ROMAN CATHOLICISM: AN EXPLANATION AND BIBLICAL EVAUATION

G. Michael Cocoris

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PREFACE

My interest in Roman Catholicism goes back to my childhood. Since my father, an immigrant from Greece, was a member of the Greek Orthodox Church, I was christened in that church. Orthodox Churches are very similar to the Roman Catholic Church. I attended a Roman Catholic school in the first grade. Along the line, I got the impression that the Roman Catholic Church was the original church and, therefore, the true church.

When I was a senior in high school, a Protestant pastor led me to Christ. At that point, I had no doubt whatsoever that I was going to heaven, but there was something that bothered me. Every time I passed a Catholic Church, I thought to myself, "What if they are right? Maybe I should be going to that church!" Because of my early exposure to Roman Catholicism, my conscience bothered me. In the meantime, as I learned more and more about the Bible, I began to wonder how Roman Catholicism arrived at its teachings. For example, it teaches that the Apocrypha is Scripture, that tradition is authoritative, that there is apostolic succession via the pope, who is infallible, and that there are seven sacraments (means of grace), one of which is transubstantiation, that is, that at the moment a priest consecrates the elements of the Eucharist, they become the actual body and blood of Christ, as well as other things.

So I began to ask questions such as: is the Roman Catholic Church the original church? Are the books in the Apocrypha Scripture? Is tradition authoritative? Is there an unbroken line of succession from Peter to the present pope? Is the Pope infallible? Are there seven sacraments? Is there such a thing as transubstantiation? Other things about Roman Catholicism raised questions for me, such as its doctrines of Mary, purgatory, the rosary, etc.

The Roman Catholic Church claims it is the original and true version of Christianity. If that is true, we should join the Catholic Church. If it is not, we should know why not. Hence, this discussion of Roman Catholicism.

This is not about *individuals* in the Roman Catholic Church, many of whom are sincere and sacrificial people. The leaders, laymen, and women in Roman Catholicism have done many good things, especially their work in hospitals, schools, and humanitarian efforts.

This discussion is about the *official teachings* of the Roman Catholic Church. In his book *The Creeds of Christendom*, a standard scholarly work on the creeds of the church, Philip Schaff says, "The principal source and highest standard of the doctrine and discipline of the Roman Church are *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* first published in 1564 at Rome by authority of [Pope] Pius IV." So, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* will be used to define and describe Catholicism. The real issue is, "What does the Bible teach?" This is a biblical, theological, and sometimes historical investigation.

I am grateful to Teresa Rogers for proofreading this material. May the Lord use this presentation to encourage you to search the Scripture to see if these things are so.

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AUTHORITY

The most basic, fundamental issue in Roman Catholicism is the issue of authority. Everything in Roman Catholicism, and, for that matter, everything in any denomination, comes down to authority. Authority has been called "the most controversial issue" between Roman Catholics and Protestants" (Boettner, p. 89). What does Roman Catholicism say about authority? It recognizes four sources of authority.

Explanation

The Bible The Roman Catholic Church recognizes the Bible as the Word of God. Their official Bible is the Latin translation of Scripture by the priest and theologian Jerome (347-420) called the Vulgate, a word which means "common." Jerome's purpose was to put the Bible in the common language of the people in a readable form (Boettner, p. 87). He spent 34 years, mostly in a cave in Bethlehem, as a hermit, producing the Vulgate. The Council of Trent was a meeting of Roman Catholic leaders in a city in Italy in 1564, held to clarify and assert Roman Catholic doctrine in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. The Council of Trent asserted the Vulgate is authentic and approved (see Decree Concerning the Edition and The Use of the Sacred Books). It also said, "But if any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately condemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema" (Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures; "anathema" is a Greek word meaning "cursed"). The Douay Version of the Bible (New Testament, 1582 and Old Testament, 1609), the official English translation, was made from the Latin Vulgate. The Confraternity Version of the New Testament (1941) also contains the notation "translated from the Latin Vulgate."

The Apocrypha The title "Apocrypha" is the name given to fifteen books written between 300 BC and 100 AD. Jerome was the first to use the term Apocrypha, which means "hidden, secret." Actually, the number of books in the "Apocrypha" is a problem. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, contains some, but not all, of the apocryphal books. One Greek manuscript, called the Codex Vaticanus (B), lacks 1 and 2 Maccabees, which Roman Catholicism accepts as canonical but includes 1 Esdras, which Roman Catholicism does not accept as canonical. The Greek manuscript of Scripture called Sinaiticus (Aleph) omits the book Baruch, which Roman Catholicism accepts as canonical, but includes 4 Maccabees, which Roman Catholicism rejects. Thus, the Septuagint and the two earliest Greek manuscripts "show considerable uncertainty as to which books constitute the list of the Apocrypha" (Archer, p. 75).

The Council of Trent listed the inspired apocryphal books (see Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures). Roman Catholicism accepts eleven of the fifteen apocryphal books as inspired and canonical: seven complete books and four pieces added to Daniel and Esther. (Thus, only seven extra books appear in the table of contents of Roman Catholic Bibles.) The seven complete books are Tobit, Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon, the

Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira (or Sirach, Ecclesiasticus), Baruch (sometimes split into two books: Baruch and The Letter of Jeremiah), 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees. The four partial books added to the Old Testament include additions to Esther (Esther 10:4ff.), The Prayer of Azariah (inserted between Daniel 3:23 and 3:24, making Daniel 3:24-90), Susanna (Daniel 13), and Bell of the Dragon (Daniel 14).

These books are also accepted as canonical by the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, as well as the Church of the East (Geisler and McKenzie say the Greek Church has not always accepted the Apocrypha, nor is its present position unequivocal, p.164). The Greek Orthodox Church adds 1 Esdras, Psalm 151, the Prayer of Manasseh, and 3 Maccabees, with 4 Maccabees in an appendix. The Russian Orthodox Church adds 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Psalm 151, and 3 Maccabees. The Roman Catholic canon places the Prayer of Manasseh, 1 Esdras, and 2 Esdras in an appendix without implying canonicity.

Tradition In Roman Catholicism, tradition is the holding onto and handing down of teachings that came *after* the message given to the apostles. The Council of Trent declared that tradition is authoritative (Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures). It declared that "the Word of God is contained both in the Bible and in tradition that the two are of equal authority, and that it is the duty of every Christian to accord them equal veneration and respect" (Boettner, p. 77). In several places, the Council of Trent declared that no one could interpret "sacred Scripture … contrary to the unanimous agreement of the [church] fathers" (for example, Decree Concerning the Edition and the Use of the Sacred books). Vatican I (1870) declared the same thing, saying, "No one is permitted to interpret sacred Scripture … contrary to the unanimous agreement of the fathers" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 182).

In his book *Fifty Years in the Roman Catholic Church*, Chiniquy says that as a young student priest, he questioned a superior about this doctrine of Rome and received the following reply: "You have spoken as a true heretic … you speak of the Holy Scriptures just as a Protestant would do. You appeal to them as the only source of Christian truth and knowledge. Have you forgotten that we have the holy traditions to guide us, the authority of which is equal to the Scriptures?" Later, the superior said: "You are not required to understand all the reasons for the vow of celibacy; but you are bound to believe in its necessity and holiness."

The Pope "In 1870, the Vatican Council defined the doctrine of infallibility as follows: 'We teach and define it (infallibility) as a doctrine divinely revealed that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding the faith and morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer will that His church should be endowed for defining doctrines regarding faith and morals, and therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff of themselves—and not by virtue of the consent of the church—are unalterable'" (Boettner, p. 235). "In actual practice, the Roman Church, since the infallibility decree of 1870, holds that the final seat of the authority is the pope speaking for the church" (Boettner, p. 89).

In the dogma of infallibility, there are three restrictions: 1) Infallibility only applies to those statements made by the pope when he is speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, in his official

capacity as head of the church. 2) Infallibility only applies to those statements binding on the whole church, not to statements addressed to a particular group within the church. 3) Infallibility only applies to statements pertaining to faith and morals. The pope cannot produce new doctrines (Boettner, pp. 235-236).

Evaluation

The Bible There are several problems with Roman Catholicism's use of the Bible. In the first place, their official version (the Vulgate) is filled with errors. "The inaccuracies of Jerome's Vulgate are legion" (Boettner, p. 88).

At one point in the history of Roman Catholicism, people were forbidden to even have a Bible. In 1229, the Council of Valencia (Valencia is a city in southeastern Spain) placed the Bible on the *Index of Forbidden Books*. It said, "We prohibit also the permitting of the laity to have the books of the Old and New Testament, unless anyone should wish, from a feeling of devotion, to have a psalter or breviary (a book of prayers, etc.) for divine service or the hours of the blessed Mary. But we strictly forbid them to have the above-mentioned books in the vulgar (common) tongue." The books that were allowed were only allowed in Latin, which "placed them beyond the reach of the common people" (Boettner, p. 97).

During the 18th century, four different popes made pronouncements against giving the Bible to the people in their own language (Boettner, p. 98). "Such was the teaching and practice of the Roman church for centuries. For one to possess or read the Bible in his native tongue without permission in writing from his superior and under the watchful eye of the Bishop was a mortal sin for which absolution could not be granted until the book was delivered to the priest" (Boettner, p. 99).

"The attitude of the Roman church toward the Bible societies has been one of sustained opposition. Several acts of the popes have been directed exclusively against them. In 1824, Pope Leo XII, in an encyclical letter, said: 'You are aware, venerable brethren, that a certain society called the Bible society strolls with effrontery throughout the world, which society, contrary to the well-known decree of the Council of Trent, labors with all its might and by every means to translate, or rather to prevent (a word that meant 'let' at the time), the Scriptures into the vulgar language of every nation.… We, in conformity with our apostolic duty, exhort you to turn away your flock by all means from these poisonous pastors'" (Boettner, p. 100).

In addition, the Council of Trent decreed that it was unlawful for anyone to "print, or cause to be printed, *any books whatever, on sacred matters*, without the name of the author; nor to sell them in future, or even to keep them, unless they shall have been first examined, and approved of, by the Ordinary; under pain of the anathema" (italics added; see Decree Concerning the Edition and the Use of the Sacred Books).

Thirdly, their English translation (the Douay Version) is a translation of a translation, that is, it is an English translation of the Latin translation of the original Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. For example, the Douay translation of Luke 13:1 reads, "I say to you: but unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish." The Greek text says, "repent," not "do penance."

Nevertheless, although the Roman Catholic Bible is not the most accurate on the shelf, it contains spiritual truth. Knowing my Greek Orthodox background, the pastor who led me to Christ used a Douay Version when he gave me the gospel.

In the fourth place, a much more serious problem is that Roman Catholicism claims their *interpretation* of the Bible is the *only accurate* interpretation of the Bible. The Council of Trent declared that no one was to interpret the Scriptures contrary to the interpretation of the Church or "contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers" (Decree concerning the Edition and the Use of the Sacred Books)

Finally, there are the Apocrypha and tradition. "When another source of authority is placed alongside Scripture as of equal importance, Scriptural eventually becomes relegated to the background … If the other source be reason, we get rationalism. If it be emotion, we get mysticism. And if it is tradition, we get ecclesiastical dictation and clericalism. In each case, the Bible, while still given lip service, is effectively suspended" (Boettner, p. 89).

The Apocrypha There are numerous factual errors in these extra-biblical books. Nebuchadnezzar is called the king of the Assyrians and is said to rule in Nineveh (Judith 1:1-7). Daniel says he was king of Babylon (Daniel 4:4-6, 30). In Tobit, an angel named Azarius claims to be the son of a man named Ananias, but angels are not the sons of human beings (Boettner, p. 84). "Both Judith and Tobit contain historical, chronological, and geographical errors. The books justified falsehood and deception and made salvation depend upon the works of merit. Almsgiving, for example, is said to deliver from death (Tobit 12:9; 4:10; 14:10-11). Judith lives a life of falsehood and deception in which she is represented as assisted by God (9:10, 13). Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon inculcate a morality based on expediency. Wisdom teaches the creation of the world out of pre-existing matter (7:17). Ecclesiasticus teaches the giving of alms makes atonement for sin (3:3). In 1 Maccabees, there are historical and geographical errors" (Edward J Young, *Revelation and the Bible*, p. 167, cited by Boettner, p. 85). To that list could be added support for prayers for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:46). Boettner classifies most of the books in the Apocrypha "as religious novels" and "pious fiction" (Boettner, p. 84).

The Apocrypha is not inspired and should not be considered Scripture. There are many reasons for that conclusion.

1. None of the authors of the Apocrypha claim inspiration. That is significant because the authors of Scripture did claim inspiration. The words "God said" occur ten times in the first chapter of Genesis. The same thing is recorded in the other four books Moses wrote (Ex. 6:2, 20:1; Lev. 1:1; Num. 1:1; Deut. 2:2; etc.). The prophets in ancient Israel claimed God spoke to them (Isa. 1:1-2; Jer. 1:1-4; Ezek. 1:1-3, 32:1-3; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:1-3; Obad. 1; Jonah 1:1; Micah 1:1; Nahum 1:1, 12; Hab. 1:1; 2:1-2; Zeph. 1:1; Haggai 1:1; Zech. 1:1; 1:4-6; Mal. 1:1). The writers of the New Testament claimed God spoke through them (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Thess. 3:14; Rev. 22:18-19; see Jn. 21:24). Some of the books of the Apocrypha explicitly disclaim inspiration (Prologue to Ecclesiasticus, 1 Maccabees 4:46, 9:27; 2 Maccabees 2:23, 58:38).

2. The ancient Jews did not accept the Apocrypha. The Septuagint was used in Palestine, but the Palestinian Jews did not accept the apocryphal additions to the Old Testament.

3. The New Testament never quotes the Apocrypha. In the New Testament, there are about 260 direct quotations and 370 allusions to the Old Testament, but there is not a single reference either by Christ or any of the apostles to the apocryphal writings (Boettner, p. 81). They undoubtedly knew of these books because the prevailing practice at the time was to quote from the Greek of the Septuagint (Boettner, p. 82). It is particularly interesting that the New Testament does not refer to the Apocrypha in light of the fact that the Bible alludes to books not accepted by Roman Catholics or Protestants, such as the Book of Enoch (Jude 14- 15) and the Bodily Assumption of Moses (Jude 9). There are even citations from pagan poets and philosophers (Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12).

4. The Qumran community did not view the apocryphal books as canonical. Although apocryphal books were found in the Qumran community (the Dead Sea Scrolls), there were no commentaries on them and they were not written on special parchment and with a special script as were the canonical books (Geisler and McKenzie, pp. 164-165).

5. Josephus did not include the Apocrypha in his list of books of the Old Testament. About 90 AD, when Josephus, the noted Jewish historian, gave a list of Jewish Law and the prophets, he did not include the apocryphal books.

6. Early church fathers vehemently opposed the Apocrypha. It was opposed by Origen, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Jerome (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 162). Jerome emphatically declared that the Apocrypha was not part of the Old Testament Scriptures (Boettner, p. 82). Of the prominent scholars in the early church, only Augustine (385-430) was willing to give the Apocrypha a place in the Bible, "but it is not certain that he considered it authoritative in all cases" (Boettner, p. 83). He recognized that the Jews did not accept these books as part of the canon, but he argued that they should be included because they mention "extreme and wonderful suffering of certain martyrs." It has been argued that if those are the criteria, *Fox's Book of Martyrs* should also be included in the canon (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 163).

7. Prior to the Council of Trent, some Catholics rejected the Apocrypha. "Pope Gregory the Great [ca. 540-604] declared the First Maccabees is not canonical. Cardinal Zomenes, in his Polyglot Bible just before the Council of Trent, excluded the Apocrypha and his work was approved by Pope Leo X. Could these popes have been mistaken or not? If they were correct, the decision of the Council of Trent was wrong. If they were wrong, where is a pope's infallibility as a teacher of document" (Harris, *Fundamental Protestant Doctrines*, I, p. 4, cited by Boettner, p. 83). In his *Commentary on All the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament* (1532), which was dedicated to Pope Clement VII, Cardinal Cajetan approved the Hebrew canon rather than the Alexandrian canon. By the way, in 1518, Cardinal Cajetan was Luther's opponent at Augsburg (Boettner, p. 83).

If the Apocrypha is not inspired, when was it accepted as inspired by Catholicism? In 1546, at the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church officially approved the Apocrypha as equally inspired and authoritative as the Bible. Even then, several members of the Council of Trent opposed the inclusion of the Apocrypha in the

Bible (Boettner, p. 83). Why did the Council of Trent accept it if there is so much evidence against the Apocrypha? Boettner says the reason is that the Reformers vigorously attacked doctrines which they regarded as unscriptural. For example, the Council needed a defense for the doctrine of purgatory. They thought they found it in 2 Maccabees 12:40-45 (Boettner, p. 83, who says that passage does not support the doctrine of purgatory; see the discussion of purgatory below).

While most of the books in the Apocrypha are not of much value, there is some useful information concerning the history of Judaism as it existed between the Old Testament and the opening of the New Testament, particularly in 1 and 2 Maccabees (Boettner, p. 84).

Tradition The concept of "tradition" is biblical! Paul exhorts the Thessalonians, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15). The Greek word translated "tradition" means "to hand over, to transfer." The picture in this word is that of something being handed to someone who, in turn, hands it to someone else. God gave the *message* to the apostles who, in turn, gave it to others who were responsible for giving it to those beyond them (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul is telling them not to be deceived and depart from the truth, but rather to hear, heed, and hold fast the *truth* handed down to them from heaven. Biblical tradition is holding onto and passing on the *message God gave to the apostles.*

In Catholicism, "tradition" is material that came *after* the apostles. The proof that tradition is not of divine or apostolic origin is the fact that some traditions contradict others. For example, in the second century, some church fathers held that Christ would return shortly and reign personally in Jerusalem for 1000 years, but Origen (185-254) and Augustine (354-430) wrote against that view. Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, denounced the title "Universal Bishop" as anti-Christian, but later, popes embraced it (Boettner, p. 78). Augustine supported the Apocrypha, while Jerome opposed it (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 196).

"The fact that there are so many contradictory traditions that tradition, as such, is rendered unreliable as an authoritative source of dogma" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 196; they add that there is no unanimous consent among the church fathers on many doctrines which are proclaimed to be infallible by Roman Catholicism and, in some cases, there is not even a majority consent).

"The most prominent doctrines and practices of the Roman Church, such as purgatory, the priesthood, the mass, transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, indulgences, penance, worship of the Virgin Mary, the use of images in worship, holy water, rosary beads, celibacy of the priests and nuns, the papacy itself, and numerous others, are founded solely on tradition" (Boettner, p. 79).

The Pope Roman Catholicism's dogma of the infallibility of the pope is not biblical. The Bible does not teach that Peter, who, according to Roman Catholicism, was the first Pope, was infallible as a teacher of the faith. At Antioch, when Peter refused to eat with Gentile Christians, implying that believers also had to keep the Mosaic law, Paul publicly rebuked him (Gal. 2:11-16). At the Jerusalem Council, the doctrine question under consideration was decided by the whole Council in conjunction with the church, not by Peter (Acts 15).

Roman Catholicism's dogma of the infallibility of the pope is a relatively late historical development. "The clear teaching of history is that the office of pope was a

gradual development. The early bishops in Rome new nothing of it" (Boettner, p. 241). If there was no office of pope, there was no infallibility of the pope! The ultimate authority commonly recognized was the church councils.

As late as the 15th century, Roman Catholicism taught the opposite of papal infallibility. The Council of Constance (1415) and the Council of Basle (1432) both declared that "even the pope is bound to obey the councils" (Boettner, p. 241).

However, in 1870, Pius IX decreed papal infallibility. At the time, some of the strongest opposition to this decree came from within the Roman Catholic Church itself. Strossmayer, a scholarly archbishop, argued that Jesus gave *all* of His apostles the same authority He gave Peter, that the apostles never recognized Peter as the vicar of Christ, that Peter never thought of being a pope and never acted as if he were a pope; that the councils of the first four centuries, while they recognized the high position of the bishop of Rome, only accorded him the preeminence of honor, never of power or jurisdiction; and that the church fathers themselves did not understand "upon this rock I will build my church" to mean that the church was built on Peter (Boettner, pp. 244-245). Another contemporary of Pius IX, Dollinger, a German theologian and a professor of theology for 47 years, insisted that the three criteria in theological controversies, namely universality, antiquity, and consent, were clearly lacking. When he could not be induced to change his mind, Dollinger was excommunicated on April 17, 1881. In September 1871, a small group in Munich who opposed papal infallibility withdrew from the Roman Catholic Church and formed the "Old Catholic" Church, which continues to this day (Boettner, p. 246; according to the 12th edition [2005] of *The Handbook of Denominations in the United States,* as many as 17 bodies in the United States alone claim to be Old Catholic churches, p. 92).

The history of the papacy reveals many errors—both doctrinal and moral, with one denying what the other affirmed. Here are a few samples (Boettner, pp. 248-253). Pope Gregory I (590-604) said anyone who would take the title of universal bishop was an antichrist, but Boniface III (607) compelled Emperor Phocas to grant him the title, and all popes have used it since. Hadrian (867-72) declared civil marriage valid, but Pius VII (800-23) condemned it as invalid. Eugene IV (1431-37) condemned Joan of Arc (1412-31) to be burned alive as a witch, but in 1919 Benedict XV declared her a saint. Paul V (1605-21) and Urban VIII (1623-44) condemned Galileo. They also declared that the theory of Copernicus was false, heretical, and contrary to the Scripture. Clement XIV (July 21, 1773) made one decree concerning the Jesuits that was overturned by Pius VII (August 7, 1814); Pius restored them. Sixtus V (1585-90) recommended that people read the Bible, but Pius VII (1800-23) and other Popes condemned the practice.

The notion of papal infallibility contradicts Scripture, history, and logic (Boettner, p. 252). It should be pointed out that while Roman Catholicism insists on the infallibility of the pope, infallibility has only been used very sparingly by the popes themselves. In 1962, Boettner wrote, "Apparently it has been formally invoked on only three occasions—twice by Pope Pius IX, once when he proclaimed his own infallibility, and once when without the benefit of the church council he set forth the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary; and once by Pope Pius XII when he promulgated the doctrine of the assumption of the Virgin Mary" (Boettner, p. 253).

Summary: Roman Catholicism claims that the Bible, including the Apocrypha, is Scripture, that tradition is authoritative, and that the Pope is infallible, but the Apocrypha is not Scripture, tradition is not authoritative, and the Pope is not infallible.

Catholicism did not officially accept the Apocrypha and tradition until 1546 (the Council of Trent), and the infallibility of the pope until 1870.

The lesson to be learned: The Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice.

The canon of Scripture is closed. The Old Testament ended by saying there was more to come (Mal. 4:5-6). More revelation was given through Jesus (Heb. 1:1-2). Jesus said the Holy Spirit would lead the apostles into *all* truth (Jn. 14:26; 16:13). To be an apostle, one had to have been an eyewitness to the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1) and to perform apostolic signs (2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4). With the apostles, revelation was complete ("all" truth has been given). The canon is closed (Jude 3). Nothing is to be added to the Bible (Rev. 22:18-19).

When tradition is added to the Scripture, it makes void what the Scripture teaches (Mt. 15:3-6). The illegitimate authority that Rome has given to uninspired tradition has produced a unbiblical church. "Israel had inspired prophets, but she preferred the pleasing and flattering teachings of the false prophets, and so developed a set of traditions which in time came to supplant the true teaching of the prophets" (Boettner, p. 90). The same is true of the Roman Catholic Church today.

ORIGIN OF THE PAPACY

Roman Catholicism claims that Peter was the first pope. If the church was established on Peter and there has been an unbroken line of succession from Peter to the present pope, all churches should join the Roman Catholic Church. If that is not true, the question becomes, "What was the origin of the papacy?"

Explanation

Matthew Roman Catholicism says that in Matthew 16:18, the Greek word translated "Peter" means "rock" and since Jesus said He would build His church on "this rock," the church was built on Peter. Thus, Roman Catholicism claims that Christ appointed Peter as the first pope and so established the papacy (Boettner, p. 105). These words of Matthew 16:18 are written around the interior of the dome of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

The New Testament In the New Testament, Peter was the leader of the apostles.

History Roman Catholicism alleges that Peter was the first bishop of Rome, hence, the first pope. They cite a tradition that asserts that Peter was the bishop in Rome from 42 to 67 AD.

Evaluation

Matthew 16:18 There are three major interpretations of the word "rock" in Matthew 16:18: Peter (Plummer; France), Christ (Augustine; Walvoord), and Peter's confession (Alexander; McNeile; Toussaint; see also Tasker). Which one is correct?

The rock is not Peter himself. In the Greek text, there is a "play on words." The name "Peter" (Greek *petros*) means "stone," but when Jesus says "upon this rock" (*petra*), He uses a different Greek word, one that indicates a "detached stone or boulder" (A-S). It is the word Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount when He said, "The wise man built his house on a rock" (Mt. 7:24). The difference between these two words is the difference between separate, loose stones and a massive rock (Walvoord; Toussaint). According to Alexander, in classical usage, "stone" and "rock" are "entirely distinct" and "scarcely ever interchanged even by poetic license." Boettner says, "The Greek *petros* is commonly used of a small, *movable* stone, a mere pebble, as it were. But petra means an *immovable* foundation, in this instance, the basic truth that Peter and just confessed, the deity of Christ" (Boettner, p. 106, italics added). The church was not built upon weak, vacillating Peter (Boettner, p. 106).

Moreover, in the Greek text, Peter (*petros*) is masculine and rock (*petra*) is feminine. Therefore, the rock on which Jesus builds the church is not Peter. "The gates of hell were not to prevail against the church. But the gates of hell did prevail against Peter shortly afterward, as recorded in the same chapter as he attempted to deny that Christ would be crucified, and almost immediately afterward, in the presence of the other disciples,

received the stinging rebuke, 'Get thee behind me Satan, thou art a stumbling block unto me, for thou mindest not the things of God but the things of man' (vs. 22)—surely strong words to use against one had just been appointed pope!" (Boettner, pp. 106-107).

The rock is not Christ. In the Greek text, "rock" is feminine. Moreover, Christ is not the foundation but the builder (Plummer).

The rock is the truth, which Peter had just articulated, namely, Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. The rock is not Peter's person but Peter's confession (Alexander). "The truth that Peter had just confessed was the foundation upon which Christ would build his church" (Boettner, p. 106).

According to the Council of Trent, the Scripture should be interpreted "according to the unanimous consent of the Holy Fathers." A Roman Catholic scholar counted the interpretations of Matthew 16:18 in the writings of the Fathers and discovered that 44 believed Peter's statement was the rock, 17 believed Peter was the rock, 16 believed that Jesus was the rock, and eight believed the apostles were meant (from a sermon by S. Lewis Johnson).

