

Catholic Teaching Examined

Examining Catholic Teaching In The Light Of The Scriptures

Some articles are written by David Riggs and others are compiled by him.
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All Christians are Priests

By David J. Riggs

A study of the New Testament reveals that all Christians are priests. Peter said, "You too are living stones, built as an edifice of spirit, into a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:5; The New Catholic Translation). Thus, all Christians are of that holy priesthood and can offer unto God spiritual sacrifices. All have the right to go directly to God through Jesus Christ, our High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16).

Peter continued, "You, however, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he claims for his own to proclaim the glorious works of the One who called you from darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Pet. 2:9). Rev. 1:6 says, "...Who has made us a royal nation of priests in the service of his God and Father." Consequently, the New Testament repeatedly teaches that all Christians are priests. When one obeys the gospel of Christ, he is added to the body of Christ and is thereby part of God's holy priesthood. As priests, all can offer up spiritual sacrifices and draw nigh to God through the mediatorship of Jesus.

A sacrificing priesthood of men was indeed appointed under the law of Moses, but the animal sacrifices offered by the priests of the Old Testament were mere types and shadows of the one sacrifice made by Christ. By the one sacrifice made by Jesus, He put an end both to the Levitical priesthood and the Old Testament law. (See Heb. 7:23-25; Col. 2:14-17).

Jesus is now at the right hand of God and ever lives to make intercession for His people (Heb. 7:25; 9:24). Through the one sacrifice of Himself, He became the sole mediator through which men have access to God (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:26-27; 9:24-28; Eph. 2:18). He is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9).

There is no priesthood on earth that has the right to forbid each Christian to go directly to God through Christ, or to assume the authority to administer graces and obtain mercy for others. All Christians are of that royal priesthood of God, and have but one great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

The Bible Condemns Catholic Doctrine

By David J. Riggs

Why would Catholics want to defeat the Bible as the only authority? The answer is: it is their way of trying to justify their own traditions. How else would they justify them? Furthermore, the reason Catholics try to discredit the Bible as the sole authority is because it plainly and forcefully condemns their doctrines. For example, to cite only a few:

(1) It condemns clerical dress. Matt. 23:4-5 says, "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments."

(2) It teaches against the adoration of Mary. Luke 11:27-28 says, "And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!' But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'"

(3) It shows that all Christians are priests. 1 Pet. 2:5,9 says, "...You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..."

(4) It condemns the observance of special days. Gal. 4:9-11 says, "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain."

(5) It teaches that all Christians are saints. 1 Cor. 1:2 says, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours..."

(6) It teaches that baptism is immersion instead of pouring. Rom. 6:4 says; "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Col. 2:12 says, "Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

(7) It forbids us to address religious leaders as "father." Matt. 23:9 says, "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven."

(8) It opposes unmarried bishops. 1 Tim. 3:2-5 says, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house,

how will he take care of the church of God?)..."

(9) It addresses only God Himself as the "Holy Father." John 17:11 says, "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are."

(10) It shows that the great apostasy would forbid marriage. 1 Tim. 4:1-3 says, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."

(11) It reveals that the great apostasy would have one who claimed to take the place of God. 2 Thess. 2:3-4 says, "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

After reading the above passages, it is abundantly clear why Catholics endeavor to destroy the Bible as the only authority in religion today.

The Bible Alone is the Standard

By David J. Riggs

The apostle Paul said, "...How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets." (Eph. 3:2-5). Furthermore, he said, "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Cor. 14:37). There is no passage anywhere in the Scriptures which states that unwritten traditions, teachings of the Pope, or legislations of the church are the laws of the Lord. Thus, the Scriptures claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority in religion.

John the apostle said, "These are written that you may believe..." (John 20:31), "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." (1 John 1:4), "...These things I write to you, so that you may not sin." (1 John 2:1), "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life..." (1 John 5:13). Again, not one time did John, or any inspired writer, declare that the ex-cathedra pronouncements of the Pope, legislations of the church, etc., are given that you may believe, might not sin, or may know that we have eternal life. Again, the Scriptures claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority.

The holy Scriptures furnish us unto every good work. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Any practice, therefore, which is not in the Scriptures cannot be a good work in God's sight. Please name one good work which is necessary for salvation which is not in the Scriptures. Thus, the Scriptures alone are the authority; they thoroughly equip us for every good work.

All teachers are to be tested by the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 4:6 says, "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other." Acts 17:11 says, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." Even when Paul emphasized that his writings were the laws of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37), it was in opposition to what men might claim as laws. The Scriptures, therefore, are the only authority. Any practice not found in them is of human origin and is therefore false.

The Scriptures are the standard by which we will be judged in the last day. Rev. 20:12 says, "...And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (See also Rom. 2:16; James 2:12; John 12:48). We will not be judged by unwritten traditions, teachings of the Pope, legislations of the church, writings of the so-called church fathers, etc., thus, again, showing that the Scriptures are the only standard.

Here is a list which shows what the holy writings furnish: (1) Life in the name of Jesus (John 20:30-31); (2)

Commands of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37); (3) Knowledge of the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:2-5). (4) The proper conduct (1 Tim. 3:14-15); (5) Every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17); (6) Protection against sin (1 John 2:1); (7) An assurance of eternal life (1 John 5:13); (8) Standard by which teachers are tested (Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 4:6); (9) Joy that is complete (1 John 1:1-4); (10) A reminder of the precepts (2 Pet. 3:1-2); (11) Standard of judgment (Rev. 20:12). This is all that is declared in God's revelation regarding His authority or law. The holy Scriptures do not mention or allow other authorities. They alone are the complete and final standard which furnish all of man's spiritual needs. They alone are the standard by which all teachers are to be tested, and by which we will be judged in the last day.

Call None "Father"

By David J. Riggs

The Catholic Church has a multitude of religious titles and addresses that are given to their officials. We list some of them here from page 129 of the book, **My Catholic Faith**.

- ! "A priest is addressed **'Father.'**"
- ! "He (the Pope, D.R.) is formally addressed as **'Your Holiness.'**"
- ! "A cardinal is addressed **'Your Eminence.'**"
- ! "Arch bishops and bishops are entitled **'Most Reverend,'** and **'Your Excellency';** the other prelates not bishops are entitled **'Right'** or **'Very Reverend Monsignor'** or **'Father.'**"

When Catholics address their priests and bishops as "Reverend" and "Father," they are using titles which belong only to God. Protestants who likewise label their clergymen as "Reverend" are doing the same. The term "Reverend" means basically "worthy of reverence; revered" and is used in the Bible to venerate the name of God. Psalm 111:9 says, "He has sent deliverance to his people; he has ratified his covenant forever; holy and awesome (also translated "reverend" D.R.) is his name." God alone is to be revered, revered and worshiped. "The Lord thy God shalt thou worship and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). Men ought not seek the glory which belongs only to Deity. They should not accept it, nor endeavor to give it. Men commit a grave error when they take the titles and designations which belong to Almighty God and place them on mere men.

Jesus said, "And call no one on earth your father; for one is your Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters; for one only is your Master, the Christ" (Matt. 23:9-10). Thus, we are forbidden by our Lord to call men "father" in a religious sense. We plead with our Catholic friends not to openly defy this command given by our Lord.

Catholic priests try to dodge the force of Jesus' command by telling us that if we interpreted our Lord's words literally, we could not call our parent "father." (See **Questions Box**, p. 310). However, in the context of Matt. 23, Jesus is condemning the religious leaders of His time who did all their works to be seen of men (vs. 5), loved marks of distinction (vs. 6), and craved the flattering titles given by men (vs. 7). The writer of Hebrews by inspiration used the term "father" for our earthly parent. He said, "Furthermore, we had fathers of our flesh to correct us..." (Heb. 12:9). In view of these things, when Jesus said "call no one on earth your father," what could he have meant but that we are not to call men "father" in a religious sense?

A young Christian girl had opportunity to introduce the local preacher to her non-Christian friends. She said, "This is **my** brother Mr._____." She demonstrated both the knowledge and obedience which the Lord requires. She gave no religious title and used the term "brother" in its proper sense. The term refers to the common bond of all Christians and is not a title that is to be given only to preachers.

All preachers and teachers of God's word should boldly refuse to be called by titles belonging to God. They should not be desirous of vain glory (Gal. 5:26), but should walk humbly before God (Micah 6:8). Also, believers in Christ should be careful not to address preachers as "Father" or "Reverend" or with any other flattering title. Job 32:21-22 says, "I would not be partial to anyone, nor give flattering titles to any."

For I know nought of flattery; if I did, my Maker would soon take me away."

Can Priests Forgive Sins?

By David J. Riggs

Catholic officials claim that the Catholic priests have inherited from the apostles the power to forgive penitent sinners. Notice the following:

- ! "Christ conferred upon the Apostles the power to forgive sins: 'Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven.' (John 20:23). St. Paul mirrors the faith of the Apostolic Church when he writes: 'God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation' (II Cor. 5:18).
- ! "As the inheritors of the power and authority of the Apostles, the priest of the Catholic Church exercises the ministry of reconciliation, forgiving penitent sinners in the name of Jesus Christ." (**The Faith of Millions**, pp. 71-72).

The Catholic priests are claiming a power which the apostles did not possess or exercise. Jesus said to the apostles, "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John 20:22-23). Thus, only by the possession of the Holy Spirit would the apostles have the authority to forgive and retain sins. As the Holy Spirit guided them in their preaching and writing, they delivered God's plan for forgiving and retaining sins (Luke 24:45-49; Acts 2:38). This alone was their "power to forgive sins" and how it was exercised.

On one occasion the Scribes and Pharisees reasoned in their hearts concerning Jesus, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God only?" (Luke 5:21). Their error was in their failure to recognize that Jesus was God in the flesh. If Jesus was not God, they would have been correct in their accusation. God said through the prophet Isaiah, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." (Isa. 43:25).

On another occasion the Jews said, "Not for a good work do we stone thee, but for blasphemy, and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God." (John 10:33). Jesus did not deny that it was blasphemous for a man to presume to forgive sins. If the Jews had been right in their premise (that Christ was only a man), they would have been correct in their conclusion. The Catholic priests literally assume the prerogatives of God when they presume to forgive sins.

If Catholic priests have the power to grant absolution from sin, why don't they also possess the power to perform miracles? Jesus said it was just as easy for him to say, "Arise, and walk," as to say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke 5:23). He added, "But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins--he said to the paralytic--I say to thee, arise, take up thy pallet and go to thy house." (Luke 5:24). Why can't the Catholic priests do the same? Since they cannot, we must conclude they do not have authority to forgive sins."

Catholic Doctrine Contradicts the Bible and is Condemned in the Bible**By David J. Riggs**

Psalms 119:104 says, "Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." 1 John 4:1 says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." Acts 17:11 says, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." 2 Thess. 2:10-12 says, "...They did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Christians are exhorted to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3). They are to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) and to "wage the good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18). They are to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and teaching." (2 Tim. 4:2). All true Bible students and defenders of the faith know that the Bible plainly and forcefully condemns many of the Catholic doctrines. For example, to cite only a few:

1. It condemns clerical dress. Matt. 23:4-5 says, "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments."

2. It teaches against the adoration of Mary. Luke 11:27-28 says, "And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!' But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'"

3. It shows that all Christians are priests. 1 Pet. 2:5,9 says, "...You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..."

