconbusters.com/iconbusters/lechery/currentlechery1.htm> That source links also to Roman Catholic sources that further show the mystery of iniquity at work.



Rome's law demands submission of mind and will to the one "*shewing himself that he is God.*" The official law of the Roman Catholic Church, enunciates the necessity of submitting one's highest faculties, that of mind and will, not to God Himself, but to the Roman Pontiff.

"A religious respect of intellect and will, even if not the assent of faith, is to be paid to the teaching which the Supreme Pontiff or the college of bishops enunciate on faith or morals when they exercise the authentic magisterium even if they do not intend to proclaim it with a definitive act; therefore the Christian faithful are to take care to avoid whatever is not in harmony with that teaching."<sup>27</sup>

Not only does Rome demand this, but also in Canon 1371 she decrees that the consequence for not obeying is punishment with a "just penalty."<sup>28</sup>

To presume to take the place of Christ Himself as Prophet, Priest, and King, and to presume to act as in His person is clearly tantamount to "*sit[ting] as God in the temple of God, setting himself forth, that he is God.*" Yet this is exactly the documented claim of Papal Rome. The teaching given in Rome's *Code of Canon Law* puts teeth into its claim by exacting submission and promising punishment for those who fail to obey.

### **The Purpose and Intent of Man of Sin**

The Apostle Paul appears to use deliberately the terms that generally refer to Christ, "revealed," "coming," and "mystery," to describe the performance of the Man of Sin. This indicates that Satan's design is to replace Christ with his own man. The stated objective is given in verse 4, "*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*" This, as has here been documented, is the claim and the law of Papal Rome. Verse 9 depicts how the aim of Satan is to be carried out, "*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.*" The Man of Sin was to come with all power and signs and lying wonders, "*in all deceivableness of unrighteousness.*"<sup>29</sup>

Just as the Lord wrought miracles through the Apostles to confirm their position, so Satan would work with Antichrist, endorsing his alleged position with false miracles designed to overthrow the Gospel. The Man of Sin is both an attempted personification of Christ and a contrast to Him. He attempts to occupy His position, but is totally unlike Him, and in opposition to Him. He has usurped His place and His prerogatives, and far from truly representing Him, he represents His greatest enemy. As Christ acts for God, so the Man of Sin acts for Satan, who indeed uses him for this very purpose, so the text states that the Man of Sin's coming is "*after the working of Satan.*"

---

<sup>27</sup> Canon 752.

<sup>28</sup> Canon 1371, Para. 1 The following are to be punished with a just penalty: 1 a person who, apart from the case mentioned in canon 1364, 1, teaches a doctrine condemned by the Roman Pontiff, or by an Ecumenical Council, or obstinately rejects the teachings mentioned in canon 750, [Para.] 2 or in canon 752 and, when warned by the Apostolic See or by the Ordinary, does not retract;"

<sup>29</sup> See *Quite Contrary: A Biblical Reconsideration of the Apparitions of Mary* by Timothy F. Kauffman (Huntsville, AL 35804: White Horse Publications, 1993). See also *Graven Bread: The Papacy, the Apparitions of Mary, and the Worship of the Bread of the Altar* by same author.

The purpose and intent of the Man of Sin is given also in the second name, “son of perdition.” The reference is to Judas, who pretended to be a disciple of Christ even as he betrayed the Son of Man with a sign of love and loyalty. The Son of Perdition is a secret enemy while a seeming friend, a well-known confidant, yet a fatal foe who betrays with a kiss even while he says he serves the Lord and master. He is a Judas whose coming was to be “*after the working of Satan,*” with “*lying wonders.*” Those under him are under the influence of “*strong delusion.*” For their own part, they had “*not received the love of the truth,*” but rather took “*pleasure in unrighteousness.*” In a denial of the Gospel of Christ, on May 13th, 2000, the present Pope, John Paul II, endorsed the identity and origin of the vision of Mary of Fatima a “lying wonder.” He proclaimed,

“According to the divine plan, ‘a woman clothed with the sun’ (Rev. 12:1) came down from heaven to this earth to visit the privileged children. ... She **asks them to offer themselves as victims of reparation, saying that she was ready to lead them safely to God.** And behold, **they see a light shining from her maternal hands which penetrates them inwardly**, so that they feel immersed in God ...”<sup>30</sup>

### The Final End of the Man of Sin

“*And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*” (v 8) Verse 8 tells of the end of the Wicked one. He, who would be revealed when the power of imperial Rome was removed, will continue until the breath of Christ’s mouth and the brightness of His coming destroy him. This is a clear reference to the Second Coming. The Lord in this verse has foretold the destruction of the Man of Sin’s reign: the Word of the Lord will reduce it to nothing. He will be completely and in every respect destroyed on the final day.

In the meantime, the victory of the Gospel is also seen in this verse. The Apostle was repeating the truth of the Lord spoken of in *Isaiah 11:4*, “*But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*” The Lord’s power has always been greatest in the day of utmost need, when He comes to the aid of those destitute and poor in spirit. The character of God in His gracious Gospel is “*the spirit of his mouth.*” All through history this verse has been understood and lived out in this sense. The Gospel is “*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*”<sup>31</sup> Repeatedly throughout history the “Gospel of grace” has conquered the Man of Sin. The Vaudois, the Waldenses, the men of the Reformation, and all genuine revivals have seen the Lord smite with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips. His power is seen when His graciousness is boldly proclaimed, every individual who is saved “*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”<sup>32</sup>

### Conclusion

---

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_p.../hf\\_jpii\\_hom\\_20000513\\_beatification-fatima\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_p.../hf_jpii_hom_20000513_beatification-fatima_en.htm) 6/1/00. See on our web page our critique of the same in *Fatima: JP II, RCC Contradict Gospel: Where Do Evangelical ECT Signatories Now Stand?*

<sup>31</sup> *Romans 1:16.*

<sup>32</sup> *Romans 3:24.*

None but God could have delineated beforehand the “*mystery of iniquity*,” which is clearly the Office of the Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church. Man could never have anticipated all this; only God foretells it. That a power claiming to act for God, to be “as God”, in the midst of the Christian Church, flouting His truth and mocking His own Holiness, defies imagination. Corruption, fraud, and false pretenses have ruled the world for ages from the very same seven-hilled city where the pagan Roman Empire once ruled by military force, and they are such that were they not clearly described by the Lord’s Word, and seen in past and recent history, they could never have been expected by man. The prophetic portrayal of the wickedness of the system built around the Antichrist is a demonstration of the divine inspiration of the Bible and the power and authority of our Lord God.

To reject the clear testimony of God’s Written Word on the fundamental office of the Antichrist, and to prefer a doctrine that can neither be verified by the text itself nor tested in time is a serious matter. It obscures the wisdom of Divine prophecy and denies the true character of the days in which we live. While futurism asserts the nearness of the Second Advent of Christ, it destroys the historical timeframe of His opposer, the Antichrist, which is essential to correctly understanding this fulfillment of prophecy. The historic playing-out of those predictions concerning the apostasy is an essential element of what the Lord foretold in His Word. Just as the Lord explained regarding Himself, “*all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*” Likewise, the substance of what was written concerning the office of the one who opposes Him has been fulfilled. With the Vaudois, the Waldenses, Lollards, and the Bohemians, through the Inquisition and the Reformation, the truth of the Gospel and the Prophetic Word lifted nations from the depths of superstition and despotism to Biblical freedom and economic growth.<sup>33</sup> Much futurist teaching has been the work of sincere and dedicated men of God; nonetheless, by failing to expose the presence of Antichrist in our midst, the nations are being lured effectively into slavery once again. In the face of such failure, it is imperative to know as believers of old knew the presence of the True Seed, Christ Jesus, with them in spirit and in truth.

The historic interpretation has been embodied in the most solemn confessions of the Biblical world.<sup>34</sup> It forms a leading part in the testimony of martyrs and reformers. Like the prophets of old, these holy men bore a twofold testimony, a testimony for the truth of God, and a testimony against the Apostasy of those professing to be Christian. Their testimony was that Papal Rome is the Babylon of prophecy, “*that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth,*”<sup>35</sup> and that its head, the Roman pontiff, is the predicted “Man of Sin,” or Antichrist.

---

<sup>33</sup> John W. Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church*, (ISBN 0–940931-52–4; USA: The Trinity Foundation, 1999) pp. 13–24.

<sup>34</sup> See *The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1646; The Baptist Confession of Faith, 1689; The Philadelphia Confession of Faith, Adopted by The Baptist Association, 1742*; and others.

<sup>35</sup> *Revelation 17:18*

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

*Permission is also given to post this article in its entirety on other Internet Web Pages.*

*Richard Bennett, Berean Beacon [www.bereanbeacon.org](http://www.bereanbeacon.org)*

# Forensic Science and the Antichrist

## Solving the Mystery of Iniquity

By Rand Winburn

*“The spirit of the Dragon is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the false Gospel to the deceived; he hath sent me to destroy the true faith; to preach no deliverance apart from obedience to the Vicar of Christ; to blind the eyes of the earth dwellers; to smite the servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken..... This day is this prophecy fulfilled in your ears.”*

In these days of ever-growing heresies, apostasies and rampant unbelief by professing Christians, the battle rages on several fronts. This ministry is especially dedicated to defending classic Reformation truths, not the least of which is the unanimous declaration of the Protestant Reformers that the Antichrist prophesied by Holy Writ was presently in their midst, reigning in the visible Church of God, [II Thess. 2:4](#), under the guise of the Pope of Rome. One does not need to search secret tunnels under Oxford and Cambridge to discover this historic fact. This potent Protestant truth is manifest for all to see. Simply by reading the creeds of the Reformation, available on the Internet, in libraries and bookstores, it quickly becomes apparent that, in their days, no Protestant worthy of the name believed anything less. For example, *The Irish Articles of Religion*, A.D. 1615, declare:

“The Bishop of Rome is so far from being the supreme head of the universal Church of Christ, that his works and doctrine do plainly discover him to be that man of sin, foretold in the holy Scriptures, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and abolish with the brightness of his coming.”

***The Second Helvetic Confession, A.D. 1566, states:***

“We reject the Romish fiction concerning an official head and title of the servant of the servants of Christ; for experience proves that this is an empty boast, and that the Pope makes himself an enemy of Christ, and exalts himself above God, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself that he is God.... The Roman head preserves the tyranny and corruption in the Church, and opposes all just reformation.”

***The French Confession of Faith, A.D. 1559, professes:***

“Therefore we condemn the papal assemblies, as the pure Word of God is banished from them, their sacraments are corrupted, or falsified, or destroyed, and all superstitions and idolatries are in them. We hold, then, that all who take part in these acts, and commune in that Church, separate and cut themselves off from the body of Christ.”

***The Second Scotch Confession of Faith, A.D. 1580, agrees:***

“We abhor and detest all contrary Religion and Doctrine; but chiefly all kind of Papistry in general and particular heads, even as they are now damned and confuted by the word of God and church of Scotland. But in special, we detest and refuse the usurped authority of the Roman Antichrist upon the scriptures of God, upon the Church, the civil magistrate, and consciences of men.....”