The New Testament There are no indications in the New Testament that Peter was a pope; a leader, yes, but a pope, no. In fact, other than being a leader, there are indications that Peter did not have a superior position or special authority. Other apostles had the same power as Peter (Mt. 18:18; Jn. 20:19-23). "That no superior standing was confirmed upon Peter is clear from the later dispute among the disciples concerning who should be greatest among them. Had such rank already been given, Christ would simply have referred to His grant of power to Peter" (Boettner, who says see Mk. 9:33-35, p. 107). Paul did not think Peter was infallible; he publicly rebuked him "because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11-12)! When there was a doctrinal question at Antioch, the church did not write a letter to Peter to ask him what to do. The Jerusalem Council made the decision (Acts 15). Peter did not claim a superior position. In his two epistles, he claimed to be nothing more than an apostle (1 Pet. 1:1), an elder (1 Pet. 5:1), and a servant of Jesus Christ (2 Pet.1:1).

"Surely if Peter had been a pope, 'the supreme head of the church,' he would have declared that fact in his general epistles, for that was the place above all others to have asserted his authority. The popes have never been slow to make such claims for themselves and to extend their authority as far as possible. But instead, he referred to himself as an apostle (of which there were eleven others), and as an elder or presbyter, that is, simply a minister of Christ" (Boettner, p. 113).

Peter was the leader of the apostles, but he was not a pope.

History The evidence in the New Testament indicates Peter was not in Rome from the years 42 to 67. Paul wrote Romans to the church in Rome in 57. The fact that Paul does not mention Peter in the book of Romans indicates that Peter was not there then. Paul wrote Colossians from Rome in 61. In the last chapter, he sends greetings to the Colossians from people in Rome (Col. 4:10-14), but he does not mention Peter, indicating Peter was not in Rome at the time. Paul wrote 2 Timothy from Rome in 67. At the end of the book, he says that only Luke is with him (2 Tim. 4:11), indicating that Peter was not in Rome at the time.

In his lectures on the papacy for The Teaching Company, Thomas F. X. Noble, a professor of history at the University of Notre Dame, says it is unlikely Peter was in Rome from 42 to 67 because Peter was in Antioch and Corinth during that time and in

Jerusalem in 49. Furthermore, "Peter did not found the Roman community and there is no good evidence that that community had a bishop—an 'overseer' in the 1st century" (Noble, p. 6).

Boettner says the legend that Peter was a bishop in Rome for 25 years is rooted in an apocryphal story originated by the Ebionites, a heretical group, and the account is discredited by its internal inconsistencies. The 25-year residency of Peter in Rome is also supposed to have been recorded by Eusebius. Boettner explains that Eusebius wrote in Greek about 310 and Jerome translated his work. In his book *The Lives of the Apostles*, William Cave (1637-1713), a historian, says the addition in Eusebius that Peter was in Rome for 25 years was an addition of Jerome and that it is not found in the Greek copy of Eusebius (Boettner, p. 118).

To sum up: the church is not built on Peter. Jesus did not give Peter the authority to forgive sins. There is no evidence inside the New Testament or after it was written that Peter was even a bishop in Rome, much less a pope. Boettner says, "Disprove the primacy of Peter, and the foundation of the papacy is destroyed. Destroy the papacy, and the whole Roman hierarchy topples with it. Their system of priesthood depends absolutely upon the claim that Peter was the first Pope of Rome and that they are his successors." Boettner goes on to say that Matthew 16 does not teach that Christ appointed Peter as a pope, that there is no proof that Peter was ever in Rome and that the New Testament in general and Peter's writings in particular show he never claimed authority over other apostles or over the church and that authority was never accorded to him (Boettner, p. 105).

The church is not built on Pope Martin Luther, Pope John Calvin, Pope John Wesley, Pope Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Pope Billy Graham, or Pope Pastor So-and-So! It is built upon a confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Making any person a pope means missing the point. Karl Barth, a famous theologian, was on a streetcar one day in Basel, Switzerland, where he lectured. A tourist to the city sat down next to Barth. The two men started chatting with each other. "Are you new to the city?" Barth inquired. "Yes," said the tourist. "Is there anything you would particularly like to see in this city?" asked Barth. "Yes; he said, "I'd love to meet the famous theologian Karl Barth. Do you know him?" Barth replied, "Well, as a matter of fact, I do. I give him a shave every morning." The tourist got off the streetcar quite delighted. He went back to his hotel, saying to himself, "I met Karl Barth's barber today." That tourist missed the point!

The word "pope" is not found in the Bible. It comes from the Latin word *papa*, meaning "father." Even though Jesus forbade His followers to call any man "father" in a spiritual sense (Mt. 23:9), for centuries, "father" was used of all priests and in the Eastern churches, it is used of the priest to this day (Boettner, p. 125). The term came to be used of bishops as a title of honor. As one of the bishops, the Bishop of Rome was called the pope "nearly 200 years before the title was limited to his office" (Chamberlin, p. 14).

The Origin of the Papacy

If the papacy is not based on Matthew 16 or the New Testament, where did the office of pope originate? (This material on the origin of the papacy is an expansion of the material in G. Michael Cocoris, *Church History*.)

The Establishment of Elders (bishops) In the New Testament, each local church had bishops (plural) and deacons (Phil. 1:1). Another name for a bishop was elder (Titus 1:5, 7). Therefore, in the New Testament, "bishop" and "elder" were two different names for the same position. The title "elder" indicated that the people who held this office were older men, and the title "bishop" refers to the fact that these older men had oversight of the church. An elder (bishop) was one among equals *within a local church*. One elder was a leader (1 Pet. 5:1; Timothy; Titus), but the leader was not a dictator (3 Jn. 9). The bishop was not over the elders; the bishop was one of the elders! Note carefully: in the New Testament, *each church had a plurality of elders (also known as bishops) who exercised oversight in their local church*.

Shortly after the last book of the New Testament was written (Revelation in 95), a man named Clement in Rome wrote to the church at Corinth (97). That letter, called 1 Clement, indicates that the church at Corinth had elders. This plurality of elders in each congregation is also mentioned in the Didache (ca. 80-90) and by Polycarp (110).

The Elevation of Bishops Sometime later, the organization and governance of the church changed slightly. Ignatius (116) indicates that a bishop (singular) was *over* a single church with elders and deacons under his authority. In other words, instead of "elder" and "bishop" referring to the same position, those two words now refer to two different positions. At this point, *the bishop was from within the church and he was over that church.* The structure was similar to that of a church today, with a pastor over deacons. The fact that this change took place so close to the time of the New Testament should not surprise you. It also happened during New Testament times (3 Jn. 9).

About 185, heretics claimed that the apostles had conveyed what Christ taught intermingled with extraneous ideas. Irenaeus insisted that the apostles accurately transmitted what Christ had taught them. He also claimed that the apostles had appointed bishops, who were followed by other bishops in an unbroken line, thus guaranteeing the apostolic teaching (Hannah, p. 266, who cites Tertullian and Irenaeus). Irenaeus was talking about apostolic succession, but this is the succession of the *apostolic message*, not the *apostolic authority*.

Thus, early in the second century, the office of bishop was elevated over elders *in each local church* (at least in the writings of Ignatius). By the end of the second century, the office of bishop rose to prominence because of the need to maintain purity of doctrine and unity. At first all bishops were equal and all were in the line of the apostolic succession of bishops from Christ and the apostles (Cairns, p. 116).

The Election of Archbishops During the early part of the third century, the bishops in a Roman province met in local councils. At this stage, this was like having a pastors' meeting. Imagine the state of California representing the Roman Empire and the 58 counties within the state representing the 54 provinces of the Roman Empire. These Roman province councils were like all the pastors in the various counties of California gathering for a meeting *in their county*. There would be a pastors' meeting in Los Angeles County, another in San Bernardino County, and still another in Riverside County, only instead of having the title "pastor," these church leaders would be called bishops. No doubt, one bishop presided over the meeting of the bishops.

Somewhere along the line, the bishops of several Roman provinces got together in a *regional* meeting. They tended to meet in the major metropolitan cities of the Roman Empire. The chief bishops of these large cities were called metropolitans. The

metropolitan bishops were also called archbishops (Latourette, p. 185; Kuiper, pp. 75-76). These bishops came to be looked upon as of higher rank than the bishops of smaller churches (Kuiper, p. 39). They had the preeminence (Latourette, p. 524). That would be like saying that all the pastors in the counties of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Riverside got together for a regional meeting and they met in Los Angeles. The head of that meeting was the metropolitan, the archbishop.

"Even today, people are inclined to think that the man who holds the pastorate in a prominent city church is perhaps, because of his position, just a little more important than his fellow ministers in the country" (Kuiper, p. 76).

As a result of the Roman Empire's organization by the Roman Emperor Diocletian (244-311), Alexandria and Antioch were chief cities in the East. So, the Bishop of Alexander became the chief bishop of all the bishops in Egypt. The Bishop of Antioch became the chief bishop of the rest of the bishops in the East (Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece). The Bishop of Rome was the chief bishop of the West. At this point, there were three archbishops: Rome, Antioch, and Alexander. Those bishops had the most prestige.

In the California illustration, this would be like saying that Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sacramento had the most prestige. At any rate, at this point (third century), the idea of an archbishop, one man over a region, was created.

The Emphasis on the Bishop of Rome In his book *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus (ca. 185) said that every church must agree with the church in Rome (Kuiper, p. 41),), but that was because it taught what the apostles taught. He did not teach succession of *apostolic authority*.

Cyprian (ca. 255), bishop of Carthage, emphasized the bishop as the center of unity and a guarantee against a schism. He gave the earliest formation of the doctrines of apostolic succession and the primacy of *honor* (not authority) for the Roman bishop (Cairns, p. 113), but he believed all bishops were equal (Eerdmans', p. 83). He insisted that no bishop should "set himself up as a bishop of bishops" (Latourette, pp. 183-184). The bishop of Rome deserved special honor because he was in the line of succession from Peter (Cairns, p. 116), but no one bishop had *administrative authority* over any other bishop.

Noble, the University of Notre Dame professor of history, distinguishes between Peter the person, the Petrine idea, and the institution of the papacy. He concedes that the traditions concerning Peter the person cannot be proven (then he adds that they cannot be disproven either). The Petrine idea is the notion that there is a Petrine office (Noble, p. 1). Noble says Stephen I (254-57) insisted that he held the "chair of Peter" in succession to Peter. "This assertion inaugurated the idea that each pope is Peter's successor" (Noble, p. 9).

Stephen and Cyprian lived at the same time. So, it is safe to say that by the middle of the third century, there was a notion that the bishop of Rome was the successor to Peter, but that is vastly different from the institution of the papacy. It is one thing to say that even though the bishop of Rome is one among equals, he is the successor to Peter (bishops in other localities where apostles had visited claimed that they were the successors to that apostle). It is another thing to say that the bishop of Rome has *administrative authority* over the other bishops (an idea that developed much later). For example, Fabian, bishop of Rome (236-250), "had little power or wealth" (Harl, p. 72).

(Remember, there is no evidence inside or outside of the New Testament that Peter held any "office" in Rome.)

The city of Rome contributed to the rise of the papacy. It was the Roman Empire's capital, making it a place of upmost importance. Moreover, for Christians, a number of significant things happened in Rome that put the focus on it. Paul wrote his longest and most important book to the church in Rome. The earliest persecution by the Roman state occurred in Rome (AD 64). Both Peter and Paul were martyred there. After the close of the New Testament, the church at Rome wrote a letter to the church at Corinth, urging them to maintain unity (1 Clement).

In 325, the Council of Nicaea prioritized bishops. It decided that the three great centers were Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch (Canon VI). In addition, it declared that Jerusalem's see (jurisdiction) would be given the next place in honor after the other three but would be subject to the Metropolitan of Caesarea (Canon VII; Ware, p. 30).

In 330, Constantine made Constantinople the capital of the Roman Empire. The Council of Constantinople (381) altered Canon VI of Nicaea. It made Constantinople second after Rome and above Alexandria. "The bishop of Constantinople shall have the prerogatives of honor after the bishop of Rome because Constantinople it is the New Rome" (Canon III). Damascus (366-388) and later Gregory the Great (590-604), Bishops of Rome, refused to confirm this canon. Nevertheless, Constantinople grew by favor of the emperor, whose centralizing policy found help in the authority of his court bishop.

The acceptance of equality among the bishops began to break down after AD 395. In that year, the Roman Empire split into two separate empires, East and West. The Western Empire was ruled from Rome and the Eastern (Byzantine) Empire from Constantinople.

In 402, Innocent I, Bishop of Rome, made it a rule that the churches in the West could make no important decision without the knowledge and approval of the bishop of Rome. The next Bishop of Rome, Zosimus, said that no one had the right to question a decision made by the Church of Rome.

The Endorsement of Patriarchs In 451, the Council of Chalcedon established patriarchs who exercised authority over a wider area than the metropolitans (Latourette, p. 524). Five sees (jurisdictions) were held in particular honor and an order of precedence was established among them. In order of rank, they were Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. Between them, the five patriarchs had jurisdiction over the known world, except for Cyprus, which was granted independence and has remained self-governing ever since. *All five bishops shared equally in the apostolic succession* (Ware, pp. 33-35).

Thus, there were five patriarchs: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The Eastern Empire included the jurisdictions of four of the five patriarchs of the Church. In the Western Empire, however, there was only one patriarch, the bishop of Rome, who therefore became *de facto* head of the Church in the Western Empire.

Using the California illustration, it is like saying Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Sacramento, and Oakland have the highest-ranking bishops.

The Exaltation of Rome Until 450, all bishops were equal "in rank, power, and function," but with Leo I (440-461), a.k.a. Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome, the Roman bishop began to claim supremacy over other bishops (Cairns, p. 157). In an edict issued in 445, the Western Roman Emperor Valentinian III recognized Leo's spiritual supremacy in the West (Cairns, 159).

The Council of Chalcedon (451) gave Constantinople jurisdiction over Asia Minor and Thrace and gave it the second place after Rome. Leo I refused to accept this decision. He used Matthew 16:19 as a reference to Peter (Eerdmans', p. 176) and in a letter to the Council of Chalcedon, he said, "Peter speaks through Leo." Cook says Leo saw himself as Peter's successor, but at this point, the claim was jurisdictional rather than doctrinal (Cook, p. 19).

In a theological controversy involving Dioscorus, the Bishop of Alexandria, and Flavian, the Bishop of Constantinople, Leo wrote a long letter known as the *Tome*, supporting to Flavian's view of the human and the divine nature of Christ. Leo set forth the view which had been clearly stated by Tertullian and was generally held in the West that in Jesus Christ there was neither manhood without true Godhead nor the Godhead without true manhood, that in Him two full and complete natures came together in one person, "without distracting from the properties of either nature and substance" (Latourette, p. 171). In 449, at the Council of Ephesus, Dioscorus refused to let the *Tome* be read, deposed Flavian, excommunicated Leo and appointed an Alexandrian priest in his stead. In 451, however, at the Council of Chalcedon, Leo's *Tome* was approved and a creed was adopted that incorporated its views (Latourette, p. 171).

Leo I was not only bishop of Rome, but he also got involved in politics. In 452, he persuaded Attila the Hun to turn back from Rome. In 455, when Gaiseric and his Vandals (a Germanic tribe) came to sack Rome, Leo persuaded them to save the city from fire and pillage, but he had to agree to allow the city to be sacked by the Vandals for two weeks. The Romans credited Leo with saving their city from complete destruction (Cairns, p. 159). This was the beginning of the bishop of Rome acting as a civil ruler (Eerdmans', p. 176).

Leo has been called the first "pope" (González, p. 242). González points out that in the theological controversies of the time, Leo's opinion was not generally accepted simply because he was the bishop of Rome. "It took a politically propitious moment for his views to prevail. Since those controversies took place mostly in the East, Leo's intervention, although significant, was powerless in the face of the imperial opposition and was accepted only when those in power agreed to it" (González, p. 243). González goes on to say that Leo was able to exercise authority in the city of Rome due to his personal gifts and the political situation of the time when civil authorities proved incapable of performing their duties, but Leo was convinced that Jesus made Peter and his successors the rock on which the church was to be built and, therefore, the Bishop of Rome was Peter's direct successor and head of the church. Leo's writings contain all the traditional arguments that would be repeatedly mustered in favor of papal authority (González, p. 243). Cairns says, "Even if we do not consider Leo the first pope, it is fair to say that he made the claims and exercised the power of many later incumbents of the Roman bishopric." If Leo I was the first pope (see below for the fact that he was not), a pope was excommunicated!

In 494, Gelasius I (492 to 496) wrote that God gave both sacred and royal power to the pope and the king. Because the pope had to account to God for the king at the judgment, the sacred power of the pope was more important than the royal power. Hence, rulers should submit to the pope. "Perhaps such power was useful in this early period in dealing with the barbarians, but later it lead to corruption within the Roman Church itself" (Cairns, p. 159). Cook says the distinction between papal authority and imperial

power was later used to justify papal assertions of the leadership of the Christian world (Cook, p. 19).

The Establishment of the Papacy So, who was the first pope? The word "pope" is not found in the Bible. It comes from the Latin *papa,* meaning "father." Even though Jesus forbade His followers to call any man "father" in a spiritual sense (Mt. 23:9), for centuries, it was used of all priests and, in the Eastern churches, it is used of the priest to this day (Boettner, p. 125). The term came to be used of bishops as a title of honor. As one of the bishops, the bishop of Rome was called pope "nearly 200 years before the title was limited to his office" (Chamberlin, p. 14).

According to the online *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the title "pope" was used in the East to designate the priest. In the West, at first, it was restricted to bishops (Tertullian, *On Modesty* 13). "It was apparently in the fourth century that it began to become a distinctive title of the Roman Pontiff. Pope Siricius (d. 398) seems so to use it (Ep. vi in P.L., XIII, 1164), and Ennodius of Pavia (d. 473) employs it still more clearly in this sense in a letter to Pope Symmachus (P.L., LXIII, 69). Yet, as late as the seventh century, St. Gall (d. 640) addresses Desiderius of Cahors as *papa* (P.L., LXXXVII, 265). Gregory VII finally prescribed that it should be confined to the successors of Peter" (see the article "The Pope" at www.newadvent.org, accessed 8/23/2010).

Eventually, it came to be used exclusively of the bishop of Rome as the universal bishop. In that sense, it "was first given to Gregory I by the wicked emperor Phocas, in the year 604. He did that to spite the bishop of Constantinople, who had justly excommunicated him for having caused the assassination of his (Phocas') predecessor, emperor Mauritius. Gregory, however, refused the title, but his second successor, Boniface III (607) assumed the title, and it has been the designation of the bishops of Rome ever since" (Boettner, p. 125).

The title "pontiff" comes from two Latin words *(pons,* bridge·and *facere,* to make) and means "bridge-builder." In pagan Rome, the emperor was the high priest of the religion. He was the bridge or connecting link between this life and the next. Four Caesars before Constantine used the title "Pontifex Maximus" (greatest bridge maker) to describe themselves as the head of all pagan religions. Damascus, Bishop of Rome (366-83), adopted the name for himself (378). Thus, the title "Pontifex Maximus" was "lifted from paganism and applied to the head of the Roman Catholic Church" (Boettner, p. 125). Cook, who is a Roman Catholic and professor of history at the State University of New York at Geneseo, says bishops "took up the trappings of pagan Rome, such as the bishop of Rome's use of the title Pontifex Maximus" (Cook, p. 17).

Boettner says the papacy began with Gregory I (Boettner, p. 103). He quotes two church historians, a Protestant and a Roman Catholic. Professor A. M. Renwick, of the Free Church College, Edinburgh, Scotland, says, "His (Gregory's) brilliant role set a standard for those who came after him and he is really the first 'pope' who can, with perfect accuracy, be given the title. Along with Leo I (440-461), Gregory VII (1073-1085), and Innocent III (1198-1216), he stands out as one of the chief architects of the papal system" *(*Renwick, *The Story of the Church,* p. 64). Philip Hughes, a Roman Catholic, says, "In a very real sense, he (Gregory I) is the founder of the papal monarchy" *(*Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church,* 1947, p. 75, cited by Boettner, p. 127). Although Leo I (ca. 450) has been called the first pope, Gregory I (604) is generally regarded as the first pope.

In the California illustration, this is like saying the Bishop of Sacramento is the universal bishop. The "papacy" is the system of ecclesiastical government over which the pope is recognized as the supreme head.

Here is a summary of the evolution of the papacy.

- In the 1st century (in the New Testament), each church had a plurality of elders (a.k.a. bishops).
- In the 2nd century, a bishop from within a church was elevated over the elders in that church.
- In the 3rd century, an archbishop presided over the meeting of bishops in a region.
- About 255, the earliest formation of the doctrines of apostolic succession and the primacy of *honor* for the Bishop of Rome appeared.
- In 325, the Council of Nicaea prioritized the bishops, giving the greatest honor to Rome, followed by Alexandria and Antioch, which were the three greatest cities of the Roman Empire.
- In 451, the Council of Chalcedon established patriarchs who exercised authority over a wider area than archbishops. Five jurisdictions were held in particular honor (Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem). All five bishops shared equally in the apostolic succession. The Bishop of Rome was the first among equals.
- Leo I, Bishop of Rome (440-61), refused to admit the Canon of the Council of Chalcedon, which gave Constantinople jurisdiction over Asia Minor and Thrace and second place after Rome. In a letter to the Council of Chalcedon (451), he said, "Peter speaks through Leo." He saw himself as Peter's successor and referred to Matthew 16:19. Leo's opinion, however, was not generally accepted simply because he was the Bishop of Rome. In fact, the Council of Ephesus (449) excommunicated him!
- After 590, the idea that Peter was over the other apostles and that his superior position was passed on to his successors, the Bishop of Rome, was generally accepted.
- At first, the word "pope" (Latin: "father") was applied to all bishops as a title of honor. In 604, the Roman Emperor Phocas gave Gregory I, Bishop of Rome, the title of Pope as the universal bishop. Gregory refused the title.
- In 607, Boniface III, Bishop of Rome, assumed the title of pope and it has been the designation of the Bishop of Rome ever since.

Summary: Peter was not a pope; the idea of a pope evolved. At first, there were elders. Then there were bishops, archbishops, patriarchs, and finally, a pope.

Lesson to be learned: The head of the church is Jesus Christ and there is no *one* human authority on earth. There is a plurality of elders in each local church and no ecclesiastical or political authority above a local church.

What distinguishes Roman Catholicism from all other churches is the *Roman* papacy. Roman Catholicism teaches that there are seven sacraments, one of which is transubstantiation, but so do the Orthodox Churches. Roman Catholicism has a Pope, but there is a church in Egypt that also has a pope. Only Roman Catholicism has a *Roman* Pope. Therefore, by definition, t*he Roman Catholic Church is the church headed by the*

pope in Rome. Since the papacy was founded in 604, Roman Catholicism began in 604. There is no biblical basis for the papacy; there is no biblical basis for Roman Catholicism.

Carl Henry, an evangelical theologian, said, "The church is not reducible to a hierarchy in Rome, Istanbul, Geneva, or Colorado Springs; its ruling head transcends all geographical locations and its genuine components are not only multiracial and multicultural but even superhistorical" (Henry, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 297).

I began this series by saying that as a child, I got the impression that the Roman Catholic Church was the original church and, therefore, the true church. That issue bothered me until I looked at the Scriptures themselves. Understanding passages like Matthew 16:18 helped, but frankly, things that are ingrained in childhood die hard. Then, one day, someone showed me a verse that settled the issue for me once and for all. The apostle John wrote, "Whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our hearts and he knows everything" (1 Jn. 3:20). The issue is not what I think or feel; the issue is, "What does the Bible say?

THE HISTORY OF THE PAPACY

Roman Catholicism claims there is an unbroken line of popes beginning with Peter. These popes are called "Holy Father." Is that claim true? Is there a history of pious popes from Peter to the present?

The Essential Element

The First Fallacy The essential element is an unbroken line from Peter to the Pope today. There is a list of popes, but the accuracy of that list has been questioned. In the first place, no popes existed before about 600 (see the previous chapter). Until then, there were bishops in Rome, but not popes, and even the list of bishops was not certain. One author says the "succession lists of bishops were seriously unreliable" (*Eerdmans'* p. 119). Boettner says it is simply not true that a list of the bishops of Rome can be drawn up with certainty. He points out that little or nothing is known about the first ten men on the so-called list of popes, and of the next ten, only one is a clearly defined figure in history. He states, "The fact of the matter is that the historical record is so incomplete that the existence of an unbroken succession from the apostles to the present can neither be proved nor disproved." He adds. "There is not a scholar anywhere who pretends to show any decree, canon, or resolution by any of the ecumenical councils which attempts to give pre-eminence to any one church. *The first six hundred years of the Christian era know nothing of any spiritual supremacy on the part of the bishops of Rome*" (Boettner, p. 126, italics his).

The Conflicting Claims Then there is the problem of conflicting claims. During the 1300s, the popes lived in Avignon, France, not Rome. Gregory XI moved the papacy back to Rome. His successor, Urban VI (1378-89), made an election promise to return to France, but later, he refused to do so. The French called his election illegal and elected a rival pope, Clement VII (1378-94). The schism continued until 1409, when the Council of Pisa deposed both popes and elected a new one, Alexander V (1409-10). The other two popes refused to accept the Council's decision, so there were three popes at one time! Alexander V was succeeded by John XXIII, whom Roman Catholicism does not recognize as a pope (in the 20th century, another pope took the name John XXIII to show the illegality of the first John XXIII). The Council of Constance (1414-18) deposed all three popes and elected a new one, Martin V (1417-31).

The Repeated Revisions "In 1939, Pope Pius XII was inaugurated as the 262nd pope. But in 1947, Vatican scholars revised the official list of popes, dropped some, added some, questioned others, and reduced the number to 261. St. Ancletus, who was supposed to have reigned about the year 100, was eliminated when research showed that he and St. Cletus, who reigned about the year 76, were the same person. Donus II (973) was dropped when research showed he never existed. Alexander V and John XXIII, fifteenth-century figures, were relegated to the list of antipopes, or false claimants. The reign of John XIV (984) was once divided into two, erroneously adding a nonexistent John to the series. In 1958, Pope John XXIII was inaugurated as the 262nd pope. But in 1961, another

Pope was still deposed, Stephen II (752). With the inauguration of Paul VI in 1963, he was accounted by some to be the 262nd pope, although the 1963 *Pontifical Yearbook* has abandoned for the present any attempt to number the popes, giving as its reason the impossibility of determining the validity of some of the names" (Boettner, pp. 251-252).

On many occasions, two men have claimed to be pope *at the same time*. At one point, there were three popes at the same time. In their list of popes, Roman Catholicism includes popes and antipopes (false claimants). Noble says, "Between 217 and 1449, some three dozen *antipopes* laid claim to the papal office" (Noble, p. 4, italics his).

Church history does not support the claim that there was an unbroken line of succession of popes starting with Peter. As has been demonstrated, the first pope did not exist until 600 AD. What happened after that?

The Expansion of the Papacy

The real growth of papal power took place during the Middle Ages. The pope became not only the "universal bishop" or head of the church but also ruler over the nations, above kings and emperors. The culmination of papal power was between 1073 and 1216 (about 150 years) when the papacy stood in well-nigh-absolute power over the church and the nations of Europe.