4. It condemns the observance of special days. Gal. 4:9-11 says, "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain."

5. It teaches that all Christians are saints. 1 Cor. 1:2 says, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours..."

6. It teaches that baptism is immersion instead of pouring. Rom. 6:4 says; "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the

Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Col. 2:12 says, "Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

7. It forbids us to address religious leaders as "father." Matt. 23:9 says, "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven."

8. It opposes unmarried bishops. 1 Tim. 3:2-5 says, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)..."

9. It addresses only God Himself as the "Holy Father." John 17:11 says, "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are."

10. It shows that the great apostasy would forbid marriage. 1 Tim. 4:1-3 says, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."

11. It reveals that the great apostasy would have one who claimed to take the place of God. 2 Thess. 3:3-4 says, "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

After reading the above passages, it is abundantly clear that Catholic doctrine contradicts the teaching of the holy Scriptures. The Catholic Church is not the one church revealed in the Bible, but is the great apostasy predicted in it. Not only are many of its doctrines not revealed in the Bible, but as shown by the above passages, many of its doctrines are clearly and forcefully condemned by its teachings. May the Lord help us to turn from all the false teachings of Catholicism and become simple New Testament Christians, lovers of truth, followers of Christ, and members of His one true church.

Catholicism's True Attitude Toward the Bible

By David J. Riggs

The modern approach of the Catholic Church is to emphasize great love and respect for the Scriptures. Present day Catholics want people to believe that the Catholic Church has faith in the Bible, is the church of the Bible, and encourages its members to read and study the Bible. However, when Catholics try to disprove the Bible as the **only** authority in religion, their true attitude toward the Bible is revealed. The Catholic Church opposes the Bible as the **sole** guide and standard in religion and whenever it tries to disprove it as such, its true attitude toward it is manifested. Accordingly, the Catholic Church makes the following accusations against the Bible:

1. Not intended to be written.
2. Not intended to be circulated.
3. Not intended to be gathered into one volume.
4. Not accessible to all.
5. Does not contain all truth.
6. Not understandable.
7. Not a safe method.
8. Is a dead letter.
9. Does more harm than good.

In this study we will carefully examine the above claims of the Catholic Church concerning the Bible. All quotations will be from authorized Catholic books (books bearing the "Nihil obstat"-"nothing hinders" and the "Imprimatur"-"let it be printed"). All Scriptural quotations will be from authorized Catholic translations (from the Confraternity Version unless otherwise indicated). A complete bibliography is furnished at the end of this document.

1. Not intended to be written.

Please notice the following quotations from Catholic sources:

- ! "If Christ Himself had written the book and set it forth as a text-book, so to speak, of His religion, we would rest securely in it, and have no need to inquire farther. That the Bible is not a book, like the Koran for instance, set forth by the founder of the religion as its authoritative exposition, is in fact the fundamental weakness of Bible **Protestantism**.
- ! If Christ had intended His religion to be propagated and preserved by means of a book, can any conceivable reason be urged why He should not have written one? Of His ability to do so there can, for the Christian, be no question." (**Plain Facts for Fair Minds**, p. 26).
- ! "Is it not strange that if Christianity were to be learned from the Bible only, that Christ himself never wrote a line or commanded his apostles to write; for their divine commission was not to write but to preach the gospel." (**Question Box**, p. 70).
- ! "Christ gave his disciples no command to write, but only to teach." (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. 5, p. 767).

The above arguments from Catholic writers are presented to establish that the Bible alone is not the

standard of authority. Christ didn't actually take a pen in His hand and write the New Testament; nevertheless, it is His production. The Old Testament declares that God built the temple (1 Kings 8:16,20), but God did not actually come down and build it Himself. He built it through the agency of others. Likewise, the written New Testament is the will of Christ. He wrote it through those commissioned by Him. It contains His laws (1 Cor. 14:37) and produces the faith which brings life in His name (John 20:30-31).

Christ commanded the apostle John, "Write therefore the things that thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are to come hereafter." (Rev. 1:19). Thus, the Catholic officials are incorrect when they say Christ never commissioned His apostles to write. In many books of the prophets of the Old Testament there are no commands to write, but it was God's will that they do so in order to preserve their words for all generations.

The Catholic officials have assumed that the command to the apostles to teach excluded written instruction. However, writing the inspired Scriptures was part of the work of the apostles and prophets in delivering God's message to man. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." (Matt. 24:35). In John 12:48 Jesus taught that His word would be the standard of judgment in the last day. He said, "He that despiseth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (Catholic Rheims Translation). Companion verses show that men will be judged by "the gospel" (Rom. 2:16), "the law of liberty" (James 2:12), and "the books" (Rev. 20:12). All of these are similar and reveal that men will be judged by the New Testament of Christ in the last day.

In providing an eternal standard of judgment, Jesus could have easily given His own personal writings if that had been His will. Instead, He chose to give us His writings by means of those whom He commissioned as His ambassadors. He gave them the same words which He received from the Father (John 17:8). He did not leave them as ordinary men subject to the frailties and fallacies of human nature, nor did He leave them to their own memories to recall His deeds and teaching; rather, He gave them the Holy Spirit who guided them into all truth (John 16:13), and brought to their remembrance all that He had said to them (John 14:26). The written words of the New Testament were not the product of mere chance, but were divinely purposed and planned.

2. Not intended to be circulated.

We mention again that present day Catholic officials would like people to believe that the Catholic Church loves and respects the Bible as ordained of God. However, in reality the Catholic Church does not love and revere the Bible, but is opposed to it as the only authority in religion. All of their claims of honor and devotion are smothered when they try to defeat the Bible as the sole standard. One such example is their assertions that the Bible was never intended to be circulated or gathered into one volume. Please notice the following from Catholic sources:

- ! "The Apostles are never reported to have circulated a single volume of the Holy Scripture, but 'they going forth, preached everywhere, the Lord co-operating with them.' (Mark xvi. 20)." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 66).
- ! "They owe their existence to lucky chance. For example, Paul's letters were written to a particular section of the country that he had converted, and some letters were written to

personal friends. All of these were never intended to be circulated." (From a letter received from my older brother who was at the time a student at St. Meinrad Seminary, St. Meinrad, Ind.).

The inspired Scriptures were not written solely for the ones to whom they were sent. For example, 1 Cor. 1:2 says, "To the church of God at Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints with all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place--their Lord as well as ours." Eph. 1:1 says, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to all the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." (Catholic Rheims Trans.). Thus, the Scriptures were written to all the faithful--to all who call upon the name of the Lord in every place.

The apostles themselves put their writings into circulation. "And when this letter has been read among you, see that it be read in the church of the Laodicians also; and that you yourselves read the letter from Laodicea." (Col. 4:16). "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren." (1 Thess. 5:27). The Scriptures do not owe their existence to mere chance, but to the power and providence of God for He declared that His word would abide forever (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

3. Not expected to be gathered into one volume.

Again, notice the following from Catholic sources:

- ! "But nothing was further from the minds of the writers, and of the Apostles generally, than that these writings be gathered together and made into a book, which would be accepted as a complete statement of the doctrine of Christianity. Any one of them would have been shocked had he known that his letters would in time be made use of by heretics in an attempt of usurping the place of the authoritative teacher, the Church of Jesus Christ." (**The Faith and the Facts**, p. 348).
- ! "There is in them no evidence whatever to suggest that it was the expectation of the writers that what they had written would one day be gathered together to become a part of the New Testament." (**Campaigners for Christ Handbook**, p. 162).

There is evidence in the Scriptures that the inspired men looked forward to time when the written New Testament would be completed. They looked ahead to a time when the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit would be done away. There are three chapters on the subject of spiritual gifts in the book of First Corinthians--12, 13, and 14. These chapters not only describe the kinds of gifts but also reveal that the gifts would cease when that which is perfect--the written New Testament--came. In Chapter 13, verse 8, Paul said, "Charity never fails, whereas prophecies will disappear, and tongues will cease, and knowledge will be destroyed." These were spiritual gifts which were given to the Christians at Corinth before the written New Testament was completed. They had "the word of wisdom" and "the word of knowledge" by the miraculous endowment of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8).

Paul continued in 1 Cor. 13:9-10, "For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect has come, that which is imperfect will be done away with." Clearly, Paul looked for something to come that was perfect which did not exist at that time, and he expected something which was then in part to be done away. The written New Testament is that which is perfect. It is the perfect law of liberty

(James 1:25). While the New Testament was being written, it was in its infancy but when completed, it was as a full grown man. Paul went on to say in 1 Cor. 13:11, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child. Now that I have become a man, I have put away the things of a child." Thus, the New Testament is "that which is perfect" and is "the full grown man" spoken of by Paul.

The inspired writers intended that their writings be circulated, and they knew that one day their efforts would constitute a "perfect" or "complete" work. We are not saying that every one of them fully understood God's purpose in providing the written New Testament, but they knew that the things they were writing were designed to produce faith (John 20:31), were to provide every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17), were the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37), and would be the standard of judgment in the last day (Rev. 20:12).

4. Not accessible to all.

A priest by the name of John A. O'Brien in his book, **The Faith of Millions**, says that the Bible alone is not a safe guide because it is not now and never has been accessible to all. (See pages 152-155). He argues this by saying on page 152:

! "First, the Scriptures were not accessible to the **primitive** Christians, for the simple reason that they were not all written until many years after the establishment of Christianity."

It is certainly true that Christianity had already been introduced before the New Testament Scriptures were written, but that does not prove the Scriptures alone are not the guide for Christianity today. Although God's word in written form was not accessible to the first Christians, they had His word as their only source of authority. They received it directly from infallible teachers rather than from infallible writings. The following chart illustrates this fundamental principle:

WORD OF GOD IN INSPIRED MEN		WORD OF GOD IN INSPIRED WRITINGS
<i>ALL ORAL</i>	<i>BOTH ORAL & WRITTEN</i>	<i>ALL WRITTEN</i>
Apostles and prophets directed to speak the word of God, Acts 1:8.	Apostles and prophets directed also to write, Rev. 1:19.	Apostles and prophets delivered the faith, Jude 3.
Had miraculous powers to confirm their word, Heb. 2:1-4; 2 Cor. 12:12.	Inspired writings put into circulation, 1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16.	Miraculous powers pass away, 1 Cor. 13:8-9.
WORD OF GOD IN ORAL FORM ONLY, 1 Cor. 2:3-13; 1 Thess. 2:13.	WORD OF GOD BOTH ORAL AND WRITTEN, 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:1-2.	WORD OF GOD IN WRITTEN FORM ONLY, 2 Tim. 3:15-17.

There was a time when all of the word of God was given orally--by word of mouth of the inspired apostles and prophets. Christians during that period were guided solely by the inspired teachers who were present with them. Paul said, "And now, behold, I know that you all among whom I went about preaching the

kingdom of God, will see my face no longer. Therefore I call you to witness this day that I am innocent of the blood of all; for I have not shrunk from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." (Acts 20:25-27). The word of God given orally by the ambassadors of Christ was the guide and standard of authority in that early period. If an individual wished to be pleasing to God, he had to receive the word of the inspired men as coming from God Himself.