***The 17th century Westminster, Savoy and Baptist Confessions concur:***

“There is no other head of the Church, but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God.”

Modern Presbyterians know nothing of this creedal stance, having excised it from their confession in the name of Reconstructionism. In their Christian minds they are, at the same time, able to both renounce and defend the Reformers. This is no easy task, to come in the name of the Reformation, yet *oppose* the Reformation. Such Jesuitical equivocation is predicted of the Antichrist. Displaying the subtlety and cunning of his progenitor, the Serpent, Scripture warns that the Antichrist *will come in the name of Christ, yet oppose Christ, deceiving many*.<sup>1</sup>

Today’s 21st century Christian is taught every imaginable erroneous way of interpreting the Revelation and other paramount prophetic Scriptures. Confusion reigns in the Christian Church. The ministry of Protestant Reformation Publications exists to put an end to the confusion.

## **The Revelation is a Murder Mystery**

Who doesn’t enjoy a good thriller? Isn’t speculating on the murderer’s identity one of the primary reasons for the popularity of mysteries? Don’t we relish putting ourselves in the role of the detective, searching the clues, seeking solutions? If this is so, then why is it the Body of Christ is clueless in solving the greatest mystery since the mystery of godliness? It’s certainly not for lack of direct and circumstantial evidence, or for lack of witnesses’ testimony. By no small act of Providence, the sovereign Lord has seen fit to hand down, from generation to generation, the facts, evidence and testimony relating to this murder mystery. No Christian is without excuse not to examine the abundant evidence available. To aid in our solving the mystery, the Lord has even placed members in His Body skilled at interpreting the clues. There are those who are adept at presenting the solution of this mystery to the Church. But all the evidence and testimony in the world will not change the mind of one whose mind is closed shut. Nor will it change the mind of one who refuses to examine the evidence. Nor will it change the mind of one who disbelieves the witnesses and evidence brought forth. Therefore, the reader is admonished to have an open mind, without which it is impossible to solve the mystery of iniquity. By the way, logic is not to be disregarded. Nor is common sense to be in short supply.

## **Murder Victims Abound in the Revelation**

### ***Pertinent information is revealed about the victims and their murderers***

A murder mystery necessitates a murder victim. A murder victim necessitates a murderer. A murderer on the loose, who does not voluntarily come forward to surrender, necessitates a quest, by police, to uncover his identity, which is necessary before he can be captured, tried and convicted. But before one can solve the mystery as to the identity of the murderer, one must first identify the victim.

The Revelation is about people: God’s people, called saints, and Satan’s people, called earth dwellers, or anti-Christians. The saints are true Christians, while the anti-Christians are false Christians. The saints comprise the virgin bride of Christ. The anti-Christians comprise the great

---

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Matt. 7:15; Matt. 10:16–17; Matt. 24:5, 15, 24, 48–49; John 16:2; Acts 20:29–30; II Cor. 11:4, 13–15; Galatians 1:8; II Thess. 2:3–12; I Tim. 4:1–3; II Peter 2; I John 2:18–19, 22–23; I John 4:1–3; Rev. 13:11 ff., Rev. 17–18.

whore, the bride of the Beast, as well as her false prophets and harlot daughters. The saints follow the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Satan's people follow the Beast, the Antichrist. Much bloodshed takes place in the Revelation. However, it is important to note that it is not the saints who shed innocent blood. It is the Beast and his people who shed innocent blood. The ones who shed innocent blood are murderers. Scripture informs us murderers will never be admitted into the holy city of New Jerusalem. Therefore, by correctly identifying the murderers of the saints we can state, authoritatively, that they are no Christians. Furthermore, unless they repent, denouncing their anti-Christianity, they cannot be saved. Let us now delve into the identity of the victims, as detailed by the Apostle John.

In **Rev. 1:9** we discover that John was imprisoned. The mystery of iniquity was already at work, otherwise an innocent man would not have been found guilty. We learn that his only crime was preaching the Word of God, and holding to the testimony of Jesus Christ. Those who preach the Word of God, while holding to the testimony of Jesus Christ, are Christians. John was a Christian guilty of telling the truth and leading an exemplary life. These were his only crimes, which were no crimes. In calling good evil, John's enemies opposed both the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as those who dared speak of these things publicly. Those who oppose Christ and His disciples are antichrist. So here are revealed a few essential characteristics of the spirit of Antichrist:

- (1) Antichrist will censor the Word of God, enacting laws which make it a crime to promote His Word.
- (2) Antichrist will incarcerate those who testify to being disciples of Christ, who hold unswervingly to His testimony.
- (3) Antichrist will make it illegal to be a fruitful Christian. He will seek to stop a true Christian witness.

In **Rev. 2:10**, we read of martyrs in the church of Smyrna. Like John, they are falsely imprisoned by unjust laws emanating from the will of Satan, the arch enemy of the Lord. They will be killed, not for any wrongdoing on their part, but because they are true Christians. It is inferred that the cause of their martyrdom is due to their exposing the false Christians who are really members of Satan's kingdom, (verse 9). We can add these new characteristics of Antichrist to our list:

- (4) Antichrist will hide under the cover of professing Christianity.
- (5) Antichrist will kill those who expose his true identity.

Those martyred discerned and exposed the false Christians. Jesus testifies that they rightly discerned the identity of the false Christians. Therefore, their testimony is true, Jesus Christ Himself corroborating their witness.

The church of Pergamos was in particular danger. In their midst was the very seat or throne of Satan. Antipas is mentioned as one of the bravest of martyrs because he did not crack under torture, imprisonment or fear of death. He remained steadfast and faithful to the end, never denying the Lord who bought him. In this we discover more characteristics of the Antichrist:

- (6) Antichrist will threaten true Christians with torture and death in order to compel them to renounce their Lord and their faith. However, true Christians will not capitulate, even if faced with death. They will persevere in the true faith, putting their Lord, His honor and His truth before all.

**Rev. 5:6** depicts Christ, the Lamb, *as it had been slain*. Destined to die an innocent victim in the place of many, the trials and execution of Jesus hold many truths which need be recounted because they foreshadowed similar ill treatment of His saints.

- (a) He was killed for no wrongdoing.
- (b) False witnesses attempted to discredit Him, charging Him with political and heretical crimes.
- (c) His trials were illegal, His conviction unjust.
- (d) His murderers handed Him over to the secular authorities to execute the death penalty.
- (e) His murderers professed to be followers of the true God, doing His will.
- (f) He was tortured mercilessly.

Therefore, we can expect Antichrist to:

- (7) Kill the innocent Christians.
- (8) Bring false charges of heresy against them.
- (9) Conduct illegal trials of Christians with unjust penalties their reward.
- (10) Hand Christians over to the secular authorities for punishment by death.
- (11) Torture Christians.
- (12) Profess to be a true Christian, following Jesus Christ, the true God.

Let us now examine **Rev. 6:9–11**. We are told those under the altar were martyred for the Word of God, as well as for their testimony. They were given white robes, indicating their testimony was true. Like John's, it was the testimony of Jesus. Had their testimony been a lie, they would not have been rewarded with the robes of Christ's righteousness, symbolizing their justification. Therefore, these victims were true Christians. They were killed for reasons similar to the previous victims. The astute reader will note one other thing: the Christian martyrs knew the identity of their murderers. They called for the vengeance of God on their behalf. They called for righteous judgment. The Lord is not the only One called to judge with righteous judgment. As Christians, we, too, are called to judge with righteous judgment, **John 7:24**. It is our duty to warn those who, in ignorance, fellowship with the murderers of the saints. But before we can do so we must determine the identity of their murderers.

We continue with **Rev. 7:9**. Innumerable saints are seen in Heaven clothed in white robes. These are Christians justified by their faith in the Lamb. They attained Heaven only through great tribulation. They were not 'Raptured' secretly beforehand. They were martyred by the Antichrist. 'Secret' Rapture enthusiasts teach that the faithful *escape* great tribulation. This is not the teaching of Scripture. Scripture teaches the faithful *endure* great tribulation. The faithful must overcome the Antichrist. This they do *by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they love not their lives unto the death*. The testimony of these tribulation saints is orthodox. They give honor and glory for their salvation to no other than the Lord God and His Lamb, (verse 10). To God be the glory alone. Their faith is in the righteousness of Christ alone. Therefore, these Christians are true Christians. They are not heretics. And how could they be? Liars, the unbelieving, and those who work abomination are in no wise allowed within Heaven's Gates, (**Rev. 21:8**).

We discovered, in the last passage, that innumerable true saints were martyred in a Christian bloodbath by the enemies of Christ. We now examine **Rev. 11:1–7**. Two witnesses possessing special powers and authority from God are killed by authority of the beast *that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit*. They have infuriated him by their testimony. They are clothed in sackcloth, symbolizing God's supreme displeasure with the spiritual and temporal state of professing

Christianity on earth. In the Old Testament and Gospels the prophets were sent to Israel, who killed them, [Matt. 23:34–35](#). In the Revelation, the prophets are sent to Mystery Babylon, who kills them, [Rev. 18:20](#). Like John before them, they, too, had measured the temple of God determining the biblical rule of faith held by true Christians. The two witnesses testify against those false Christians who are *without* the temple, warning those within to separate from those without, while warning those without that the judgment of God upon them will not fail. Verse 5 infers these witnesses will undergo torture which will *hurt* them. Yet their witness will not cease until they have fully completed their testimony against the Beast and his kingdom, Mystery Babylon. These witnesses are received into Heaven, (verse 12). Therefore, these victims were true Christians unjustly executed for carrying out the perfect will of God. They are not heretics. If they were, we can be sure that they would not be received into Heaven.

[Rev. 12](#) tells yet another compelling story. The Church of God, symbolized as a woman, the Bride of Christ, is seen positioned in heavenly places, clothed in His righteousness. The true Church, spiritual Israel, the mother of all living, gives birth to the Savior as well as all future Christians. She is the keeper and sower of the Word, the seed of which gives life to the dead by the resurrecting power of the Holy Spirit. In the process of fulfilling her divine calling and mission, Satan aggressively resists her, attempting to kill and destroy her new offspring. As Christ was put to death having committed no crime, so, too, will His disciples be similarly persecuted and killed, (verse 13). To better combat the enemy of Christ and His Church, the Lord has ordained His people to hide in locations specifically chosen by Him. By so doing, they show themselves to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves while in the midst of wolves. Rather than unify with the enemy in a spirit of ecumenism, they willfully and deliberately separate from the enemy. Rather than be swept away in the swift current of false doctrine, the true saints hold fast to their faith. On the other hand, the false Christians, depicted as the earth dwellers, readily swallow false doctrine, hook, line and sinker. Their mouths stand agape, their bellies ready receptacles for the Lie. The saints seen in [Rev. 12](#) are true Christians. They are not heretics. We know this because the Holy Spirit testifies that the seed of the Woman *keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*. Heretics, on the other hand, break the commandments of God and have not the testimony of Jesus, teaching lies for truth.