Power Vacuum Over several centuries, even before there was a pope, developments set the stage for the expansion of the power of the papacy. Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Byzantium (Constantinople). When he left Rome, he gave the Lateran Palace to the bishop of Rome. Rome was sacked by the Goths in 410 and by the Vandals in 455. After 476, there was no emperor in the West. As a result, there was no Roman administration to provide justice, defense, and other government services. Frequently, the local bishop provided some of these services (Cook, p. 26).

Property Owners The church began to accumulate wealth, especially in the form of land. People gave money and land to the church. "Some were bargains struck with God for salvation despite a life of unchristian deeds" (Cook, p. 27).

Political Involvement Since kings were interested in who controlled the land, which in the case of the church was bishops and abbots of monasteries, they used their influence and even made appointments to these offices. (Remember, Constantine even presided over the Council of Nicaea.) The criteria for a good bishop or abbot from a king's perspective was the person's political leanings, not his piety (Cook, p. 39).

"The accumulation of wealth and power primarily came out of a power vacuum left by the end of the Roman Empire" (Cook, p. 27). The real growth of papal power took place during the Middle Ages. During the Middle Ages, the church centralized under papal supremacy and developed the hierarchical-sacramental system characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church (Cairns, p. 22). The pope became not only the "universal bishop" or head of the church but also ruler over the nations, above kings and emperors.

Pepin A relationship between the Frankish kings and popes changed the Roman church forever (Cook, p. 40). In the middle of the eighth century, Rome faced an attack from the Lombards, a group of barbarians. The Byzantine emperor could not help because he was busy with the Muslims on his own border. So in 755, Pope Steven III (752-57) crossed the Alps mid-winter to appeal to Pepin the Younger (ca. 714-768), King of the Franks, for help. Steven did not just ask for protection; he asked for land. The pope

showed Pepin the *Donation of Constantine*, a document later proven to be forged, which declared that Constantine had given the land to the pope (Chamberlain, p. 15). Pepin accepted *The Donation of Constantine* at face value, waged two campaigns against the Lombards, and made a treaty that gave the pope the territory he requested. As a result, the Papal States were created (Chamberlain, p. 17), which lasted until 1929. During the Middle Ages, the *Donation of Constantine* was often used to bolster papal claims to secular authority (Cook, p. 40).

That changed everything. "The chair of St. Peter became a prize of the greatest families of Rome … (which) created a more insidious danger of the Papacy than that which the Byzantines and the Lombards had threatened.… Now that the Bishop of Rome held … more than a score of cities, each with its revenues, the attraction of the office was considerably magnified" (Chamberlain, p. 17).

Power to Crown In 799, a rival faction drove Pope Leo III out of Rome. When Leo appealed to the Frankish king Charlemagne (Pepin's son), Charlemagne reinstalled Leo in Rome. On Christmas day, 800, Leo placed the crown on Charlemagne's head, naming him "emperor" (Cook, p. 40).

Cook sums it up like this: In the 4th century, the church became involved with secular authority (remember Constantine). After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West, bishops found themselves with secular power. The church became wealthy, especially in landholdings. "Secular rulers needed some control over the administration of the church's wealth—meaning they needed to influence or even control the selection of bishops and abbots. In the 8th century, the Pope became the secular ruler of the Papal States, and the papal office became embroiled in local, political quarrels" (Cook, p. 49). At times, the papal office devolved into "a plaything of local nobility" (Cook, p. 49). With its wealth and power, the papacy became a prize for Roman noble families. "Monasteries and bishoprics often fell into the hands of men from the ranks of warriors" (Cook, p. 42).

Papal Power The culmination of papal power was between 1073 and 1216 (about 150 years), when the papacy stood in near-absolute power not only over the church but over the nations of Europe.

Gregory VII (1073-1085), better known as Hildebrand, ruled at the zenith of papal power. Cook calls him one of the most important popes in the history of the church (Cook, p. 51). He reformed the clergy by (temporarily) ending simony (the purchase of offices), lifting the standards of morals, and compelling the celibacy of the priesthood. He freed the church from the domination of the state by putting an end to the nomination of popes and bishops by kings and by requiring all accusations against priests or involving the church to be tried in ecclesiastical courts. He made the church supreme over the state.

When Emperor Henry IV, King of the Germans, summoned a synod of German bishops and compelled them to depose the pope, Gregory retaliated with excommunication, absolving all the subjects of Henry IV from their allegiance. Henry was powerless under the papal ban. In January of 1077, the Emperor stood for three days with bare feet before the pope's castle in Northern Italy to make his submission and receive absolution. He got it, but no sooner did Henry regain power than he made war on the pope and drove him out of Rome. Hildebrand died soon after in exile.

Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) declared in his inaugural discourse, "The successor of St. Peter stands midway between God and man; below God, above man; judge of all, judged of none." In one of his official letters, he wrote that the pope "has been committed

not only the whole church but the whole world," with "the right of finally disposing of the imperial and all other crowns." Innocent III chose Otho of Brunswick to be the emperor. Brunswick publicly acknowledged that he wore the crown "by the grace of God and the apostolic see." Later, Innocent III deposed Otho for his insubordination!

Innocent III assumed the government of the city of Rome, making rules for its officers, with himself as their supreme lord; thus, in effect, establishing a state under direct papal government. He compelled Philip Augustus, king of France, to take back his wife, whom he had divorced. He excommunicated King John of England, compelled him to surrender his crown to the papal legate and to receive it again as the pope's subject. In the exercise of autocratic power, Innocent III is regarded as the greatest pope.

Boniface VIII (1294-1303) had a conflict with Philip IV of France over taxing the clergy and putting a bishop on trial. In the process, Boniface uttered what has been called one of the most famous papal pronouncements of the Middle Ages, *Unam Sanctam*, which declared that every human was subject to the pope (Cook, p. 59).

The Evil in the Papacy

The popular impression that the popes have been pious people is not true. Philip Schaff, the respected church historian, said, "In 1049, the corruption was so bad that when Pope Leo IX tried to reform the priesthood, he found that enforcing reforms 'would well-nigh deprive the churches, especially those of Rome, of their shepherds'" (Schaff, vol. V, p. 13). In other words, almost every priest, especially in Rome, had purchased their position with money and had a concubine. Noble, professor of history at the University of Notre Dame, readily admits there has been corruption in the papacy and gives several outstanding examples (Noble, pp. 27-30). Cook, a committed Catholic and a professor at the State University of New York says, "Some popes had mistresses openly in the papal palace and eagerly acknowledged their illegitimate children" (Cook, p. 82). Chamberlain has written a well-documented book on seven such popes (see Chamberlain, *The Bad Popes*, in the appendix).

Sergius III (904-11) had an illegitimate son. That son became Pope John XI (931-36). His nephew became John XII (956-64) at 18. His tyrannies and debauchery were such that Emperor Otho had him tried and deposed due to the complaints of the people of Rome. "Some of the sins enumerated in the charge were murder, perjury, sacrilege, adultery, and incest" (Boettner, pp. 250-251).

Alexander VI (1492-1503) had six illegitimate children, two of whom were born after he became pope. He was charged with adultery repeatedly. His third son, Caesar Borgia, was made a cardinal, and his daughter, Lucrezia Borgia, disgraced the papal office with her intrigues and immoralities (Boettner, p. 251). He "spent a good deal of his pontificate trying to ensure that his son Caesar would have a territory to rule and his daughter Lucrezia would marry well" (Cook, p. 82).

"During the period of history known as the Middle Ages, many of the popes were guilty of nearly every crime in the catalogue of sin. Twenty-nine of those who held the office at one time or another but who are now said to have obtained it by fraud or otherwise to have been unfit for it are now listed as 'intent popes'" (Boettner, p. 251).

In 2013, when Pope Benedict XVI resigned and Pope Francis was elected to replace him, there were two popes for the first time in hundreds of years. Speaking to reporters,

Pope Francis joked, "The last time there were two or three popes, they didn't talk among themselves and they fought over who was the true Pope!" (*Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 2013, p. A3).

On October 23, 2013, Pope Francis suspended Bishop Franz-Peter Tebarta-van Eist of Germany because of his lavish lifestyle. The renovation of the church-owned residence ran over budget to cover $620,000 worth of artwork, $1.1 million in landscaping, and last-minute design renovations. The total was $42 million, all of which was billed to the Vatican and German taxpayers (in Germany, those who identify themselves as churchgoers on their tax form pay a tax to the state that is used to cover government-administered religious expenses; the German government collects more than $6 billion a year for the Catholic Church). The European media dubbed him the "Bishop of Billing." This is not an isolated case. Matthew Schmaiz, a professor at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, said, "In many parts of Asia and Africa, Catholic bishops live lifestyles of great luxury while the laity live in poverty. Catholic bishops often have cars and drivers, air-conditioned homes, and servants" (Carol J. Williams, "Bishop in Germany known for living large is suspended." *Los Angeles Times*, October 24, 2013).

The Exalted Claims of the Papacy

The claims of the papacy are astonishing! When the pope is installed, at his "coronation," a triple crown is placed on his head and the officiating cardinal says, "Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns, and know that thou art the Father of Princes and Kings, Ruler of the World, the Vicar of our Savior Jesus Christ*" (National Catholic Almanac*, cited by Boettner, p. 127*).*

In 1885, in his encyclical, *The Reunion of Christendom*, Pope Leo XIII declared that the pope holds "upon this earth the place of God Almighty" (Leo XIII, cited by Boettner, p. 127). The New York Catechism says: "The pope takes the place of Jesus Christ on earth.... By divine right, the pope has supreme and full power in faith and morals over each and every pastor and his flock. He is the true Vicar of Christ, the head of the entire church, and the father and teacher of all Christians. He is the infallible ruler, the founder of dogmas, the author of and the judge of councils; the universal ruler of truth, the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one, God himself on earth" (The New York Catechism, cited by Boettner, p. 127).

Boettner says, "Thus the Roman Church holds that the pope, as the vicar of Christ on earth, is *the ruler of the world,* supreme not only over the Roman Church itself but over all kings, presidents, and civil rulers, indeed over all peoples and nations. On numerous occasions, the popes have exercised that authority in countries where the Roman Church was strong. They have excommunicated and deposed kings and governors, and, as in the cases of Queen Elizabeth I of England and Emperor Henry IV of Germany, they have attempted to arouse rebellions by releasing subjects from any allegiance to their rulers. They have been prevented from exercising such authority in the United States because they do not have control here and because our Constitution serves as a shield against such outside interference.

"The pope thus demands a submission from his people, and indeed from all people in

so far as he is able to make it effective, which is due only to God. Sometimes that submission takes a particularly servile form, with even the cardinals, the next highest-ranking officials in the Roman Church, prostrating themselves before him and kissing his feet! The popes have gone so far in assuming the place of God that they even insist on being called by His names, e.g., 'the Holy Father,' 'His Holiness,' etc. Such titles applied to a mere man are, of course, blasphemous and unchristian. We cannot but wonder what goes through the mind of a pope when people thus reverence him, carrying him on their shoulders, kissing his hands and feet, hailing him as the 'Holy Father,' and performing acts of worship before him. By such means, this so-called 'vicar of Christ' accepts the position of ruler of the world, which the Devil offered to Christ, but Christ spurned with the command, 'Get thee hence, Satan!'

"The triple crown the pope wears symbolizes his authority in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld—as king of heaven, king of earth, and king of hell—in that through his absolutions, souls are admitted to heaven, on the earth he attempts to exercise political as well as spiritual power, and through his special jurisdiction over the souls in purgatory and his exercise of 'the power of the keys' he can release whatever souls he pleases from further suffering and those whom he refuses to release are continued in their suffering, the decisions he makes on earth being ratified in heaven" (Boettner, pp. 127-128).

After visiting Rome and seeing firsthand the workings of the papacy, Lord Acton, a historian who was also a Roman Catholic, wrote: "All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Boettner, p. 238). Boettner adds, "Christ's Vicar on the earth is *the Holy Spirit*" (Boettner, p. 128, italics his).

Summary: The papacy developed, expanded, and was often evil during the Middle Ages, yet the papacy still makes the most exalted claims.

Lesson to be learned: Follow the spiritual leader who follows the Lord (1 Cor. 11:1). "The fallacy of the claim that the pope is the vice-regent of Christ is apparent in the glaring contrast between him and Christ. The pope wears, as a fitting symbol of the authority claimed by him, a jewel-laden, extremely expensive crown, while Christ had no earthly crown at all—except a crown of thorns which He wore in our behalf. In solemn ceremonies, the pope is carried in a portable chair on the shoulders of twelve men, while Christ walked wherever He needed to go. We cannot imagine Christ, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, being carried in luxury on the shoulders of men. The pope is adorned with genuflections (a bowing of the knee in reverence), he is preceded by the papal cross and by two large fans of peacock feathers, and his garments are very elaborate and costly, all of which is out of harmony with the person and manner of Christ. The pope lives in luxury with many servants in a huge palace in Vatican City, while Christ, when on earth, 'had not where to lay His head.' Many of the popes, particularly during the Middle Ages, were grossly immoral, while Christ was perfect in holiness. Christ said that His kingdom was not of this world, and He refused to exercise temporal authority. But the pope is a temporal ruler, just like a little king, with his own country, his own system of courts, vassals, coinage, postal service, and a Swiss military guard (100 men in sixteenth-century uniforms) that serves as a papal bodyguard" (Boettner, pp. 129-130).

THE PRIEST

In describing the developments that led to the papacy, the origins of the bishops and archbishops were also discussed. There are other "offices" within Roman Catholicism, such as priests and deacons. Since the priesthood has been called "the *real crux* of the Roman system" (Boettner, p. 67, italics his), it needs to be explained and evaluated biblically.

Explanation

The Origin of the Priesthood The Council of Trent discusses the origin of the priesthood. It says, "Whereas, therefore, in the New Testament, the Catholic Church has received, from the institution of Christ, the holy visible sacrifice of the Eucharist; it must need also be confessed that there is, in that Church, a new, visible, and external priesthood, into which the old has been translated. And the sacred Scriptures show, and the tradition of the Catholic Church has always taught, that this priesthood was instituted by the same Lord our Savior, and that to the apostles, and their successors in the priesthood, was the power delivered of consecrating, offering, and administering His Body and Blood, as also of forgiving and of retaining sins" (Decree Concerning the Sacrament of Order, chapter I).

Simply put, the "priesthood was instituted" by Christ. Actually, the Council of Trent says the priesthood originated in the Old Testament. It states that the old priesthood, the priesthood of the Old Testament, was "translated" into "a new, visible, and external priesthood." It makes the apostles and their successors priests.

In fact, the Council of Trent also made church elders priests. It says, "And now as to prescribing who ought to receive, and who to administer this sacrament, this also was not obscurely delivered in the words above cited. For it is there also shown that the proper ministers of this sacrament are the Presbyters of the Church; by which name are to be understood, in that place, not the elders by age, or the foremost in dignity amongst the people, but, either bishops or priests by bishops rightly ordained by the imposition of the hands of the priesthood" (On the Institution of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, Chapter III). "If anyone saith, that the Presbyters of the Church, whom blessed James exhorts to be brought to anoint the sick, are not the priests who have been ordained by a bishop, but the elders in each community, and that for this Cause a priest alone is not the proper minister of Extreme Unction; let him be anathema" (On the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, Canon IV). So, according to Roman Catholicism, the New Testament basis for the office of priest is the office of the elder. They claim that elders are priests.

The Council of Trent also states that the priesthood is a sacrament. "By the testimony of Scripture, by Apostolic tradition, and the unanimous consent of the Fathers, it is clear that grace is conferred by sacred ordination, which is performed by words and outward signs; no one ought to doubt that Order is truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of holy Church" (Decree concerning order, chapter III).

The Office of the Priesthood What is involved in the office of a priest? The Council of Trent says, "If anyone saith, that there is not in the New Testament a visible and external priesthood; or that there is not any power of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of the Lord, and of forgiving and retaining sins; but only an office and bare ministry of preaching the Gospel, or, that those who do not preach are not priests at all; let him be anathema" (On the Sacrament of Order, Canon I). An online Catholic encyclopedia says the priest offers the sacrifice, is the mediator between God and man, and is the teacher of spiritual truth (www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=9625). Catholics point to John 20 for justification that priests can forgive sin. Jesus says, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:23). The disciples were to remit and retain sins.

To sum up, Roman Catholicism says the priesthood 1) was "translated" from the Old Testament priesthood, 2) was instituted by the Lord, and 3) a priest is the same as an elder in the New Testament. The priest offers a sacrifice of the "true body and blood of the Lord" and forgives sins.

Evaluation

Origin of the Priesthood Under the Mosaic Law, the Lord made Aaron and his sons priests to minister to Him (Ex. 28:1; 29:30). Their ministry was to perform services in the Tabernacle, mainly offering sacrifices to God. The priests served in the Tabernacle building the fire under the altar (Lev. 1:7) and sacrificing animals on the altar (Lev. 1:9, 12, 13, 15, 17), thus making an atonement for sin (Lev. 4:20, 6:7). The priests also taught (Lev. 10:11). *Smith's Bible Dictionary* sums it up like this: "The chief duties of the priests were to watch over the fire on the Altar of Burnt Offering, and to keep it burning evermore both by day and night, Lev. 6:12; 2 Chron. 13:11, to feed the golden lamp outside the vail with oil, Ex. 27:20-21; Lev. 24:2, to offer the morning and evening sacrifices, each accompanied with a meat offering and a drink offering, at the door of the Tabernacle. Ex. 29:38-44. They were also to teach the children of Israel the statutes of the Lord. Lev. 10:11; 33:10; 2 Chron. 15:3; Ezek. 44:23-24."

Christ did not institute a new priesthood. There are many references to "priest" in the Gospels and in Acts. All of them are references to Old Testament priests. If you handed a Bible to someone who had never seen a Bible or heard of anything in it, and asked him to find where Christ *instituted* the priesthood, he could not do it. Christ commissioned apostles, not priests. The apostles are never called priests anywhere in the Gospels, in Acts, or anywhere else in the New Testament.

Elders are not priests. "In the book of Acts, there are many references to the founding of churches, preaching the Word, the assembling of Christians, the governing of the churches, and the matter of controversy with those who advocated error. But there are no references whatever to a sacrificing priesthood. Paul likewise, through his epistles, gave many directives concerning the duties of the ministry. But nowhere is there even a hint that ministers were to offer sacrifices, nowhere even an allusion to the mass! The Greek word for priest, *hireus*, as we have noted, is never applied to New Testament ministers. Strange indeed if this was the work of the early ministers, that in Scripture we find no references whatever to it!" (Boettner, p. 57, italics his).

"First-century Christianity had no priest. The New Testament nowhere uses the word to describe a leader in Christian service" (R. Laird Harris, *Fundamental Protestant Doctrine,* II, p. 3, cited by Boettner, p. 50). "The writers of the New Testament had two separate words for *elder* and *priest*. They do not mean the same thing at all, and the New Testament never confuses them. It never says *presbuteros,* elder, when it means *priest*" (*Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary Record*, July 1952, italics his, cited by Boettner, p. 47). "The function of no New Testament minister or official resembles that of the priest of the Roman church. The titles of 'archbishop,' 'cardinal' ('prince of the church,' as they like to be called), and 'pope' are not even in the Bible. The term 'bishop' (overseer, or shepherd of the flock) designated an entirely different office than the term in the present-day Roman Church. In fact, the terms 'bishop' (*episcopos*) and 'elder' (*presbyteros*) are used interchangeably" (Boettner, p. 52, italics his). "Surely, it is clear that the sacrifice of the mass is a later development, a radical perversion, and that the Roman Catholic priesthood is following a system quite foreign to that of the early church" (Boettner, p. 57). The celibacy of the priesthood will be discussed later.

Church History Where did the idea of an elder being a priest originate? Tertullian (160-220) mingled the Old Testament with the New Testament. His Christianity has been called "baptized Judaism." Cyprian (ca. 200-258) "mingled" Christian ministers with Old Testament priests and the Christian ordinances with Old Testament sacrifices (*Eerdmans' Handbook,* pp. 101-102). Cyprian thought of the clergy as sacrificing priests in offering the body and blood of Christ in the communion service, which later developed into the concept of transubstantiation (Cairns, p. 113; Eerdmans', p. 83).

In the Old Testament, the priesthood was a hereditary profession! Moreover, the priests were married.

Office of Priest A priest cannot make a sacrifice for sin. Christ made a once-for-all sacrifice for sin (Heb. 9:12, 10:12). There is no need for another sacrifice for sin. "The human priesthood as a distinct and separate order of men has fulfilled its function and has been abolished" (Boettner, p. 14). Therefore, the Old Testament priesthood has not been translated; it has been abolished.

Priests cannot forgive sin. The apostles did not take John 20:23 to mean that they had the power to forgive sins (Acts 8:22). They were well aware that only God can forgive sins (Mk. 2:7).

The issue here is not the forgiveness of a specific sin; it is declaring the forgiveness of sins in general. Plummer says this is "the power to declare the conditions on which forgiveness is granted and the fact that it has been or has not been granted." Ryrie says, "Since only God can forgive sins (Mk. 2:7), the disciples and the church are here given the authority to declare what God does when a man either accepts or rejects His Son" (*Ryrie Study Bible*). "What he commits to the disciples and to us is the power and privilege of giving *assurance of the forgiveness of sins by God* by correctly announcing the terms of forgiveness. There is no proof that he actually transferred to the apostles or their successors the power in and of themselves to forgive sins" (A. T. Robinson, italics added).

In the New Testament, all believers are priests with direct access to God through Christ (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Believers offer spiritual sacrifices, such as obedience (Rom. 12:1), praise (Heb. 13:15), and good works (Heb. 13:16).

Summary: There is no biblical basis for a priest in the church offering sacrifices to God and forgiving sin; all believers are priests offering spiritual sacrifices to God.

Lesson to be learned: Believers do not need a human priest because they are priests!

Here is the story of a Roman Catholic priest. Some time ago, a man was baptized, brought up in, and confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church. He regularly attended mass, went to confession, and visited shrines. Believing they could intercede for him, he prayed to Mary and to saints. He was a monk, an ordained priest, and a professor at a Roman Catholic university. He was a deeply religious man, but he was greatly concerned about salvation. With all that was within him, he tried to earn salvation by his good works, yet he was oppressed with the terrible sense of his own utter sinfulness.

He found some comfort in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux, who stressed the free grace of Christ for salvation (Kuiper, p. 162). The vicar of his monastic order (Johann von Staupitz), told him, "Remember that Christ came into the world for the pardon of our sins." On another occasion, when the thought of Christ terrified him because he thought of the Lord as the One who punishes sin, Staupitz told him, "Your thoughts are not according to Christ; Christ does not terrify, he consoles. Look at the wounds of Christ and you will there see shining clearly the purpose of God towards men" (Houghton, p. 81).

Finally, one day, as he was sitting in his room reading the book of Romans, the priest came upon Romans 1:17, which says, "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'the just shall live by faith,'" It was then he realized the righteousness of God is given to those who live by faith. Concerning this discovery, he said, "I felt that I had been born anew and that the gates of heaven had been open. The whole of Scripture gained a new meaning" (González, II, p. 19-20). He found peace for his soul, which he had not been able to find in rites, acts of asceticism, or the mystics' theology (Cairns, p. 289). The priest's name was Martin Luther. He popularized the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. If you have already trusted Christ for salvation, you do not need to go to a priest; you need to realize you yourself are a priest.

SACRAMENTS

One of the most important aspects of Roman Catholicism is its doctrine of sacraments. “Few things involve greater differences between Catholics and Protestants than the sacraments” (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 269). What exactly does Roman Catholicism teach about the sacraments?

Much of this material on sacraments is taken from G. Michael Cocoris *The Four Systems of Salvation* (www.insightsfromtheword.com/theological Studies). It should also be noted that both the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church teach that there are seven sacraments.

Explanation

Definition The word “sacrament” comes from the Latin word *sacramentum,* which means “mystery, holy.” In early ecclesiastical writings, the term “sacrament” had many meanings; the definition evolved over the centuries (*New Catholic Encyclopedia,* vol. 12, p. 806). Today, the accepted definition is that a sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace. Roman Catholicism teaches seven sacraments, that is, means of grace, five of which are necessary for salvation and two of which are optional.

Sacraments were instituted by Christ. “If one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord; or, that there are more, or less, than seven, to wit, all Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Order, and Matrimony; or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament; let him be anathema” (Decree Concerning Sacraments in General, Canon 1).

Sacraments are a means of grace. The Council of Trent declared that the sacraments are means of grace. “If anyone saith, that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify; or, that they do not confer that grace on those who do not place an obstacle thereunto; as though they were merely outward signs of grace or justice received through grace, and certain marks of the Christian profession, thereby believers are distinguished amongst men from unbelievers: let him be anathema” (Decrees on the Sacraments, Canon VI). Trent insisted that faith alone is not enough for obtaining grace. Canon VIII states, “If anyone saith, that by the said sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred through the act performed, but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices for the obtaining of grace: let him be anathema” (Decree Concerning Sacraments in General, Canon VIII).

Sacraments are Necessary for salvation. “If anyone saith, that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain God, through faith alone, the grace of justification; though all [the sacraments] are not indeed necessary for every individual: let him be anathema” (Decrees on the Sacraments, Canon IV).

After making statements about the sacraments in general, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* spoke about each sacrament. Here are samples of what was written.

1. Baptism. “If anyone saith, that baptism is free, that is, not necessary unto salvation; let him be anathema” (Canon V).

2. Confirmation. “If anyone saith, that the confirmation of those who have been baptized is an idol ceremony, and not rather a true and proper sacrament; or that of old it was nothing more than a kind of catechism, thereby they were near adolescence gave an account of their faith in the face of the Church: let him be anathema” (Canon I).

3. Eucharist. “In the first place, the holy Synod teaches, and openly and simply professes, that, in the august sacrament of the holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and the wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man is truly, really, and substantially contained under the species of those sensible things.... For thus all our forefathers, as many as were in the true Church of Christ, who have treated of this most holy Sacraments, have most openly professed that our Redeemer instituted this so admirably a sacrament at the last supper, when, after the blessing of the bread and the wine, he testified, in express and clear words, that he gave them his own very body, and his own blood, words which, recorded by the holy Evangelist, and afterward repeated by St. Paul, whereas they carry with them that proper and most manifest meaning in which they were understood by the fathers” (Chapter I).