There was a period when the word of God was given both orally and written. The apostles and prophets began delivering God's will both by preaching and writing. 2 Thess. 2:15 says, "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter." (Catholic Edition RSV). Thus, there was time when people were guided either by having inspired men in their presence or by epistles written by inspired men. Both of these had equal authority because both were the product of the Holy Spirit. Notice also that they were not to hold just any traditions, but "the traditions which you were taught by us." 2 Thess. 3:6 teaches the same; the traditions delivered by the apostles and prophets were to be held, not the traditions of men.

In all ages true Christians have been guided by the same source or standard--the word of God. The word was delivered at first in oral form only, then both orally and written, and now in written form only. When the apostles and prophets passed from the earth, their inspired writings became the only source of authority in religion. The apostles and prophets, and they alone, were the Lord's chosen ambassadors to deliver God's word to mankind (2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 3:3-5). They were selected to deliver "the faith" and it has once and for all been delivered by them (Jude 3). We are to receive their word as the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 4:6); their message had the promise of God to remain forever (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

The inspired writings, therefore, are the only infallible succession that we have from the apostles and prophets. The written word of God is the guide to eternal salvation (2 Tim. 3:15); it contains the laws of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). It produces the faith which brings life in the name of Jesus (John 20:31); it is the means whereby we can know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). It was given to protect us from sin (1 John 2:1) and to show us how to conduct ourselves in the house or church of God (1 Tim. 3:14-15). It is profitable for teaching, reproof, correcting, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The written word is the standard by which men will be judged in the last day (James 2:12; John 12:48; Rom. 2:16; Rev. 20:12).

As we have shown, a Catholic priest by the name of John O'Brien tried to prove that the New Testament alone could not be the authority in religion by showing that the early Christians did not have it. A Catholic Cardinal by the name of James Gibbons on page 69 of his book, **The Faith of Our Fathers**, makes the same argument. He said, "The most perfect Christians lived and died and went to heaven before the most important parts of the Scriptures were written. And what would have become of them if the Bible alone had been their guide?"

As we have already mentioned, even though the early Christians did not have the New Testament Scriptures, it does not disprove the Bible as the only guide in religion today. The first Christians were guided by the same source as Christians today--the word of God. It was delivered first in oral form only, then both orally and written, and now all written. Thus, in the plan of God all men of every generation were to be made believers through the same source. "Faith then depends on hearing, and hearing on the word

of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). "And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me..." (John 17:20 Rheims Trans.). At first people were made believers through the word of Christ delivered through inspired men; today individuals are made believers through the word of Christ given through inspired writings. "These are written that you may believe..." (John 20:31).

In God's plan all men were to be guided by the same teaching, at first through inspired men, but now, "All Scriptures is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in justice; that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In God's plan all men will be judged by the same standard. Those first individuals will be judged by the word of God which was spoken to them orally. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48 Rheims Trans.). Those living afterward will be judged by the word of God spoken through inspired writings. "...And the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the scrolls, according to their works" (Rev. 10:12).

The Catholic Cardinal continues his argument that the Bible is not accessible to all. He does this in effort to prove that the Bible alone is not a safe guide in religion.

- ! "The art of printing was not invented until the fifteenth century (1440). How utterly impossible it was to supply everyone with a copy of the Scriptures from the fourth to the fifteenth century!...It was well for Luther that he did not come into the world until a century after the immortal invention of Guttenberg. A hundred years earlier his idea of directing two hundred and fifty million men to read the Bible would have been received with shouts of laughter, and would inevitably have caused his removal from the pulpit of Wittenburg to a hospital for the insane." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 69; see also **The Faith of Millions**, p. 152).

The following passages demonstrate that people in the time of Christ had access to the Old Testament Scriptures:

- ! "For Moses for generations past has had his preachers in every city in the synagogues, where he is read aloud every Sabbath." (Acts 15:21).
- ! "Now after passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as was his custom, went in to them and for three Sabbaths reasoned from the Scriptures..." (Acts 17:1-2; see also Acts 17:10-11).
- ! "And from thy infancy thou has known the Sacred Writings, which are able to instruct thee unto salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15).
- ! "And he arose and went. And behold, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, who was in charge of all her treasures, had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, sitting in his carriage and reading the prophet Isaias." (Acts 8:27-28).

Everyone in those ancient times did not have a copy of the Scriptures, but those who were seeking to know the will of God had free access to them. The synagogues, even in remote places, had Scriptures in them (Acts 17:10-11) and some individuals had Scriptures which were carried with them (Acts 8:27-28). The same could have been true regarding the New Testament Scriptures if the people who lived during the fourth through the fifteenth centuries had wanted them. God will judge all men in the last day by the Scriptures (Rev. 20:12; James 2:12). Would one dare to say that God will judge men by something to which they could not have had access? The only time people do not have the Bible is when they do not

want it and are opposed to it.

In the following, Catholic officials try to prove that the Bible has not been accessible to all by stating that some people are incapable of reading.

- ! "But even if the Bible were at all times accessible to everyone, how many millions exist in every age and country, not excepting our own age of boasted enlightenment, who are not accessible to the Bible because they are incapable of reading the Word of God?" (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, pp. 69-70).
- ! "Even at the present time, as in all previous ages and climes, there are millions who are unable to read, millions to whom the Bible remains a sealed book." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 152).

There are many who are unable to read, but that does not discredit the Bible as the only authority in religion, nor does it imply that tradition, the pope, and the church are equal in authority with the Bible. How would a Catholic priest relay or transmit his belief to those who cannot read? He would simply **teach** them, either directly if they understood his language or through an interpreter if they did not. This is precisely how the word of God is transmitted to those who cannot read. "Faith then cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:17 Rheims Trans.). Only by complying with the commandments of God contained in the Bible, do men have salvation (James 1:25; Rev. 22:14), and it matters not whether they learned them by hearing or reading, or by both.

By their arguments on the Bible not being accessible to all, the Catholic writers draw these conclusions:

- ! "We must, therefore, conclude that the Scripture alone cannot be a sufficient guide and rule of faith because they cannot, at any time, be within the reach of every inquirer..." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 73).
- ! "From all of which it must be abundantly clear that the Bible alone is not a safe and competent guide because it is not now and has never been accessible to all..." (**The Faith of Millions**, pp. 154-155).

As one can easily see, these Catholic writers make very bold efforts to destroy the Bible as the only source of authority. However, their denunciations against the Bible as the sole authority are found to be without foundation. They argue, "The early Christians did not have access to the Scriptures" (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 152). We answer, "By the plan and purpose of God, for a short time the people were guided by inspired men, but later by inspired writings." They argue, "Without the invention of the printing press all could not have free access to the Bible" (**The Faith of our Fathers**, p. 69). We answer, "At the time of Christ people had access to the Old Testament Scriptures without the printing press." They argue, "It is not accessible to all because all cannot read" (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 152), and we answer, "Faith then depends on hearing and hearing on the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

We willingly admit that the Bible has not been freely accessible to all men in all nations at all times. The Bible, however, has been and will be assessable to those who want it. When men try in every way to weaken and destroy the Bible as the only guide in religion, though not able to completely annihilate it (1 Pet. 1:23-25), they greatly hamper it from being readily available both among their own and other nations. Likewise, when men believe and uphold the Bible as God's sole infallible rule of faith--which is exactly what

the Bible claims for itself--they strive to the best of their ability to make it available to those of like precious faith and to all men of the world.

5. Does not contain all truth.

The Catholic Church teaches that the Bible does not contain all truth. This is another Catholic effort to prove that the Bible alone is not the standard of authority in religion. The assertion that the Bible does not contain all truth, and others like it, reveals the true attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Bible. The Catholic Church does not have love and respect for the Bible; otherwise, why raise such false claims? Please notice the following quotations from Catholic sources:

- ! "The Bible does not contain all the teaching of the Christian religion, nor does it formulate all the duties of its members." (**The Faith of Millions**, pp. 153-154).
- ! "Now the Scriptures alone do not contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe, nor do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is obliged to practice. (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 72).
- ! "Can you learn to save your soul just by reading the Bible? No...because the Bible does not have everything God taught." (**A Catechism for Adults**, Q. 1, p. 52).

Paul told Timothy, "For from thy infancy thou hast known the Sacred Writings, which are able to instruct thee unto salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15). Consequently, according to an inspired apostle, one can save his soul just by the Scriptures. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correcting, for instruction in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work." Paul's own writings are included as "Scripture" as shown by Peter (2 Pet. 3:15-16). The Scriptures contain everything that is necessary to equip the man of God for every good work. There is not a solitary good work that the Christian can do which is not provided in the Scriptures. Furthermore, if men are doing things which are not revealed in the Scriptures, they cannot be good works in God's sight.

John 20:30-31 says, "Many other signs also Jesus worked in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." The apostle John clearly shows that the things which he wrote were given to produce the faith which brings life in the name of Jesus. Life in the name of Jesus refers to eternal life and it is obtained by belief in the things written by the inspired writers.

We freely admit that the Scriptures do not contain everything Jesus did. John said, "There are, however, many other things that Jesus did; but if every one of these would be written, not even the world itself, I think, could hold the books that would have to be written." (John 21:25). Although we do not have everything Jesus did, we do have every **necessary** thing. We have enough to give us life in His name.

Luke said, "...It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed." (Luke 1:3-4 Catholic Edition RSV). Thus, Luke said he wrote his book to Theophilus so he could know the truth concerning those things which he had heard. In other words, he

would no longer need to rely on what he had heard by word of mouth, but could now prove them by the inspired writings. Luke said, "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach..." (Acts 1:1 Catholic Edition RSV). What did Luke mean when he said he wrote of **all** that Jesus did and taught? We know he did not mean every detail of the life of Christ because John said if that was done the world would not contain the books. He meant, therefore, that he had written all **necessary** things Jesus did and taught. The following chart lists the things which Scriptures provide:

- ! All necessary things which Jesus did - Acts 1:1-2.
- ! Certainty of His action and teaching - Luke 1:3-4.
- ! Life in the name of Jesus - John 20:30-31.
- ! Instructions to salvation - 2 Tim. 3:15.
- ! Commands of the Lord - 1 Cor. 14:37.
- ! The proper conduct - 1 Tim. 3:14-15.
- ! Every good work - 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
- ! Protection against sin - 1 John 2:1.
- ! An assurance of eternal life - 1 John 5:13.
- ! Standard by which teachers are tested - Acts 17:11.
- ! Standard which we cannot go beyond - 1 Cor. 4:6.
- ! Blessings from God - Rev. 1:3.
- ! Joy that is complete - 1 John 1:3-4.
- ! Standard of judgment - Rev. 20:12.

If one reads and studies the New Testament and obtains all the things mentioned above, what else would he need? Do not men cast reflection on God when they imply that He failed to provide everything needful? God declared that man is equipped for **every** good work through the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Who has the right to say that man is **not** equipped for every good work through the Scriptures?

Following are quotes from Catholic authorities who claim that the Bible is incomplete and fragmentary:

- ! "I find that in no way are the teachings of the scriptures complete. Nowhere do they tell that they contain all that Christ taught." (**I Believe**, p. 148).
- ! "Granting that the Bible as we have it is a faithful record...it is plain that this record and this picture are far from being as complete or as clear as they should be.
- ! "...Our Bible record is fragmentary." (**Plain Facts for Fair Minds**, pp. 23-24).