Let us note that the spirit of Antichrist revealed in these latter Scriptures is the same as in the former: killing the innocent saints, killing God's prophets who testify against them, persecuting the innocent saints, forcing them to flee and hide.

### **A Note on the Seed of the Woman Vs. The Seed of the Serpent**

[Rev. 12:17](#) clearly calls the fleeing and persecuted saints *the seed of the woman*. We need now briefly examine the first reference to this title. It is found in [Genesis 3:15](#), where it is stated by the Lord Himself, *And I 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*. Here are presented two seeds, or genealogies: the seed of the Serpent and the seed of the Woman. Within the confines of the professing family of God there are two distinct family lines: the lineage of Jesus Christ, beloved of God; the lineage of Satan, hated by God. The Pharisees were of the lineage of Satan, [Matt. 23:33](#); [John 8:44](#), [1 John 3:10](#), though they professed to be the lineage of Abraham, [Matt. 3:9](#). The lineage of Jesus, beloved of God, is recounted in [Matthew 1](#) and [Luke 3](#). Paul differentiates between the lineage of spiritual Israel and carnal Israel, ([Romans 9:6 ff.](#)). Jacob was loved, Esau was hated. Spiritual Israel is comprised of the true children of God, while carnal



Israel is not. Needless to say, the Antichrist is of the seed of the Serpent. He is called the son of perdition, [II Thess. 2:3](#).

Furthermore, it is no light thing that Jesus is personally responsible for placing enmity, intense hatred and hostility, between the two seeds. The will of God demands we not commune or fellowship with the seed of the Serpent. As God, Jesus' will cannot fail to come to pass. These seeds will not commingle in ecumenical fornication. These seeds have not the power to countermand the decree of God. By so decreeing, Jesus has given us a litmus test for determining the true Christian from the false. The false Christian will find unity and harmony with the seed of the Serpent. The true Christian will loathe the Devil and his disciples, despising the false love of ecumenism. By these fruits we shall know them.

Incredibly, this pronouncement in the Garden is seen fulfilled in the book of Revelation. The decree still abides. The seed of the Woman is persecuted, imprisoned and killed by the Serpent and his seed. In chapter 13 of the Revelation, we find the Serpent's seed, a son, is born - the son of perdition. He is called the Beast from the sea. The sea is a bottomless abyss. Even in our day of exploration and high technology the vast majority of the ocean is unexplored, what lies beneath is unknown. The Beasts depicted in [Rev. 11:7](#), [Rev. 17:8](#); [Rev. 20:3](#), as well as [Rev. 13:1](#) are one and the same. He is that *head* of Satan's kingdom whom Christ prophesied would be wounded by the testimonial sword of the Elect, ([Gen. 3:15](#); [Rev. 13:3](#)). This Beast is the Antichrist.

### **The Beast and His Victims, Revelation 13**

In [Rev. 13](#), Satan, that old serpent, has given birth, by water, to his Vicar, the seed of the Serpent. Imitating the Lord's methods in [Rev. 11](#), the Dragon, as god of this world, gives his son, a false prophet, his power, authority and throne. The Beast rules over Satan's kingdom. However, unlike the two prophets of [Rev. 11](#), who are despised by the earth dwellers, this false prophet is embraced, honored and obeyed by the earth dwellers. They are of one and the same spirit. The Beast's wisdom, influence and judgments are viewed by the world as without peer. In his worldwide kingdom the Beast is the undisputed king, head and ruler. Who is there in all the earth who dares question his decrees, who dares disobey his commands? (verse 4). This Beast is unstoppable. Though he appears to be killed, his power greatly diminished, he comes back to life with new found vitality, to rule once more, (verse 5). By this we know him not to be one person, but a dynasty comprised of a succession of rulers who rule one at a time. This also explains the seven heads and ten horns. They symbolize a succession of like rulers. Only Christ has literally risen from the dead to rule and reign at the right hand of Power. The Beast is no Christ, nor has he the disposition of a lamb. His resurrection is strictly symbolic. We know the Beast to be a false prophet because he is described prophesying in oppo-sition to God, (verses 5–6). The true prophets of God always speak that which God has commanded, ([John 8:26](#)). True Christians love the brethren, ([1 John 3:10](#)). The Beast, on the other hand, blas-phememes the brethren on earth as well as those martyrs in Heaven, proving him to be a child of the devil.

The power and authority of the Beast reaches worldwide, touching the saints in many nations. By his supreme authority the Beast is able to wage war against the saints, in the name of the Dragon. The saints will not obey him or his commandments. Obedience is necessary to worship, ([Rev. 13:8](#); [John 14:15](#)). Therefore, the Beast ensures his supreme headship by persecuting and killing those who refuse to obey him, which is refusal to worship him. Once more the decree of [Genesis 3:15](#) is clearly seen. The saints of Jesus, whose names are written in

the Lamb's book of Life, will not worship the Beast, (verse 8). Their enmity for him and his doctrine will not allow them to betray the Lord.

### **If Any Man Have an Ear, Let Him Hear**

Christian detectives should register, in their spirit, the import of these words. This mystery of iniquity is so great that unless the Lord opens the ears and mind of your understanding, you will not understand the significance of what has just been revealed. The Lord has publicly declared that those who obey the Beast - believe him, follow him, fellowship with him, honor him, call him good, worship him - ARE NOT TRUE CHRISTIANS. It is only those Elect whose names are written in the book of Life, [Rev. 20:15](#), who are the true Christians. It is those alone who escape the eternal judgment of God. Incredibly, the Lord reinforces the truth of this spiritual nugget by repeating it again, ([Rev. 17:8](#)). How many times has the reader heard a Christian say, 'I cannot judge the heart of another. That is not my job. Only the Lord knows.' Scripture boldly declares otherwise. We can know and should know the spiritual state of a professing Christian. But in order to judge another with righteous judgment, one needs to rightly discern the identity of the Beast. Those professing Christians who side with the Beast are false. Those professing Christians who oppose the Beast are true.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Beast from the Earth**

This beast, also a false prophet, [Rev. 19:20](#), is under obedience to the first Beast, (verse 12). Though he has the outward appearance of Christ and Christianity, his doctrine is from Satan. The first Beast gives him the authority to judge and to execute judgment. He works lying miracles, deceiving the earth dwellers. He demands obedience to the first Beast by compelling all men to take his mark. The true saints refuse. They will not take his mark, nor will they make an image unto the Beast and worship it. For this they are persecuted, excommunicated and killed.

### **The Prophets Preach Against Mystery Babylon and the Beast**

**Revelation 14** depicts another group of 144,000 Elect. They, too, are sealed in their foreheads as were those in [Rev. 7](#). They, too, are required to endure great tribulation from the Beast and his false prophet. They are described as without guile, justified by grace, (verse 5). They are no heretics promulgating false doctrines. Though they tell the truth, they will be disbelieved and killed. Described as angels because of their divine message, God's prophets on earth continue to preach the ever-lasting Gospel, warning those within the confines of Mystery Babylon of the impending judgment of God. Despite threats of severe punishment and death, these prophets witness against the Beast, his image and his mark, describing the eternal punishment of those who disobey God's commandment. In order to carry out this mission, the

---

<sup>2</sup> This is not the only sure test to determine a true Christian. The cults also agree with the Protestant Reformers that the Pope is the Antichrist, yet that confession alone does not insure orthodoxy. Remember, the persecuted saints are all depicted as relying on the Word alone, faithfully holding to the testimony of Jesus. They are not viewed as holding errant beliefs in opposition to His Word. The cults all oppose His Word, whether by wrongly discerning His Deity and/or by opposing salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

prophets are required to discern the identity of Mystery Babylon and the Beast. There could be no mystery in their minds. Their warnings must be grounded in fact, not their fanciful imaginations. We are, once again, told that these saints are not heretics. They keep the commandments of God, (verse 12). Their faith is not misplaced. They have the faith of Jesus. For their thankless efforts, these tribulation saints are killed by the Beast and his followers, (verse 13). But it is not in vain. Their works will abide even though they may be gone.

Because they *die in the Lord*, they are assured their position in Heaven. **Rev. 15** reveals the victorious celebration of those tribulation saints who did not bend their knee to the Antichrist. True Christians will have no part in his false worship nor will they countenance it, even unto death.

### **Mystery Babylon Kills the Saints for Profit**

**Rev. 17–18** describes, in detail, characteristics of this false Christian religion. She is not the virgin Bride of Christ she claims to be, but is viewed by the Holy Spirit as one put away by her spouse, a great whore, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Her claims to faithfulness are lies. Fornication is her area of expertise. Her wealth is legendary, the result of meticulous planning, strategic business transactions, coupled with innumerable financial holdings, many of which were acquired illegally. She is on intimate terms with the Beast, partaking in the murders of the innocent saints, apostles and prophets of Jesus, **Rev. 17:6; 18:20**. These cold blooded acts result in her prosperity and rise to power. Curiously, the leaders of the earth delight in bestowing favor and honor upon her. They view her history of cruelty and murder of innocents a small thing, not worthy of their hatred.

### **The Lord God Has Not Forgotten Her Crimes, Murders or Victims**

While the worldly earth dwellers and kings wallow in their lust, while Mystery Babylon and the Beast actively promote spiritual fornication between all mankind, the Lord God waits. He remembers every evil act committed in His name by this false Christianity, **Rev. 18:5**. The Lord wills we remember also. This is why He has written them for all generations to read. The Revelation was written to reveal to His Body that murders would occur. The murdered victims are His innocent children, our brothers and sisters in Christ, washed in His blood. Our Lord wills we read of the exploits of these martyrs. He wills we understand the great truths contained therein: *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.* The saints who died opposing this end time satanic Kingdom will be avenged. The Lord knows those who are His own, but do we? The Spirit calls them blessed who die in the Lord at the hands of the Antichrist, but do we? How can we bless those whom we do not know? Furthermore, how can we be good stewards, watching and protecting God's household if we know not the identity of the enemy, **II Thess. 5:2–8; Matt. 24:42–51**?

### **A Murder Mystery Cannot Be Solved Without First Identifying the Victim**

It is an undisputed fact that before the murderer can be apprehended, his victim must be identified. But before one can make a positive identification of the victim, one must discover the corpse. *For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* This ominous

sign, described by our Lord in the Gospels, is one which is known and understood worldwide. This present author remembers a tragic news story which illustrates this very point. A young girl had gone missing for several weeks. Search parties had failed to uncover any clues as to her whereabouts. Then one day vultures were seen hovering in the distance. They had found a carcass and were in the process of devouring its flesh. Sadly, upon investigating the vultures' prey, the body of the young girl was found. When vultures circle, a carcass is near. The Lord has given us a critical clue in finding the corpse. One must look for the logical accompanying signs, like the gathering of vultures above the body.