4. Penance. “Because God, rich in mercy, knows our frame, He hath bestowed a remedy of life even on those who may, after baptism, have delivered themselves up to the servitude of sin and the power of the devil—the sacrament to wit of Penance, by which the benefit of the death of Christ is applied to those who have fallen after baptism. Penitence was in deed at all times necessary, in order to attain to grace and justice, for all men who had defiled themselves by any mortal sin” (Doctrine on the Sacrament of Penance, Chapter 1). “From the institution of the sacrament of Penance as already explained, the universal Church has always understood that the entire confession of sins was also instituted by the Lord, and is of divine right necessary for all who have fallen after baptism” (Doctrine on the Sacrament of Penance, Chapter V). “But, as regards the minister of this sacrament, the holy Synod declares all these doctrines to be false, and utterly alien from the truth of the Gospel, which perniciously extend the ministry of the keys to any others soever besides bishops and priests; imagining, contrary to the institution of this sacrament, that those words of our Lord, Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven, and, Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven the m, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained, were in such wise addressed to all the faithful of Christ indifferently and indiscriminately, as that everyone has the power of forgiving sins,-public sins to wit by rebuke, provided he that is rebuked shall acquiesce, and secret sins by a voluntary confession made to any individual whatsoever” (Doctrine on the Sacrament of Penance, Chapter VI).

5. Extreme Unction. “Now, this sacred unction of the sick was instituted by Christ our Lord, as truly and properly a sacrament of the new law.… For the unction very aptly represents the grace of the Holy Ghost” (Chapter I).

6. Holy Orders. “Whereas, by the testimony of Scripture, by the Apostolic tradition, and the unanimous consent of the Fathers, it is clear that grace is conferred by sacred ordination, which is performed by words and outward signs, no one ought to doubt that Order is truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of holy Church” (Chapter III).

7. Matrimony**.** "If anyone saith, that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelic law, [a sacrament] instituted by Christ the Lord; but that it has been invented by men in the Church; and that it does not confer grace: let him be anathema" (Canon I).

In the Roman Catholic church, sacraments are means of grace necessary for salvation, but *assurance of salvation is not possible.* Under the topic of Decree on Justification, the Council of Trent said: "Chapter X. Seeing that no one can know with a certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God. Chapter XI. No one ought to flatter himself up with faith alone, fancying that by faith alone he is made an heir, and will obtain the inheritance. Chapter XII. No one, moreover, so long as he is in this mortal life, ought so far to presume as regards the secret mystery of divine predestination as to determine for certain that he is assuredly in the number of the predestined, as if it were true that he that is justified, either cannot sin anymore, or, if he do sin, that he ought to promise himself assured repentance; for except by special revelation, it cannot be known whom God hath chosen unto himself."

The Eastern Orthodox Churches agree with the Roman Catholic view of sacraments. Timothy Ware was a graduate of Oxford University, a Bishop in the Orthodox Church, and a lecturer in Eastern Orthodox studies at Oxford. In his book *The Orthodox Church*, Ware says, "The Orthodox Church speaks customarily of seven sacraments, basically the same seven as in Catholic theology" (Ware, p. 281).

Thus Catholicism teaches that there are seven sacraments, which are means of grace necessary for salvation and that these seven have come down to us unchanged from the time of Christ to the present. Such a claim certainly needs to be examined.

Examination

The New Testament The New Testament knows nothing of the seven sacraments. None of the seven sacraments are ever said to be a means of grace and none of the seven sacraments are ever said to be necessary for salvation.

Church History Augustine (d. 430) taught that there were thirty sacraments. Peter Doamian (ca. 1007-1072) enumerated twelve. Following Augustine, Hugo of St. Victor (1096-1141) listed thirty. In his popular book, *Four Books of Sentences*, Peter Lombard (ca. 1100-ca. 1160) named seven. He seems to have been the first to limit the sacraments to seven. His views were pronounced Orthodox by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). In his book, *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) said Christ instituted seven sacraments as channels of grace. It was Aquinas who entrenched the system of seven sacraments. Latourette says that by the fourteenth century, Lombard's list of seven "had gained general acceptance" (Latourette, p. 528). In 1439, the Council of Florence accepted the seven sacraments as authoritative (Cairns, p. 235).

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says, "The formula that there are seven and only seven Sacraments of the New Law was first set down in the 12th century as a result of the theological reflection and systematic presentation that commenced at that time. It was not until the 16th century at the Council of Trent that the church defined the truth that there are seven Sacraments of the New Law, no more or no less" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 811).

Since the Council of Trent, no Council has rescinded Trent's conclusions. Many think the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) radically changed the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, many significant changes were made: worship services are now conducted in the language of the people, the priest now frequently offers the congregation both bread and wine, the exposition of Scripture occupies a more prominent part of the service, and dialogue with other Christians, now called "separated brethren," is encouraged. But these changes are pastoral, not doctrinal. *The Second Vatican Council did not change Sacramentalism*. Vatican II declared that the sacraments "do indeed impart grace" (Vatican Council II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, quoted in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 806). Pope John XXIII stated at the Second Vatican Council's opening, "I do accept entirely all that has been decided and declared at the Council of Trent." Every cardinal, bishop, and priest who participated in the Vatican II Council signed a document affirming Trent.

The New Testament The New Testament does not teach that there are seven sacraments necessary for salvation, but what does the New Testament say about the seven things Roman Catholicism says are sacraments?

1. Baptism. Baptism will be discussed in detail later.

2. Confirmation. Roman Catholicism teaches that after regeneration, a person receives the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. Granted, that took place in Acts 8, but it only occurred one other time in all of Scripture, namely when Paul laid hands on the disciples of John in Acts 19.

Actually, there are only four instances of people receiving the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts (see Acts 2, 8, 10, 19). In two of these passages, people received the Holy Spirit after conversion and with the laying on of hands (Acts 8, 19). In the other two, it was *at conversion* and *without* the laying on of hands (Acts 2, 10). So the question becomes, which set of examples is the norm?

The epistles indicate that all believers have the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." Indeed, Paul says, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Rom. 8:9; see also Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10). So, at least by the time Paul wrote his epistles, all Christians received the Holy Spirit *at conversion*. Therefore, the only logical conclusion is that the two cases of believers receiving the Holy Spirit after conversion in Acts were exceptions, not the rule.

These exceptions were part of a transition process. First, the Holy Spirit came upon the Jews (Acts 2). Then, the Holy Spirit came to the Samaritans (Acts 8). As has been pointed out by many expositors, it was necessary for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands and, therefore, after their conversion. Had it not been done that way, the longstanding animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans would have produced two separate churches. After the Samaritans, the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10). Finally, some disciples of John received the Holy Spirit when Paul laid hands on them (Acts 19). Many scholars have argued that the very nature of the book of Acts is to vindicate Paul. It is striking that everything Peter does, Paul does. Indeed, Acts is divided into two parts: the acts of Peter (Acts 1-12) and the acts of Paul (Acts 13-28). Hence, Acts 19 is an isolated case at the end of a transition period to demonstrate

that Paul had as much authority as Peter. The point is that Act 8 is not the norm, nor is it teaching the doctrine of a sacrament called confirmation.

3. Holy Eucharist. The Eucharist will be discussed in detail later.

4. Penance. Penance will be discussed in detail later.

5. Extreme Unction. The Second Vatican Council said that this will be officially called "The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick." Roman Catholicism teaches that if a priest anoints a sick person with oil, that person is forgiven. The Bible does not teach that Jesus instituted a sacrament whereby people receive grace when they are anointed with oil. In fact, Jesus did everything but that. He spoke, and people were healed. On at least one occasion, He put mud on a blind man's eye, but it was not His practice to anoint the sick with oil.

Granted, James instructed elders to anoint sick people who requested it with oil, but he made it very clear that it was "the prayer of faith that will heal the sick" (Jas. 5:15). There is nothing in this passage or in any other passage in the New Testament, to suggest that the anointing with oil will take away sin, which is what the Catholic doctrine of Extreme Unction claims.

6. Holy Orders. Roman Catholicism teaches that God gives special grace to those the church ordains to be priests. No one involved in spiritual ministry would deny that God's grace performs all ministries. At the same time, nothing in the New Testament can be interpreted in such a way as to mean that God would give grace to a man to be a priest in the Sacramentalists' sense of the word. The kind of things that a Sacramental priest does, like bestowing forgiveness on a person who is confessing his sins to him, is not the kind of ministry of which the Scripture speaks. Such activity is foreign to the text of Scripture.

7. Matrimony. Roman Catholicism teaches marriage is a sacrament. In the first place, marriage was instituted thousands of years before the institution of the New Covenant. In fact, it was instituted before the Fall of Mankind! A more accurate reflection of the biblical text would be that God gave the institution of marriage for all of mankind to enjoy. Of course, all married people acknowledge their need of grace to discharge their responsibilities in marriage.

The basis for marriage being a sacrament is a mistranslation of Ephesians 5:31-32, which correctly translated reads, "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." The Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Scriptures, translated "this is a great mystery" as "this is a great sacrament." Martin Luther's opponent at Augsburg, Cardinal Cajetan, admitted that "great mystery" was the correct translation (Boettner, p. 192).

Interestingly, for six or seven centuries after the establishment of the church, people did not acknowledge any claim of the clergy alone to perform marriages. Strong popes, such as Hildebrand, secured for the church complete control over marriage (Boettner, pp. 192-193).

Conclusion: There is no basis for Sacramentalism in the New Testament. Geisler and McKenzie conclude, "The argument for seven sacraments scarcely needs critique; the lack of scriptural and historical support speaks for itself. There is no real basis in the Bible, the Fathers, or church councils for the enumeration of seven. The decision to recognize seven and only seven was late (13th century)" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 258).

A Catholic scholar admits, "Holy Writ… does not summarize them (sacraments) in the figure of seven. Again, no formal enumeration of the seven Sacraments is found in the Fathers. This (enumeration of seven) emerged only around the middle of the 12th century. It cannot be shown that any of the seven Sacraments was at any particular time, instituted by a Council, a Pope, a Bishop, or a Community. The doctrinal decision of the Church, the Fathers and the theologians presupposes the existence of the individual Sacraments as something handed down from antiquity. From this, one may infer that the seven Sacraments existed in the church from the very beginning" (Ott, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 258).

Summary: Sacramentalism, the doctrine that seven sacraments are the means of grace and, therefore, are necessary for salvation, is an unscriptural doctrine that evolved during church history.

Lesson to be learned: The means of grace are not the sacraments but faith (Eph. 2:8) and prayer (Heb. 4:16).

In the final analysis, the issue is the sufficiency of Christ's death on the cross as a payment for sin. Roman Catholicism teaches that Christ died for our sins, but it also teaches His sacrifice was not sufficient. "What He did on Calvary must be repeated (in the mass) and supplemented (through works of penitence)" (Boettner, p. 257).

Many years ago, when I began to travel as an evangelist, a pastor and I talked with a Roman Catholic lady about going to heaven. As I began to walk her through the presentation of the gospel, I began to think, "When I get to the part about believing, she's going to tell me she believes." Dreading getting to that point and entering into a discussion about the difference between believing that Christ died and trusting His death, I camped on the death of Christ. I explained that Jesus Christ paid for sin; everything it takes for us to get to heaven, He accomplished in His death and resurrection. As I explained that, she said, "I do not believe that." I was shocked! I said, "What do you mean you don't believe that?" As a Roman Catholic, she explained to me that even though she believed Christ died for sin, she also believed that she had to do things in order to be saved. That taught me that when talking to Roman Catholics, the issue is the sufficiency of the death of Christ.

THE MASS

The Roman Catholic doctrine of the Mass (a.k.a. The Eucharist) is one of their chief doctrines, if not "the chief doctrine upon which their church rests" (Boettner, p. 175). Exactly what does Roman Catholicism teach about the Mass?

Explanation

Transubstantiation Roman Catholicism teaches that the elements of communion (bread and wine) *literally* become the body and blood of Christ. This is called the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Council of Trent taught it. "Because that Christ, our redeemer, declared that which he offered under the species of bread to be truly his own body, therefore has it ever been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this holy Synod doth now declare it anew, that, by the consecration of the bread and wine, a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood; which was conversion is, by the Holy Catholic Church, suitably and properly called Transubstantiation" (Decree concerning the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, chapter IV). "If anyone denieth, that, in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ; but saith that He is only therein as in a sign, or in figure, or virtue; let him be anathema" (Canon 1, Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist).

Trent leaves no doubt that the elements become the actual body and blood of Christ, going so far as to say that the bread and the wine themselves are worthy of worship. In the words of Trent: "There is no room left for doubt, that all the faithful of Christ may, according to the custom ever received in the Catholic Church, render in veneration the worship of latria (the act of adoration), which is due to the true God, to this most holy sacrament. For not, therefore, is it the less to be adored on this account, that it was instituted by Christ, the Lord, in order to be received: for we believe that same God to be present therein, of whom the eternal Father, when introducing him into the world, says; 'And let all the angels of God adore him; whom the Magi falling down, adored; who, in fine, as the Scripture testifies, was adored by the apostles in Galilee'" (Decree Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, Chapter III).

Sacrifice The Council of Trent repeatedly calls the mass a sacrifice. For example, it says, "The sacred and holy, ecumenical and general Synod of Trent… teaches, declares; and decrees what follows, to be preached to the faithful, on the subject of the Eucharist, considered as being a true and singular sacrifice" (Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass).

In the section entitled "Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass," the title of chapter II is "The Sacrifice of the Mass is Propitiatory both for the Living and the Dead." That chapter says, "The fruits indeed of which oblation, of that bloody one to wit, are received most plentifully through this unbloody one; so far is this (latter) from derogating in any way from that (former oblation). Wherefore, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions,

and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified, is it rightly offered, agreeably to a tradition of the apostles" (Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass).

Boettner says, "The sacrifice (in the mass) is identical with the sacrifice of the cross, inasmuch as Jesus Christ is a priest and victim both. The only difference lies in the manner of offering, which is bloody upon the cross and bloodless on our altar" (Boettner, p 169).

Evaluation

Transubstantiation The passage most often used to support the idea that the elements of communion become the actual body and blood of Christ is John 6:38, but that verse does not even remotely suggest such a concept. John 6 is not talking about communion! The Lord's Supper was not instituted until the Last Supper, several years after this time. Furthermore, John 6 uses the word "flesh" instead of the word "body." No passage clearly referring to communion does the New Testament ever use the word "flesh" to refer to the Lord's Supper.

The other passage that is used is Matthew 26:28. The Sacramentalists point out that when Jesus instituted communion, He held the cup in His hand and said, "This is My blood" and the disciples took Him literally, but Jesus obviously did not mean that literally. At that moment, His blood was still flowing in His veins! In John 10:9, He also said, "I am the door," but that does not mean He was made of wood. It is like a man showing someone a picture of his wife and saying, "This is my wife." In 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks of eating the bread (1 Cor. 11:27), indicating that no change had taken place in the elements of the Lord's Table.

If the New Testament does not teach the doctrine of transubstantiation, where did it originate? In 831, Paschasius Radbertus (ca. 785-860), an abbot in a monastery in what is now France, wrote a book entitled *Of the Body and Blood of the Lord*. In it, he taught that by a divine miracle, the substance of the bread and the wine in the Eucharist were actually changed into the body and blood of Christ. However, he did not call this change transubstantiation (Cairns, p. 200).

The earliest known use of the term "transubstantiation" to describe the change from bread and wine to body and blood of Christ that was believed to occur in the Eucharist was by Hildebert de Lavardin, Archbishop of Tours (died 1133). By the end of the twelfth century, the term was in widespread use. The Fourth Council of the Lateran, which convened beginning November 11, 1215, spoke of the bread and wine as "transubstantiated" into the body and blood of Christ: "His body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread and wine having been transubstantiated, by God's power, into his body and blood."

Nothing can be more contrary to Scripture. The Old Testament forbids drinking blood (Deut. 12:16; see also Acts 15:29). Calvin also thought that the notion that we derive spiritual life from literal flesh is "more than stupid" (Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 17, 24).

Addressing the subject of transubstantiation, Geisler and McKenzie point out that it is not *necessary* to take the words of Christ pertaining to the Lord's Supper literally because He often spoke in metaphors and figures of speech, such as, "I am the true vine" (Jn. 15:1). Moreover, they point out, it is not *plausible* to take Jesus' words literally, because

Jesus said that the words He spoke to them are spirit and life (Jn. 6:63). Besides, as Catholic scholars themselves admit, the Church Fathers were by no means unanimous in their interpretation concerning communion, yet Trent speaks of "unanimous consent of the fathers." The Eastern Orthodox Church has always held a mystical view of Christ's presence in the elements of communion and has never held to transubstantiation. Likewise, the Lutherans appeal to the same fathers in support of their view over against the Catholic view. Geisler and McKenzie go on to say that it is not possible to take the literal view because "*no disciple present could possibly have understood Him to mean that the bread was actually His physical body since He was still with them in his physical body, the hands of which were holding that very bread*," and it is idolatrous to worship the host. They also ask, "Where is the evidence of the miraculous in transubstantiation? What Catholicism is claiming is like a physical resurrection without an empty tomb" (Geisler and McKenzie, pp. 261-267, italics theirs).

Sacrifice Scripture repeatedly states that the sacrifice of Christ was, once for all, never to be repeated (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 9:22-29; 10:10-14). Peter says Christ suffered *once* for sin, the just for the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18a). When the Council of Trent speaks of Christ being sacrificed again and again in the mass, "it violates the clear teaching of Scripture" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 267). If that is the case, where did the idea of communion being a sacrifice originate?

The early church viewed the Lord's Supper as a fellowship meal. The term "sacrifice" was used by Gregory the Great (ca. 540-604), who held that Christ was sacrificed afresh at every Mass (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 266). Years later, Paschasius Radbertus, the same monk who wrote the book *Of the Body and Blood of the Lord,* taught the bread and the wine were actually changed into the body and blood of Christ, and he also taught in that book that Christ was "corporeally" present during communion. This new emphasis on Christ's corporeal (bodily) presence permitted the church to begin to treat Christ as a victim, offering Himself to the Father. Thus, the Lord's Supper became a sacrifice (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 266).

In his book *Babylonian Captivity*, Martin Luther wrote, "Since Christ died and atoned for sin once and for all, and since the believer is justified by faith on the basis of that one-time sacrifice, there is no need for repeated sacrifices" (Luther, p. 140, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 267).

Summary: The Bible does not teach transubstantiation or a sacrificial view of the Lord's Supper.

There are four views of the Lord's Supper. Transubstantiation, the Roman Catholic view, says the bread and the wine are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ. Consubstantiation, the Lutheran view, claims the bread and the wine contain the body and blood of Christ "in, with, and under" the elements. Luther explained it was like an iron rod placed into a fire: both are united in the red-hot iron, yet both are also distinct. Spiritual Presence, the Reformed view, is that the bread and the wine contain the body and blood of Christ spiritually. Symbolic, the Anabaptist and later the Baptist view, is that the bread and the wine are symbols of the body and blood of Christ.

The Catholic view was so entrenched it was hard for even the Reformers, who understood the doctrine of justification by faith, to set aside their preconceived ideas to see clearly what the Scripture was teaching. For example, Luther accepted the perpetual

virginity of Mary. He wrote, “She was a virgin before the birth of Christ and remained one at the birth and after the birth” (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 301). Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Zwingli believed in the Immaculate Conception and perpetual virginity of Mary. Luther and Calvin even believed that she intercedes for us (Geisler and McKenzie, pp. 328-329).

In the New Testament, the Lord’s Supper was an actual supper! It originated during the Passover, which was a memorial meal. *As they were eating* (Mt. 26:26), the Lord took a piece of bread and said it symbolized His body. *After the meal* (1 Cor. 11:25), the Lord took the cup of wine and said it symbolized His blood. This symbolic meal was observed weekly in the early church. In fact, it was the primary purpose of the church meeting (Acts 20:7). Evidently, His sacrifice is the one thing the Lord wants us to remember.

The man who led me to Christ told me that I should thank the Lord every day that Christ died for me (Lk. 10:20), and if I sincerely did that, I would never drift away from the Lord.

PENANCE

In Roman Catholicism, one of the seven sacraments is penance. This sacrament is better known as "confession." What exactly is it and what does the Bible say about it?

Explanation

Sins Roman Catholicism has a way of dealing with sins committed after baptism. First, it divides all sins into "mortal" and "venial." Mortal sins are deadly, meaning they kill the soul and subject one to eternal punishment (Boettner, p. 198). They are any great offense against the Law of God. As a general rule, mortal sins are breaking the Ten Commandments together with the seven deadly sins (pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth). The list also includes all sexual offenses, whether in word, thought, or deed. In the past, the list has also included attending a Protestant church, reading a Protestant Bible, eating meat on Friday, and missing Mass on Sunday (Boettner, p. 198). Venial sins are offenses against God or our neighbor. Priests do not agree among themselves as to which sins are mortal and which sins are venial. No pope has ever been able to produce such a list. One example might be abusive language. An ex-Catholic told me she once confessed to the venial sin of eating a few grapes as she strolled through the supermarket.

Confession In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council decreed that every adult must confess all of his or her sins to a priest at least once a year. In 1546, this decree was ratified by the Council of Trent and remains in force to this day. More frequent confession is advised if public or mortal sins have been committed (Boettner, p. 198).

Priest Roman Catholicism teaches that sins must be confessed to a priest. The Baltimore Catechism says confession is to an "authorized priest." Actually, after kneeling before the priest and asking and receiving his blessing, the penitent says, "I confess to the Almighty God, to the Virgin Mary, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles, Peter and Paul, to all the saints and to you father, that I have sinned exceedingly, in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault" (the last phrases repeated three times).

Trent "If anyone saith that in the Catholic Church penance is not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ our Lord for reconciling the faithful unto God, as often as they fall into sin after baptism: let him be anathema" (Doctrine on the Sacrament of Penance, Canon I). "If anyone denieth, either that sacramental confession was instituted, or is necessary to salvation, of divine right; or saith, that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Church hath ever observed from the beginning, and doth observe, is alien from the institution and command of Christ, and is a human invention: let him be anathema" (Doctrine on the Sacrament of Penance, Canon VI).

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that priests have the authority to forgive sin. The Council of Trent stated, "They (priests) pardon sins, not only as ambassadors of Jesus Christ, but as judges, and by way of jurisdiction." The Council also declared, "Whoever shall affirm that the priest's sacramental absolution is not a judicial act, but only a

ministry to pronounce and declare that the sins of the party confessing are forgiven, let him be anathema" (Boettner, p. 202).

Thus, Roman Catholicism teaches that penance takes away sins committed after baptism. The sacrament of penitence consists of an act of confession on the part of the penitent, the pronouncement of absolution by the priest, and the assigning of works to be done by the penitent. In the narrow sense of the term, penance refers only to the works assigned by the priest and performed by the penitent. The broad and narrow use of the word "penitence" is like the use of the name "New York" as a state and as a city.

Support According to Sacramentalism, Jesus promised the sacrament of penance when He announced to Peter that He would give him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 16:19 says, "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on the earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." After His resurrection, Christ fulfilled this promise when He breathed on His Apostles (Jn. 20:23). This power was transmitted by the Apostles to their successors and thence to all priests of the Catholic Church.

Following the Vulgate, Trent rendered the text "do penitence" instead of "repent." (Contemporary translations approved or done by Catholics have corrected this error; for example, the *New American Bible*, St. Joseph Edition, which the National Conference approves of Catholic Bishops; see also the Catholic *New Jerusalem Bible* and the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition; Geisler and McKenzie, p. 480.)

Part and parcel of being a practicing Roman Catholic is confessing one's sins to a priest to be forgiven. The Baltimore Catechism defines confession as "telling of our sins to an authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness" (Baltimore Catechism, cited by Boettner, p. 196).

Examination

Sins The problem, of course, is that the Bible does not make a distinction between mortal and venial sins (Gal. 5:19-21, where jealousy and envy are on the same list as idolatry, sorcery, murder, adultery). Such a distinction is arbitrary. While it is true that some sins are worse than others, there is no sin that is "mortal" in the sense that would cause a believer in Jesus Christ to lose his or her salvation.

Confession Waiting a year to confess a sin is too long! Sin should be confessed as soon as a person is aware of it (Mt. 5:21-25).

Priest Does the Bible teach that to be forgiven, a person must confess his or her sins to a priest? No! In the first place, only God can forgive sin (Mk. 2:7). Jesus can forgive sin because He is God (Mt. 9:6). In one of His parables, Jesus taught that sinners can go *directly to God* for forgiveness (Lk. 18:9-14). There is *only one mediator* between God and man: Jesus Christ, not a priest (1 Tim. 2:5).

Roman Catholicism uses two passages as proof that priests can forgive sin. They claim Jesus gave Peter the authority to forgive sin when He said, "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Mt. 16:19). As was pointed out earlier, the keys of the kingdom are not the ability to forgive sins. Jesus says "whatsoever," not "whomsoever." To the Jews, "keys" represented the authority that belonged to the scribes, those who taught the Law. Binding and loosing were technical

terms for the verdict of a teacher of the oral law who declared some actions "bound," that is, forbidden and others "loosed," that is, permitted. In the Greek text, both of these verbs are future-perfect periphrastics. The perfect denotes past action with present result. The periphrastic form of the perfect emphasizes the existing state. These verbs should be translated "shall have been bound" and "shall have been loosed." Jesus is not saying that decisions on earth would be endorsed "in heaven," that is, by God. He is saying that Peter will pass on decisions already made in heaven. As we have seen, Peter didn't understand this to mean that he had the power to forgive sin. Instead of pronouncing forgiveness on Simon the Sorcerer, as the Catholics claim he had the power to do, Peter said, "Repent therefore of this your wickedness and *pray God* if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22, italics added).

The apostles used the keys in Acts 15. They bound eating things sacrificed to idols. There was no teaching from the Lord in this matter, or they would simply have quoted it. Since He did not, they exercised their authority.

Roman Catholicism also claims that Jesus gave the apostles to forgive sin when He said, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn. 20:23). The issue in this passage is not the forgiveness of a specific sins; it is declaring the forgiveness of sins in general. Plummer says this is "the power to declare the conditions on which forgiveness is granted and the fact that it has been or has not been granted." Ryrie says, "Since only God can forgive sins (Mk. 2:7), the disciples and the church are here given the authority to declare what God does when a man either accepts or rejects His Son" (*Ryrie Study Bible*). "What he commits to the disciples and to us is the power and privilege of giving assurance of the forgiveness of sins by God by correctly announcing the terms of forgiveness. There is no proof that he actually transferred to the apostles or their successors the power in and of themselves to forgive sins" (A. T. Robinson).

The only passage that even comes close to suggesting such a practice is James 5:16, which says, "Confess your trespasses one to another." Because this verse is in the context of elders anointing a sick person with oil, it is sometimes claimed that the confession is to the elders, but that is not what the verse is saying. In the Greek text, the word "another" is a reciprocal pronoun. In other words, this verse says that two people must confess *to one another*. If the sick person is confessing to an elder, the verse requires that the elder confesses to the sick person! It is much more natural and logical to take the verse in the context of James and conclude that this sick person's sickness was due to sin, probably the sin of fighting with another brother (Jas. 4:1-12). If such is the case, the reciprocal pronoun makes perfect sense. The two believers fighting with each other, which has made one of them sick, *should confess to each other*. If this verse were talking about the confession of a layman to a priest, the layman would confess his sins to the priest and the priest would confess his sins to the layman (Boettner, p. 206).