The Catholic Bible, just as any other Bible, claims to be the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25) and to equip the man of God for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The apostles were guided into all truth (John 16:13; Acts 2:1-4). Paul says that he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). The book of Jude says that the faith was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Thus, the revelation of the will of Christ was completed before all of the apostles died. It was duly confirmed and is absolutely infallible. God's word is truth (John 17:17). Though the Catholic Bible says of itself that it is perfect and complete, Catholic doctrine says that it is incomplete and fragmentary. We draw the following contrast to show that Catholic teaching openly contradicts the Scriptures.

CATHOLICISM	THE BIBLE
"The Bible does not contain all the teaching of the Christian religion..." (The Faith of Millions , pp. 153-154).	"For indeed his divine power has granted us all things pertaining to life and piety..." (2 Pet. 1:3).
"Nowhere do they tell that they contain all that Christ taught." (I Believe , p. 148).	"...I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach." (Acts 1:1 Catholic Edition RSV).
"They do not contain all the truths necessary for salvation." (The Faith of Our Fathers , p. 73).	"These are written that you may believe...and that believing you many have life in his name." (John 20:31).
"Can you learn to save your soul just by reading the Bible? No..." (A Catechism for Adults , p. 52).	"For from thy infancy thou has known the Sacred Writings, which are able to instruct thee unto salvation..." (2 Tim. 3:15).
"I find that in no way are the teachings of the scriptures compete." (I Believe , p. 148). "...Nor do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is obliged to practice." (The Faith of Our Fathers , p. 72).	"All Scriptures is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproving, for correcting, for instructing in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Catholic Church insists that the Bible does not contain all truth and therefore it alone cannot be our rule of faith. Cardinal Gibbons said, "The Catholic Church correctly teaches that our Lord and His apostles inculcated certain important duties of religion which were not recorded by the inspired writers. (See John xxi. 25)." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 73). John did not say that certain important duties were not recorded by the inspired writers. The verse simply says, "There are however, many other things that Jesus did; but if every one of these should be written, not even the world itself, I think, could hold the books that would have to be written." (John 21:25).

John was emphasizing that his gospel was only a brief account of what Jesus did. To write every detail of every breath, thought, and move of the life of Jesus would take a world full of books. John through the power of the Holy Spirit, wrote only those things which are essential. In a parallel verse, John himself said, "Many other signs also Jesus worked in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31).

Cardinal Gibbons said that "worship on Sunday" is an example of an important Christian duty that was left out of the inspired writings. He said, "But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, pp. 72-73; see also **The Faith of Millions**, p. 154). By this argument, the Catholic officials reveal their ignorance of the Bible. Through such falsehoods they deceive the hearts of millions of people.

The Bible explicitly enjoins the first day of the week (Sunday) as the day of worship. "Now concerning the contribution for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, as you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside..." (1 Cor. 16:1-2 Catholic Edition RSV). "And on the first day of the week, when we had met for the breaking of bread, Paul addressed them..." (Acts 20:7). Col. 2:14-16 and other passages clearly show that the law of Moses, Sabbath day worship included, was nailed to the cross.

The assertions that the Bible does not contain all truth by the Catholic writers reveal the true attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Bible. The Catholic Church does not have love and respect for the Bible; otherwise, why raise such false claims? The Catholic Church is not building men's faith in the Bible alone as the authority but is destroying it. It wants to place on equality with the Bible its own man made authorities; namely, Catholic human traditions, a human church, and the pope. However, those of us who truly love the Lord will follow only the Bible. It contains all truth, is a perfect and complete guide to eternal life, and is the only standard by which we will be judged.

6. Not understandable.

Following are quotations from the Catholic Church which state that the Scriptures are not understandable:

- ! "For the Scripture is not like other books, dictated by the Holy Ghost, it contains things of deepest importance, which in many instances are very difficult and obscure. To understand and explain such things there is always required the coming of the same Holy Ghost." (**Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII**, p. 227).
- ! "Second--a competent religious guide must be clear and intelligible to all, so that everyone may fully understand the true meaning of the instructions it contains. Is the Bible a book intelligible to all? Far from it; it is full of obscurities and difficulties not only for the illiterate, but even for the learned." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 70).
- ! "We must, therefore, conclude that the Scriptures **alone** cannot be a sufficient guide and rule of faith...because they are not of themselves clear and intelligible even in matters of the highest importance..." (Ibid., p. 73).
- ! "Secondly, the Bible is not a clear and intelligible guide to all." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 152).

As seen from the above, the Catholic Church claims that the Bible cannot be understood. It then declares that it alone is God's official interpreter to give the true meaning of the Bible. In this study we will examine the truthfulness of their first claim. We will discuss whether or not God made the Catholic Church the interpreter of His word under the heading, "**Is the Catholic Church Infallible?**"

The above statements of Catholic writers, calling the Bible an unclear and unintelligible book, clearly state the true attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Holy Scriptures. We state emphatically that their claim is false. The inspired writers declared that the things they wrote were understandable. "For we write nothing to you that you do not read and understand." (2 Cor. 1:13). "According to revelation the mystery has been made known to me, as you reading, may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ..." (Eph. 3:3-4 Rheims Trans.).

That which the word of God does and supplies to the hearts of men can be done only by an intelligible source. For example, "The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing to the soul..." (Psalm 19:8). "The revelation of your words sheds light, giving understanding to the simple." (Psalm 119:130). "And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32 Catholic Edition RSV). "For the word of God is living and efficient and keener than any two-edged sword...and a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Heb. 4:12). These things could not be said of a word which cannot be understood by all who receive it.

God requires that we understand: "Therefore do not become foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Would God command something that is impossible? God wants all men to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Is God desiring the impossible? God will judge all men by the Scriptures (Rev. 20:12). Will God judge men by a standard which cannot be understood? These things show that God's written word is indeed understandable. He wants us to understand it; moreover, He expects us to understand it.

The passages which compel us to study, search, and grow in knowledge imply that the Scriptures are understandable. "Carefully study to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15 Rheims Trans.). "Now these were of nobler character than those of Thessalonica and they received the word with great eagerness, studying the Scriptures every day to see whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11). "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 3:18). (See also Heb. 5:11-14; 1 Pet. 2:2; James 1:21,25; Rev. 1:3). The fact that God commands us to do these things shows that God Himself considers His word understandable. God made the mind of man and is fully capable of addressing man in words which he can understand. His sacred volume which He delivered to man can be understood and to argue otherwise is to raise insult to Him and to impeach His wisdom.

Catholics often use 2 Peter 1:20 in effort to prove that one cannot have a private interpretation. Please notice the following:

- ! "How can you get the true meaning of the Bible? You can get it only from God's official interpreter, the Catholic Church. 'This, then, you must understand first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation' (2nd Peter 1:20)." (**A Catechism for Adults**, p. 10).
- ! "No prophecy of scripture is made by private interpretation. This shows plainly that the scriptures are not to be expounded by any one's private judgment or private spirit..." (From a footnote on 2 Pet. 1:20, Douay-Rheims Version, p. 582).
- ! "...St. Peter...declared against private interpretation of the Scriptures (2 Pet. 1:20..." (**Father Smith Instructs Jackson**, p. 153).

We call your attention to the fact that they want you to make a private interpretation of the above verse. What kind of rule is it that says we can make a private interpretation of a verse which says we can't make a private interpretation. Catholics are always inconsistent on this point. They quote Scripture to support their doctrine expecting us to understand and expecting us to make a private interpretation. However, when we quote a passage which refutes their doctrine, they tell us that it is wrong to make a private

interpretation.

In the following we quote 2 Pet. 1:20 and the verse which follows it from two Catholic Versions. Please examine these verses carefully.

- ! "This, then you must understand first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation. For not by will of man was prophecy brought at any time; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Pet. 1:20-21 Confraternity Version).
- ! "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Pet. 1:20-21 Catholic Edition, Revised Standard Version).

Catholic writers usually only quote the first verse (verse 20). However, when putting the two verses together, it is easy to see that Peter is not saying one cannot have a private interpretation of Scripture, but is teaching that no prophecy of Scripture ever **came** by private interpretation. W.E. Vine's **Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** says the word "prophecy" denotes "the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God...in the N.T. it is used...either of the exercise of the gift or of that which is prophesied..." (p. 211). Mr. Vine defines "interpretation," "To loose, solve, explain, denotes a solution, explanation, lit., a release...2 Pet. 1:20 '(of private) interpretation;' i.e., the writers of Scripture did not put their own construction upon the 'God-breathed' words they wrote." (p. 268).

Thus, Peter is saying that no prophecy of Scripture (divine utterance of a prophet in writing) is made by private interpretation (it was not made by the prophet's own interpretation) **because** no prophecy (divine utterance of a prophet) ever came by the impulse of man (it did not come from the mind of man), but it came as the prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit. The passage affirms the inspiration of the Scriptures. They did not originate from private interpretations or private wills of men, but came from holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus expected the people of his day to privately interpret the Scriptures. He used such terms as "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39), "have you not read?" (Matt. 12:3,5; 19:4; 21:16,42; 22:31), "is it not written in your law?" (John 10:34; Luke 10:26) which show that the people were obligated to read and interpret the Scriptures. Furthermore, He quoted the Scriptures as the final source of authority (Matt. 22:29-32; Mark 7:9-13) and showed the consequences of failing to abide in them, e.g., "You err, not knowing the Scriptures..." (Matt. 22:29 Rheims Trans.), "Thus making void the word of God through your traditions" (Mark 7:13 Catholic Edition RSV). These things show that Jesus wanted and required a private interpretation of Scripture.

The apostles and prophets likewise required that people make private interpretations of Scripture (Acts 17:2-3; 18:28) and the people did that very thing (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:15). Actually, every passage in the Bible that is addressed to the individual shows that God wants and expects a private interpretation. We are commanded and exhorted: grow in knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), study (2 Tim. 2:15), exercise senses (Heb. 5:14), search (Acts 17:11), receive (James 1:21), read (Eph. 3:3-4), desire it (1 Pet. 2:2), let it unfold (Psalm 119:130), meditate on it (Psalm 1:2), hear it read (Rev. 1:3), have it preached (2 Tim. 4:2-4), test what is said (1 John 4:1), prove all things (1 Thess. 5:21). All of these show that a private interpretation of Scripture is possible and necessary.

We have examined various quotes from Catholic authorities which affirm that the Bible cannot be understood. We now investigate their claims concerning the Bible not being clear and intelligible. As we have emphasized repeatedly, Catholic officials raise such accusations against the Bible in effort to prove that the Scriptures alone are not the standard of authority in religion. Their attempts to destroy the Scriptures as the sole authority reveal the true attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Bible. Notice, again, these quotes from Catholic sources:

- ! "Secondly, the Bible is not a clear and intelligible guide to all. There are many passages in the Bible which are difficult and obscure, not only to the ordinary person, but to the highly trained scholar as well. St. Peter himself tells us that in the Epistles of St. Paul there are 'certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and the unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.' (II Peter, 3:16)." (**The Faith of Millions**, pp. 152-153).
- ! "Second--A competent religious guide must be clear and intelligible to all, so that everyone may fully understand the true meaning of the instructions it contains. Is the Bible a book intelligible to all? Far from it; it is full of obscurities and difficulties not only for the illiterate, but even for the learned. St. Peter himself informs us that in the Epistles of St. Paul there are 'certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and the unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.' (II Pet. iii. 16)." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 70).