### **Forensic Science a Critical Help in Solving Crimes**

In the secular world it is not unusual for a murder to go undetected for years. The police may not be aware a murder victim lies dead in their county. They may receive a missing persons report from the victim's family members, but not always. It is frequently not until an innocent party stumbles across the deceased victim's remains in a remote site that the police are called. The body is disposed of in an area that is not frequented in the hope that it will never be discovered. With no identification, and only bone and teeth fragments, the authorities must first begin their investigation by utilizing forensic science. Specialists expert in the study of minute particles of human remains, including blood, hair and fibers, must carefully examine all evidence in determining sex, age, health, and race of the victim. Some specialists are able to create a drawing of the victim by using the skull as a model. Once rudimentary facts concerning the victim are brought to light, detectives attempt to match the description with known missing persons. To further complicate matters, it is not unusual that no missing person's report has been filed on the victim. The police must then use the media to alert the populace of the deceased victim, asking their help in identification. Assuming the victim is able to be positively identified, the authorities now have a starting point from which their investigation will proceed. They begin by questioning the victim's immediate family and friends. From information gathered they narrow their suspect list. In particular, they seek those who had possible motives and means to harm the victim. Once detectives have their suspect, the defendant's alibi is scrutinized to find inconsistencies in his story. It is not unusual for a liar to contradict himself in retelling his alibi. Lying, for the purpose of covering up the truth, points to guilt. In addition, investigators must link the accused with the victim at the time of the crime. This may be done a number of ways, including matching the DNA of the victim with the DNA found on or near the suspect, and vice-versa. One does not need an eyewitness or confession to deem the defendant guilty of murder. The circumstantial evidence alone may prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, the guilt of the accused.

Another scenario is slightly different. A family member is killed in what the police and coroner believe to be an accident. The case is closed, ruled an accidental death. But the family does not believe the findings of the authorities. They believe the death to be homicide. Therefore, they launch their own investigation, hiring private detectives and forensic experts to uncover new evidence and/or reexamine the existing evidence. Another skilled interpretation of the same set of facts can lead to a radically different conclusion. It can even uncover the identity of the murderer.

### **The Death of Martin Dillon, a Case in Point**

Mr. Dillon was killed in an alleged skeet shooting accident. The only witness was his best friend, Dr. Stephen Scher, who supplied the police with the details. According to the testimony of Scher, he and Dillon were walking through the woods when Dillon stooped down to tie his boot. Suddenly Dillon spotted a porcupine, grabbed Scher's shotgun, and ran off to shoot it. In the process Dillon tripped, the gun fired, hitting him square in the heart. Scher, a well respected member of the medical community and best friend of the Dillon family, was questioned by the police. His testimony was believed without checking the facts, and the case was closed.

But Dillon's father was not so easily convinced. Nearly two years after the Martin Dillon's death, Stephen Scher married Dillon's widow, Pat. Because of the perseverance and nagging suspicions of the elder Mr. Dillon, a private investigator, as well as a forensic expert were hired. The private investigator discovered it was common knowledge that Scher and Pat Dillon, a nurse who was employed at Scher's hospital, were openly carrying on an affair. Everyone knew it. The illicit couple made no attempt to hide it. The forensic reconstructionist discovered further damning evidence. By testing the same gauge shotgun used in the accident, he found that the hole made by firing the gun at pointblank range - the range in which the shotgun allegedly misfired - was much smaller than the hole found in Dillon's chest. In fact, further testing proved that the shotgun had to be fired 5 feet from the victim to make a hole the size actually found in the victim's chest. This pertinent information could mean only one thing: It was physically impossible for Dillon to have fired the weapon.

Unbelievably, 19 years after the demise of Martin Dillon, the police reopened the case. The FBI forensic specialists were called in to examine the evidence. One expert discovered a microscopic fine mist of blood on Stephen Scher's boots called *high velocity impact spatter*. This specific blood spatter occurs only as a result of gun shots. Science has determined this phenomena can be detected no more than 6 feet from the gunshot victim. Scher claimed he was dozens of feet away at the time of the shooting. The blood DNA on Scher's boots was proved to be Dillon's. Scher was lying.

One final piece of forensic evidence convicted Scher of the crime: the trajectory of the gunshot. Scher claimed Dillon was standing when the gun went off squarely in his chest. The evidence said otherwise. Upon exhuming Dillon's body, it was discovered that the gunshot hit Dillon's body from an angle to his right, having a decidedly downward trajectory. The wound track revealed Dillon had to be in a kneeling position to have been shot from above. Furthermore, Dillon's body and clothing revealed no powder burns, a necessary residue if he had, in fact, shot himself. This was yet further undeniable evidence of his not having shot himself.

Stephen Scher was charged and convicted of murdering his best friend. He had shot his friend while Dillon was kneeling to load the skeet shoot. Scher's motive was lust. He desired Pat Dillon all to himself. Dr. Scher is currently serving a life sentence with no possibility of parole.

The true story of Martin Dillon contains many valuable lessons and truths. First, the truth of the matter may lie hidden under the surface, not obvious to the untrained eye. Second, it is possible for professionals to be misled without closely examining the evidence, comparing it with the defendant's alibi. Third, we should not readily believe the defendant's alibi without verifiable proof. Fourth, we should not be a respecter of persons in determining the truth of the matter. Fifth, though non-family members may easily dismiss the murder as accidental, true family members will not allow justice to be obstructed. If unconvinced by the findings of the authorities, they will not rest until the truth is known. Sixth, if necessary they will carry out their own investigation.

## **The Lord Has Left His Church Overwhelming Evidence in Solving the Mystery of Iniquity**

### **The Church is Without Excuse**

Our gracious Lord has not left His Church without extraordinary help in solving the murder mystery of iniquity. First, He alerts us to the existence of murder victims. Though the police, whose task it is to insure the public safety, including the capture of suspected murderers, may not know of an unreported homicide, the Christian Church has no such excuse. Their sole rule of faith, the Bible, has revealed innumerable murders. They may be found in the book of Revelation. Second, we are given valuable information about these murders. The victims are true Christians. This has been proved in the first part of our study. The victims are our brothers and sisters in Christ. They are part of the family of God. As such, we should be alarmed, heartbroken and outraged at the deaths of our innocent family members. Like Martin Dillon's elderly father, we should seek answers to crucial questions. We should not necessarily believe what those in authority may tell us. They, too, may be deceived. Like Mr. Dillon, we should be firmly determined that the perpetrators of these heinous crimes be brought to justice.

But a question arises. Are the victims and their murderers, described so carefully in the Revelation, in the prophetic future, unknowable because the crimes against them have yet to be committed? Or are they in the knowable past and present? Is the Revelation a book pertaining to future events, or was it written as a history of the Christian Church encompassing the time of the Apostle John until the Second Advent of Christ? If the crimes have not yet been committed, then we as a Church need not concern ourselves in solving them. To do so would be madness, a flight of fancy. But, if, on the other hand, these crimes are historic fact, then we are duty bound to witness this paramount truth from the heavens, [Rev. 14:6–11](#).

### **The Martyrologists, Prophets and Church Historians are Those Who Detail the Victims and Their Murderers**

History has indelibly written the truth of the unspeakable crimes perpetrated against the saints. The Lord has preserved and provided His Church with all the facts, evidence and testimonies we need to solve the mystery of iniquity, including the names of the murdered victims. They have been catalogued and published worldwide by the such Martyrologists as John Foxe, in 8 voluminous works, as well as the Mennonites in their classic, *Martyrs Mirror*. The Christian victims include the Paulicians, the Albigenses, the Cathars, the Waldenses, the Vaudois, the Lollards, the Hussites, the Henricians, the Arnoldists, the Huguenots, the Anabaptists, the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Protestant Reformers, the Puritans, the Covenanters, etc., etc. Their histories have been written by Protestants such as Sir Samuel Moreland, G. S. Faber, Peter Allix, Joseph Milner, William Jones and Jean Perrin, to name but a few. God's prophets have written untold volumes of works explaining the Revelation in clearer terms with each generation. Rev. Brightman, Joseph Mede, Bishop Newton, Sir Isaac Newton, E. B. Elliott, and H. Grattan Guinness are but a handful of names of those who have contributed immeasurably to understanding and solving the mystery of iniquity. Many of these works are reprinted and available to the public today. To ignore these great men of God is to dishonor the Body, of which these wise men are integral members. To dishonor the Body is to dishonor the Head, Jesus Christ. To dismiss the overwhelming evidence preserved for our benefit is to

willfully close one's eyes and shut one's ears. Such an attitude is a sign of reprobation, not election.

### **The Murderers Admit to the Murders**

If the direct and circumstantial evidence were not enough, the murderers themselves admit to the murders. In the secular world this is rarely the case. Incredibly, our job is made that much easier by the admission of guilt by the perpetrators. The Roman Catholic Church, under the leadership of her head, the Pope of Rome, admits to murdering innumerable human beings over a period of 800 years. This they did in the name of Christ, earnestly believing they were doing service to God. Their biased historians have detailed the murders, whether they be the results of Inquisitional tribunals or massacres called Crusades. The Popes' encyclicals, decretals and bulls detail their hatred of the saints as well as their commands to exterminate them. The records of the Inquisition detail the names and faith of those imprisoned, tortured and burned.

Therefore, the serious seeker of the facts has two verifiable sources by which he can find the truth of the matter. He has the Protestant sources and the Roman Catholic sources. Both agree to the murders and the circumstances. The disagreement lies in the controversy over the justice of the murders. The Reformation Protestants argue that the murdered victims were their innocent brothers and sisters in Christ, members of the Lord's Body, the true Church. The Roman Catholics argue they were all heretics worthy of death for spreading the venomous poison of heresy, leading the deluded and innocent to Hell, while opposing the true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, outside of which no man can be saved.

### **How One Views the Victims' Orthodoxy Determines One's View of the Murderers**

This present writer has spent considerable time building a biblical foundation, using Scripture alone, to prove that all the murder victims in the Revelation are true Christians. The Holy Spirit has portrayed them, by various means, as faithful and true to the Lord Jesus Christ unto the end. This imperative truth has been detailed in the first part of our study. We are left with no possible question as to the orthodoxy of the victims. All the Church histories available to us today, both pro and con, detail the faith of those martyred over the centuries. By simply reading their testimonies one quickly discovers that their faith was the faith of Jesus, that they held the true testimony of Jesus, that their confessions were grounded on the Word of God alone. This present author has compared their confessions with the confessions of the Reformed and has found them to be perfectly compatible.<sup>3</sup> If, however, one views the Protestant Reformers as heretical, one will view the ancient Christians killed during the Middle Ages as also heretical, in which case, the murderers are the true Christians. Thus, we are left with only two choices: either (a) the Roman Catholic Church, who dominated the world during the Middle Ages, is the true Christian Church; or (b) those who opposed her - who were taken captive by her, who were put on trial for heresy, and who were tortured and burned for their faith - these comprised the true Christian Church. We have already proven that Heaven holds no place for murderers. Therefore, (b) must be true.