The Problem The priest in the Old Testament did not hear confessions. There is no such thing as an office of priest in the church. The officers in a church are bishops (elders) and deacons (Phil. 1:1). In the New Testament, the terms "bishop" and "elder" are two different names for the same office (Titus 1:5). The Roman Catholic Church makes a distinction between the two, raises the bishops above the elders, and makes elders priests. Elders are not priests. There is another Greek word for "priest" and it is not used in the New Testament as a synonym for elder.

"Confession of sin is commanded all through the Bible, but always it is confession to God, never to man. It is a striking fact that although Paul, Peter, and John dealt frequently with men and women in sin, both in their teaching and in their practice, they never permitted a sinner or a saint to confess to them. Paul wrote thirteen of the New Testament epistles, and in them, he often speaks of the duties and practices of Christians, but never once does he mention auricular [made in private to a priest] confession. Peter, John, and Jude wrote six epistles in which they have much to say about the matter of salvation. But not one of them ever mentions auricular confession…. Nowhere do the Scriptures tell us that God appointed a special class of men to hear confession and to forgive sins.

"If such an important tribunal as the confessional had been established, undoubtedly, the apostles would have commented on it repeatedly. Had the power of forgiving sin been committed to the apostles, it would have been one of the most important parts of their office and one of the leading doctrines of Christianity. We cannot imagine that they would have been so remiss as never to exercise the most important function, and nowhere even to have alluded to it" (Boettner, p. 206).

The Origin There is no evidence whatsoever for confessing sins to a priest in the Bible. "It is equally impossible to find any authorization or general practice of it during the first one thousand years of the Christian era. Not a word is found in the writings of the early church fathers about confessing sins to a priest or to anyone except God alone." Such confession is not mentioned in the writings of Augustine, Origen, Tertullian, Jerome, Chrysostom, Athanasius—"all of these and many others apparently lived and died without ever thinking of going to confession" (Boettner, p. 198). Confession was first introduced by Leo the Great in the fifth century on a voluntary basis, but it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 that confession was made compulsory at least once a year (Boettner, p. 199).

Summary: Roman Catholicism's claim that people must confess their sins to an authorized priest to be forgiven is not biblical.

What is the biblical teaching concerning confession? Years ago, I heard a Bible teacher say that the confession of sin should be as public as the knowledge of the sin. If you are the only one who knows about the sin, confess it to the Lord (1 Jn. 1:9). If you have sinned against another person, confess to that person (Jas. 5:19). Perhaps under some circumstances, such as the already-public knowledge of the sin, public confession might be in order (1 Cor. 5).

Looking back on his experience in the confessional, a converted Roman Catholic priest said, "Where my doubts were really troubling me was inside the confessional box. People were coming to me, kneeling down in front of me, confessing their sins to me. And I, with the sign of the cross, was promising that I had the power to forgive their sins. I, a sinner, a man, was taking God's place, God's right, and that terrible voice was penetrating me, saying, 'You are depriving God of His glory. If sinners want to obtain forgiveness of their sins, they must go to God and not to you. It is God's law that they have broken, not yours. To God, therefore, they must make confession, and to God alone, they must pray for forgiveness. No man can forgive sins, but Jesus can and does forgive sins'" (Boettner, p. 203).

SALVATION

Thus far, we have seen that Roman Catholicism teaches that there are seven sacraments, which are means of grace and are necessary for salvation. Three of the seven have been described and discussed in detail. According to Roman Catholicism, what must a person do to get to heaven? In a sense, the answer is "Yes." Their system of salvation is Sacramentalism. At the same time, to put this subject in clear focus, some aspects of their system of salvation need to be explained. For example, what is Roman Catholicism's explanation of justification?

Explanation

Salvation is Institutional Historically, at least before Vatican II, Roman Catholicism taught that being part of the Roman Catholic Church is necessary for one's salvation. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) declared that "the universal Church of the faithful is one outside of which none is saved" (Fourth Lateran Council, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 294). A Catholic theologian has listed several popes who said the same thing, including Benedict XIV (1740-58), Pius IX (1846-78), Leo XIII (1878-1903), and Pius XII (1939-58). A more recent Catholic theologian wrote, "The church of Christ, therefore, is one and perpetual; whoever goes apart (from it) wanders away from the will and prescription of Christ the Lord and, leaving the way of salvation, digress to destruction" (Denzinger [1957], cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 293). Another Catholic theologian wrote, "Membership of the church is necessary for all men for salvation" (Ott [1960], cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 294). Since "salvation is dispensed by the Catholic Church to each recipient piece by piece from birth to death, perhaps it should be called 'institutional salvation'" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 268).

Salvation is a Process According to Roman Catholicism, baptism confers justification. As one Catholic theologian said, "Baptism confers the grace of justification" (Denzinger, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 478). In fact, it teaches that at baptism, justification and sanctification are given to the infant (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 259). Sanctifying grace is infused into the one being baptized (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 479). The Council of Trent (1547) stated it simply, "Sacraments have … the power of sanctifying" (Decree Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, chapter III). Trent held that justification is "not a bare remission of sins, but also sanctification and the renewal of the inner man." To clarify, consider the following.

According to Roman Catholicism, justification has three phases. The *initial* phase occurs at baptism when grace is given to overcome original sin. The *progressive* phase includes participation in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and penitence, to increase righteousness. The *ultimate* phase is entering heaven, provided one has not committed a mortal sin (Geisler and McKenzie, pp. 225-226).

According to Roman Catholicism, salvation is not by works, but works are necessary for salvation in the second and third phases of justification. One Catholic theologian said, "By his good works, the justified man really acquires a claim to supernatural reward from

God" (Ott, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 226). Good works performed with grace are meritorious (Ott, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 228). The bottom line is this: "For Roman Catholics, salvation in the ultimate sense, not just initial justification, always requires faith plus works to obtain eternal life" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 239).

According to Roman Catholicism, salvation is by grace, but since they also teach that meritorious works are necessary for salvation, they do not believe that salvation is by *grace alone* (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 229).

Salvation is Sacramental As has been pointed out, Catholicism teaches that salvation is by grace, but that grace is received through the sacraments. Since the purpose of the sacrament is to bestow God's grace, sacraments are necessary for salvation. The Council of Trent said that if anyone should say that the sacraments are not necessary for salvation, let him be anathema (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 252), "as though they were only outward signs of grace or justice, received through faith … Let him be anathema" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 250). So, in Roman Catholic theology, salvation is by sacraments (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 242).

A Catholic priest has explained the specifics of this system. In 1961, a Catholic priest named Leo J. Trese wrote a book called *Everyman's Road to Heaven*. In 2001, it was revised and republished under the title *Seventeen Steps to Heaven: A Catholic Guide to Salvation* (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press). He tells Catholics exactly what they must do to get to heaven. Here is a summary of what Trese says.

1. Deepen your understanding of the faith. "Periodically, we must revive our understanding of the nature and the effects of prayer and the sacraments—the wonder of them, and the tremendous power of them" (Trese, p. 10). The basic truths of religion provide the motivation for all spiritual progress. These basic truths include the purpose of life, the irresistible attraction of Heaven, the malice of sin, the repulsiveness of hell, the inescapable fact of death, and our awful responsibility as we face God in judgment (Trese, p. 10). "Love Him we must, or we perish" (Trese, p. 11). "Our love for God is measured by how hard we tried to keep His commandments and do His will" (Trese, p. 6).

2. Strive to do God's will in all things. We justify God's love for us, when we try to do God's will to the best of our ability (Trese, p. 16).

3. See sin for what it is. Sin is either doing something God has forbidden or refusing to do something God has commanded (Trese, p. 26).

4. Avoid serious sin. The avoidance of mortal sin is the first and foremost essential step in fulfilling our duty to love God (Trese, p. 35). For a sin to be a mortal sin, 1) It must be a serious matter (a bit of petting, defrauding another in a business deal), 2) We must have sufficient understanding of what we are doing, and 3) We must give our full consent (not being influenced by grave fear, severe anxiety, extreme fatigue, nervous tension, or hidden emotional conflict; Trese, pp. 36-38). The minute people decide to commit a sin, they have committed it (Trese, p. 40).

The way to keep from mortal sin is to be faithful to daily prayer, pray especially in times of temptation, receive the sacraments frequently, and avoid persons, places, and things that might lead to sin. "To a person who is really doing his best, God always gives enough grace to keep him from mortal sin" (Trese, p. 35, italics his), but young couples who park in lovers' lane, the man who goes to a striptease performance, the woman who

reads the latest obscene bestseller, and the girl (or man) who dates a divorced person, is making no effort to avoid the occasion of sin (Trese, p. 41).

5. Avoid even venial sin. Some sins are semi-deliberate venial sins, such as sins committed without full purposefulness; sins committed through sudden surprise, carelessness, or lack of full attention, such as a man who drops a brick on his toe and bursts into profanity or the dog-tired mother who becomes irrationally angry over a bit of spilled milk (Trese, pp. 46-47). Deliberate venial sins include stealing an ashtray or a towel from a hotel, carefully thinking up a lie in advance to explain an absence from work, and passing along a choice piece of gossip that is not gravely harmful (Trese, p. 47).

We usually commit venial sins for some small personal advantage, such as telling a lie to save ourselves a momentary embarrassment, stealing some stamps from the boss' desk to save a few pennies, making a catty remark about someone to get even for what she has said about us, taking one drink too many to escape anxiety or our self-consciousness, using profanity to let someone know we mean business, or getting to Sunday Mass a little late so we can be the first out of the parking lot (Trese, p. 48).

We do not gain by committing venial sins. God evens the score in this life; if it is not completely here, it is in purgatory (Trese, p. 49). "Unless we had set our will firmly against deliberate venial sin, we cannot gain a plenary indulgence for ourselves. A plenary indulgence is a complete wiping out of any debt we owe to God" (Trese, p. 50).

6. Be prepared for God's judgment. At the judgment, we shall see every grace we've ever received and every sin we've ever committed. So meditate on death; visualize the moment (Trese, pp. 58-59).

7. Let the thought of Heaven inspire you to be holy. Heaven is eternal ecstasy (Trese, p. 66). "My own parents were very dear to me. I am confident that they are in Heaven and that I shall see them there—if, by God's mercy, I make it" (Trese, p. 68). There is a good chance that you will immediately enter Heaven after death. If you make a sustained effort to live day by day as God wants you to live. "Surely this kind of loyalty gives us a claim upon God for whatever grace we may need in our last moments to die a completely happy death. This means to die not only free from mortal sin but free but also from any venial sin or unpaid penance that might delay our entrance into Heaven. This, we know, is the principal purpose of the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick: to cleanse us from whatever 'remains of sin' might impede our immediate flight to God" (Trese, p. 68). "If we have the least understanding of Heaven, we must see that it is worth living for, working for, and suffering for. We must see, too, that the only certain path to Heaven lies over that sometimes rugged but never impassable road of a good life" (Trese, p. 69).

8. Fear Hell. Hell is loneliness such as we have never conceived of (Trese, p. 74). It is a self-chosen punishment, like the hangover that a drunkard knowingly chooses for himself (Trese, p. 77).

9. Gain the benefits of confession. Jesus wants us to confess our sins to have been forgiven. That's why He said, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). "How could the Apostles (and the priest who succeeds them) know what sins to forgive and what sins to retain (not forgive), if they did not know what the sins were?" (Trese, p. 84).

"Dig into the Fathers of the early church. You'll find that confession is as old as Christianity. This is the way sins were forgiven in the very beginning. Surely, the people

who came along right after Christ two thousand years ago ought to be the best judges of what Jesus meant. Confession always precedes forgiveness of sins in the Christian world" (Trese, p. 85). Some seem to think of confession as spiritual laundry, where you get rid of one load of dirt so that you can take on another (Trese, p. 86).

10. Learn to improve your confession. The sacrament of Penance increases sanctifying grace and strengthens against temptation. So don't take it for granted (Trese, p. 94). A good confession cannot be made unless there is sorrow for sin (Trese, p. 96). "Even venial sins cannot be forgiven without true sorrow for them and the purpose of amendment…. Examine your conscience thoroughly" (Trese, p. 97).

11. Receive communion. "In the mass, He has just renewed the offering of Himself to God the Father, the offering He made for us upon the cross…. 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' Frequent Holy Communion is the surest of all sure paths to heaven…. Our attainment of Heaven and our avoidance of Hell are the consequences of the work that Jesus does for our soul when we receive Him in Holy Communion" (Trese, pp. 104-105).

12. Fulfill your role in the mass. At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the *Sacrifice* of the Mass. The Mass is our direct line to Calvary and through Calvary to heaven. We come to sign on our name on the Gift. In the Mass, Jesus re-enacts the great Sacrifice, the Gift, of Himself on Calvary. So in the Mass, give your free consent and approval to the gift Jesus offered on the Cross in our name (Trese, pp. 112-114).

13. Learn to pray well. To pray well is to keep my mind on what we are doing with petition, adoration ("We tell Him of our love for Him, we acknowledge our dependence on Him, pledge Him our to-the-death loyalty and obedience…. Prayers in honor of our Blessed Mother and the saints are also, indirectly, prayers of adoration to God"), thanksgiving (including Our Fathers, Hail Marys, Rosaries, litanies, novenas, and favorite devotions), and contrition. "Flowing from our sorrow will be acts of reparation: prayers, Masses, and deeds of charity and self-denial, offered in atonement for our sins" (Trese, pp. 119-124).

14. Be courageous and compassionate. We should be quick to make allowances for the weaknesses and mistakes of our fellowmen. Words of the harsh criticisms seldom should be heard from my lips (Trese, p. 132).

15. Attend to others' needs. We do not love Him unless we love our neighbor. So we should be concerned for others, but we're too engaged in our own worries to notice that others have worries, perhaps far greater than ours (Trese, pp. 140-142).

16. Strive to win souls for Christ. By winning souls for Christ, Trese means bringing them into the Catholic church (Trese, p. 147). He says, "You are a Catholic. You've been baptized and confirmed. You have a definite and inescapable vocation to be a missionary to the people around you. If you've been neglectful of this vocation, right now would be a logical time to make a resolution: 'During the next 12 months, with the help of God's grace, I'm going to bring at least one person into the church'" (Trese, p. 151).

17. Let love diminish your fear of death. Since the lesser emotions pale before a stronger one, as the rising sun vanishes the light of the moon, so fear is totally eclipsed by the stronger emotion of love for God and neighbor (Trese, p. 158). It is also possible to accept and offer your death to God ("dying in advance"), for which one receives a plenary indulgence. Each time this offering is made, an indulgence of seven years is granted and a plenary indulgence at the hour of death. The usual conditions for gaining

this plenary indulgence are confession, Holy Communion, and at least one Our Father, Holy Mary, and Glory be for the intentions of the Pope (Trese, p. 161).

Examination

Salvation is Institutional As we have previously noted, Scripture does not teach that we don't have to confess to a priest to be saved. When the thief on the cross got saved (Luke 23:39-43), no church or church representative, such as a priest, was present. Someone may object, "Yes, but Jesus was there." That is true, but in Acts 8, when the Ethiopian eunuch was saved, no church or church representative, such as a priest, was present.

Evidentially, it is no longer true that Roman Catholicism teaches that salvation is institutional. Vatican II concluded that non-Catholics and even non-Christians could be saved. It called Protestants "separated brethren." It said, "Those who have not yet received the gospel are related to the people of God in various ways." "The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims…. Nor is God remote from those in shadows and images seeking the unknown God… since the Savior wills all men to be saved." "Those who through no fault of their own, do not know the gospel of Christ, or his church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try, in their action, to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation" (Vatican II, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, pp. 295-296). So, although in the past, some Catholics have gone so far as to declare all non-Catholics lost, more recently, Protestants have been elevated to the status of "separated brethren" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 293).

Salvation is a Process According to Scripture, justification is an *event* that takes place at the moment of faith, by which God declares a person righteous legally, and practical sanctification is a *process* by which the believer is made righteous morally (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 240). In the Bible, justification is a forensic term (Deut. 25:1), meaning it is simply declaring a person righteous in the legal sense of the term, such as is done in a court of law.

According to Scripture, eternal life is a present possession (Jn. 3:36), but according to Roman Catholicism, one must wait until the final judgment at death to know whether or not one has eternal life (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 231). Eternal life cannot be lost (Jn. 5:24).

Salvation is Sacramental The Bible nowhere says that grace is received through sacraments. It clearly teaches that grace is received *through* faith (Eph. 2:8). "While Roman Catholic theology claims that there is no salvation apart from God's grace, their view of the sacraments tends to take away in practice what they affirm in principle" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 242).

According to Scripture, salvation is by *faith alone*. The Gospel of John is the only book in the New Testament that was written with the express purpose of explaining to people how to obtain eternal life (Jn. 20:31). In the Gospel of John, the only condition for obtaining eternal life is belief (Jn. 3:16, 36; 5:24; 20:31). John says the only "work" necessary for salvation, is to believe (Jn. 6:29)! Salvation is a gift (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8; see also Romans 4:5).

Salvation is by faith, *not by works*, so that no one may boast (Eph. 2:9). Grace and meritorious works for salvation are mutually exclusive (Rom. 11:6). From a biblical point of view, people do not do good works to obtain salvation; they should do good works because they have already received salvation (Eph. 2:10). "God works salvation *in* us by justification and by God's grace, we work it *out* in sanctification (Phil. 2:12-13)" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 233).

Catholicism and Protestantism agree that salvation is by grace, that is, no good works precede regeneration, but Catholicism teaches that justification occurs at baptism and that works are necessary for salvation. In other words, Catholicism teaches that grace is necessary for salvation, but salvation is not exclusively of grace. Works are prompted by grace, but works are also meritorious (Geisler and McKenzie, pp. 85-86).

John Henry Newman, an Anglican scholar who converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845, commented: "Whether we say we are justified by faith, by works, or by Sacraments, all these but mean the one doctrine that we are justified by grace which is given through the sacraments, and penetrated by faith, manifested in works."

In *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Ott says, "The supernatural life (by analogy with the natural life) is generated by baptism; brought to growth by Confirmation; nurtured by the Eucharist; cured by the diseases of sin, and (cured) from the weakness arising from Penitence and Extreme Unction" and "By the two social sacraments of Holy Order, and Matrimony the congregation of the church is guided and spiritually and corporately preserved and increased" (Ott, p. 341, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 253).

Summary: Roman Catholicism teaches that salvation is by faith and that it is by grace, but they do not teach that it is by grace *alone* or faith *alone*; rather, it is a process whereby grace is received through the sacraments and merited through good works.

Scripture teaches that salvation is by grace through faith apart from works (Eph. 2:8-9; see also Rom. 4:5). In the course on *How to Live a Biblical, Spiritual Life* (see it at www.insightsfromthe word.com), I explain that the means of spiritual growth are the Word, the Holy Spirit, and fellowship with other believers. For example, believers must: 1) desire the Word (1 Pet 2:1-2), 2) receive the Word (Jas. 1:21), 3) meditate on the Word (Jas. 1:25; the Greek word translated "continue" means "to continue beside" and indicates continuing in the sense of observing), 4) believe the Word (Rom. 1:17; Heb. 4:2), and 5) obey the Word (Jas. 1:22, 25). If believers obey, practical righteousness (spiritual maturity) will result (Jas. 1:19).

Spiritual growth takes desire, but desire is not enough. Solomon says, "The soul of a lazy *man* desires, and *has* nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich" (Prov. 13:4). The lazy soul has desire, but that is all. "He would be wise without study and rich without labor" (Bridges). I would add, "You cannot become spiritually mature without obedience to the Word of God."

PURGATORY

One of the distinctive dogmas of Roman Catholicism is purgatory. Eastern Orthodox churches do not believe in purgatory, nor do Protestants. Purgatory has been called "an essential part of the Catholic faith" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 331). What does Roman Catholicism teach about purgatory? Is the idea of purgatory found in the Bible?

Explanation

Purification Purgatory is a process of purification (temporal punishment) after death to prepare a just person for entering heaven. The Council of Trent decreed, "Whereas the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost, has, from the sacred writings and the ancient tradition of the Fathers, taught, in sacred councils, and very recently in this ecumenical Synod, that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages (intercessory prayers) of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar; the holy Synod enjoins on bishops that they diligently endeavor that the sound doctrine concerning Purgatory, transmitted by the holy Fathers and sacred councils, be believed, maintained, taught, and everywhere proclaimed by the faithful of Christ" (Decree Concerning Purgatory).

"If anyone saith, that, after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise, that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world or in the next in Purgatory before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened (to him); let him be anathema" (On Justification, Canon XXX).

To put purgatory into perspective, it is helpful to understand what Catholicism says about heaven and hell, as well as purgatory. Catholics who have obtained a state of Christian perfection go immediately to heaven, that is, those who are in a perfect state of grace and penitence, who are completely purified at the time of death, immediately go to heaven (Erickson, pp. 1178-1179). All unbaptized adults and those who have committed mortal sins after baptism go immediately to hell. Catholics who die at peace with the church but who are not perfect go to purgatory, where they undergo penal and purifying suffering for their sins (Boettner, p. 218).

To say the same thing another way, Catholicism teaches there are two kinds of sins and so there are two kinds of punishment. The punishment for mortal sins is eternal (hell). Eternal punishment is canceled by the sacraments of baptism, penitence, or by perfect contrition with the promise of confession. The punishment for venial sins is temporal (purgatory). The sacraments do not cancel temporal punishment, but it is done through the works of penitence, almsgiving, paying priests to say mass, indulgences, etc. So, even if all mortal sins are forgiven through confession, Catholics who do not perform enough good works will have to go to purgatory until they are completely purified (Boettner, p. 219).

Joseph Pohle, a modern Catholic theologian, defines purgatory as "a state of temporary punishment for those who, departing this life in the grace of God, are not yet

entirely free from venial sins or have not yet fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions" (Pohle, cited by Erickson, p. 1179). Ludwig Ott says, "The souls of the just, which, in the moment of death, are burdened with venial sins or temporal punishment due to sins, enter purgatory." In short, purgatory is a period of temporal punishment for sins after death and before entering heaven (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 332).

There are no official pronouncements concerning the nature and intensity of purgatory, but no less than the great Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas taught the least pain in purgatory surpasses the greatest suffering in life. The fire in purgatory is the same as the fire in hell; the only difference is the duration (Boettner, p. 220). The duration of time spent in purgatory depends on one's sins (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 333). Bishop Fulton J. Sheen said purgatory was "a place for purification where satisfaction is made for grave sins whose guilt has been repented of, but for which there is still a debt of satisfaction owed and for venial sins that have not been repented" (Fulton J. Sheen, *World Book*, 1960).

The pope can grant indulgences, that is, relief from suffering in purgatory. He can alleviate, shorten, or terminate the suffering. Within limits, a priest can do the same as a representative of the pope (Boettner, p. 219).

Catholics use several passages of Scripture and a passage from the Apocrypha to defend the dogma of purgatory. Matthew 5:26 says, "You will by no means get out of there (prison) till you have paid the last penny." Ott says, "Through further interpretation of the parable, a time-limited condition of punishment in the other world began to be seen expressed in the time-limited punishment of the prison" (Ott, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 333). Matthew 12:32 says, "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come." Ott says this passage "leaves open the possibility that sins are forgiven not only in this world but in the world to come" (Ott, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 333). First Corinthians 3:15 says, "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." Ott says, "The Latin fathers take the passage to mean a transient purification punishment in the other world" (Ott, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 333). Second Maccabees 12:42-46 is said to be a case where "the Jews prayed for their fallen (dead) … that their sins might be forgiven them" (Ott, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 333). In other words, it mentions praying for the dead!

Prayer The Council of Trent decreed, "Let the bishops take care, that the suffrages (intercessory prayers) of the faithful who are living, to wit the sacrifices of masses, prayers, alms, and other works of piety, which have been wont to be performed by the faithful for the other faithful departed, be piously and devoutly performed, in accordance with the institutes of the church; and that whatsoever is due on their behalf, from the endowments of testators, or in another way, be discharged, not in a perfunctory manner, but diligently and accurately, by the priests and ministers of the church, and others who are bound to render this (service)" (Decree Concerning Purgatory).

Passages used by the Catholic church to prove that people can pray for those in purgatory include 2 Timothy 1:18 ("The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day"), 1 Timothy 2:1 ("Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men"), Matthew 17:3 ("And

behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him"), as well as 2 Maccabees 12:42-46.

A Catholic organization (Passionist Monastery) sent an appeal for money that included a prayer for the souls in purgatory. It read, "O God, Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, grant to the souls of our departed loved ones remission of all their sins that by means of a pious supplication, they may obtain the joy of heaven, which they have ever earnestly desired. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen."

Evaluation

Purgatory In the first place, Ott, a standard Catholic authority on dogma, admits that the Bible only teaches the existence of purgatory "indirectly," and it is only a "possibility." *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* acknowledges that "the doctrine of purgatory is not explicitly stated in the Bible" (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, p. 1034, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 334).

Matthew 5:26 is not talking about a spiritual prison after death but about a physical prison *before death*. Ott's "further interpretation" is not an interpretation at all. It is reading something into the text that is not even remotely there. Matthew 12:32 is talking about what the Catholics would call mortal sin. Purgatory only deals with venial sins. "How can a statement about the unforgiveness of a mortal sin in the next life be the basis for an argument that non-mortal sins will be forgiven?" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 335). Furthermore, there is nothing in the passage about punishment. How can the passage that is not talking about punishment be used to prove punishment? First Corinthians 3:15 talks about the Judgment Seat of Christ, which will take place in a day (1 Cor. 3:13), not a long period of time. People's works, *not their sins*, will be tested by fire (1 Cor. 3:13). If their works survive the fire, they will be rewarded (1 Cor. 3:14). If their works are consumed by fire, they will suffer *the loss of reward* (1 Cor. 3:15). The fire is not purgatory, because the fire destroys, not purifies and the believer suffers loss of reward, not personal suffering. Second Maccabees 12:42-46 is in the Apocrypha, which is not inspired Scripture. So, no matter what it says, it has no doctrinal authority. Second Maccabees 12:42-46 never mentions the words purgatory or fire. Furthermore, as Boettner points out, "From the Roman Catholic viewpoint, these verses prove too much, for they teach the possible salvation of soldiers who die in mortal sin, that of idolatry. And that contradicts Roman Catholic doctrine, which is that those dying in mortal sin go straight to hell and are permanently lost. They do not go to purgatory, where they can be aided by the prayers of people still on earth. Surely one who had never heard of purgatory would not learn about it from this passage" (Boettner, p. 228). Another apocryphal book, which the Council of Trent rejected, speaks against praying for the dead (2 Esdras 7:105).

Prayer In 2 Timothy 1:18, Paul is praying for someone still alive, not someone dead. "Praying that someone alive will receive mercy on the Day of Judgment is a far cry from praying for a person *after* he or she has already died. There is no indication of the Bible that anyone ever prayed for another after the person died" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 348, italics theirs). The same is true in 1 Timothy 2:1, where Paul is exhorting believers to pray for *living* political rulers. There is no prayer for anyone in the passage of Matthew 17! As we have seen, the passage in Maccabees is not inspired Scripture and, therefore, has no binding authority.