The passage quoted above by the two Catholic writers does not state that the Scriptures are not clear and intelligible to all. Peter simply said that in Paul's writings are certain things "**hard**" (not "impossible") to be understood. He said that the unlearned and unstable distort these, as they do the other Scriptures (the Old Testament ones) to their own destruction. In other words, their misuse (twisting, distorting, misapplying) of the Scriptures would cause their eternal destruction. Peter went on to say in the next verses, "You therefore, brethren, since you know this beforehand, be on your guard lest, carried away by the error of the foolish, you fall away from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 3:17-18). Thus, Peter admonished Christians to grow in knowledge lest they, too, being led away by the error of the wicked fall from their own steadfastness or lest they, too, like the unlearned and unstable, twist and distort difficult passages, causing their own destruction. This instruction of the beloved apostle is far removed from the Catholic claim that the Scriptures alone are not a sufficient guide.

Everyone knows that it is possible to misunderstand certain passages of the Bible. This is especially true when one gets help from the clergy. Some get expert help to misunderstand the Bible and they in turn become ready experts to help others misunderstand. There is much misunderstanding and confusion when men try to harmonized Catholic teaching with the Bible for in many instances it is contrary to it. For example, the Catholic Church practices pouring water as a mode for baptism, but the Bible teaches immersion or a burial in water (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12; Acts 8:38-39). Thus, in such matters, instead of rejecting the false teaching of the Catholic Church, many conclude that the Bible is an obscure and difficult book.

No one would say that everything in the Bible is easily understood. If everything was easily understood, God would not have required study. However, men can easily understand what they must do in order to

go to heaven. The plan of salvation is plain and simple. None will be able to stand before God at the judgment and say, "Lord, I just couldn't understand it." Everyone can understand if he so desires (John 7:17). The Scriptures will instruct one to heaven if he will only avail himself of them (2 Tim. 3:15). Isaiah prophesying of the coming New Testament Way, said, "This shall be unto you a straight way, so that fools shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8).

We freely admit that many do not understand the Scriptures today. When men fail to do so, it does not mean that the holy writings cannot be understood. The written word of God forever remains the only guide which instructs to salvation (2 Tim. 3:15-17). When men do not understand it, the fault lies with them, not with the word itself. Many fail to understand the Scriptures because they do not study (2 Tim. 2:15). Many do not understand because they blindly follow religious leaders without investigation (1 John 4:1). A great number do not understand because they are prejudiced and closed minded (Matt. 13:15; 2 Tim. 4:3-4). Many do not understand because they twist and corrupt the word of God (2 Pet. 3:16; 2 Cor. 2:17). Many do not understand simply because they do not love the truth (2 Thess. 2:10-12). The holy Scriptures can be and are understood by those who love the truth. Those who do not love the truth declare that the Scriptures are not understandable.

7. Not a safe method.

Present day Catholics want people to believe that the Catholic Church has faith in the Bible, is the church described in the Bible, and encourages its members to read and study the Bible. However, when Catholics try to refute the Bible as the **sole** authority in religion, their true attitude toward the Bible is disclosed. All of their claims of love and respect toward the Bible are nullified when they attempt to destroy the Bible as the only guide and standard. An example of this is their assertion that the Bible is not a clear, safe method for learning the teaching of Christ. Please notice the following quotations from Catholic sources:

- ! "The Bible does not pretend to be a formulary of belief, as in a creed or catechism. There is nowhere in the New Testament a clear, methodical statement of the teaching of Christ" (**Question Box**, p. 66).
- ! "The very nature of the Bible ought to prove to any thinking man the impossibility of its being the one safe method to find out what the Savior taught." (Ibid., p. 67).

The above quotes are charges levied against the Bible regarding the way it was written. They claim that since the Bible is not like a creed or catechism which makes a systematic listing of things to be believed and practiced, it ought to prove that it is not a safe method. First of all, we deny their claim that the Bible does not have a clear, methodical statement of the teaching of Christ. Luke said that he wrote an orderly account of all that Jesus began to do and teach (Acts 1:1; Luke 1:1-4). One cannot read the books of Romans, Hebrews and others without seeing the systematic design of the writers. Furthermore, the fact that all of the Bible is not written in an orderly fashion does not prove that it is not the one and only guide. It only proves that God did not wish to do it that way. There are many possible reasons why God chose to have His word written in the way He did; e.g., it makes it less boring to read, men easily learn by the examples of others, putting forth effort in learning God's will is a way of serving God, etc. Whether we understand God's intended purpose or not, we dare not speak against His way and claim that it is not a safe method.

Again, quoting from Catholic sources:

- ! "Again it has ever been practically impossible for men, generally, to find out Christ from the Bible only." (**Question Box**, p. 70).
- ! "...The Bible nowhere implies that it is the only source of faith." (Ibid., p. 77).
- ! "The Bible was not intended to be a textbook of Christian religion." (**Catholic Facts**, p. 50).

John the apostle said, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31). Thus, John taught that men could find out Christ from the Bible only. Catholics claim that the Bible nowhere implies that it is the only source of faith and it was not intended to be a textbook of the Christian religion. However, the following passages demonstrate that the very opposite is true:

The scriptures furnish:

- ! All necessary things which Jesus did - Acts 1:1-2.
- ! Certainty of His action and teaching - Luke 1:3-4.
- ! Life in the name of Jesus - John 20:30-31.
- ! Instructions to salvation - 2 Tim. 3:15.
- ! Commands of the Lord - 1 Cor. 14:37.
- ! The proper conduct - 1 Tim. 3:14-15.
- ! Every good work - 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
- ! Protection against sin - 1 John 2:1.
- ! An assurance of eternal life - 1 John 5:13.
- ! Standard by which teachers are tested - Acts 17:11.
- ! Standard which we cannot go beyond - 1 Cor. 4:6.
- ! Blessings from God - Rev. 1:3.
- ! Joy that is complete - 1 John 1:3-4.
- ! Standard of judgment - Rev. 20:12.

The above passages imply that the Scriptures were intended to be a textbook of the Christian religion. The Scriptures instruct us to heaven, provide the good works that are pleasing to God, give strength and comfort, etc. Furthermore, the above passages imply that the Bible is the **only** source of faith. For example, the Bible is the standard by which teachers are tested. It is the law of God which we cannot go beyond. Also, the fact that the Bible is the only standard by which we will be judged shows that it is the only source of faith. We will not be judged by the decrees of the popes, tradition, or the laws of the church, but by the Bible only.

8. Is a dead letter.

In order to sustain the claim that the Bible must have an infallible interpreter, Catholic officials argue that the Bible is a dead and speechless book. Please notice the following quotes from Catholic sources:

- ! "The Scriptures indeed is a divine book but it is a dead letter, which has to be explained, and cannot exercise the action which the preacher can obtain." (**Our Priesthood**, p. 155).
- ! "...A dead and speechless book." (**Question Box**, p. 67).
- ! "The simple fact is that the Bible, like all dead letters, calls for a living interpreter." (**The Faith**

of Millions, p. 155).

- ! "Through Luther, although Calvin seems to have been the first to announce Monobiblicism clearly, the Bible became the arm of the Protestant revolt. A dumb and difficult book was substituted for the living voice of the Church, in order that each one should be able to make for himself the religion which suited his feelings. And the Bible open before every literate man and woman to interpret for themselves was the attractive bait to win adherents..." (**A Catholic Commentary**, p. 11).

As one can readily see, the above accusations against the Bible are made in effort to sustain the Catholic claim that the Bible needs a infallible interpreter. We have chosen to consider the arguments for the infallible interpreter under the heading, "**Is the Catholic Church Infallible?**" We wish to show here that the Bible is not a dead letter, a dead and speechless book, or a dumb and difficult book as Catholic officials claim. Such claims reveal their true attitude toward the Bible. It is one of utter disrespect for God's holy word. We quote the holy Scriptures to show that their claims amount to nothing more than man's word against God's word. We remind you that in spiritual matters, "God is true, and every man is a liar..." (Rom. 3:4).

- ! "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Heb. 4:12 Catholic Edition RSV).
- ! "You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God." (1 Pet. 1:23 Cath. Edition RSV).
- ! "Are not my words as a fire, saith the Lord; and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29).
- ! "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to Jew first and then to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16).

From the above passages, does it appear that the Bible is a dumb, dead, speechless book? Various Catholic writers refer to Rom. 10:17 as proof that we must hear a living voice and not the Bible to obtain faith (See **Question Box**, p. 79; **The Faith of Millions**, pp. 155-156). Rom. 10: 17 says, "Faith then depends on hearing, and hearing on the word of Christ." They seem to think that hearing cannot come from the written word; hence, one must hear the living voice of the Catholic Church to receive faith. However, many years after Moses and Old Testament prophets were dead, the rich man was told that his brothers had Moses and the prophets and "let them hear them." (Luke 16:31). They were to hear Moses and the prophets by hearing the written word of Moses and the prophets. John the apostle wrote letters to the seven churches of Asia and said to them, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Rev. 2:7). They were to hear by reading what was written in the letters.

Consequently, acceptable faith comes by hearing the written word of God. Faith came by hearing the inspired men so long as the New Testament was in the inspired men, but it now comes by hearing the written word of the New Testament. The New Testament (the gospel) is the power of God unto salvation regardless if one receives it by hearing, or by personally reading it. It is living and active, quick and powerful, and needs only to be heard, learned and obeyed in order that one might come to Jesus (John 6:45), and be instructed to salvation (2 Tim. 3:15).

9. Does more harm than good.

The Catholic Church occupies a very difficult position which makes it necessary to contradict itself continually. For the benefit of Protestantism, it presents the image of lover and defender of the Bible, for she knows that Protestants whom she hopes to convert into her fold, will not take seriously a religious body that scorns the Bible. Yet, at the same time, lest people are converted to the position of the Bible only and leave the Catholic Church, it presents the image of skepticism, antagonism, and contempt for the Bible.

Please notice the following quotes from Catholic sources:

- ! "Since it is clear from experience that if the Sacred Books are permitted everywhere and without discrimination in the vernacular (in the common language of the people, D.R.) there will by reasons of the boldness of men arise therefrom more harm than good..." (**Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent**, p. 274).
- ! "As it has been clearly shown by experience that, if the holy Bible in the vernacular is generally permitted without any distinction, more harm than utility is thereby caused..." (**Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII**, pp. 412-413).
- ! "In early times the Bible was read freely by the lay people...New dangers came in during the Middle Ages...To meet those evils, the Council of Toulouse (1229) and Terragona (1234) forbade the laity to read the vernacular translations of the Bible. Pius IV required bishops to refuse lay persons leave to read even Catholic versions of Scripture unless their confessors or parish priests judged that such reading was likely to prove beneficial." (**Catholic Dictionary**, p. 82).