---

<sup>3</sup> This comparison may be found in the author's full length book, *Antichrist in Our Midst*, [Los Angeles: Protestant Reformation Publications, 1997].

## **The Revelation Settles the Question: The Victims Were Christians, the Murderer is the Antichrist**

By comparing the facts of history with the prophetic Word of God, having an open mind, one quickly comes to an inevitable conclusion: The Roman Pontiff is the Antichrist predicted to come, his church the murderess harlot who drinks the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. We are left with no other logical, reasonable conclusion. The one who commits the murders of the innocent saints is the Antichrist, plain and simple. Who in their right minds would interpret the Scripture otherwise? Who would dare call the victims the Antichrist? Yet this is exactly what the Roman Catholic Church has done. They actually claim that by murdering the heretics, they have waged battle against the forces of the Antichrist. Have they not been sent strong delusion to justify their innumerable murders?

### **The Mystery of Iniquity is Still Working in Our Day**

This is where things get sticky. This is where the reader may get uncomfortable, begin to squirm and cry out, *Enough!!* But alas, there is more to tell. The horror story does not end here. If, as this writer has proven, the abundant damning evidence only points to the Papacy and his harlot false church, how is it all true Christians do not know it? How is it they are believing the lies of Preterism and Futurism, the former claiming the Revelation is about the ancient Roman Empire, while the latter claims the Revelation is about the forever distant, unknowable future? Is this not a great mystery?

### **Satan Has Successfully Spread False Theories for the Purpose of Misdirecting the True Church Away from His Papal Antichrist**

These demonic doctrines originated by the Jesuits centuries ago in a brilliant attempt to confuse and misdirect the Body of Christ away from the man of Sin whose throne is Rome, the City of 7 Hills. The history of their origins have been known and exposed by the Protestant church for centuries. The Internet even documents this truth. Yet, incredibly, today's Evangelicals embrace false theories as fact. Current popular Futurist prophetic teachings point every which way to an unknown Antichrist. The imagination of these false prophets is limitless. The Preterists comfort themselves in the false notion that the Christian Church is reconstructing society for the better, everyday bringing the world just a little bit closer to obedience under the reign of King Jesus. The idea that the Antichrist is currently thriving in our midst opposes those two theories at their very core. If the Antichrist is, in fact, present, Scripture warns that he will reign in the visible Christian Church until he is destroyed by the Second Advent of Christ.<sup>4</sup> If the Antichrist is already here, ruling without the knowledge of the most famous Christian leaders in our day, then we are not experiencing the revival and victory of Christ. Rather, we are experiencing the revival and victory of the Antichrist, as predicted in [Rev. 13:3](#) and [17:2](#). If the Antichrist is already here, then the saints in the past have not escaped Great Tribulation under his bloody tyranny, nor will the saints of the present and future escape Great Tribulation under his tyranny. This would negate the 'secret' Rapture *escape from great tribulation under the Antichrist* theory.

---

<sup>4</sup> [Daniel 2:35, 44](#); [Daniel 7:11, 26](#); [II Thess. 1:7-10](#); [2:8](#); [Rev. 19:11-21](#).



## Conclusion

By reviewing Church history, the biographies and testimonies of the saints, martyrs and prophets of Jesus, as well as the overwhelming evidence pro and con from authoritative verifiable sources, we discover the truth of the Revelation. The Church of Christ in the 21st century has been slowly, but steadily moving away from the truths known and published abroad by the saints throughout the ages. Today the love of many waxes cold, though the testimony of the martyrs remains true. The Christian martyrs were neither deluded, deceived or lying when they confessed, in one voice, that the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist. Nor are we to look for another. The Lord Jesus Christ did not allow them to die for a lie, nor did the Holy Spirit allow their last breath to speak false words.<sup>5</sup> If the works of the Vicar of Christ are the lying wonders of Antichrist, if he teaches the doctrine of Antichrist, if he reigns in the seat of Antichrist, and if he kills the saints of Christ, he can be no other but the Antichrist. Even his name in Greek translates to *antichrist*, one who both represents and yet, at the same time, opposes Christ.

The professing Evangelical Church and its leaders deny these things be so. They deny the testimony of the ones martyred, whose testimony was of God, whom they have glorified. They deny history and the testimony of truthful, scholarly Church historians. They deny the conviction of reason, as well as the conviction of the Holy Spirit. In short, they deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Can the reader now discern the predicted apostasy in the end times, allowing for the rise of the Man of Sin unchecked, while the so-called leaders of the Church sleep in a drunken stupor, willfully drinking from the cup of abominations offered them by the Mother of All Harlots and her Beast? If the reader has been given eyes to see and ears to hear, will he not shout this truth from the rooftops? Will he not endure persecution, ridicule and excommunication as did those who went before us? It is the prayer of this Protestant ministry that our sovereign Lord would, by His grace and power, raise up a mighty modern army of Christian soldiers to fight the good fight of faith against the Antichrist and his armies, [Rev. 19:11–20](#). So great a cause is this that those soldiers are counted worthy of inclusion in the first resurrection, [Rev. 20:4–5](#).

## Two Book Reviews:

### **R.F. Littledale: Plain Reasons Against Joining the Church of Rome**

*(Spck, London, 1879)*

#### **Reviewed by R. K. McGregor Wright, PhD**

Sadly out of print for many years, this once popular little summary of Protestant objections to the claims and heresies of the Church of Rome once went into repeated reprintings. My own copy is of the “fortieth thousand, carefully revised and much enlarged,” according to the title page, issued in 1886. The book is of a small format, (4.5" by 6.5"), and just over 250 pages. Instead of a series of chapters, it simply numbers its paragraphs and lists the topic of each one on the Contents pages. The style is Victorian of course, but generally crisp and carefully specific. There is no padding in this book, but rather we find a list of problem facts taken almost wholly from Roman Catholic authorities, with the relevant data and objections clearly stated. Between its first issue and the one in my hand, the Catholic scholar Fr. Ignatius Ryder attempted a

---

<sup>5</sup> [Matt. 10:17–20](#); [Mark 13:9–11](#); [Luke 12:11–12](#), [21:12–15](#).

refutation of it (egged on by his mentor Cardinal Newman), but Littledale's opinion of Ryder's scholarship is indicated on pages 134 and following. He rarely has any need to respond to Ryder in this revised edition, and then only about trivia.

This "manual of the Romish controversy" as such books used to be called, is a result of the problem of Anglicans drifting over to Rome under the influence of the "Oxford Movement" started by Keble, Pusey, and Newman, among others. This movement sought to "recover the Catholic truths" supposedly jettisoned at the Reformation, and which these men thought could be brought back to complete the "true catholic character" of the Anglican Church. Some indication of how candid much of the Anglo-Catholic efforts were, may be gathered from the fact that the Bishop of Oxford was forced to stop John Newman from continuing his "Tracts For The Times," after Newman had in *Tract 90* tried to show that the quite clearly Protestant *Thirty-nine Articles* of Anglicanism were "really" compatible with the Council of Trent! A few years later (in 1845) Newman went over to Rome, and the real tendency of the Oxford movement was thereby made a public scandal. As a result, pastors sympathetic to the Anglo-catholic movement such as Dr. Littledale, felt obliged to compile books designed to discourage their members from drifting over to Rome. Thus we have *Plain Reasons*. It is therefore doubly useful, being a collection of Anglican *catholic* objections to joining Rome.

Important and useful features of the book include a chart at the end, of all the occasions that popes have had elections of doubtful validity. Of the 58 popes listed, 8 were heretics, 22 had doubtful or invalid elections, 11 were probably or certainly simoniacal (that is, they had *bought* the See), and 22 committed Intrusion to the See, among other problems. These numbers add up to more than 58 because some of them had more than one of these problems. At the bottom of the list, which ends at Leo X, Littledale adds the laconic comment, "No valid election has been possible since." The point of course, is that the number of invalid occupancies of the See of Peter is so large that the idea of an "unbroken succession" in the bishopric of Rome is simply absurd on historical grounds alone. Even the Catholic Church itself regards over 20 of these men as anti-popes! Littledale's authorities for compiling this list are of course, all Roman Catholic sources and historians. One of them, Baronius, was made a Cardinal because of his thorough historical work.

I give one example here of Littledale's cryptic treatment of what he calls the "Dilemma of the Dogma" of the Pope's infallibility just recently proclaimed (at Vatican I in 1870), that—

Either the Pope assumed the title of Infallible of his own mere motion, or it was conferred on him by the Council. If he took it [to] himself, there is no evidence in its favour, because no man may be judge in his own cause, nor decide to his own advantage on a mere *exparte* statement. [But] If the Council gave it to him, then the Council, by declaring him alone infallible, and that without the consent of the Church, confessed its own fallibility and liability to error; and therefore its entire incompetence to decide on such a stupendous doctrine at all, involving as it does, a complete revolution in the constitution of the Church, and reducing it to nothing. [from page 187]

This dilemma points up the historical fact that the idea of the Pope being himself *alone* infallible ("without the consent of the Church" is the precise expression of Vatican I), was a highly novel doctrine, and had been vigorously opposed by many Catholic theologians ever since its invention in the twelfth century. The step in the above argument, that "no man may be judge in his own cause" is quoted from Pope Benedict XIV no less, as *Nemo esse queat Judex in causa propria*. Nothing, surely, could be more reasonable than that...

The most telling result of such a book, is that the reader comes away with the impression overwhelmingly confirmed, that the Church of Rome is a wholly unreliable guide in spiritual matters, having undergone vast and radical changes of doctrine over the years, adding much incompatible with both the spirit and the Scriptures of the age of the Apostles. Its own historians show that it is neither holy, catholic, nor apostolic, and has only the most misleading claims to offer to one who is informed by the Bible itself, or who bothers to look into the history of these changes.

Although its critique of the Roman doctrines of salvation and grace are not adequate from a consistent Protestant standpoint (in fact, they are virtually non-existent), the historical material on papal claims is excellent. Romanism's false claims about Peter, apostolic continuity, Roman sacraments, superstitions, the Mass, worship of the Virgin, early papal forgeries, the immorality of Liguori's casuistry, the universal bishopric, as well as papal infallibility, are all thoroughly demolished.

Littledale's evaluation of the doctrine of papal infallibility is found in paragraphs LXXIV (74) to LXXXII (82). It should be supplemented by the doctoral thesis *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150–1350* (Brill, 1972), by the modern catholic historian Brian Tierney.

Littledale's book is often found in second-hand religious book stores, and is occasionally offered on the wwweb, but the reader must realize that its deficiencies as well as its value, derive from the fact that it was written at a time when the changes in the Roman Church during the twentieth century would have been simply inconceivable. We therefore come now, to a book produced in the light of Vatican II, which unlike Littledale, deals thoroughly also with matters concerning *salvation* from an evangelical standpoint:

### **James G. McCarthy: The Gospel According to Rome** (*Harvest House, Eugene, or, 1995*).

After the Council of Trent, Pius V had a full-scale Catechism compiled to reflect the new teachings of the council. It was published in 1564. Likewise, the recent Second Vatican Council is best represented to the faithful in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994). It represents the way the Church of Rome wishes itself to be understood in harmony with the "spirit of Vatican II" and must therefore be read and understood by Protestant critics of that church.