Origin Purgatory is not taught in the Bible, so where did it originate? The idea of purification by fire after death can be found among the ancient people of India, Persia, Egypt, and later among the Greeks and Romans. Plato taught that "perfect happiness after death was not possible until one had made satisfaction for his sins, and that if his sins were too great, his suffering would have no end. Following the conquest of Alexander the Great, Greek influences spread to all Western Asian countries, including Palestine…. It found expression in II Maccabees. The Rabbis began to teach that by means of sin offerings, children could alleviate the suffering of deceased parents…. The writings of Marcion and the Shepherd of Hermes (second century) set forth the first statement of the doctrine of purgatory (in the early church), alleging that Christ, after His death on the cross, went to the underworld and preached to the spirits in prison (I Peter 3:19) and led them in triumph to heaven. Prayers for the dead appear in the early Christian liturgies and imply the doctrine since they suggest that the state of the dead is not yet fixed. Origen, the most learned of the early church fathers (AD 254), taught, first, that a purification by fire was to take place after the resurrection, and second, a universal restoration, a purification by fire at the end of the world through which all men and angels were to be restored to favor with God. In the writings of Augustine (died AD 430) the doctrine of purgatory was first given definitive form, although he himself expressed doubts about some phases of it. It was, however, not until the sixth century that it received formal shape at the hands of Gregory the Great, who held the papal office from 590 to 604 A.D…. The doctrine was proclaimed an article of faith in 1439 by the Council of Florence and was later confirmed by the Council of Trent in 1548" (Boettner, pp. 228-29).

Gonzales says Augustine *suggested* the possibility that there was a place of purification for those who died in sin, where they would spend some time before going to heaven. What was conjecture for Augustine became a certainty for Gregory. He affirmed the existence of purgatory and gave impetus to the development of the doctrine (Gonzales, I, p. 247).

Thomas Aquinas taught that we can be cleansed in this life by performing works of satisfaction, but after death, that is no longer possible. The cleansing which takes place after death is through penal suffering. The Council of Florence, which adopted the doctrine of purgatory in 1439, said, "Purgatorial pains cleanse souls after death, and in order that they may be rescued from these pains, they are benefited by the suffrages of the living faith, viz. the sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, alms, and other works of piety." The Council of Trent reiterated the doctrine (Erickson, pp. 1179-1180).

Summary: Roman Catholicism's dogma that after death, people go to purgatory, where they undergo penal and purifying suffering for their sins, is not based on the Bible and is not even taught in 2 Maccabees 12.

After a detailed discussion of purgatory, Boettner concludes, "We do not say that any person who believes in purgatory cannot be a Christian. Experience shows that Christians, as well as unbelievers, sometimes are very inconsistent, and they may accept it without thinking through a doctrine or theory that is contrary to what the Bible teaches and to what their hearts know to be true. But how thankful we should be that we all are not under the false teaching of a misguided church or priesthood that threatens us with

the torments of purgatory, that instead, we have the assurance that at death, we go immediately to heaven and enter into its joys" (Boettner, p. 234).

What the Bible clearly teaches makes the idea of purgatory impossible. For example, since Christ paid for our sins, there is no payment left for us to pay. On the cross, He cried, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Heb.10:14). "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). The purging of our sins was accomplished on the cross ("purged" is past tense). So, to say that believers must be punished by suffering for their sins in Purgatory insults the once-for-all finished work of Christ.

What the Bible teaches about going to heaven immediately after death eliminates any possibility of purgatory. Eternal life is a present possession of those who believe on Christ (Jn. 3:36) and there is no possible judgment for such a person (Jn. 5:24). Those who trust in Jesus Christ go immediately to heaven when they die (Lk. 23:43, Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8). It should be pointed out, however, that believers are judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. At that Judgment, believers will be rewarded.

Dave Mumby, a member of my church, served in the Navy and later in the Navy Reserves for decades. As an enlisted man, he rose to the highest rank possible, Master Chief. After a long and illustrious career, the time came for Dave to retire. The Navy has a ceremony for that. I was invited to pray and speak at the ceremony as his pastor. The service was impressive and moving, as only the military could do it. One of the things that struck me the most was that during the ceremony, they recited Dave's accomplishments and every medal he had received. The list was long, but they read them one by one.

As I watched and listened, I thought to myself, "Is that what it's going to be like at the Judgment Seat of Christ?" God is not going to forget the things we have done. The writer to the Hebrews says, "For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end" (Heb. 6:10-11). Is it possible that at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Lord will rehearse everything we did for Him and reward us accordingly? Every idle word will be evaluated. Will not every encouraging word be rewarded as well?

If I'm right about this, I can imagine the Lord saying something like, "I remember when you took the time to visit the fatherless and widows. Well done, my good and faithful servant."

MARY

Roman Catholicism venerates Mary, praises Mary, and even calls her "the mother of God." That is only the beginning. What does Roman Catholicism teach concerning Mary? What should be our attitude toward Mary?

Explanation

The Immaculate Conception The dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary teaches that Mary was *conceived without original sin*. In 1476, Pope Sixtus IV (1414-1484) instituted December 8th as the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven. The Council of Trent said, "This same holy Synod doth nevertheless declare, that it is not its intention to include in this decree, where original sin is treated of the blessed and immaculate Virgin Mary, the mother of God; but that the constitutions of Pope Sixtus IV, of happy memory, are to be observed, under the pains contained in the said constitutions, which it renews" (Decree Concerning Original Sin).

On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX decreed, "We, declare, pronounce and define that the most blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, but the singular grace and privilege of the omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, and that this doctrine was revealed by God, and therefore must be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful" (Boettner, p. 158).

According to Catholicism, biblical support for the Immaculate Conception is in Genesis 3:15, which says, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." They say the woman is Mary. The phrase describing Mary as "full of grace" (Lk. 1:28 in the Douay-Rheims version, which is based on the Latin Vulgate) extends over her whole life, beginning with her entry into the world. Therefore, Mary was immaculately conceived. Since Mary was called "most blessed" (Lk. 1:42), the blessing of God, which rested upon her, is parallel to the blessing of God, which rests upon Christ in His humanity. The parallelism suggests Mary, like Jesus, was free from all sin from the beginning of her existence. A few isolated references to the Immaculate Conception from church history are also cited (Geisler and McKenzie, pp. 305-306).

Sinlessness of Mary Roman Catholicism not only teaches that Mary was conceived without original sin, but it also teaches she was sinless throughout her entire life. The Council of Trent said, "lf anyone saith, that a man once justified can sin no more, nor lose grace, and that therefore he that falls and sins was never truly justified; or, on the other hand, that *he is able, during his whole life, to avoid all sins*, even those that are venial, except by a special privilege from God, as the Church holds in regard of the Blessed Virgin; let him be anathema" (On Justification, Canon XXIII, italics added). For proof of this concept, Catholicism appeals to "full of grace" in Luke 1:28, arguing that personal moral defects are in irreconcilable with the fullness of grace. They also argue that the

Latin Church fathers unanimously taught the doctrine of the sinlessness of Mary (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 309).

Perpetual Virginity Roman Catholicism teaches Mary was a perpetual virgin, that is, she was a virgin before, during, and, after the birth of Christ. Catholicism teaches that Mary was not only a virgin before the birth of Jesus but that Jesus was born in such a way that left Mary a virgin. How this happened is not a matter of Catholic dogma, but the traditional Catholic teaching is that "Mary gave birth in miraculous fashion without opening of the womb and injury to the hymen, and consequently also without pain" (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3.28.2). Catholicism also teaches that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 300).

Catholicism argues that when Mary told the angel, "I know not a man" (Lk. 1:34), she inferred she made a resolution of constant virginity that when Jesus told John to take care of Mary (Jn. 19:26), it presupposes that she had no other children and that the brothers of Jesus (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3; Gal. 1:19) were cousins of Jesus or sons of Joseph by a previous marriage. Catholicism points to tradition. Gregory of Nyssa (371) refers to this doctrine. Jerome (347-420) claimed it was widely believed. The Fifth General Council at Constantinople (553) gave Mary the title of "perpetual virgin" (Geisler and McKenzie, pp. 300-301).

The Bodily Assumption of Mary The Roman Catholic dogma of the Assumption of Mary states that Mary's body was raised from the grave shortly after she died, that her body and soul were reunited, and that she was taken up and enthroned as Queen of Heaven. On November 1, 1950, Pius XII spoke *ex cathedra* to proclaim infallibly that "just as the glorious resurrection of Christ was an essential part, and final evidence of the victory, so the Blessed Virgin's common struggle with her Son was to be concluded with the 'glorification' of her virginal body." This means she was "immune from the corruption of the tomb, and that in the same manner as her Son she would overcome death and be taken away soul and body to the supernatural glory of heaven, where, as Queen, she would shine forth at the right hand of the same Son of hers, the Immortal King of Ages" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 311).

Passages used to support the bodily Assumption of Mary include Matthew 27:52-53 (which shows the "possibility" of the bodily Assumption of Mary), 1 Corinthians 15:23 (Mary is one of the ones who belong to Christ), Luke 1:28 (since she was "full of grace," she remains preserved from the curse of sin as well as from her return to dust), and Revelation 12:1-6 (a woman gave birth to a son who was caught up to heaven, which includes the Transfiguration of the mother).

Mediatorship of Mary According to Catholicism, "Although Christ is the sole mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5) … this does not exclude a secondary mediatorship, subordinate to Christ." Acknowledging that Christ alone is the perfect mediator, Aquinas said, "There is nothing to prevent others in a certain way from being called mediators between God and man." In 1854, the same bull that proclaimed the immaculate conception of Mary said, "Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces by her cooperation in the incarnation and Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces by her intercession in heaven." Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) stated, "Nothing whatever of that immense treasure of all graces, which the Lord brought us… is granted to us save through Mary, so that, just as no one can come to the Father on high, except in the Son, so also in the same

manner, no one can come to Christ except through his Mother" (Pope Leo XIII, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 317).

"When Jesus said to Mary, 'Woman, behold your son,' Catholicism sees John as a representative of the whole human race. It is argued, in him (John), Mary was given as the spiritual mother of the whole of redeemed humanity that she, as her powerful intercessor, would procure for her children in need of help all grace by which they can attain eternal salvation" (Ott, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 318).

The Veneration of Mary The veneration of Mary is based on her role as "Mother of God." Practicing Catholics are familiar with the concept of Mary being the Mother of God because the most popular Catholic prayer ("Hail Mary") ends with the words, "Hail Mary, Mother of God. Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." The point is that in view of her dignity as the Mother of God, she is due special veneration, that is, veneration and honor on a level higher than other creatures, angels, or saints.

Catholics claim the biblical basis for the veneration of Mary is the phrase "full of grace" (Lk. 1:28), and the statements "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb" (Lk. 1:42) and "For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (Lk. 1:48). There is also the claim that from as far back as the fourth century, Mary has been given such titles as "Mother of God," "Queen of heaven," and even "co-redemptress."

Evaluation

The Immaculate Conception The Bible does not teach the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Many Catholic scholars acknowledge that the woman in Genesis 3:15 is Eve, not Mary, but the passage does not teach the Immaculate Conception, even if it is Mary. It would be a "gigantic leap" to go from Mary in Genesis 3:15 to her immaculate conception (Geisler and McKenzie, pp. 306-307). The Catholic translation "full of grace" in Luke 1:28 is "an inaccurate rending based on the Latin Vulgate that is corrected by the modern Catholic Bible (NAB), which translates it simply, 'favored one'" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 310; see "highly favored" in the NKJV and NIV or "favored one" in the NASB and ESV). All believers in Ephesians 1:6 use the same expression. Thus, nothing in Luke 1:28 establishes the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Luke 1:42 should simply be translated "blessed are you among women" (NKJV; NASB; NIV; ESV). The Bible does not make a parallel between the blessing of Mary and the blessing of Christ, and even if it did, that would not prove the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

Since God has not specifically said that Mary conceived without original sin, she comes under the universal statement that all have sinned. She herself acknowledged that God was her Savior (Lk. 1:46-47).

Augustine (d. 430) expressly states that Mary's flesh was "flesh of sin" (Augustine, De Peccatorum Meritis, ii, c, 24), that "Mary, springing from Adam," and that she "died because of sin." In his sermon on Psalm 2, Augustine attributed original sin to Mary. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was opposed by Chrysostom, Eusebius, Ambrose, and Anselm, and most of the great medieval schoolmen, including Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theol.* III, ad 2; Quest 27, Art. 1-5) and Bonaventure, as well as by Pope Gregory the Great and Innocent III (Boettner, p. 160).

Thomas Aquinas' strong opposition to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception became almost a point of honor among the Dominicans. The Franciscans followed philosopher-theologian Duns Scotus, who defended the dogma. The dispute between the Dominicans and the Franciscans became so bitter that Pope Sixtus IV forbade further discussion without deciding the question in favor of either side. Pius IV asked the Council of Trent to make a pronouncement, but they left the matter untouched. Nevertheless, the idea of Mary's sinlessness continued to gain ground. The Jesuit order propagated the idea and it was largely because of their work that it was decreed by Pius IX and officially ratified by the Vatican Council of 1870 (Boettner, p. 161).

Peter Lombard, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas argued that exempting Mary from original sin was inconsistent with the universality of sin and the necessity of redemption for all human beings (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 308).

Sinlessness of Mary As has been pointed out, the Catholic translation of Luke 1:28 ("full of grace") is based on the Latin Vulgate and should be translated "favored." Just because she was favored to be the mother of the Messiah does not prove she was without sin. The fact that she acknowledged that she needed a Savior (Lk. 1:46) demonstrates that she was a sinner. Moreover, she presented an offering required by the Mosaic Law (Lk. 2:22-24). The Mosaic Law required an offering of a lamb and a pigeon, but it also stipulated that "if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons; one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean" (Lev. 12:8).

Catholicism says the Latin Fathers taught the sinlessness of Mary, but Ott, a Catholic scholar, admits that many "Greek fathers (Origen, St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Alexander) taught that Mary suffered from venal personal faults, such as ambition and vanity, doubt about the message of the angel, and lack of faith under the cross" (Ott, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 310).

Perpetual Virginity The verses Catholicism uses for this doctrine do not prove the perpetual virginity of Mary. When Mary told the angel, "I know not a man" (Lk. 1:34), she meant *up until that time*. There is nothing in her statement to indicate she had resolved to remain a virgin. The statement that Jesus told John to take care of Mary (Jn. 19:26) does not prove that she did not have other children; it simply means that Jesus told John to take care of Mary for whatever reason!

The Bible indicates Jesus had a supernatural conception (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:18), but He had a normal birth. It says Mary "brought forth" (Lk. 2:7) Jesus. He is said to be "born of a woman" (Gal. 4: 4). These words describe a natural birth. The Bible never uses any words that would be used to describe a miracle when speaking of the birth of Jesus.

The Bible indicates that after Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary had a normal marital relationship. It says Joseph "did not know her (Mary) *till* she had brought forth her firstborn Son and he called His name Jesus (Mt 1:25, italics added), clearly indicating ("till") that after the birth of Jesus, he did. Luke says, "And she (Mary) brought forth her *firstborn* Son" (Jesus), implying that she had other children (Lk. 2:7, italics added). Roman Catholicism claims that Luke 2:7 means "only-born," not "firstborn," but the Greek word "firstborn" means "firstborn," not "only-born." He would have used another word if Luke wished to say that Mary did not have other children. Moreover, since Mary's childbearing years had passed when Luke wrote, he would not have said this unless she had other children. Matthew 13:54-56 speaks of "the brothers of the Lord" and

Mark 6:3 says He had sisters, indicating that after the birth of Jesus, Mary had other children (see also Jn. 7:5). Roman Catholicism claims that Matthew is referring to the cousins of Jesus, not the brothers of Jesus, but there is another word for cousin in Greek (Col. 4:10). Nor could there have been children of Joseph from a previous marriage, because if there were, Joseph's oldest son would have been the heir to David's throne. Jesus was the heir to the Davidic throne (Matthew 1:1).

As for tradition, Tertullian (d. 222) held that after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary lived a normal marital life (Boettner, p. 136). He and others were opposed to the concept of the perpetual virginity of Mary (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 303). The *Protoevangelium of James*, which was probably written at the end of the second century, says Mary took a vow of celibacy. It does not directly state the perpetual virginity of Mary. That is assumed based on the vow she should have made. Although the Christian community did not accept the *Protoevangelium* as authoritative, the details in the stories found their way into Christian teaching.

The Bodily Assumption of Mary The biblical passages Catholicism uses to support the bodily Assumption of Mary are not even remotely related to her bodily assumption into heaven. The resurrection described in Matthew 27:52-53 does not include Mary. She was still living at the time! Furthermore, possibility does not prove actuality. The expression "full of grace" in Luke 1:28 has absolutely nothing to do with a bodily assumption into heaven. In Revelation 12:1-6, Christ is taken into heaven, which has nothing to do with Mary being taken into heaven. The Catholic scholar Ott admits that concerning the doctrine of the bodily assumption of Mary, "direct and expressive scriptural proofs are not to be had" (Ott, cited by Geisler and McKenzie, p. 313). In fact, the amazing thing about the doctrine of the bodily Assumption of Mary is that there is not so much as a scintilla of scriptural proof for it.

The early church fathers knew nothing of such a notion as the bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven. "One marvels that such unscriptural, unhistorical, and senseless teaching could be embraced by any people and treated as if it were unchangeable Scripture truth. All that the Roman Church pretends to have from an early date supporting this doctrine is an apocalyptic legend, contained in a book, *In Glorian Martyrum* written by Gregory of Tours, southern France, in the sixth century. On the face of it, it is a mere fairy tale…. As Edward J. Tanis appropriately remarks, 'There is no more evidence of the truth of this legend than for the ghost stories told by our grandfathers'" (Boettner, p. 163).

"The general attitude of modern writers is exhibited in the following sentences (from Wilhelm and Scannel, *Manual of Catholic Theology*, II, 220, quoted by Mayor, *Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible*, II, 288, note): 'Mary's corporeal assumption into heaven is so thoroughly implied in the notion of her personality as given by Bible and dogma, that the church, can dispense with strict historical evidence of the fact'" (ISBE, e-sword).

Mediatorship of Mary When it comes to the mediatorship of Mary, the Roman authority Ott concedes, "Express scriptural proofs are lacking" and admits that Catholic theologians seek a "mystical" interpretation of John 19:26, which is not a legitimate interpretation. Mary is not a mediator because there is only one mediator! The Bible is emphatic about that: "For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). If there is *only* one, there cannot be two.

The Veneration of Mary Geisler and McKenzie put their finger on the fatal flaw of the Catholic doctrine of the Veneration of Mary when they say: "There is absolutely nothing in the biblical text that supports the conclusions Catholics draw from them, namely, that Mary should be venerated above all creatures, but below God. The texts say nothing about veneration or prayers to Mary; they simply call her 'blessed' of God, which she truly was. Contrary to Catholic practice, however, Mary was not blessed *above* all women, but simply was the most blessed *among* all women. Even the Catholic *New American Bible* reads: 'Most blessed are you *among* women' (Luke 1:42, emphasis added)" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 321, italics theirs).

Geisler and McKenzie go on to state, "There is not a single instance in the New Testament where veneration is given to Mary…. Further, Scripture forbids us to bow down in veneration for any creature, even angels (Col. 2:18; Rev. 22:8-9)…. To call Mary 'Queen of Heaven,' knowing that this very phrase comes from an old pagan idolatrous cult condemned in the Bible (Jer. 7:18), only invites the charge of Mariolatry. And Mariolatry is idolatry" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 322).

It is dangerous to call Mary the "Mother of God" because it can be so misleading, but from a historical point of view, it was accurate at the time it was first used. In the fifth century, a controversy arose over whether or not Mary was the Mother of Christ or the Mother of God. Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, called Mary "the Mother of Christ." Cyril of Alexander preferred "Mother of God."

The problem was that Nestorius so distinguished the humanity of Christ and the deity of Christ that he was in danger of teaching that two persons coexisted in the same body. He did not like Mary being called *theotokos* (God-bearer), because it unduly exalted her. He wanted for her to be called *Christotokas* (Christ-bearer), arguing that she was only the mother of the human side of Christ (Cairns, p. 136). To say that same thing another way, Nestorius refused to call Mary "Mother of God," insisting that she should be called "Mother of Christ" or "Mother of Man" since she was only the mother of Christ's humanity, not His deity (Ware, p. 32). All of this made Christ out to be a man in whom the divine and human natures were combined in a mechanical union rather than in an organic union of natures. In other words, Christ was only a perfect man who was morally linked to deity. In 431, the Council of Ephesus deposed Nestorius, condemned Nestorianism, and proclaimed Mary the Mother of God. In other words, the Council of Ephesus rejected the idea that the deity and humanity of Christ existed in two distinct natures and were not united in a single personality.

So, in reaction to a false idea concerning the person of Christ, Mary was called the Mother of God, meaning she was the mother of the God/man Jesus, not just the human side of Jesus. Their point was right, but their choice of language was misleading.

"The purpose of the expression (the Mother of God) as used by the Council of Ephesus was not to glorify Mary, but emphasized the deity of Christ over against those who denied His equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit" (Boettner, p. 134). This was a controversy over who Jesus is, not who Mary was. The Council of Ephesus decided that Mary was "the Mother of God," using a Greek term which means "God-bearing one," not precisely "Mother of God" (Geisler and McKenzie, p. 299 fn.).

It would not only be unscriptural but illogical and impossible for Mary to literally be the mother of God because God is eternal, without a beginning, and, therefore, He does not have a mother. If Mary is the mother of God, "Joseph is God's stepfather, James,

Joseph, Simon, and Judas were God's brothers, Elizabeth was God's aunt, John the Baptist was God's cousin, Heli was God's grandfather, and Adam was God's 59th great-grandchild" (Boettner, p. 135). "As His human nature had no father, so His divine nature had no mother" (Boettner, p. 135).

Summary: The New Testament does not teach the Immaculate Conception, sinlessness, perpetual virginity, bodily assumption, mediatorship, or the veneration of Mary.

What does the New Testament have to say about Mary? She was an unmarried (but "engaged") virgin who was the mother of Jesus. After Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they came together as man and wife, "she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:18). Gabriel visited Mary (Lk. 1:26-38) and Mary visited Elizabeth (Lk. 1:39-45) and magnified the Lord (Lk. 1:46-56). Mary gave birth to Jesus (Lk. 2:4-7). Mary was present at the wedding of Cana of Galilee (Jn. 2:1-11) and at an episode in the ministry of Jesus (Mt 12:46; Mk. 3:21, 3:31ff.). Mary was present at the crucifixion (Jn. 19:25). Mary was with the disciples in the upper room after the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:14).

What is significant about the New Testament data is that the apostles do not show Mary any special honor. The apostle John took care of her until she died, but he does not mention her in his Gospel, three epistles, or the book of Revelation. Neither James nor Jude, the half-brothers of Jesus, nor Peter nor Paul mention her.

Where did the false teachings concerning Mary originate? "As late as the fourth century, there are no indications of any special veneration of Mary. Such veneration at that time could begin only if one were regarded as a saint, and only the martyrs were counted as saints" (Boettner, p. 133).

Boettner points out that "the Christian church functioned for at least 150 years without idolizing the name of Mary. The legends about her began to appear after that, although for several centuries, the church was far from making a cult of it. But after Constantine's decree making Christianity, the preferred religion the Greek-Roman pagan religions with their male gods and female goddesses exerted an increasingly stronger influence upon the church. Thousands of people who then entered the church brought with them the superstitions and devotions that they had long given to Isis, Ishtar, Diana, Artemis, Aphrodite, and other goddesses, which were then conveniently transferred to Mary. Statues were dedicated to her, as there had been statues dedicated to Isis, Diana, and others, and before them, the people kneeled and prayed as they had been accustomed to do before the statutes of the heathen goddesses" (Boettner, p. 136).

In 610, Pope Boniface IV was the first to suggest the celebration of an All Saints festival. He ordered that the Pantheon, a pagan temple in Rome that had been dedicated to all the gods, be converted into a Christian church and the relics of the saints be placed there. He then dedicated the church to the Virgin Mary and all the martyrs. "Thus the worship of Mary and the saints replaced that of the heathen gods and goddesses, and it was merely a case of one error being substituted for another" (Boettner, p. 137).

Lesson to be learned: Mary is not a mediator, but she is a model. When something happens to you that you do not fully understand, do not react. Do what Mary did: ponder it in your heart (Lk. 2:19) and say, "Let it be to me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38).

ADDITIONS AND PROHIBITIONS

In this series on Roman Catholicism, I have pointed out over and over again that the Roman Catholic Church has added doctrines and practices to Scripture. Boettner says it has added *many* doctrines and practices that are not found in the New Testament (Boettner, p. 22, italics added; see also the list at the end of this chapter). Roman Catholicism argues that tradition is authoritative. Therefore, according to them, it is not wrong to add to the Scripture.

Adding something to the Scripture is not necessarily, in and of itself, wrong. For example, churches add programs such as Sunday school. Some of the Roman Catholic Church's doctrines and practices, however, are not just additions to biblical statements but *expressly contrary* to the Scripture. Some are even *clearly forbidden* in the Scripture. What does Catholicism teach and practice that is forbidden in the Bible? Here are a few examples that have not been mentioned.

Catholic

The word "catholic" (with a lowercase "s") means "universal." If "catholic" in the Roman Catholic Church means that it is universal in that it exists throughout the world, the word "catholic" may be accurate, but that is not what the Roman Catholic Church means when it says it is catholic. This means the Roman Catholic Church is the one universal church on earth. That simply is not true.

The New Testament teaches that all believers are members of the universal spiritual body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), called the church (Eph. 1:22-23; see Boettner, p. 22). Since the Roman Catholic Church does not include all believers, it cannot be the universal church. Roman Catholicism is not biblical catholicism because it does not include all believers.

There has always been a catholic church (small "c") in the sense that all believers are members of the universal body of Christ, the church, but there has never been an organized universal church. In the first several centuries of church history, there were "mainline churches" ("the old Catholic Church"), but there were also churches that broke away from the mainline churches (such as Montanism, ca. 170; the Cathari, ca. 250, the Donatis, ca. 300). Cook says, "Groups had broken with or were expelled from Christian communities almost since the church's beginning. Monophysite churches (not accepting the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon in 451) still exist in Egypt, Ethiopia, Syria, Armenia, and Georgia today" (Cook, p.86).