Our reply to the above is that the reading of the Bible does more harm than good to the Catholic Church! When men begin to study the Bible, they will come to respect it as God's only guide to heaven as it claims for itself (2 Tim. 3:15-17). This, naturally, puts them in direct opposition to the Catholic Church. No institution on earth has as much to fear from reading the Bible as does the Catholic Church. When men read it they begin to see that Catholicism is not in the Bible, and that the Catholic Church has discarded many things taught in the Bible.

Following is a list of twenty-one passages which condemn various teachings and practices of the Catholic Church.

1. Exodus 20:4-5 (Images).
2. Ezekiel 18:20 (Original sin).
3. Matthew 20:20-28 (Hierarchy).
4. Matthew 23:5-6 (Clerical dress).
5. Matthew 23:9 ("Father").
6. Matthew 28:19 (Infant baptism).
7. Mark 7:8,13 (Tradition).
8. Luke 11:27-28 (Adoration of Mary).
9. Luke 16:26 (Purgatory)
10. Luke 22:24-27 (Primacy of Peter).
11. Romans 6:4 (Pouring).
12. 1 Corinthians 1:2 ("Saints").

13. Galatians 4:9-11 (Special days).
14. 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (Pope has place of God).
15. 1 Timothy 2:5 (Many Mediators).
16. 1 Timothy 3:2 (Unmarried bishops).
17. 1 Timothy 4:3 (Forbid marriage).
18. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (Many authorities).
19. Hebrews 8:12 (Indulgences).
20. James 5:16 (Confess to priest).
21. 1 Pet. 2:5,9 ("Priesthood").

As we said, no religious institution on earth has as much to fear about its members reading the Bible as the Catholic Church. When Catholics study the Bible they learn that in order to please God, they must discard the many false doctrines which their church has accumulated over the centuries. Following is an excerpt from an address given by the Cardinals to Pope Pius III, and is preserved in the National Library in Paris, Folio No. 1068, Vol. 2, pp. 650-651:

- ! "Of all the advice that we can offer your holiness we must open your eyes well and use all possible force in the matter, namely to permit the reading of the gospel as little as possible in all the countries under your jurisdiction. Let the very little part of the gospel suffice which is usually read in mass, and let no one be permitted to read more. So long as people will be content with the small amount, your interest will prosper; but as soon as the people want to read more, your interest will fail. The Bible is a book, which more than any other, has raised against us the tumults and tempests by which we have almost perished. In fact, if one compares the teaching of the Bible with what takes place in our churches, he will soon find discord, and will realize that our teachings are often different from the Bible, and oftener still, contrary to it.

Notice, again, the following quotes from Catholic sources:

- ! "The hundreds of sects, with their divisions and subdivisions, which the Religious Census of the United States Government lists in our own country, offer grim evidence of the ceaseless dissension and havoc which the principle of the private interpretation of Scripture has wrought in our own day." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 153).
- ! "In sharp contrast with the sorry spectacle of Protestantism with its hundreds of warring sects and creeds, agreeing with one another only in their disagreement with all others, there is the Catholic Church with its 431,000,000 members--more than twice the total of all the sects of Protestantism combined--speaking every tongue and in every land under the heavens, all united in the strong bonds of a common faith." (Ibid., p. 156).
- ! "The reformation produced indeed an exaggerated individualism, which by declaring every man equally competent to find out the doctrine of the Savior from his own private reading of the Scriptures, has led millions to the utter denial of Christ." (**Question Box**, p. 131; there is a similar statement from Archbishop Spalding in his book entitled, **Miscellanea**, p. 392).

What the Catholic writer above really means by the statement that "private interpretation has led millions to utter denial of Christ" is that Bible study has led millions to utter denial of the Catholic Church. Private interpretation of the Scriptures is not the cause of religious division. The word "interpretation" means "1.

to explain the meaning of, and 2. to conceive in the light of individual belief, judgment, or circumstance." (**Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary**). The inspired writers taught that men could privately interpret or understand the Scriptures. "Therefore do not become foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. 5:17). "For we write nothing to you that you do not read and understand." (2 Cor. 1:13). "...The mystery has been made know to me, as I have written above in few words; as you reading my understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:3-4 Rheims Trans.) Thus, God requires a private interpretation of the Scriptures.

Catholic officials would like men to believe that the Catholic Church has unity, whereas those who hold to the bible only have had utter division. However, the truth of the matter is that the Catholic Church is the mother of division. Every major division that is in Christianity originated with and came out of the Catholic Church. In 1050 the Catholic Church split and there was the great schism between the West and the East. A few hundred years later, there was a split and the Anglican Church was started. It claimed to honor many of the very same bishops and trace its lineage back to the apostles over much the same route. A division occurred in Catholicism when the Lutheran Church broke away; it was another branch or division within Catholicism. The bulk of Protestant denominations today are branches and sects of groups which originally broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. Even today those who have knowledge of the current trends know that the Catholic Church is not united.

The great disrespect that the Catholic Church has toward the Bible is the prime cause of division in the Religious world. In this study we have examined many of the charges it makes against the Bible. Such charges lead men away from the Bible and cause them to distrust it as the only rule of faith. It does this even in so-called Protestantism because many of the same charges are repeated by Protestants. Very few Protestants today truly respect the Bible as God's sole authority in religion. In fact, most of their doctrines originated in the Catholic Church rather than in the Bible, e.g., infant baptism, instrumental music in worship, observance of Christmas and Easter. The only authority they have for these and many others is the Catholic Church. Holding to the Bible alone does not cause division, but to the contrary, is the only true means of unity. The solution for overcoming division among us is to reject all the unscriptural practices which have been introduced by men and go back to the Bible. We must completely denounce all the decrees, doctrines, and traditions of men and fully return to the written word of Christ, the New Testament. This is the only way to please God and to be united in His name.

Conclusion

We have shown the true attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Bible. Its attitude vividly comes to light when it tries to prove that the Bible alone is not the standard of authority. It is an attitude of utter disrespect for God's written word.

The Catholic Church claims that the Bible was not intended to be written (**Plain Facts for Fair Minds**, p. 26), was not intended to be circulated (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 66), was not expected to be gathered into one volume (**Our Faith and the Facts**, p. 348), is not accessible to all (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 152), does not contain all truth (**A Catechism for Adults**, p. 52), is not understandable (**Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII**, p. 227), is not a safe method (**Question Box**, p. 67), is a dead

letter (**Our Priesthood**, p. 155), and does more harm than good (**Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent**, p. 274). These many accusations against the Bible reveal that the Catholic Church is not the friend of the Bible but the enemy, and is not building men's faith in it but is destroying it. They exemplify that the Catholic Church is not true and loyal to the Bible, but seeks to undermine, weaken and nullify it from its God ordained place.

In view of the foregoing, consider the absurdity of the following words from a Catholic priest: "The simple fact is the Catholic Church loves the Bible, reveres it as the inspired word of God, gives to it a loyalty and a intelligent obedience greater than any other religious body in the world" (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 143). The same priest at the same time was laboring under the caption at the beginning of the chapter, "Why the Bible alone is not a safe guide in religion" (p. 141). Within a few pages he concludes, "From all of which it must be abundantly clear that the Bible alone is not a safe and competent guide because it is not now and has never been accessible to all, because it is not clear and intelligible to all, and because it does not contain all the truths of the Christian religion." (p. 155).

I close by stating, as I have earnestly and sincerely labored to prove, and as I honestly and confidently believe, that the Bible alone is a safe and competent guide to eternal life. It is within the reach of every inquirer after truth, is clear and intelligible to all, and contains all the truths of the Christian religion.

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Christ, the Only Foundation and Head

By David J. Riggs

First Corinthians 3:11 should be the end of all controversy as to the rock or foundation on which the church is built. It says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Thus, Jesus is the one and only sure foundation that will stand through time and eternity; all others are but sinking sand.

Jesus has all authority both in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). He is head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22-23) and holds the preeminence in everything (Col. 1:18). His kingdom is a spiritual one (Luke 17:20-21) and, therefore, has a spiritual king only. Jesus did not appoint any man or group of men to preside over His church. The function of the apostles and prophets was to deliver His will concerning the church and not to personally devise laws and regulations for it. His church has no earthly president or headquarters because He Himself is its only head.

Jesus is now reigning from heaven. He was promised the throne of His father David (Luke 1:31-33) and was raised up to sit on it (Acts 2:29-31). Jesus sat down on the throne after He ascended into heaven (Heb. 8:1; Rev. 3:21). He would be priest at the same time He sat and ruled upon His throne (Zech. 6:12-13). He became the high priest when He sat down on the right hand of God (Heb. 3:1; 10:11-12). He was to receive the kingdom when He received dominion and glory (Dan. 7:13-14). He received dominion and glory when He went into heaven and was placed on the right hand of God (1 Pet. 1:21; 3:22). Christ, therefore, is now reigning over His kingdom at the right hand of the Father.

The Scriptures use numerous terms which reveal Christ's exalted relationship to the church. With reference to the structure of the church, He is its foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). Regarding its construction, He is its builder (Matt. 16:18). Concerning its glorious end, He is its savior (Eph. 5:23). With reference to its ownership, He is its purchaser (Acts 20:28). Regarding its completeness, He is its fulness (Eph. 1:22-23).

Christ alone is the foundation and head of His church; He has full and absolute dominion over it. He has all authority both in heaven and on earth. Man's responsibility is to humbly submit to His will. James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, in his book, "**The Faith of Our Fathers**, on page 82 says, "Jesus, our Lord, founded but one Church, which he was pleased to build on Peter. Therefore, any church that does not recognize Peter as its foundation stone is not the Church of Christ, and therefore cannot stand, for it is not the work of God."

As we have shown, the Word of God declares plainly that Jesus Christ is the only foundation on which the church is built. It ordains no other; it allows no other. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11). Thus, any church which does not recognize Christ as its only foundation cannot be the church of Christ.

Did the Catholic Church Give us the Bible?

By David J. Riggs

Catholics contend that the whole world is indebted to the Roman Catholic church for the existence of the Bible. This is another of their attempts to exalt the church as an authority in addition to the Bible. Please notice the following from Catholic sources:

- ! "If she had not scrutinized carefully the writings of her children, rejecting some and approving others as worthy of inclusion in the canon of the New Testament, there would be no New Testament today.
- ! "If she had not declared the books composing the New Testament to be **inspired** word of God, we would not know it.
- ! "The only authority which non-Catholics have for the inspiration of the Scriptures is the authority of the Catholic Church." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 145).
- ! "It is only by the divine authority of the Catholic Church that Christians know that the scripture is the word of God, and what books certainly belong to the Bible." (**The Question Box**, p. 46).
- ! "It was the Catholic Church and no other which selected and listed the inspired books of both the Old Testament and the New Testament...If you can accept the Bible or any part of it as inspired Word of God, you can do so only because the Catholic Church says it is." (**The Bible is a Catholic Book**, p. 4).

The Catholic writers quoted above state that one can accept the Bible as being inspired and as having authority only on the basis of the Catholic Church. In reality, the Bible is inspired and has authority, not because a church declared it so, but because God made it so. God delivered it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and declared that it would abide forever. "All scripture is inspired of God..." (2 Tim. 3:16). "...Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21). "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." (Matt. 24:35). "The grass withered, and the flower has fallen--but the word of the Lord endures forever." (1 Pet. 1:24-25). The Catholics are wrong, therefore, in their assumption that the Bible is authoritative only because of the Catholic Church. The Bible does not owe its existence to the Catholic Church, but to the authority, power and providence of God.