Accordingly, James McCarthy has compiled an examination of Rome's doctrines, in the form of a commentary on the important passages in the new *Catechism*.

McCarthy is the ideal person to do this work, having converted from the Church of Rome to the Protestant Gospel, and having been a missionary to catholic Ireland for many years.

McCarthy introduces each doctrine with an anecdote (mostly taken from his own experiences), which points up the real nature and effect of Rome's false doctrines on its own people. He then shows what the current official position of the Catholic Church is from the new *Catechism* and other sources. Every important point of the catholic position on each subject is properly documented from official sources, making this volume a most useful source-book. He then shows in sections called "A Biblical Response" that the Roman doctrine is incompatible with the Bible. For the Christian trying to witness to Catholics, this is the most practical part of each subject. The Bible's position is carefully contrasted with such sources as the Council of Trent, as on pages 118–121, a convenient chart in two columns lays the teaching of the new

*Catechism* over against the Bible. Other doctrinal contrasts can be found conveniently laid out in boxes on the relevant pages.

This is an unusually helpful and accurate book, and anyone who simply reads it through will get an education in the differences between the biblical Gospel and the “gospel according to Rome.” It is also able to function as a reference or commentary on the *Catechism*, and for this we can only be grateful to the author. The issues and the differences are the same today 35 years after Vatican II, as they were in the decades immediately following the Council of Trent. The Church of Rome is changing all the time, but not, apparently, in the direction of the Reformation.

Protestants are of course amused by the appalling tardiness with which the Roman church finally came to see the absurdity of a liturgy in Latin (ignoring St. Paul in [1 Cor 14:1–19](#)), opting in Vatican II (over a thousand years late!) for a vernacular liturgy. But this type of change in church practice is of no importance when compared with the Reformation question of Justification by “faith without works” (as Paul so clearly puts it in [Romans 3:28](#)), and such a central difference between the Reformers and Roman dogma remain identically central today. No interaction or dialogue with Rome can be honest which omits or judiciously avoids consideration of these controlling differences. They are radical and unbridgeable, and only a return to Scripture as the final and sufficient guide in matters spiritual, can be expected to heal them. There is no likelihood that any such return on Rome’s part will occur in the foreseeable future.

Meanwhile, James McCarthy’s book will be a great encouragement to those of us involved in Protestant apologetics, and to those thousands of believers anxious to help their Catholic friends to faith in Jesus as a sufficient Savior.

## ***The Promise, a New Bible Translation***

**Put Out by Thomas Nelson Pub.**

**Reviewed by Dr. Robert Morey**

This recent translation is one of the most inept attempts at translating the Bible I have ever seen. It can be compared only to the erroneous New World Translation put out by the Jehovah’s Witnesses. As a matter of fact, the Watchtower will be thrilled with this translation for many reasons. For example, [Micah 5:2](#) is translated,

“But the LORD will choose one of your people to rule the nation—someone whose family goes back to ancient times.”

Not only does this translation ignore the Hebrew and Greek text, but it adds the note, “...the deity of the ruler is omitted.”

The entire point of the Hebrew and Greek text is that the Ruler was present at Creation and actually existed from all eternity. ([The Trinity](#), pgs. 311f.). His deity is clearly revealed in the syntax.

The same violation of the Hebrew text is found in its translation of [Prov. 30:4](#).

“If you know of any who have done such things, then tell me their names and their children names.”

The translators changed the singular “what is *His name* and *the name of His Son*” into plurals! Evidently they cannot tell the difference between singular and plural nouns and pronouns.

The problem with translating pronouns affected their translation of [Psa. 2:12](#).

“Show respect to his son because if you don’t, the LORD might become furious and suddenly destroy you. But he blesses and protects everyone who runs to him.”

The Hebrew text is quite clear that if we fail to trust in *the Son*, *He* will judge us one day. We must place our faith in Him. This translation avoids this by inserting the words “the LORD” when it is not in the Hebrew and thus making all the pronouns refer to the Father instead of the Son. This is an old Arian trick that has been refuted many times before ([The Trinity](#), pg. 178). Evidently, they feel at liberty to add words as well as ignore the grammar and syntax of the text.

They mistranslate [Zech. 12:10](#) by using old Arian idea of altering the text to avoid the reference to the crucifixion of Christ. Instead of following the Hebrew, “they will look upon Me whom they have pierced,” they mistranslate “when they see the one they pierced” ([The Trinity](#), p. 522).

The deity of Christ in the New Testament is denied on many occasions. The doxology to Christ as God found in [Rom. 9:5](#) is redirected to the Father by doing what Arians have suggested for years: Change the Greek text without any textual evidence whatsoever. ([The Trinity](#), pgs. 332f).

The same is true of [Acts 20:28](#). They avoid the reference to “the blood of God” by adding the words “His own Son.” We documented in [The Trinity](#), that this is an old Arian trick (pgs. 330f).

In this translation, [I John 5:20](#) is no longer a proof text for the deity of Christ. They also mistranslate [2 Thess. 1:12](#).

On the other hand, they did translate a few passages correctly such as [John 1:1,18; 20:28](#). But, overall, this translation is an abomination and I fully expect the Watchtower and other Arian cults to quote it and even sell it.

It is a sad day when Thomas Nelson prints an Arian translation of the Bible that is based on faulty scholarship and a clear bias against the deity of Christ.

## The Doctrine of Justification

by Dr. Robert A. Morey

In his epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul at the outset establishes the basic truths of man’s sinfulness and God’s judicial wrath upon man for his sin. Thus he begins his epistle by saying in [1:18](#),

For *the wrath of God* is revealed from heaven against all *Ungodliness* and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness.

Paul argues from [1:18](#) to [3:23](#) that all men are sinners and are therefore rightfully condemned before the Law of God. He demonstrates from Scripture that both Gentile and Jew are without excuse before the bar of God’s justice.

That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God ([Rom. 3:19](#)).

In Chapter 3, Paul points out the two major results of man’s fall. First, man is rendered unrighteous in his *person* or *condition* (vs. [10–18](#)). Second, man is rendered guilty in his *position* or *standing* before God and His Law (v. [19](#)). These two problems constitute the basis of man’s

need for salvation. Indeed, the rest of Romans is simply God's answer to the problems of man's sinful condition and guilty position.

In Chapters 4–5, the Apostle explains how a sinner's guilty position before God and His Law can be removed by God's plan of salvation. Then in Chapters 6–8, the apostle explains how God deals with the sinful condition of man.

It is in the context of dealing with the problem of man's guilty standing before God that Paul introduces justifications as God's answer to this problem.

It is necessary to emphasize in our day that *man* has a *problem with real judicial guilt before God and His Law*.

Paul is not referring to mere guilt feelings or pangs of conscience. But he refers to real guilt before the Judge of all the earth.

Various psychological techniques can be used to remove guilt feelings but they can never remove a sinner's real guilt before God. *Our real problem is not our guilt feelings but our guilty standing or position before God.*

Perhaps one of the main reasons for a general lack of joy and peace among 20th century Christians is their woeful ignorance of the Biblical doctrine of justification. The Reformation was created by men and women who understood, embraced, and proclaimed the doctrine of justification by grace alone-through faith alone-in Christ alone. They were Christians who turned their world upside down (or rather right-side up!)

If we are going to witness a true reformation or revival in our day, we must preach the Biblical doctrine of justification. The great themes of salvation must be thundered once again from pulpits across the land. We have no time to major on minors. We must preach the doctrines of grace if we desire to see a true reformation of religion in our generation.

With these thoughts in mind, let us now examine what the Scriptures teach us concerning justification.

## I. The Origin of Justification

Man's guilt is of such a nature that only God Himself could ever remove it. Thus the Apostle Paul states in [Gal. 2:21](#),

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Or, again, Paul argues in [Gal. 2:16](#),

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.

The Scriptures are particularly clear that it is God the Father who is the author and origin of justification.

Seeing it is one God, *which shall justify* the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith ([Rom. 3:30](#)).

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on *him that justified the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness (Rom. 4:5).

Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he *also justified*: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:30).

Who shall lay anything to charge of God's elect? It is *God that justifieth* (Rom. 8:33).

Since it is the Father who justifies us, we can see how sinful it is to neglect the Father in our prayers and praise.

We hear very much today of praying to Jesus, praising Jesus, praying to and for the Holy Spirit. Yet, we hear very little about God the Father.

The Holy Spirit was sent to point us to Christ, *not* to Himself. Jesus said in John 16:13, 14.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for *he shall not speak of himself*; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come, He *shall glorify me*: for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you.

When we turn to Christ under the Spirit's guidance, we find Him pointing us to the Father. Christ is the way to the Father and not a dead end street (Un. 14:6). Christ is the mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5). Thus Paul places all members of the Godhead in their proper order in Eph. 2:18,

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

It is on this basis that we must judge as spurious any religious revival which does not lead to the glorification of the Father. True revivals in the past always quickened and renewed the believer's love and devotion to his Father.

Dear Christian reader, do you praise the Father for justification? Do you wish a quickened devotion to your Father? Then study those aspects of salvation which are His particular work.

## II. The Nature of Justification

Justification is a judicial, legal and forensic declaration or verdict of God. As such, justification takes place in heaven and not on earth. It deals with our guilty position or standing before God and His law. Thus justification concerns what God *says* about us in His capacity as the Judge of all the earth.

The Scriptures speak of God justifying us in the sense of judicially declaring us righteous before the Law of God. This declaration of righteousness involves two things: (1) God declares before the Law that we have never sinned. Thus it is a declaration of our *perfect sinlessness*. (2) God declares before the Law that we have lived in total obedience to the Law and have, therefore, merited the blessings of eternal life. Thus it is a declaration of our *perfect obedience*.

Justification is more than mere pardon for pardon means "declared guilty but delivered from punishment" while justification is God's declaration that we are *not* guilty and therefore *not* worthy of punishment. But, instead, God positively declares that we are *righteous* before Him and, therefore worthy to receive all the blessings and privileges of the righteous.

It is for this reason that forgiveness should not be confused with justification. In justification, God declares us perfect in righteousness. Thus there is nothing to forgive for no sin is judicially recognized by God.

That justification means *to declare righteous* in a legal, judicial or forensic sense is almost universally accepted. Since the arguments for this position have been presented in great detail by such scholars as James Buchanan, we will only present a brief summary of the chief arguments which demonstrate the forensic or judicial character of justification.

1. The word justification is not confined to the pages of Holy Scripture but it was a well-known and commonly used word in the Greek language. When we investigate the meaning of justification as used in everyday speech, we discover that justification as used in everyday speech, we discover that justification meant “to declare righteous” 100% the time. Furthermore, it was used in Roman law as the judicial term to declare someone “not guilty,” i.e., righteous.