Roman Catholicism does not include the Orthodox churches. One bishop of an Orthodox Church says the East has objected to the claim of the bishop of Rome of universal authority for centuries. He quotes the twelfth-century Archbishop of Nicomedia, Nicetas, noting that this was the way the Orthodox had felt for centuries. Nicetas wrote: "My dearest brother: we do not deny to the Roman Church the primacy amongst the five sister Patriarchates; and we recognize her right to the most honorable seat at an Ecumenical Council. But she has separated herself from us by her own deeds,

when through pride she assumed a monarchy which does not belong to her office.... How shall we accept decrees from her that have been issued without consulting us and even without our knowledge? If the Roman Pontiff, seated on the lofty throne of his glory, wishes to thunder at us and, so to speak, hurl his mandates at us from on high, and if he wishes to judge us and even to rule us and our churches, not by taking counsel with us but at his own arbitrary pleasure, what kind of brotherhood, or even what kind of parenthood can this be? We should be the slaves, not the sons, of such a church, and the Roman See would not be the pious mother of sons but a hard and imperious mistress of slaves" (Nicetas, cited by Ware, p. 58). "The authority of the bishop of Rome never has been acknowledged by the Eastern churches" (Boettner, p. 102).

In the 12th century, the Waldensians (a group in France and Northern Italy) broke with Rome and in the 15th century, the Kingdom of Bohemia seceded from papal jurisdiction (Cook, p. 86). Then, there are all the Protestant churches that are not part of Roman Catholicism. "Many forms of non-Roman Christianity developed in the 16th and 17th century, from the Church of England to the Amish" (Cook, p. 86).

"There remained, however, some groups, small in numbers, usually in isolated places, and later primarily in the mountains of northern Italy, who maintained the Christian faith in reasonable purity. There were also individuals throughout the church in all ages, usually more or less independent of the church at large, who continue to hold quite correct ideas concerning the Christian faith" (Boettner, p. 11).

The Roman Catholic Church is not now, nor has it ever been, catholic in the universal sense of the term. Roman Catholicism is not true catholicism. "The Roman church is, after all, a local church, with headquarters in Rome, Italy, and is limited to those who acknowledge the authority of the pope" (Boettner, p. 22).

"Strictly speaking, 'Roman Catholic' is a contradiction of terms. Catholic means universal; Roman means particular. The Protestants and not the Romanists believe in the catholic church. Protestants believe the church is universal or catholic; Rome cannot discover it beyond her own communion" (John H. Gerstner, *The Gospel According to Rome*, cited by Boettner, p. 22).

Cook, a practicing Roman Catholic and professor of history at the State University of New York at Geneseo, concludes his lectures on the history of Roman Catholicism with a series of questions. He points out that Catholics recite the Nicene Creed every Sunday at Mass, which includes the words, "We believe in one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic church." Then he asks if the Catholic Church is one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic. His answers are: 1) The obvious answer is the church is not one; it is divided and divisive. 2) "There is a great deal of Catholic history that demands that the church repent." 3) "The word 'catholic' (with a small c) means 'universal' and is not a proper name of a form of Christianity." 4) "If 'apostolic' means that the apostles would recognize the Roman Church as theirs, the answer would have to be no" (Cook, pp. 136-138). In each case, Cook hedges his negative answer, but the reality is the apostles would not recognize Roman Catholicism as biblical Christianity because it is not.

Prayers

Hail Mary Part of the "Hail Mary" prayer was used in 1508, but it was not completed until 50 years later. It was finally approved for general use by Sixtus V at the end of the

16th century (Boettner, p. 275). As we have already seen, there is nothing in Scripture to support the veneration of Mary.

Rosary The rosary is a string of beads used to count prayers. One explanation for the name "rosary" is that originally, the beads were made of rosewood. There are longer and shorter versions of the string of beads. The longer form consists of 15 beads for reciting the Lord's Prayer, addressed to God the Father, 15 Gloria's, and 150 Hail Mary's addressed to the Virgin Mary. That means there are ten times more prayers addressed to Mary as to God the Father! The shorter and more common form is a string of beads divided into five sections, each consisting of one large bead and ten smaller ones.

The rosary was invented by Peter the Hermit in 1090, but it did not come into general use until after the beginning of the 13th century. It was not given official sanction until after the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century (Boettner, pp. 284-285).

The rosary is a form of prayer that Christ expressly forbids. He said when we pray, we are not to use vain repetitions as the Gentiles do (Mt. 6:7-8). Pointing out that mechanical devices similar to the rosary have been used to count prayers for centuries among Buddhists and Muslims, Boettner concludes that the rosary is "simply another device borrowed from paganism" (Boettner, pp. 285-286).

Indulgences

An indulgence is an official shortening or canceling of suffering for sin in purgatory. According to Roman Catholicism, this is possible because "the church has a vast treasury of unused merits which has been accumulated primarily through the suffering of Christ, but also because of the good works of Mary and the saints who have done works more perfect than God's law requires for their salvation" (Boettner, p. 263). Only the pope can grant an indulgence that cancels all suffering. Bishops can grant up to 40 days and parish priests can grant shorter periods. "A single viewing of the 5005 relics of Frederick of Saxony was supposed to reduce one's time in purgatory by nearly two million years" (Cairns, p. 281).

The concept of indulgences is not in the Scripture and the practice of indulgences was unknown in the early church. It arose in the Middle Ages in connection with penitence. At first, indulgences only applied to the living. In 495, Gelasius, the Bishop of Rome, said, "They demand that we should also bestow forgiveness of sins upon the dead. Plainly this is impossible for us, for it is said, 'What things soever you bind upon the earth.' Those who are no longer upon the earth he has reserved for His own judgment." In 1096, at the Synod of Claremont, Urban II promised an indulgence covering all sins for all who would participate in the Crusades. Clement VI (1342-52) proclaimed that the church has control of a treasury of merit and can give one the excess merits of another. In 1477, Sixtus IV decreed that indulgences were available for souls in purgatory. Since then, indulgences have been considered helpful to the dead as well as the living. When Leo X (1513- 21) needed money to complete St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, he offered indulgences to cover all sins for sale and sent representatives to every nation, promising forgiveness to the living and release from the fire of purgatory for the dead. This practice provoked Martin Luther to post his 95 Theses on the cathedral door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, the date marking the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Papal

indulgences are not officially sold today, but when they are granted, it is understood that those who come seeking them do not come empty-handed (Boettner, pp. 264-266).

The concept of indulgences is contrary to Scripture because it assumes that the state of the dead has not yet been fixed and, beyond that, it can be improved.

Fasting

Fasting A simple, practical illustration of the unscriptural practices of the Roman Catholic Church is the fact that they require abstinence from food before people partake of communion (Boettner, p. 170). However, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper in the midst of a meal (Mt. 26:26). The New Testament Christians practiced observing the Lord's Supper during a meal (1 Cor. 11:33-34); they called it a "love feast" (Jude 12).

Celibacy

The concept of celibacy is that priests, monks, and nuns are to abstain from marriage. Celibacy is different than chastity. Chastity is abstinence from *sexual immorality*; celibacy is abstinence from *marriage*. According to Canon Law, if a vow of chastity is broken (there is sexual immorality), forgiveness is easily obtained by confession to a fellow priest, but if the vow of celibacy is broken (there is marriage), absolution can only be obtained from the pope, who gives it with accompanying severe penalties, one of which is for the priest to forsake his wife (Boettner, p. 298).

Cyprian (ca. 200-258) was converted in 246 (Kuiper, p. 21). After his conversion, he dedicated himself to celibacy, poverty, and the Bible with such distinction that within two years, he was made bishop of Carthage (Eerdmans', p. 83). Cyprian thought that those who chose the path of virginity were the most pious and holy Christians (Harl, FOP, p. 175).

This first council to call for clerical celibacy was the Spanish Council of Elvira in 305. It enacted decrees against the marriage of the clergy, but those decrees were limited and no serious effort was made to enforce them (Boettner, p. 307).

In his book *A History of the Church in England*, Moorman says that in the tenth century, the marriage of the priests in the north of England was considered "perfectly normal and legal" and "a good many of them" were married. By 963, however, it became common, at least in the south, for men to separate from their wives at ordination and make a vow of celibacy. Not all of them did. By 1009, it was necessary to admonish the clergy not to marry, although some had two wives or more. The effort to get the men in the ministry to be celibate was "not meeting with an unqualified success" (Moorman, pp. 50-51). Church councils held in 1072, 1075, and in 1076 in England decided that in the future, no married man would be ordained, but all priests who were married were allowed to keep their wives (Moorman, p. 62).

As archbishop, Anselm (1033-1109) enforced clerical celibacy. In 1079, Gregory VII decreed the celibacy of the priests and he made it reasonably effective. In 1123, the First Lateran Council declared that marriage of all in sacred orders was invalid. Celibacy for the priests was not mandated under canon law until the second Lateran Council in 1139. In 1545, the Council of Trent made strict pronouncements concerning the celibacy of the

clergy. According to those decrees, a priest who married would be disbarred from spiritual functions and excommunicated (Boettner, pp. 307-308).

Ministerial celibacy has proven to be a failure over and over again. "The immorality of the priest was the special target of the reformers who appeared from time to time, such as William of Occam, John Wycliffe, John Hus, Savonarola, and especially Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and Knox" (Boettner, p. 308). Down through the ages of church history, there have been repeated charges of immorality in the monasteries and convents and between priests and their parishioners. "There is abundant evidence that in the predominantly Roman Catholic countries, particularly during the Middle Ages, the monasteries and convents sometimes became cesspools of iniquity" (Boettner, p. 313).

The Emperor Charlemagne (ca. 742-814) issued an edict that read, "We have been informed to our great horror that many monks are addicted to debauchery and all sorts of viral abominations, even to unnatural sins. We forbid all such practices and command the monks to cease wandering over the country" (Boettner, p. 314).

John Calvin (1509-1564) wrote, "In one instance, they are too rigorous and inflexible, that is, in not permitting priests to marry. With what impunity fornication rages among them, it is unnecessary to remark. Emboldened by their polluted celibacy, they had become hard to every crime" (Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, 12, 33).

In 1536, Henry VIII of England appointed a commission to inspect all monasteries and nunneries. The cruelty and corruption were so terrible that people all over England demanded that all such places be destroyed (Boettner, p. 315).

In the New Testament, celibacy is permitted (Mt. 19:12) and, under some circumstances, even recommended (1 Cor. 7:7-8, 25-35), but it was not required for ministry. Peter was married (1 Cor. 9:5). In fact, Peter was married (Mt. 8:14-15) when Jesus told him the church would be built upon a rock (Mt. 16:18), which Roman Catholicism says constituted his appointment as pope! When Paul mentioned the fact that Peter was married (1 Cor. 9:5), he had been married for at least 25 years. He was married during the ministry of Christ (Mt. 8:14-15, about AD 28), and 1 Corinthians was written and 57 AD. Elders (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:5-6) and deacons (1 Tim. 3:12) were married and had children (1 Tim. 3:4, 12).

Paul calls the idea of forbidding marriage a doctrine of demons (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

Summary: Roman Catholicism has added doctrines and practices to the Bible that are clearly forbidden in the Bible.

The most distinctive features of Catholicism were unknown to Apostolic Christianity (Boettner, p. 7). The church began with a simple organization of the elders and deacons and two ordinances: believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. Catholicism replaced the simple organization of the elders and deacons with an elaborate hierarchy at the top of which is a pope. It changed the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper into sacraments and added five more. That is only the beginning. Many distinctive doctrines of Roman Catholicism are not biblical. Peter had a wife (Lk. 5; 1 Cor. 9:5), was not infallible (Gal. 2:9-14) and said God can forgive sin, not him (Acts 8:22). Jesus said we should call no man father (Mt. 23:9). Christ died once for all (Heb. 9:24-26). The Old Testament forbids drinking blood (Deut. 12:16; see also Acts 15:29). Mary needed a Savior (Lk. 1:46-47) and had children (Mt. 12:46ff.).

Those things in Roman Catholicism that go beyond what the Bible teaches are a violation of the command not to add anything to the Scripture (Rev. 22:18-19).

Catholicism developed slowly, mainly during the Middle Ages. “It is clear that the Roman Catholic Church, with its hierarchical form of government, was not the New Testament church, for the institution of the papacy, with its sacrificing priesthood, did not develop until some five centuries later” (Boettner, p. 169). Here is a summary of the dates of the development of some of the Roman Catholic Church practices:

1. The Mass is a daily celebration	394
2. The beginning of the exaltation of Mary (Council of Ephesus)	431
3. Prayers to Mary, dead saints, and angels	600
4. The Pope as universal bishop (Boniface III)	607
5. Celibacy of the priest (Gregory VII)	1079
6. Transubstantiation (Innocent III)	1215
7. Confession to a priest instead of God (Innocent III)	1215
8. Purgatory was proclaimed as a dogma (Council of Florence)	1439
9. The doctrine of seven sacraments affirmed (Council of Florence)	1439
10. Tradition was given equal authority with the Bible (Council of Trent)	1545
11. Apocryphal books added to the Bible (Council of Trent)	1546
12. The Immaculate Conception of Mary (Pius IX)	1854
13. The infallibility of the Pope (First Vatican Council)	1870
14. The Assumption of Mary (Pius XII)	1950
15. Mary proclaimed mother of the church (Paul VI)	1965

The distinctive features of the present-day Roman Catholic Church were largely fixed by the Council of Trent (1545-63) “with its more than 100 anathemas or curses pronounced against all who then or in the future would dare to differ with its decisions” (Boettner, p. 9).

Roman Catholicism has adopted a number of doctrines based on tradition, such as the celibacy of the priest (begun during the reign of Gregory I, 590-604), the Rosary (1090), the adoration of Mary (1215), purgatory (Council of Florence, 1439), the apocryphal books as Scripture (Council of Trent, 1546), Immaculate Conception of Mary (1854), papal infallibility (1870), and the assumption of Mary (1950).

Roman Catholicism has been heavily influenced by paganism. Some elements of Roman Catholicism were taken from the Roman government. Terms such as “vicar” and “diocese” come out of the administrative reforms of the Roman emperor Diocletian (Harl, FOP, p. 131). The title *Pontifexf Maximus* was also taken from paganism and applied to the bishop of Rome. “Some scholars say as much is 75 percent of the Roman ritual is of pagan origin. In his book, *The Development of the Christian Religion*, John Henry Newman, later a cardinal, admits that ‘temples, incense, oil lamps, votive offerings, holy water, holy days and seasons of devotion, processions, blessings of fields, sacerdotal investments, the tonsure (of priests, monks and nuns), images, etc., are all of pagan origin” (Newman, p. 359, cited by Boettner, p. 10; see Mk. 7:7, 13).

Forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from food are demons' doctrines (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

If you are a Catholic who relies on the teachings of Catholicism, you need to trust Jesus Christ and Him alone for the gift of eternal life. If you are a Catholic who has trusted Christ, you need to know that you are not to be unequally yoked with the Roman Catholic Church. You need to come out from among them (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

The ultimate issue is that we need to get back to the Bible and rely on it rather than tradition and man-made additions and prohibitions.

Once upon a time, a long time ago, a man was an extraordinarily talented cook. Using his own recipes, he prepared exceptionally delicious meals. He was extremely successful. He put his unique recipes in a cookbook and instructed his three sons that when he died, they were to not only keep the restaurant business going, but they were also to establish restaurant franchises all over the world. He insisted that they follow the recipes in the cookbook. The menu in each restaurant was to have only items that were in the cookbook and no other items could be added to the cookbook.

When he died, his sons did exactly what their father told them to do. One son set up a franchise in Jerusalem, one in Rome, and one in New York. Each son also set up other locations and only served what was in the cookbook.

When each son died, someone else took over the business. Over time, each franchise started other franchises so that franchises spread all over the world. The Jerusalem franchise had branches primarily in Israel, but they also had franchises in the Middle East and other places in the world. The Roman franchise had branches in Europe and they too had franchises in other places in the world. The same was true for the franchise in New York.

It is sad to say that, as time went by, the franchises did not always stick to the original cookbook. Sometimes, they left items off the menu and, sometimes, they added new things to the menu. The franchise that was originally established in Rome went so far as to create a second cookbook.

Then, several hundred years later, the head of the franchise in Rome announced that he had authority over all the franchises in the world because the son who started the Roman franchise had been given that authority by his father, which, of course, was not true. The head of the Roman franchise went so far as to claim that when he spoke, it was as if the original owner himself were speaking and people in other franchises should submit to his authority. All the franchises started by the franchise in Rome agreed, but other franchises refused to submit to his authority. In fact, one group decided that the real issue was to get back to the original cookbook and do only what it said.

APPENDIX

THE BAD POPES
E. R. Chamberlain

E. R. Chamberlain was born in Kingston, Jamaica, moved to England, served with the Royal Navy, worked on the public library staff (government historical section), was an editor at a publishing house, and became a professional writer. In 1969, he wrote *The Bad Popes* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993 edition), a well-documented history of seven popes. His primary sources were the work of the Protestant historian Ferdinand Gregorovius, "whose history of medieval Rome is, in effect, a continuation of Gibbon" and the papal histories of two Catholics, Horace K. Mann and Ludwig Pastor. "Pope Leo XIII opened the Vatican archives to the great Catholic historian, Ludwig Pastor, with a single injunction: tell the truth" (Chamberlain, p. 290). The following material is taken from Chamberlain's book, with a few other citations.

In 328, Emperor Constantine transferred the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople. When the capital was moved, the Bishop of Rome enjoyed more freedom than the Patriarch of Constantinople, but in the eyes of the Emperor, both were subordinate to him in spiritual as well as temporal matters (Chamberlain, pp. 10-11).

There were no major clashes between the emperor in Constantinople and the Bishop of Rome concerning religious matters until about 726. In 726, the emperor in Constantinople, Leo III, issued an edict ordering the breaking of all religious images throughout the empire in the West as well as in the East. The Bishop of Rome, Gregory II, defied the edict. He argued that they did not worship images but honored them as memorials. It was not worship; it was reverence (Chamberlain, pp. 11-12).

The Donation of Constantine

The "Donation of Constantine" is a document that was probably written during the eighth century. In the 15th century, it was proven to be fabricated. Here is Chamberlain's discussion of it.

The Document Christophorous, a papal official, forged a document which nearly transferred temporal power from the emperor to the pope. According to the legend, Constantine was persecuting Christians when he was afflicted with leprosy. Peter and Paul appeared to him and told him that Sylvester, the Bishop of Rome, could cure him. Sylvester went to the Lateran Palace, where Constantine resided, and told him that baptism would cleanse him of his leprosy. In gratitude for his baptism, cleansing him of his leprosy, he ordered that Christ should be worshiped throughout the Empire, that tithes should be collected for the building of churches, and that the Lateran Palace be given to Sylvester and his successors for all time.

Some of the information in the document is correct. Constantine did give the Lateran Palace to the Bishop of Rome. But it also contains fabrications. "The Bishop of Rome

was entitled ‘pope’ nearly two hundred years before the title was limited to his office” (Chamberlain, p. 14).

The document declared that the pope was superior to the emperor. In fact, it made it appear that Sylvester was actually offered the imperial crown but declined it as unfit for the holder of the spiritual office. The document stated, however, “Wherefore, that the pontifical crown may be maintained in dignity, we hand over and relinquish our palaces, the city of Rome, and all the provinces, places, and cities of Italy and the regions of the West to the most blessed pontiff and Universal Pope, Sylvester.” Constantine then departed to the new Rome (Constantinople), “as it was not fitting that an earthly emperor should share this seat of the successor of Peter” (Chamberlain, p. 15).

The Papal States In the middle of the eighth century, Rome was threatened by the Lombards, the most powerful of the barbarian invaders. Pope Stephen III (752-57) sought the help of Pepin, King of the Franks. In the middle of the winter of 755, he crossed the Alps. He did not ask for just protection; he asked for land, the land the Lombards had taken, which was the land that the *Donation of Constantine* said Constantine gave to the pope. Pepin accepted the *Donation of Constantine* at face value, waged two campaigns against the Lombards, and made a treaty that gave the pope the territory he requested. As a result, the Papal States were created, making the pope a feudal lord. “The chair of St. Peter became a prize of the greatest families of Rome and it in its neighborhood, created a more insidious danger of the papacy than that which the Byzantines and the Lombards had threatened … Now that the Bishop of Rome held not only the keys of heaven but also the keys of more than a score of cities, each with its revenues, the attraction of the office was considerably magnified” (Chamberlain, p. 17).

The Papal Office In 767, when the pope died, recognizing the opportunity, an insignificant lord proposed his brother be the successor. His brother was an unqualified layman! Nevertheless, he was ordained cleric, sub-deacon, deacon, and priest and then consecrated as a bishop and pope on the same day (Chamberlain, p. 17). Rival factions produced two more popes. The first had his eyes gouged out and was left for dead; the second one was murdered (Chamberlain, p. 18).

The Crown Pepin’s act gave temporal wealth to the spiritual power and established the precedent that the German monarch was the protector of the papacy. Years later, Pope Leo III appealed to Pepin’s son Charlemagne to put down a rebellion. In return, on Christmas day, 800, Leo III crowned Charlemagne emperor of the West. The Emperor and the Pope were seen as twin vicars of Christ, one with a spiritual sword and the other with a temporal sword, a holy empire. There was, of course, an emperor in Constantinople. At any rate, the creation of an emperor in Europe contributed to the rift between the East and the West (Chamberlain, p. 18).

Stephen VII (896-97)

The Battles Rival factions contended for the papacy. Pope Stephen VII (896-97; a.k.a. Stephen VI), a member of one faction, despised his predecessor, Pope Formosus, a member of another faction (Noble says Steven hated Formosus “with a passion;” Noble, p. 28). In 896, Stephen had the corpse of Formosus removed from the tomb where it had rested for eight months, dressed it in a papal robe, and propped it up in the throne he had occupied in life. Stephen proceeded to scream insults at the corpse. The Synod condemned the dead Formosus, stripped his corpse, and hacked off the three fingers of benediction on the right hand. It was then dragged through the palace and hurled to a

yelling mob in the streets, who dragged it to the Tiber River and threw it in. A group of fishermen retrieved it and gave it a decent burial. The corpse of Formosus was degraded to degrade his faction and render it powerless (Chamberlain, p. 20).

In the early autumn, Stephen was seized and strangled (Noble says Stephen was eventually arrested by Formosus's supporters, jailed, and strangled; Noble, p. 27). Stephen's faction elected Cardinal Sergius as pope, and the other faction elected their candidate. Sergius and most of his followers were chased out of the city, but that did not end the battle for the papacy. Over the next 12 months, there were four popes, some occupying the office for only a few weeks, or even days, before being hurled into their graves. Seven popes and an anti-pope appeared in a little over six years. After seven years in exile, Sergius reappeared and returned to the papacy. Six centuries later, Cardinal Baronius, the first of the great papal historians, concluded that such a monster had been unleashed against the church to show the supernatural strength of its foundation (Chamberlain, p. 21).

"Pope Joan" (855-58)

The legend of Pope Joan first appeared in literary form in the 13th century. It was produced as anti-papal propaganda. The story was told in various forms, but in the main version, Joan was a beautiful woman who began her career in a monastery disguised as a monk. Ultimately, she went to Rome and was elected pope. Her secret was revealed when she gave birth to a child during a procession. The length of her pontificate was two years, one month, and 14 days, from approximately 855 to 858 (Chamberlain, p. 25).

Sergius (904-11)

Theophylact was a senator of Rome, the civic head of the city. His daughter, Marozia, gained the title of senatrix (lord of the city) and ruled the city between 926 and 932, providing a model for the far less colorful "Pope Joan" (Chamberlain, p. 26). The scandal is that Marozia was Pope Sergius' (904-11) mistress and that shortly after puberty, she had a son by him! The son became Pope John XI (931-35). He was not much more than twenty years old when he became pope (Chamberlain, p. 25; see also University of Notre Dame professor Noble, p. 27).

John X (914-28)

Theodora was the wife of Theophylact and the mother of Marozia. According to Liutprand (ca. 922-972), who was a historian and Bishop of Cremona, Theodora fell in love with John, a cleric in Ravenna who frequently came to Rome on official business. In 914, Bishop John of Ravenna, Theodora's protégé (and lover), became Pope John X (914-28; Chamberlain, pp. 28-29).

John XII (955-63)

In 955, Octavian, a Roman prince, became pope, combining one person's political and spiritual offices. Octavian took the papal name of John XII (955-63), establishing the custom of a papal name. "It was an expression of his dual role, for he employed the name Octavian in his capacity of prince and the name John in that of pope" (Chamberlain, p. 42; Noble says Octavian was only the second pope to change his name and, with two exceptions, all later popes followed suit, Noble, p. 29).

Pope John XII was credited with turning "the Lateran (palace) into a brothel; that he and his gang violated female pilgrims in the very basilica of St. Peter; that the offerings of the humble laid upon the altar were snatched up as casual booty. He was inordinately fond of gambling, at which he involved the names of those discredited gods now universally regarded as demons. His sexual hunger was insatiable—a minor crime in Roman eyes" (Chamberlain, pp. 43-44).

Otto of Saxony became a king in Germany, but remembering Charlemagne's coronation, he wanted the Bishop of Rome (John XII) to crown him lord of Europe (Chamberlain, p. 46). On February 2, 961, he was crowned by John XII and the Holy Roman Empire came into being, tying Italy and Germany together in a marriage that would continue for 900 years (Chamberlain, p. 49). After John XII crowned Otto, he also offered the crown to Adalbert, the Bishop of Prague! Otto marched into Rome, and John fled.

The source for all of this, and what comes next, is from *Deeds of Otto* by Liudprand (Liudprand's other works are the source of our knowledge of the careers of John, his father Alberic, and his grandmother Marozia). The broad outline of what he writes is substantiated by other authors (Chamberlain, p. 53).

Three days after Otto entered Rome, he summoned a synod to consider the situation. The charges brought against John XII were such things as he had been paid to ordain bishops and he had "copulated with Rainer's widow, with Stephana, his father's concubine, with the widow Anna and with his own niece" (Liudprand, *Deeds of Otto*, chapter X, cited by Chamberlain, p. 56). Boettner says, "Some of the sins enumerated in the charge were murder, perjury, sacrilege, adultery, and incest" (Boettner, pp. 250-251). The synod decided that John should be summoned to defend himself.

John responded, "To all bishops—We hear that you wish to make another Pope. If you do I excommunicate you by Almighty God and you have no power to ordain no one (sic) or celebrate mass" (Liudprand, *Deeds of Otto,* chapter Xiii, cited by Chamberlain, p. 57). The synod replied that unless John presented himself in Rome, he, not the bishops, would be excommunicated. John did not come. So, the synod formally deposed John XII and elected Leo VIII as pope.

As soon as Otto left Rome, John returned to Rome, where he summoned a synod. He then punished those who had made specific accusations against him. "One had his tongue torn out, his nose and fingers cut off; another was scourged; the hand of a third was hacked off. Loyalty being thereby reinforced with terror, John sent about overturning the decrees of the synod. Louis VIII, who had fled to Otto as soon as John returned, was excommunicated" (Chamberlain, p. 60). As Otto was still marching to Rome, news came that a political assassin had violently killed John.

Benedict IX (1032-46)

In 1032, Theophylactus of Tusculum was elected Pope at fourteen (Chamberlain, p. 66; the *Catholic Encyclopedia* says he was 20). He is better known as Benedict IX. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says that Benedict IX was "a disgrace to the chair of Peter."