It would seem unnecessary for the Catholic Church to make the boastful claim of giving the Bible to the world when both it and so-called Protestantism accept the Bible as a revelation from God. However, it is an attempt to weaken the Bible as the sole authority and to replace it with their man-made church. If it is true that we can accept the Bible only on the basis of the Catholic Church, doesn't that make the Catholic Church superior to the Bible? This is exactly what Catholic officials want men to believe. Their only problem is that their doctrine comes from their own human reasoning rather than from God. Their logic is a classic example of their "circle reasoning." They try to prove the Bible by the church (can accept the Bible only on the basis of the Catholic Church) and prove the church by the Bible ("has ever grounded her doctrines upon it"). Such is absurd reasoning which proves nothing. Either the New Testament is the sole authority or it is not. If it is the New Testament, it cannot be the church, and if it is the church, it cannot be the New Testament.

Notice, again, the following from Catholic sources:

- ! "Because it never was a Bible, till the infallible Church pronounced it to be so. The separate treatises, each of them inspired, were lying, as it were dispersedly; easy to confound with others, that were uninspired. The Church gathered them up, selected them, pronounced judgment on them; rejecting some, which she defined and declared not to be canonical, because not inspired; adopting others as being inspired, and therefore canonical." (**What Is the Bible?** p. 6).
- ! "And since the books of the Bible constituting both the Old and the New Testament were determined solely by the authority of the Catholic Church, without the Church there would have been no Bible, and hence no Protestantism." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 10).

In addition to the above, Catholics often boast that the Bible was written by Catholics, e.g., "All the books of the New Testament were written by Catholics." (**The Bible is a Catholic Book**, p. 14). When we consider the word "catholic" as meaning "universal," we readily admit that the writers were "catholic" in that sense; they were members of the church universal--the church of Christ which is described in the New Testament Scriptures (Col. 1:18; Rom. 16:16). However, we firmly deny that the writers of the New Testament were members of the Roman Catholic Church as we know it today. The Roman Catholic Church was not fully developed until several hundred years after the New Testament was written. It is not the same institution as disclosed in the New Testament. The New Testament books were written by members of the Lord's church, but they are not its author. God Himself is the author of the New Testament.

The Catholic officials above claim that without the Catholic Church there would be no Bible; they argue that mankind can accept the Scriptures only on the basis of the Catholic Church which gathered the books and determined which were inspired. Surely the Catholic Church cannot claim that it gave us the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament came through the Jews (God's chosen people of old) who had the holy oracles entrusted to them. Paul said, "What advantage then remains to the Jew, or what is the use of circumcision? Much in every respect. First, indeed, because the oracles of God were entrusted to them." (Rom. 3:1-2; see also Rom. 9:4-5; Acts 7:38).

The Old Testament books were gathered into one volume and were translated from Hebrew into Greek long before Christ came to earth. The **Septuagint Version** was translated by seventy scholars at Alexandria, Egypt around the year 227 B.C., and this was the version Christ and His apostles used. Christ did not tell the people, as Catholics do today, that they could accept the Scriptures only on the basis of the authority of those who gathered them and declared them to be inspired. He urged the people of His day to follow the Old Testament Scriptures as the infallible guide, not because man or any group of men has sanctioned them as such, but because they came from God. Furthermore, He understood that God-fearing men and women would be able to discern by evidence (external and internal) which books were of God and which were not; thus, He never raised questions and doubts concerning the gathering of the inspired books.

If the Bible is a Catholic book, why does it nowhere mention the Catholic Church? Why is there no mention of a pope, a cardinal, an archbishop, a parish priest, a nun, or a member of any other Catholic order? If the Bible is a Catholic book, why is auricular confession, indulgences, prayers to the saints, adoration of Mary, veneration of relics and images, and many other rites and ceremonies of the Catholic

Church, left out of it?

If the Bible is a Catholic book, how can Catholics account for the passage, "A bishop then, must be blameless, married but once, reserved, prudent, of good conduct, hospitable, a teacher...He should rule well his own household, keeping his children under control and perfectly respectful. For if a man cannot rule his own household, how is he to take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim. 3:2, 4-5). The Catholic Church does not allow a bishop to marry, while the Bible says "he must be married." Furthermore, if the Bible is a Catholic book, why did they write the Bible as it is, and feel the necessity of putting footnotes at the bottom of the page in effort to keep their subject from believing what is in the text?

The following list give a summation of what we have been trying to emphasize. If the Bible is a Catholic book,

1. Why does it condemn clerical dress? (Matt. 23:5-6).
2. Why does it teach against the adoration of Mary? (Luke 11:27-28).
3. Why does it show that all Christians are priests? (1 Pet. 2:5,9).
4. Why does it condemn the observance of special days? (Gal. 4:9-11).
5. Why does it teach that all Christians are saints? (1 Cor. 1:2).
6. Why does it condemn the making and adoration of images? (Ex. 20:4-5).
7. Why does it teach that baptism is immersion instead of pouring? (Col. 2:12).
8. Why does it forbid us to address religious leaders as "father"? (Matt. 23:9).
9. Why does it teach that Christ is the only foundation and not the apostle Peter? (1 Cor. 3:11).
10. Why does it teach that there is one mediator instead of many? (1 Tim. 2:5).
11. Why does it teach that a bishop must be a married man? (1 Tim. 3:2, 4-5).
12. Why is it opposed to the primacy of Peter? (Luke 22:24-27).
13. Why does it oppose the idea of purgatory? (Luke 16:26).
14. Why is it completely silent about infant baptism, instrumental music in worship, indulgences, confession to priests, the rosary, the mass, and many other things in the Catholic Church?

Please notice further quotes from Catholic sources:

- ! "During those early times parts of the Bible were scattered among the various churches, no one of which had the complete Bible as we have it now. Then in A.D. 390, at the Council of Hippo, the Catholic Church gathered together the various books which claimed to be scripture, passed on the merits and claims of each and this council decided which were inspired and which were not. The Catholic Church put all the inspired books and epistles together in one volume and THAT is the Bible as we have it today. The Catholic Church therefore gave to the people and the World, the Bible as we have it today." (From a magazine advertisement published by the Knights of Columbus bearing the title, "**Who Gave the Bible to the People?**")
- ! "It was not until the Council of Hippo in 390 that the Church gathered these gospels and epistles, scattered about in different churches, and placed them within the covers of a single book, giving the Bible to the world." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 152).
- ! "Indeed, when you accept the Bible as the Word of God, you are obliged to receive it on the authority of the Catholic Church, who was the sole Guardian of the Scriptures for fifteen

hundred years." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 68).

- ! "When were all these writings put together? The Catholic Church put all of them in one book between the years 350 and 405." (**A Catechism for Adults**, p. 10).

Thus, Catholics argue that since the Council of Hippo in 390 A.D. proclaimed which books were actually inspired and placed them in one volume, all are indebted to the Catholic Church for the New Testament and can accept it only on the authority of the Catholic Church. There are several things wrong with this. First, it cannot be proven that the church which held the Council of Hippo in 390 A.D. was the same church which is now known as the Roman Catholic Church. For example, the church of 390 had no crucifixes and images because, "The first mention of Crucifixes are in the sixth century" and "The whole tradition of veneration holy images gradually and naturally developed" (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. VII, p. 667). The church of 390 took communion under both kinds because that was the prevailing practice until it was formally abolished in 1416 A.D. (See **Lives and Times of the Roman Pontiffs**, Vol. I, p. 111). The church of 390 was a church altogether different from the Roman Catholic Church today.

Furthermore, in the proceedings of the Council of Hippo, the bishops did not mention nor give the slightest hint that they were for the first time "officially" cataloging the books of the Bible for the world. It was not until the fourth session of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) that the bishops and high ranking officials of the Catholic Church "officially" cataloged the books they thought should be included in the Bible and bound them upon the consciences of all Catholics. (See **Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent**, pp. 17-18).

Secondly, God did not give councils the authority to select His sacred books, nor does He expect men to receive His sacred books only because of councils or on the basis of councils. It takes no vote or sanction of a council to make the books of the Bible authoritative. Men were able to rightly discern which books were inspired before the existence of ecclesiastical councils and men can do so today. A council of men in 390 with no divine authority whatever, supposedly took upon itself the right to state which books were inspired, and Catholics argue, "We can accept the Bible only on the authority of the Catholic Church." Can we follow such reasoning?

Thirdly, it cannot be proven that the Catholic Church is solely responsible for the gathering and selection of the New Testament books. In fact, it can be shown that the New Testament books were gathered into one volume and were in circulation long before the Catholic Church claims to have taken its action in 390 at the council of Hippo. In the following we list some of the catalogues of the books of the Bible which are given by early Christian writers.

- ! 326. Athanasius, bishop at Alexandria, mentions all of the New Testament books.
- ! 315-386. Cyril, bishop at Jerusalem, gives a list of all New Testament books except Revelation.
- ! 270. Eusebius, bishop at Caesarea, called the Father of ecclesiastical history, gives an account of the persecution of Emperor Diocletian whose edict required that all churches be destroyed and the Scriptures burned. He lists all the books of the New Testament. He was commissioned by Constantine to have transcribed fifty copies of the Bible for use of the churches of Constantinople.
- ! 185-254. Origen, born at Alexandria, names all the books of both the Old and New

Testaments.

- ! 165-220. Clement, of Alexandria, names all the books of the New Testament except Philemon, James, 2 Peter and 3 John. In addition we are told by Eusebius, who had the works of Clement, that he gave explanations and quotations from all the canonical books.
- ! 160-240. Turtullian, contemporary of Origen and Clement, mentions all the New Testament books except 2 Peter, James and 2 John.
- ! 135-200. Irenaeus, quoted from all New Testament books except Philemon, Jude, James and 3 John.
- ! 100-147. Justin Martyr, mentions the Gospels as being four in number and quotes from them and some of the epistles of Paul and Revelation.
- ! Besides the above, the early church fathers have handed down in their writings quotations from all the New Testament books so much so that it is said that the entire New Testament can be reproduced from their writings alone.

Thus, the New Testament books were in existence in their present form at the close of the apostolic age. As a matter of fact, the apostles themselves put their writings into circulation. "And when this letter has been read among you, see that it be read in the church of the Laodiceans also; and that you yourselves read the letter from Laodicea." (Col. 4:16). "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren." (1 Thess. 5:27). The holy Scriptures were written for all (1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1) and all will be judged by them in the last day (Rev. 20:12; John 12:48). Jesus said that His Word will abide forever (Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

Fourthly, the Catholic claim of giving the Bible to the world cannot be true because they have not been the sole possessor of the Bible at any time. Some of the most valuable Greek Bibles and Versions have been handed down to us from non-Roman Catholic sources. A notable example of this is the **Codex Sinaiticus** which was found in the monastery of St. Catherine (of the Greek Orthodox Church) at Mount Sinai in 1844 and is now in the British Museum. It contains all of the books of the New Testament and all but small portions of the Old Testament. Scholars are certain that this manuscript was made early in the fourth century, not later than 350 A.D. This manuscript found by a German scholar named, Tischendorf, who was a Protestant, and this manuscript which is the most complete of all has never been in the hands of the Roman Catholic Church.