2. When we turn to study how the word justification is used in Scripture, we again find that it *always* means to declare someone righteous.

First, its usage in non-theological or everyday speech contexts always means to declare righteous. Examine the following passages and substitute the phrase “declare righteous” wherever the word justification is found.

Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not *justify* the wicked (Ex. 23:7).

If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them. Then they shall *justify* the righteous, and *condemn* the wicked (Deut. 25:1).

He that *justifieth* the wicked, and he that *condemneth* the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord (Prov. 17:15).

Which *justify* the wicked for regard, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him (Isa. 5:23)!

And the Lord said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah (Jer. 3:11).

Neither bath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast *justified* thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done (Ezk. 16:51).

The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is *justified* of her children (Mart. 11:19).

But he, willing to *justify* himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my neighbor (Lk. 10:29).



And he said unto them, Ye are they which *justify* yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Lk. 16:15).

Second, man is said to “justify” God. It is obvious that while we cannot *make* God righteous we can *declare* Him to be righteous. No other meaning is possible.

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that *thou mightest be justified* when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest (Psa. 51:4).

And all the people that heard him, and the publicans *justified God*, being baptized with the baptism of John (Lk. 7:29).

Third, judicial condemnation is the opposite of justification. A judge cannot make a person guilty or righteous. He can only declare him condemned or justified.

If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and *condemn* the wicked (Deut. 25:1).

If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall *condemn* me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse (Job 9:20).

Shall even he that hatheth right govern? And wilt thou *condemn* him that is most just (Job 34:17)?

He that justifieth the wicked, and he that *condemneth* the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord (Prov. 17:15).

Which justify the wicked for reward, and *take away* the *righteousness* of the righteous from him (Isa. 5:23)!

Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall *condemn* me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up (Isa. 50:9).

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth (Rom. 8:33).

Who is he that *condemneth*? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Rom. 8:34).

Fourth, the different words and phrases which are sometimes substituted for justification mean to declare righteous.

Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD *imputeth not iniquity*, and in whose spirit there is no guile (Psa. 32:2).

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he bath whereof to glory, but not before God.

For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was *counted* Onto him *righteousness*. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is *counted for righteousness*. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God *imputeth righteousness* without works. Saying, Blessed are they whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom *the Lord will not impute sin* (Rom. 4:1–8).

3. In the book of Romans, Paul introduces justification as God’s answer to man’s problem of his sinful record or standing before God and His Law. Justification is always dealt with in the context of the Law and its demands. Tho<sup>5</sup> justification and the Law are the two main topics discussed in Galatians as well as in [Romans 4](#) and [5](#). Therefore, the context of justification reveals its judicial character.

### III. The Foundation of Justification

Having established that God declares us righteous in justification, we are warranted to ask, “On what grounds or foundation does God make such a declaration? How can He declare us righteous while we are yet unrighteous? How can God justify the ungodly ([Rom. 4:5](#))? How can God be just and, at the same time be the justifier of sinners ([Rom. 3:26](#))?”

The righteousness which is imputed to our account in God’s act of justification must be understood as *an evangelical righteousness which is revealed to us in the Gospel*. The Apostle Paul begins his epistle to the Romans by stating that there is a righteousness revealed in the Gospel which must be received by faith.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. The just shall live by faith ([Rom. 1:17](#)).

The righteousness revealed by the Gospel is declared to be *God’s* righteousness. This is not to be understood as referring to God’s general attribute of righteousness, but, rather, as a righteousness which comes from God and not from man. Thus justifying righteousness is not the product of our obedience to the Law but it is the gift of God. Paul stated this beautifully in [Phil. 3:9](#),

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.

Even though we have seen that the righteousness of justification comes from God and is revealed in the Gospel, we still must answer the question, “Upon what grounds does God declare us righteous?” The Gospel reveals the righteousness of Jesus Christ as the foundation of our justification. By His life, death, and resurrection Christ Jesus accomplished all that was necessary for our complete justification.

The work of Jesus Christ is the key to justification. We are justified on the basis of His work for us while upon earth nearly 2,000 years ago. Justification is based upon three great transactions rooted in the historical redemptive work of Christ.

1. Christ’s perfect life of sinlessness and total obedience to the Law of God is imputed to our account. God accepts us as righteous by the virtue of the substitutionary obedience of Christ in His life. Thus Paul declares in [Rom. 5:18](#),

Therefore, as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

2. Our life of sin and guilt was imputed to Christ's account and He bore the curse of the Law in our place.

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 (II Cor. 5:21).

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree (Gal. 3:13).

3. By resurrecting Christ from the grave, God demonstrated that He accepted the obedience of Christ in life and death. Thus Christ's resurrection is viewed by the apostle as being foundation to our justification in Rom. 4:25,

Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.

In summary, God declares us righteous because we *are* legally righteous by virtue of the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness to our account.

The reality and preciousness of justification through Christ's righteousness can perhaps be emphasized by the following illustration.

Imagine that you found yourself in the courtroom of heaven. Your name was called and you were given a book entitled, *This Was Your Life*, in which was recorded every single thought, word, deed and desire of your entire life.

As you looked into your book, you found it divided into two sections. The first section was headed by this question, "*Did you always perfectly keep God's Law and do that which was pleasing in God's sight?*" The second section began by asking, "*Did you ever transgress God's Law by failing to obey its commands or by doing what it forbids?*"

When you examine the first section you find that all the pages are blank because you never did any good in God's eyes. But when you turn to the second section, you find a detailed account of all of your many sins of omission and commission.

The full impact of your sinfulness before God suddenly rushes upon you. You realize that justice cannot do otherwise than demand and receive your eternal condemnation.

Your fear is increased as you hear a man before you receive this verdict, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire." You shake as your case is now called up. But then there arose One who willingly took upon Himself the task of representing and defending you before the Judge of all the earth.

He held a book in His hand. And now He asked you for your book. After He had both books, He switched the covers so that your cover received the contents of His book while the contents of your book were put into the covers of His book.

As you examine your book, you see that according to the record written therein, you always perfectly kept God's Law and did that which was pleasing before God. You turn to the second section and see blank pages because you never sinned.

The full realization of what just happened had come to you when you hear the Judge pronounce your representative guilty and hand Him over for Justice to crucify. Then you are declared "not guilty," even as your representative cries out, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?"

His righteous life was put to your account while your sins were put to His account. O, the matchless grace of God!

#### IV. The Attributes of Justification

Perhaps the best way to give the attributes of justification is to state them in comparison with regeneration and sanctification. In this way, we can establish wherein these redemptive works of God are alike and different. The following chart illustrates the similarities and differences between regeneration, justification and sanctification.

REGENERATION	JUSTIFICATION	SANCTIFICATION
1. Work of the Holy Spirit.	1. Work of the Father.	1. Work of Holy Spirit.
2. Takes place in the sinner.	2. Takes place in heaven.	2. Takes place in the sinner.
3. Deals with the pollution and power of sin.	3. Deals with the guilt of sin.	3. Deals with the pollution and power of sin.
4. Impartation of new nature.	4. Impartation of Christ's righteousness.	4. Impartation of Christ's righteousness.
5. We are created righteous.	5. We are reckoned righteous.	5. We are made righteous.
6. The focus is on our person or condition.	6. The focus is on our standing.	6. The focus is on our person or condition.
7. Finished.	7. Finished.	7. Progressive.
8. Complete.	8. Complete.	8. Incomplete.
9. Instantaneous.	9. Instantaneous.	9. Gradual.
10. Perfect.	10. Perfect.	10. Imperfect.
11. Not repeatable.	11. Not repeatable.	11. Growth.
12. Act of God.	12. Act of God.	12. Work of God.

## V. The Application of Justification

That justification is received by faith as the free gift of God's un-merited grace is apparent even to the most superficial reader of Scripture. The Apostle again and again emphasizes that the grace of justification comes to those who believe in Christ and not as a result of the works of the Law.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

Even the righteousness of God which is *by faith* of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that *believe: for there is no difference:*

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.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of *faith*.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law ([Rom. 3:21–28](#)).

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

But to him that worketh not, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for righteousness ([Rom. 4:1–5](#)).

Therefore being justified *by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ([Rom. 5:1](#)).

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 ([Gal. 2:16](#)).

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain ([Gal. 2:21](#)).

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live *by faith* ([Gal. 3:11](#)).

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified *by faith* ([Gal. 3:24](#)).

Faith is the means Or channel through which justification comes to the believing sinneL Faith is the open hand extended to receive the free gift of justification.

It is important to point out that the Scripture *never* say that we are *justified* because *we believe*. Faith is never viewed as the grounds or foundation of justification. Thus the Biblical authors were very careful to use only those prepositions which in the Greek refer to faith as the

means and not as the grounds. We are *not* justified because we believe, but *through* faith or *by means* of faith we receive justification.

## VI. The Time of Justification

Some confusion has centered around the exact point in time when justification takes place. This confusion has resulted from two basic errors of thought.

1. There is a failure to distinguish between the plan, the accomplishment and the application of salvation.

God planned or decreed from eternity past to justify all elect sinners. Then in the fulness of time, God sent forth Christ to accomplish the basis of justification by His obedience in life and death. At some point in the personal history of each elect sinner, they believe and are justified.

Justification cannot be reduced to God's *plan* to justify or to Christ's *accomplishing* the basis of justification. The Scriptures never place justification first and faith second as if we believe because we are justified. The order is always faith, then justification.

Also, if the elect were justified from all eternity or from the historical life of Christ, this would deny the transition from wrath to grace which is true of all elect sinners. If they were justified, i.e. declared righteous before they were born, no elect sinner was ever under the wrath of God. Yet, Scripture is clear that we are all born sinners under God's wrath and do not come into God's grace until conversion. Is this not the plan teaching of [Eph. 2:1–3](#), where the apostle speaks of the transition from wrath to grace evident in the Ephesian believers?

And you hath he quickened, *who were dead* in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in *the children of disobedience*: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind' and were by nature *the children of wrath*, even as others.

2. Confusion concerning the time of justification in relationship to the other aspects of the application of redemption has arisen because of the failure to avoid linear reasoning.

Justification and the other elements of salvation are related to each other in *many* different ways. Thus while a chronological order will see faith and justification as simultaneous, the casual order would place faith before justification. Or again, while justification and adoption are chronologically simultaneous, justification is placed first as the basis of adoption in the legal order. Justification is interrelated to all the other aspects of the application of redemption.

## VII. The Fruit or Results of Justification

The blessedness of justification is found not only in the act of justification wherein God declares us righteous in Christ, but, also, in the results of justification. Let us briefly consider three of the direct results of justification.

### 1. Justification Secures Peace with God

Therefore being justified by faith, *we have peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first and foremost result of justification is the obtaining of peace with God. That peace with God could be obtained at all by any means is astounding when one considers that we are viewed by God as “without strength,” “ungodly,” “sinners,” and “enemies” (Rom. 5:6, 8, 10).