Chamberlain says that under Benedict IX, "It seemed that John XII was again in the chair (of Peter), with rape and murder again commonplace, the remaining wealth of the papacy again squandered in brothel and banquet room (sic) and the upkeep of private armies" (Chamberlain, p. 70).

Once when Benedict was absent from Rome, another baron-prelate appeared as pope: John, Bishop of Sabine Hills. He took the name Sylvester, ruled for three months and fled when Benedict was returning to the city (Chamberlain, p. 70).

Benedict IX wanted to get married, but the girl's father insisted that Benedict could have his daughter only if he resigned from the papacy. Benedict was prepared to do that, but he was not to prepared to forego the loss of income. To solve the problem, he sold the papacy itself to his grandfather Giovanni Gratiano for 1500 pounds of gold (Chamberlain, p. 71). Gratiano took the papal name Gregory IX.

"Three months after Giovanni Gratiano had purchased the papacy, three popes ruled in Rome, each powerless to eject the others, each claiming the unique possession of the keys of heaven" (Chamberlain, p. 73).

Benedict IX is the only man to have been pope on more than one occasion and the only man ever to have sold the papacy.

Boniface VIII (1294-1303)

Celestine When the reigning pope died in 1292, the Cardinals had a difficult time electing a new pope. The conclave was divided between two Roman families. Consequently, they could not get a two-thirds majority. Finally, after 18 months, they elected Peter of Morone, a hermit well into his 80s. He took the papal name of Celestine. Just 15 weeks after his coronation, under the guidance of Benedict Gaetani, Celestine abdicated the papacy. Ten days later, the conclave met and, within 24 hours, elected Benedict Gaetani, who took the name Boniface VIII (Chamberlain, pp. 77-86).

Fearful that Celestine could attract a rebellious following, Boniface ordered that the old man be arrested and brought to Rome by force if necessary. When Celestine was warned, he fled into the mountains in the dead of winter. A monk who remained behind to break the news to Boniface's soldiers paid for his devotion to his life (Chamberlain, p. 89). Celestine was caught, taken to Rome, and brought before Boniface for judgment to be passed. Celestine told Boniface, "You have entered like a fox. You will reign like a lion and you will die like a dog." Celestine was put in prison. Boniface's first act as pope was to condemn all that Celestine had done and cancel the appointments Celestine had made (Chamberlain, pp. 92-93).

Nepotism Boniface exercised power like a monarch. He practiced simony (the buying and selling of a religious office) and nepotism. Chamberlain remarks, "In the tenth century, and again in the sixteenth, the office (of the pope) became all but hereditary" (Chamberlain, p. 95). Boniface had a real love for family. "On the news of the death of his brother and his nephew, he burst into bitter and indiscreet lamentations, cursing the God who had brought these things on him" (Chamberlain, p. 95).

The Colonna Family Jacopone da Todi, who had been an advisor of Celestine, and the Colonna family joined forces in opposition against Boniface. They drew up a manifesto in which they challenged the legitimacy of Boniface's election. Boniface responded by excommunicating two Colonna cardinals. The Colonna family replied by accusing Boniface of having been the direct cause of Celestine's death. Boniface then extended the excommunication "to include every member of the Cardinals branch of the Colonna family 'even to the fourth generation,' its oldest and youngest members declared heretical, outside the law, legitimate prey for those who would overcome them" (Chamberlain, p. 100).

On August 17, 1297, open war was declared against the Colonna family. On September 14, Boniface absolved those who sacked the Colonna property in Rome from sin. Three months later, he proclaimed a crusade against the Colonna family. "It was not merely the rebellious Colonna who suffered, but all connected with them by even the remotest of feudal ties. The peasants on their land, the women and children in all the villages which happen to be within the boundaries of their lands—all these now could be killed or sold into slavery, their pathetic goods became the property of the 'crusaders'" (Chamberlain, p. 101).

By the summer of 1298, all the Colonna cities had fallen except one—Palestrina. The Colonna family gathered in Palestrina, safe behind the city's gigantic walls, with provisions to last indefinitely. Boniface offered to pardon them if they would yield the city. The Colonna cities surrendered and Boniface destroyed Palestrina. The usual token of destruction was the demolition of a section of the wall or of a tower or two. Boniface ordered the total eradication of the city, and everything except the cathedral was destroyed. Following the Roman model, Boniface ordered a new city to be built on the hill's lower slopes. In the spring of 1300, he ordered it be destroyed in a sudden fit of rage.

Boniface, who hated Jacopone da Todi, an Italian Franciscan friar, above all men, had him thrown into prison to rot for the rest of his life, but when Boniface died, Jacopone da Todi was released (Chamberlain, pp. 97, 104).

Florence Boniface dealt with the people of Florence using the same method he had employed against the Colonna family. "He demanded absolute and humble obedience; otherwise he would 'inflict the utmost injury on their citizens and merchants, cause their property to be pillaged and confiscated in all parts of the world, release all their debtors from the duty of payment'" (Chamberlain, p. 109). No wonder one of his contemporaries said, "He guided the Church as he wished and thrust down those who did not consent. He reigned most cruelly and fomented warfare, undoing many people." Another said Boniface was "haughty, proud, violent" (Chamberlain, p. 108). Author Dante Alighieri hated Boniface. In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante dragged Boniface through hell, purgatory, and paradise to be condemned before Peter.

His Utterances Boniface had a gift for pungent, pithy speech. Concerning sexual immorality, he said there is no more to going to bed with women and boys than rubbing one hand against another. Concerning immortality, he said a man had as much hope of survival after death as a roasted fowl on the dining table. Chamberlain says it is difficult to assess his beliefs, but these clever remarks show an indifference to, or even skepticism, the religion he professed. "The God that the world saw him worship was the God of power" (Chamberlain, p. 111).

The Cardinals, who came into daily, intimate contact with him, learned to hate him with a personal bitterness that surpassed even Dante's. One cardinal is reported to have said, "It is better to die than to live with such a man. He is all tongue and eyes, but as the rest of him is rotten, he won't last much longer. We have the very devil to deal with." A visitor reported, "The Cardinals all desire his death and are weary of his devilries" (Chamberlain, p. 111).

Philip IV Philip IV, the King of France, needed money for his war against the feudal lords. To get it, he turned to the immense wealth of the church in France. The monks of France appealed to Pope Boniface, who forbade, under the threat of excommunication,

any attempt to extract money from the clergy without direct permission from the Holy See. Philip struck back by forbidding the export of money in any form for any purpose and preventing foreigners from residing in France. The question was: "Was there but one Lord in Europe?"

The pope reduced the impact of his bull and the king did not pursue the export of money, "but the natures of the two men were far too similar to allow a permanent settlement based on compromise" (Chamberlain, p. 118). They waged war by hurling thundering letters at one another.

In December 1301, Boniface activated the dormant bull that forbade taxation of the clergy and summoned the French bishop to appear before him in Rome. Philip replied that in temporal matters, "we are subject to no man." Boniface responded by saying that he could depose the king like a stable boy and summoned the bishop to Rome again under the threat of excommunication. Philip then called a council in which the crimes of Boniface, real and imaginary, were held up for all of Europe to see: simony, sodomy, patricide, nepotism, and heresy.

The quarrel grew. The clergy of France aligned themselves with the king and attacked Boniface from their pulpits. Before Boniface, popes acted on the assumption that they held both the sword and the keys, but Boniface made explicit what had been implicit. In *Unam Sanctam*, he said, "It is necessary for salvation that all human creatures should be subject to the Roman Pontiff" (Chamberlain, p. 119).

In the summer of 1303, Boniface went to a small central Italian town named Anagni to escape the heat of Rome. He drew up his final bull, excommunicating Philip and freeing all of his subjects from obedience, but never issued it. A small group of Boniface's enemies led by Sciarra Colonna (remember the Colonna family?) held Boniface prisoner for three days. Boniface was freed and returned to Rome, but his political power was broken during the three days he remained prisoner. A few months later, he died of natural causes in utter despair.

Boniface's successor was Benedict XI, who survived less than a year. Then, a Frenchman, Clement V, was elected in France and remained there, turning the universal church into a chapel for the French king. Seeking to lay to rest the "splendid, arrogant ghost of Boniface forever," Philip instituted a posthumous trial to have him condemned as a heretic and, therefore not pope, but the trial never came to a verdict (Chamberlain, p. 123).

Urban VI (1378-89)

At Rome In 1305, Clement V, a Frenchman, was elected pope. He chose to remain in France, rather than move to Rome. In 1309, he moved his court to Avignon, France. The next six popes were all Frenchmen who reigned at Avignon (for a brief description of those six popes, see Chamberlain, pp. 131-134). This period is sometimes called the "Babylonian captivity of the Papacy" since the papacy was moved outside Rome. On September 13, 1376, Gregory XI abandoned Avignon and moved his court to Rome (arriving on January 17, 1377), officially ending the Avignon papacy.

After six French popes, the Romans demanded an Italian pope and rioted in the streets to get one (Chamberlain, p. 138). On April 9, 1378, Urban VI, who had been a bureaucrat in the papacy at Avignon but was Italian, was proclaimed pope. According to his secretary, the absolute power suddenly thrust upon him transformed him from a short-tempered bureaucrat into a raging tyrant (Chamberlain, p. 140). His first address to the

cardinals was abusive. With language drawn from the slum, each cardinal was singled out for his lust for power, his scandalous wealth based on simony, his immorality, and his neglect of duties. While most of the charges were justified, the manner in which they were delivered was offensive. He yelled at one to shut up, called another a liar and another a fool, and described another as a bandit (Chamberlain, p. 142).

Later, when an advisor expressed doubt about Urban's power to excommunicate for the mildest misdemeanor, Urban yelled, "I can do anything, anything!" His behavior grew steadily worse, culminating in a physical attack on a cardinal (Chamberlain, p. 143).

On September 20, 1378, Robert of Geneva was elected pope. He took the name Clement VII. Now, there were two popes. [Actually, at various times in papal history, there were two (or more) men claiming to be pope at the same time.] England recognized Urban and Scotland recognized Clement. Military forces backing Urban defeated the army supporting Clement, who ended up in Avignon (Chamberlain, pp. 145-146).

At Naples Chamberlain says Urban's troubles began with Joanna, the reigning monarch of Naples, who recognized Clement, gave him the money she owed Urban, and offered him shelter in Naples. Urban entered into an agreement with King Charles V of France to overthrow Joanna. After Joanna surrendered to Charles and was murdered, Urban went to his native Naples (Chamberlain, pp. 147-150).

At Nocera Sometime later, he left Naples and went to Nocera, a city not far from Pompeii. Wanting Urban to return to Rome, a number of Cardinals began to debate among themselves as to how to accomplish that. Urban had six of the ringleaders arrested and, after three days of "examination," gave orders that they be "put to the question," in other words, tortured. Meanwhile, Charles and Urban were at war with each other. Urban excommunicated Charles and announced his intention of crowning his nephew King of Naples. Charles sent an army to besiege Nocera. Nocera fell, but the castle housing Urban held out. Three or four times a day, appearing at one of the windows, Urban pronounced curses on the army below, excommunicating every man in it. He miraculously escaped the shower of arrows that greeted his every appearance (Chamberlain, pp. 150-154).

On the Road Finally, a local lord, who hated Charles, fought through the lines and escorted Urban out of the castle. The tormented cardinals, as well as others, traveled with him. Most of them were so weak they were barely able to keep their seats on their half-starved horses. "One of them, the Bishop of Aquila, managed, even in his enfeebled state to excite Urban's suspicions. He was murdered on the spot in the sight of his horrified companions, his body was dumped casually by the roadside, and the party moved on" (Chamberlain, p. 154).

At Genoa Urban ended up in Genoa, where he was obsessed with one idea, namely gathering an army for another attack on Naples. The people of Genoa were scandalized by his treatment of the Cardinals. Part of the price he paid for their help was a promise to release the Cardinals as soon as he was in Genoa, but he refused to do that. When some of the citizens made a gallant attempt to free the prisoners, "five of the six were immediately murdered: buried alive according to some reports, tied in sacks and thrown into the sea according to others" (Chamberlain, p. 155). The morning after these murders, Urban left Genoa.

At Rome Urban returned to Rome, where he died on October 15, 1389.

After his death, two self-perpetuating, mutually exclusive colleges of cardinals in Rome and Avignon continued to elect popes. Twenty years after his death, the two sets of cardinals united in a council to dispose of both popes and elect a successor, but the problem was merely postponed. As a result of that counsel, three popes now ruled where there had been but two. In 1415, six European nations forcefully deposed the reigning three popes at the Council of Constance and elected Martin V (Chamberlain, p. 158).

Alexander VI (1492-1503)

His Appointment When Calixtus III (1455-58) became pope, he heaped the greatest possible honors upon his two nephews (nepotism), one of whom was named Rodrigo Borgia. At the age of 26, Rodrigo was made a cardinal. The following year, he was made vice-chancellor, the highest office a pope could bestow.

The Letter In June 1460, Pope Pius II wrote a letter to 29-year-old Rodrigo Borgia. In the letter, Pius accused Borgia of being at a six-day party where "the most licentious dances were indulged in, none of the allurements of love were lacking, and you conducted yourself in a wholly worldly manner. Shame forbids mention of all that took place—not only the acts themselves, but their very names are unworthy of your position. In order that your might be given free reign the husbands, fathers, brothers, and kinsman of the young women were not admitted.… All Siena is talking about this orgy…. Our displeasure is beyond words.… A cardinal should be beyond reproach" (Chamberlain, p. 161).

His Wealth In his early forties, Cardinal Borgia was said to be the second richest man in the College of Cardinals, a group that included the richest men in Europe. How did he become so wealthy? Well, "when someone protested at his wholesale distribution of pardons for the most hideous crimes, one of which included the murder of a daughter by the father, he retorted easily, 'It is not God's wish that a sinner should die, but that he should live—and pay" (Chamberlain, p. 167).

His Predecessor Chamberlain says that when Innocent VIII (Giovanni Battista Cibo) was elected pope, he ensured that when Borgia later became pope, he would appear as an honest man, at least for the first few weeks. When Innocent's gender was questioned, it was squashed by the vicious satire: "Why do you seek witnesses to prove whether Cibo (Innocent VIII) is a man or woman? Look at the number of his children—surely proof. Justly may Rome call this man 'Father.'" Innocent VIII was the first pope to acknowledge his illegitimate children openly. He also loaded them with riches (Chamberlain, pp. 167-168).

His Election In 1492, a new pope needed to be elected. Of the four most likely candidates, Borgia was last on the list. Borgia bought the votes of thirteen cardinals! His "election was the result of simony" (Chamberlain, p. 181; Boettner, p. 251). Borgia once boasted that he had sacks of gold enough to fill the Sistine Chapel. He obtained the vote of another cardinal, who was a hard bargainer, by offering him the lucrative office of vice-chancellor and a payment in cash as well, which was delivered in four mule-loads of bullion, gold according to some reports, silver according to others. "The college went through the motions of election, praying to the Holy Ghost for guidance … and shortly after daybreak on the morning of August 11, the name of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia was taken from the urn." He excitedly cried, "I am pope, I am pope," and hastened to put on the gorgeous vestments. He did not make any of the modest disclaimers normally given.

He chose for his name the one that belong to the greatest pagan conqueror of antiquity—Alexander. He became Pope Alexander VI (Chamberlain, pp. 170-171).

His Coronation Alexander used his enormous wealth to enhance an already elaborate coronation. The triumphal arches proclaimed, "Rome was great under Caesar, but greater far under Alexander. The first was only a mortal man, the second is a God" (Chamberlain, p. 173).

His Conduct Once Alexander was in office, his contemporaries began to picture him "as a man little removed from a monster." One scholar at the time (Francesco Guicciardini) said of him: "He was possessed by an insatiable greed, an overwhelming ambition, and a burning passion for the advancement of his many children" (Chamberlain, p. 173).

Speaking of his children, when he was a young man, he began an affair with Giovanna dei Cattanei, nicknamed Vannozza, who bore him four children. (He had had at least three other children by other women before he met Vannozza!) He provided Vannozza with three successive husbands, each of whom gladly gave her his name in exchange for the comfortable living provided by her lover. In 1486, when she married her third and last husband, Alexander immediately broke off the relationship with her that had lasted for nearly a quarter of a century (Chamberlain, p. 174). In 1489, a beautiful young girl named Giulia, who was perhaps 16, married the son of Alexander's cousin and, about the same time, was added to the lengthy score of Alexander's mistresses. Alexander was 40 years her senior. The wits of Rome called Giulia "Christ's bride." One of his first acts as pope was to make Giulia's brother a cardinal. The Romans called him the Petticoat Cardinal, a title he bore until he became Pope Paul III.

Cook says he "spent a good deal of his pontificate trying to ensure that his son Caesar would have a territory to rule and his daughter Lucrezia would marry well" (Cook, p. 82). Caesar was made a cardinal, and his daughter Lucrezia disgraced the papal office because of her legendary intrigues and immoralities (Boettner, p. 251).

After one of Alexander's sons was murdered (the murderer was never discovered), he decided to reform the church. The proposed reforms included the condemnation of simony in all of its forms, the dismissal of all concubines within ten days, frugality among the cardinals, etc. The reforms were never carried out. Chamberlain remarks that had Alexander actually made some of these reforms, Martin Luther, then a neurotic 14-year-old, would probably have lived and died a faithful Augustinian monk (Chamberlain, p. 190).

Louis XII, the King of France, requested that Alexander dissolve his marriage to an ailing and unattractive woman so that he could marry a beautiful and wealthy heiress. Alexander agreed to do that provided that Louis released some things he requested. Louis was delighted to oblige (Chamberlain, p. 193).

At one point, Alexander added nine new cardinals. Chamberlain remarks that most of them were men of doubtful reputation, but all paid handsomely for their office (Chamberlain, p. 199). Chamberlain also says that Alexander "could and did murder, but that was for political, not personal reasons" (Chamberlain, p. 198).

In his book *The History of the Popes*, Ludwig Pastor, the Roman Catholic historian, says that Alexander VI lived the immoral life of a secular prince of his day, both as a cardinal and as pope (V, 363; VI 140), that he obtained the papacy by the rankest simony (V 35), and that he brought the office into disrepute by his unconcealed nepotism and

lack of moral sense (VI, 139). When the Dominican friar and preacher Savonarola urged his disposition, Alexander had him condemned as a heretic, hanged, and publicly burned in 1498 (Boettner, p. 251).

Leo X (1513-21)

His Father Lorenzo the Magnificent, head of the Florentine Republic, had a son named Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici. In 1483, using his talents as a businessman and statesman, Lorenzo had his son made an abbot. His son was but eight years old at the time. By continually pestering the pope, Lorenzo got his son made a cardinal at age 14, but the pope, Innocent VIII, insisted that he wait at least three years before taking a place in the College of Cardinals (Chamberlain, p. 211). Gold purchased his son's rank (Chamberlain, p. 212).

Lorenzo advised his son to spend his money on a well-appointed stable and servants of a superior class rather than on pomp and show, to select valuable antiques and handsome books rather than silk and jewels, to entertain at home rather than dine out, to get plenty of exercise, to rise early, and to look after his health. His son ignored almost every detail (Chamberlain, p. 213).

His Obsession In 1513, at the age of 37, Giovanni de' Medici became Pope Leo X. Leo X went to extreme lengths to take care of his health. His passion for hunting arose in part from his belief that it was good for his health. In fact, it was an obsession with him. Going on the hunt involved elaborate preparations because his court, numbering 140, went with him. The affairs of the church were discharged in the intervals between his hunts (Chamberlain, pp. 218-219).

His Skepticism He delighted in feminine company but did not want to become entangled with a demanding mistress (Chamberlain, p. 221). His love for classical scholarship was so strong that, in many ways, it seemed that he cherished yet at the cost of Scripture, absorbing the skepticism of the humanists as well as their learning. When Bembo quoted from the Gospels, Leo said, "How very profitable this fable of Christ has been to us through the ages" (Chamberlain, p. 223).

His Nepotism Like his predecessors, Leo practiced nepotism. Shortly after his election, he made his cousin a cardinal, but to do so, he had to commit an act of perjury because his cousin was illegitimate, which disqualified him from being a cardinal. To solve this problem, a declaration was drawn up stating that his cousin's parents were indeed married. The new cardinal received the lucrative and important post of vice Chancellor (Chamberlain, p. 228).

Leo desired to give the city of Urbino to his nephew, Lorenzo de' Medici. To do that, he declared Francesco Maria I della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino, deposed. Then, he excommunicated the duke for refusing to come to Rome and make submission. On August 8, 1516, Leo declared his nephew Lorenzo to be Duke of Urbino and insisted that the entire College of Cardinals sign the deed, which they obediently did, with the exception of the Bishop of Urbino, who declined to be associated with a robbery. When della Rovere, the now exiled duke, pleaded for the salvation of his soul, Leo refused to lift his excommunication. Della Rovere gathered an Army to fight back and sent an envoy to Leo's nephew, challenging him to single combat to decide the issue. The nephew sent the envoy to Leo, who tortured the envoy to find out his master's military intentions. A battle ensued, and Leo lost an enormous amount of gold and prestige (Chamberlain, pp. 230-232).

"The Italians, who believed they had witnessed the ultimate in human depravity during the Borgia (Alexander VI) reign, could still profess themselves shocked by the cold-blooded breaking of a safe-conduct. If the sacrosanct person of an envoy could be mutilated to gain a temporary advantage, who then could be safe?" (Chamberlain, p. 232).

The Conspiracy When Leo discovered a plot originated by Cardinal Petrucci to kill him and nominate Cardinal Riario to replace him, he had Cardinal Riario arrested. Petrucci left Rome. He was induced to return based on a promise of safe conduct, but as soon as he was back in Rome, he was seized (Chamberlain, p. 234). Under torture, he implicated some of his fellow cardinals, including some who had been cardinals for more than 40 years.

On June 8, 1517, Leo summoned the cardinals together. Questioning them under oath, Leo isolated those implicated by Petrucci. Leo decided based on being terrified by the extent of their plot. In the long speech, he declared that the guilty deserved degradation and death but would pardon them, except for Petrucci and Riario. Petrucci and Riario were handed over to secular authorities. "Petrucci and his personal servants alone suffered that torture of red-hot irons and ignominious death at the end of a rope" (Chamberlain, p. 236).

On June 26, 1517, Leo created 31 new cardinals. Each paid for the privilege. Leo collected a rather large sum of money. From that point until his death, Leo had no more trouble with the cardinals (Chamberlain, p. 237).

Luther On October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his 95 Theses of the church door at Wittenberg. The church door was the place to display public notices. All Luther intended to do, and everyone at the time understood this, was to debate the 95 Theses, which were primarily against the use of indulgences. Therefore, Leo was not particularly worried about Luther. Over the past two centuries, there had been an endless procession of people who objected to this or that aspect of papal power and the corruption that went with it, including Dante, Huss, Petrarch, St. Catherine of Siena, Arnold of Brescia, Jerome of Prague, and St. Bridget of Sweden (Chamberlain, pp. 242-243). Leo reacted mildly when he was forced to take notice of the squabble in Germany. He even issued an edict condemning the abuses of indulgences.

Luther visited Rome in 1511. Later, he wrote, "I dashed like a madman between one church and another, believing all their filthy nonsense. I even read a dozen masses and was very sorry that my mother and father were still alive, for I would gladly have redeemed them from purgatory with these masses." He also wrote, "If there is a hell, then Rome is built upon it and this I heard at Rome itself. Tiberius, the heathen Emperor, even if he were a monster such as Suetonius writes of, is nevertheless an angel in comparison to the present court to Rome" (Chamberlain, pp. 245-246).

On June 28, 1519, the emperor, Charles V, convened a diet (formal deliberative assembly) at the city of Worms to consider the case of the excommunicated monk Martin Luther and various other imperial matters. An imperial ban was added to the papal excommunication, and Leo felt that the troublesome interlude had passed.

On December 1, 1521, Leo passed away. Later, men called Leo's rule the Golden Age, but many bankers and wealthy cardinals bewailed his death because the money they had loaned him in his youth was not repaid—for the papal treasury was quite empty (Chamberlain, p. 249).

Clement VII (1523-24)

Giulio de Medici's birth was illegitimate and although that carried no social stigma, it created a legal bar for a career in the church. Leo legitimized him, made him a cardinal, bestowed on him the powerful and lucrative office of vice-chancellor, and made him lord of Florence. On November 17, 1523, Giulio was elected pope and took the name Clement VII (Chamberlain, p. 258). Clement VII was timid, slow to make decisions, and frugal, for he inherited a bankrupt treasury. His main defect was his inability to make up his mind (Chamberlain, pp. 259-261).

Henry VIII of England wanted to put aside his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, on the grounds that her previous marriage to his brother Arthur, Prince of Wales (who was 15 years old at the time) had indeed been consummated before Arthur's death six months after the wedding. Therefore, Henry asserted, Catherine's marriage to him was technically incestuous. It was well-known that Henry wanted to marry again. Catherine denied that her marriage to Arthur had ever been consummated, but Henry asked Clement to annul the marriage. Henry wanted to please Henry, but he didn't want to displease Charles V, the King of Germany, who was also Catherine's nephew (Chamberlain, p. 261).

Clement VII was caught between Charles V and King Francis I of France, who both wanted to control Italy. Partly because of Clement's decisions, Charles invaded Italy and sacked Rome. Here is a sample of what happened when Rome was sacked: "A mob of soldiers dressed an ass in bishop's vestments and demanded that a priest should offer it the Host. The man, in the last defense of his office, swallowed the wafer for himself and was murdered—slowly. Those nuns who were killed after being raped were fortunate, for their sisters were dragged around like animals, to be auctioned off to man after man before finding the relief of death. Luther was proclaimed pope in a mock ceremony. The vulnerable relics of Rome, the very tombs of the popes, were despoiled. Every soldier became a wealthy man" (Chamberlain, p. 278).

Charles had Clement crown him Holy Roman Emperor, the last time a pope crowned an emperor. Clement also censured Henry VIII of England for his adultery, defending the honor of Charles's aunt. At the age of 56, Clement died on September 25, 1534. Chamberlain's assessment is that Clement inherited an impossible situation for a man of his caliber. Chamberlain says, "A greater man than Clement might have turned his back upon the political problems and concentrated the vast energy of the Roman church upon destroying cancer in its heart, reforming itself before it again sought to lead others" (Chamberlain, p. 284). Someone said, "Political dissent in England and Germany developed and spread more readily because of Clement's failed political policies."

Three weeks after Clement's death, Paul III became pope. He was the pope who summoned the Council of Trent, which did too little too late (Chamberlain, p. 285). Noble says, "Paul III was a Roman aristocrat, a Humanist, and thoroughly corrupt" (p. 71).

This list of bad popes is not exhaustive. Other names can be added to the list. For example, Noble says Julius III (1550-55) was a pederast, that is, a man who has sex with boys (Noble, p. 71). Paul IV (1555-59) was an "ill-tempered bigot" (Noble, p. 71) who mistrusted almost everyone. He herded the Jews in Rome into a and forced them to wear yellow headgear (Nobel, p. 74).

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