By nature, we are at war with God and God is at war with us. The futile revolt of sinful mankind and its utter defeat is graphically described in [Psalm 2](#).

Peace with God is something which every sinner should earnestly seek. But this seeking must take into account the terrible price of peace. The Son of God had to suffer and die under the wrath of God in order to obtain peace for His people.

Christ must die for justice demands that either the rebel sinner or his substitute must die for the crimes committed against God and His kingdom. Thus Paul says in [Col. 1:20](#) that Christ accomplished peace “through the blood of his cross.

Blessed are the sons of God, they are bought with Christ’s own blood; they are ransomed from the grave, life eternal they shall have: with them numbered may we be, here and in eternity.

They are justified by grace, they enjoy the Saviour’s peace; all their sins are washed away, they shall stand in God’s great day:

With them numbered may we be, here and in eternity; they are lights upon the earth, children of a heav’nly birth; one with God, with Jesus one, glory is in them begun: with them numbered may we be, here and in eternity. Amen.

## **2. Justification Secures the Righteousness of Christ**

We, like Joshua, stand before God in filthy garments ([Zech. 3:3](#)) for all our righteousness are as filthy rags before Him ([isa. 64:6](#)). Like Joshua, we need to be clothed with the pure white linen of the righteousness of Christ ([Zech. 3:4](#) of [Rev. 19:8](#)).

Is not Christ our only righteousness ([I Cor. 1:30](#))? Was it not by Christ’s righteousness that justification came to sinners ([Rom. 5:18](#))? Does not Peter ascribe the obtaining of “like precious faith” to “the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ” ([II Pet. 1:1](#))?

We are acceptable before God because we are robed in the righteousness of Christ. Well did the hymn writer pen these beautiful words.

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress; “Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, With joy shall I lift up my head.”

Bold shall I stand in the great day; For who ought to my charge shall lay? Fully absolved through these I am from sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

When from the dust of death I rise to claim my mansion in the skies, Ev’n then this shall be all my plea, Jesus, Jesus hath lived, bath died for me.

Jesus, be endless praise to thee, whose boundless mercy bath for me, for me a full atonement made, an everlasting ransom paid.

O let the dead now hear thy voice; Now bid thy banished ones rejoice; Their beauty this, their glorious dress, Jesus, thy blood and righteousness. Amen.\*

### 3. Justification Secures Judicial Forgiveness

While justification does not consist of forgiveness, it does result in forgiveness and pardon. Thus the Apostle quotes [Psa. 32:1](#) where David ascribes forgiveness of sin to justification.

Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered ([Rom. 4:7](#)).

*The focus of justification is on the righteous life of Christ while the focus of forgiveness is on the death of Christ.* Thus while justification and forgiveness should not be viewed as being the same thing, neither should they be viewed as being totally apart from each other. They are like the head and tail of a coin. Even though they are different, they always attend each other.

The forgiveness which comes to us in justification is called *judicial* forgiveness to distinguish it from *parental* forgiveness. Perhaps the best way to clarify the difference between judicial and parental forgiveness is by the following comparison.

Judicial forgiveness guarantees that at the moment of death the child of God goes to heaven regardless if he had just committed a sin. Thus judicial forgiveness is one of the foundations of the assurance of salvation.

Judicial forgiveness is the ground upon which we ask for parental forgiveness. We can pray,

“O, my Father, forgive me this day of my sins which are before Thee and withhold thy hand of chastening because these sins have been judicially forgiven through Christ’s blood.”

## VIII. The Evidence of Justification

One of the basic principles of the Christian life is that *position determines experiences*. If we are truly justified, there will be the evidence of good works in our lives for justification is organically and immutably connected to sanctification. Thus after completing his section on justification, the Apostle immediately deals with sanctification as an evidence of justification in [Rom. 6–7](#).

### Judicial Forgiveness

### Parental Forgiveness

1. Has in view our relationship as sinners before God the Judge of all the earth.
1. Has in view our relationship as children before God our heavenly father.
2. The lack of it means eternal torment in hell.
2. The lack of it means *loss of* fellowship with God and chastening on earth.
3. It is once for all and not repeatable.
3. It is needed continuously every day and is repeatable.
4. It covers all sins past, present and future.
4. It covers only the past and present sins of omission and commission which we confess and forsake.

---

\* Hymn: “Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness”



5. Once received, we never again need to ask for it. It is immutable and eternal.
5. We need to ask for it daily for it is mutable and needs constant revival.

If justification is by faith alone, and apart from works, will this not give sinners the license to sin? No! Paul responds to this question in [Rom. 6:1, 2](#).

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid,  
How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Paul is not afraid of the subject of works for he has placed works in its proper order. Saving faith justifies and then the justified sinner produces works in his life, Faith-then-works is the proper order. That Paul believed that position determines experience particularly it terms of justification and works is clear from the following passages.

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* ([Eph. 2:8–10](#)).

In all things showing thyself a pattern of good *works*: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity ([Tit. 2:7](#)).

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works* ([Tit. 2:14](#)).

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to *maintain good works*. These things are good and profitable unto men ([Tit. 3:8](#)).

And let ours also learn to *maintain good works* for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful ([Tit. 3:14](#)).

It is in this light that we must approach the book of James. Although they approach it from different angles, James and Paul are both teaching the same doctrine. They both say that a *justified sinner will evidence his salvation by living a life of good works*.

It is obvious that James was dealing with people who professed to be justified but there was evidence in their lives to make it a questionable profession (see [2:14](#)).

### **Paul James**

1. Deals with justification “before God” ([Rom. 4:1, 2](#)).
1. Deals with justification before men. (See [2:14](#) “though a man say”; [2:18](#) “am an may say”; [2:18](#) “show me,” “I will show you”; [2:24](#) “ye see.”)
2. He speaks of faith because God alone can see faith in the heart.
2. He speaks of a living faith which produces works in the outward life of a man which can be seen and examined by other men [James 2:14, 17–20](#)).
3. He draws his illustration from [Gen. 15:6](#), wherein the conversion of Abraham is recorded. Paul refers to Abraham’s justification by faith alone. Thus he is dealing with Abraham’s *salvation*.

3. He draws his illustration from [Gen. 22:1–19](#), where, after being a believer for many years, Abraham is asked to give evidence to everyone of his love to and faith in God. James refers to Abraham *after* he was justified. Thus he dealt with Abraham’s *sanctification*.

4. Paul’s key phrase is “before God,”

4. James’ key phrase is “show *me* (1:18). James could not see faith if it was not manifested by works.

They were hearers and not doers of the Word (1:22). They did not bridle their tongue (1:26). They favored the rich and ignored the poor (2:1–6). They did not have compassion on their brethren (2:16). They all wanted to be leaders (3:1). They cursed men (3:9). Their hearts were full of envying and strife (3:14). They were given over to lustful fighting (4:1–3). They attempted to be friends of this world (4:4). They spoke evil of one another (4:11). They were not patient and held grudges one against the other (5:8, 9).

In the light of the lives of these professing Christians, is it any wonder that James casts doubt on their conversion and demands evidence to make their profession credible? Did not Paul do the same with the Corinthians in II Cor. 13:5? Did not Jesus teach this in [John 8:31](#)? Is this not the same teaching as found in I Cor. 6:9–11 and [Gal. 5:17–24](#)?

When we compare the teaching of the Apostle Paul on the relationship between justification and sanctification with what James says, we find them teaching the same thing:

The faith that works is the faith that saves. A dead faith will not save for it is not true faith.

A seeming contradiction arises between Paul and James when we mistakenly confuse Paul’s teaching on faith with James’ teaching on works as an evidence of true faith. There is a difference between Paul and James because they are handling different subjects. The following diagram may help to show that James and Paul do not contradict each other because they are dealing with two different issues.

From the above it is clear that Paul in [Rom. 3–5](#) is dealing with a different topic than that which James dealt with in his book.

Dear Reader, meditate on these questions and apply them to your conscience.

Is there evidence in my life that I am justified?

Would James agree that I was justified?

Is my faith living or dead?

Do I have compassion and an open hand to brothers and sisters in Christ?

In summary, justification is God’s way of dealing with our guilty standing before Him and His Law. In this amazing provision of God’s free grace, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account or record while our sins were imputed to Christ’s record. God declares us not guilty before the moral universe and pronounces us righteous in His sight.

“*Justification*” is a Chapter XIII of Dr. Morey’s book entitled “*Studies in the Atonement.*” If you wish to obtain a copy of his book, please call 1–800–41–TRUTH, or visit our website at [www.faithdefenders.com](http://www.faithdefenders.com).

## The Reformation Day Statement

Unicoi, Tennessee, October 28, 1998—The Trinity Foundation today released the following statement on the 481st anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation on October 31, 1517. The Statement was adopted at the Conference on Christianity and Roman Catholicism held in Erwin, Tennessee, October 8–10, 1998.

*“We the undersigned, having gathered together for the purpose of exposing the fundamental errors of the Roman State-Church and her superstitious and deceptive doctrines, as well as to reaffirm the Biblical doctrines of grace which after the example of Paul the Apostle to exhort all Christians to stand boldly against those today who are not being ‘straightforward about the truth of the Gospel’ (Galatians 2:14).*

*“Divisive persons have risen within the ranks of those professing the Christian Faith, persons who do not cherish or do not understand the distinctive doctrines of the bible, but rather have trampled the Gospel and the unity of the Christian Church underfoot. They have twisted the clear Biblical doctrine of justification. The Biblical truth is that justification is strictly the act of God’s grace alone in which the Lord declares legally righteous those who are His own, by the imputation to them of the perfect righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ alone, through faith alone. These persons have abandoned the Biblical phrase “imputed righteousness” and taught that justification is a transformative rather than a purely forensic act. This alteration carries with it the old lie of Satan-of conveyed, imparted, or infused righteousness (‘you shall be as God’). They have proclaimed erroneous doctrines, such as baptismal regeneration, that annul the grace of justification, to be interrelated questions yet to be resolved. These men have persisted in their divisive behavior without the benefit of Church discipline commanded by Christ in Matthew 18:15-20, and modeled for us by Paul the Apostle.*

*“In light of the recent proliferation and popularity of such unbiblical concordats as Evangelicals and Catholics Together (March 1994) and The Gift of Salvation (November 1997), we see that it is once again time for the Church of Jesus Christ to rise up to stand on the bible alone so that it may be said of us what was said to the Philadelphians: You ‘have kept My Word, and have not denied My Name’ (Revelation 3:8), for His Word alone is truth (John 17:17). It is therefore strongly urged by those present at this Conference that all who read this Statement join with us and sing it. In so doing we seek to obey the command of Christ ‘in spirit of gentleness’ so that we may receive from Him either the restoration of our transgressing brethren (Galatians 6:1, or the clarity and courage of mind necessary to excuse them from our midst in order to preserve the unity of the Church for which Christ prayed in John 17, ‘that they all may be one in Us.’*

*“To God alone be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.”*