Another valuable manuscript that has never been possessed by the Roman Catholic Church is the **Codex Alexandrianus**. It, too, is now on exhibit in the manuscript room of the British Museum in London. It was a gift from the Patriarch of Constantinople (of the Greek Orthodox Church) to Charles I in 1628. It had been in possession of the Patriarchs for centuries and originally came from Alexandria, Egypt from which it gets its name. Scholars are certain that this manuscript was also made in the fourth century and, along with the **Codex Sinaiticus**, is thought to be one of the fifty Greek Bibles commissioned to be copied by Constantine.

In the light of the foregoing, the boastful claim of the Roman Catholic Church that it has been the sole guardian and preserver of the sacred Scriptures down to the present, is nothing but pure falsehood. The Bible is not a Catholic book. Catholics did not write it, nor does their doctrines and church meet the

description of the doctrine and church of which it speaks. The New Testament was completed before the end of the first century, A.D. The things in it do not correspond to the Catholic Church which hundreds of years after the death of the apostles slowly evolved into what it now is. The Catholic Church is not the original and true church, but a "church" born of many departures and corruptions from the New Testament church. Even if the Catholic Church could prove that it alone is the sole deliverer of the Scriptures to man today, it still remains that the Catholic Church is not following the Bible and is contrary to the Bible. Furthermore, even if the Catholic Church could show conclusively that it alone is responsible for gathering the books, it does not prove that the Catholic Church is infallible, nor does it prove that it is the author of the Bible. God has at times used evil agencies to accomplish His purpose (Jer. 27:6-8; 43:10; Hab. 1:5-11; John 11:49-52).

We have studied, therefore, that the Catholic Church argues that since one of its councils in 390 selected the sacred books, one can accept them only on the basis of its authority. We have answered by showing: (1) The Bible is inspired and has authority, not because a church declared it so but because God made it so. (2) Jesus did not teach the people in His day that they could accept the Old Testament Scriptures only on the basis of those who placed the books into one volume. (3) It is a mere assumption that the Council of Hippo in 390 was a Council of the church which is now the Roman Catholic Church. (4) God did not give councils the authority to select His sacred books, nor does He expect men to receive His books only on the basis of councils. (5) The Catholic Church is not solely responsible for the gathering and selection of the New Testament books. (6) The Catholic Church has not been the sole possessor of the Bible at any time. (7) Even if it could be proven that the Catholic Church gathered the books into one volume, it still remains that it is not following the Bible today.

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Examining Catholic Successors

By David J. Riggs

The aim of this study is to carefully examine the Scriptures regarding the Roman Catholic claim of successors. As in all our writings, our purpose is not to stir up hatred or to create strife. We wish only to make an honest inquiry regarding the validity of the successor doctrine as taught by the Catholic Church. Our intent is to secure an accurate knowledge of God's truth that we might abide therein. We ask our readers to investigate with open minds and honest hearts the things presented. God requires this of everyone. "Test all things; hold fast that which is good." (1 Thess. 5:21).

All scriptural quotations in this work are from authorized Catholic translations (from the Confraternity Version unless otherwise indicated), and all quotes are from authorized Catholic books. Ones which bear the "Nihil obstat" (nothing hinders) and the "Imprimatur" (let it be printed). A complete bibliography is furnished at the close of this document.

Apostolic Authority

In this age, God speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2). Christ spoke the words and commandments given to Him from the Father (John 12:49-50). We are to hear Jesus, not Moses or Elijah (Mark 9:2-8). Christ is the mediator of the New Testament (Heb. 9:15-17). Christ is that great prophet who was to come (Deut. 18:15,19; Acts 3:22-23). The name of Jesus is the only name by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12). We cannot reject His word and be guiltless (John 12:48). God, therefore, makes known His will to us today through His Son.

Jesus makes known God's will through His apostles and prophets. Christ gave the same words and commandments that He received from the Father to His twelve apostles (John 17:6-8, 17-20). He promised them the Holy Spirit who would remind them of all He had said and would guide them into all truth. He said, "These things I have spoken to you while yet dwelling with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you." (John 14:25-26; see also 14:16-17). Furthermore, Jesus said, "But when the advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me. And you also bear witness, because from the beginning you are with me." (John 15:26-27; see also 16:13-14). From the foregoing passages, we learn two important facts: (1) The promise of the Holy Spirit was to the apostles only. They were the ones to whom Jesus was speaking; they were the ones who had been with Him from the beginning. (2) The Holy Spirit would be in them and would enable them to teach all the truth concerning the will of God.

The apostles were to wait in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit as was promised. "And I send forth upon you the promise of my Father. But wait here in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49). "And while eating with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, 'of which you have heard,' said he, 'by my mouth; for John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.'" (Acts 1:4-5). "...You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you..." (Acts 1:8). All of this was in fulfillment of the Old

Testament prophecies which said, "...The law shall come forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:3; Micah 4:2).

The apostles received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:1-4 and "began to speak in foreign tongues, even as the Holy Spirit prompted them to speak." (Verse 4). Thus, they began to proclaim by inspiration the will or law of God as Jesus had declared in the words, "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matt. 18:18). What Jesus said to Peter concerning binding and loosing (Matt. 16:19), He also said to all the apostles (Matt. 18:18). The meaning is not that the binding and loosing would come from their own devising--God alone is the lawgiver (James 4:12) and His word is forever firmly fixed in the heavens (Psalm 119:89)--but with the Holy Spirit guiding them they would proclaim the things God wanted bound and loosed. For example, they declared what God bound for forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), and what God loosed--"...Delivered me from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). This principle is expressed in Matt. 10:20 which says, "...For it is not you who are speaking, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you."

Jesus also said to His apostles, "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John 20:22-23). Again, the meaning is not that they would forgive and retain sins in and of themselves. They would not from their own devising arbitrarily say to one "your sins are forgiven" and to another "your sins are retained." The action they were to take was conditioned upon the expression, "Receive the Holy Spirit." By the possession of the Holy Spirit, therefore, they would be enabled to forgive and retain sins.

When the apostles received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), they began to do as the Lord had said. For example, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..." (Acts 2:38). This and other similar passages are inspired examples of how their authority to forgive sins was exercised. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they laid down the conditions by which sins are forgiven. If we do as they commanded, our sins are forgiven, if we do not, our sins are retained. Since this is the only thing revealed in the New Testament concerning their power to forgive and retain sins, this constitutes the full extent of their authority in this matter.

Up to the point as recorded in Acts 2, only the twelve had obtained the ability to speak by the inspiration of God. Verse 14 of Acts 2 shows that Peter, standing with the eleven, declared that the gift which they had received was in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Verse 43 says, "And fear came upon every soul; many wonders also and signs were done by means of the apostles in Jerusalem, and great fear came upon all." Consequently, the apostles up to this point were the only ones who had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. God worked with them by giving them the power to work miracles. Mark 16:20 says, "But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the preaching by the signs that followed." (See also Heb. 2:3-4).

As we read a little farther in the book of Acts we see how New Testament prophets were made. The first account of someone besides an apostle working a miracle is that of Stephen. "Now Stephen, full of grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people." (Acts 6:8). Stephen, as well as Philip, was of the seven on whom the apostles had laid their hands. "These they set before the apostles,

and after they had prayed they laid their hands upon them." (Acts 6:6). As we read still farther, we see that Philip is the next person who was able to work miracles. "And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached the Christ to them. And the crowds with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, listening to him and seeing the miracles that he worked." (Acts 8:5-6).

Although Philip was a New Testament prophet and could work miracles, he was unable to give the Holy Spirit to others. Only the apostles were empowered with that ability. Acts 8:14-19 says, "Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John. On their arrival they prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for as yet he had not come upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. But when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me also this power, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' "

Please notice that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands. This is the only way New Testament prophets were made and the prophets themselves were unable to give the Spirit to others. Philip could not give the Holy Spirit to the people of Samaria. Some apostles, Peter and John, had to be sent from Jerusalem before that could be done. When an apostle laid his hands on someone, he received miraculous powers. Acts 19:6 says, "And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy." Cornelius and his household received the "like gift" as the apostles for the specific purpose of God's acceptance of the Gentiles into the New Covenant (Acts 11:14-18).

Thus, we have shown that the apostles were the only ones who were to receive the power from on high and were to wait in Jerusalem for it (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8). This power enabled them to speak in tongues, prophesy and work miracles (Acts 2:4,43). Also, it gave them the ability to transmit the Holy Spirit by laying their hands on others. New Testament prophets were made in this manner and they also could speak in tongues, prophesy and work miracles but could not pass on the power to others (Acts 8:4-6; 14-19).

Apostolic Succession

We will now notice several quotations from Catholic sources which assert that the present day officials in the Catholic Church are successors to the apostles. Please notice the following:

- ! "There is no just ground for denying to the Apostolic teachers of the nineteenth century in which we live a prerogative clearly possessed by those of the first, especially as the Divine Word nowhere intimates that this unerring guidance was to die with the Apostles. On the contrary, as the Apostles transmitted to their successors their power to preach, to baptize, to ordain, to confirm, etc., they must also have handed down to them the no less essential gift of infallibility." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 54).

Please notice, first of all, that the Catholic writer says, "There is no just ground for denying to the Apostolic teachers of the nineteenth century in which we live a prerogative clearly possessed by those of the first..." In other words, he is saying there is no just ground for denying that the present day teachers in the Catholic

Church are successors to the apostles. We claim that there **is** just ground for denying it. No one is a successor to the apostles and has their authority today because no one is inspired by the Holy Spirit today. The possession of the Spirit is the factor that determined the apostles' authority. They had the power to bind and loose, forgive and retain, because God was speaking through them. On that basis only were they enabled to unerringly deliver God's message to mankind. How can anyone claim to have authority such as theirs, being their successors, when not inspired by the Holy Spirit?

Furthermore, the apostles and those on whom they laid their hands could speak with tongues, prophesy and work miracles. They worked miracles to demonstrate their authority, to show that they were indeed inspired of God. In defense of his own authority, Paul said, "Indeed, the signs of the apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in miracles and wonders and deeds of power." (2 Cor. 12:12). No one can work miracles today as they did; thus, no one is inspired today and no one has the same authority today.

Secondly, the Catholic writer said, "...The Divine Word nowhere intimates that this unerring guidance was to die with the apostles." We agree that the unerring guidance was not to die with the apostles. However, we must inquire, "In what way is the unerring guidance transmitted or handed down to us today?" The Scriptures affirm that we receive it through the inspired writings of the apostles and prophets. The Catholic official, however, tries to show that it is handed down through men as successors of the apostles and prophets. He affirmed that the Divine Word nowhere indicates that it was **not** to be transmitted to their successors. In reality, the opposite is true. The Divine Word nowhere indicates that it **was** to be transmitted to successors.

A look at the qualifications of the apostles reveal they would not have successors. An apostle had to be an eye-witness of Christ. (See Acts 1:15-26). Paul defended his apostleship by saying, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor. 9:1). The apostles were indeed witnesses in the fullest sense. They were the eye-witnesses, carefully chosen by the Lord, who would witness to mankind what they saw and heard concerning Jesus. Acts 1:8 says, "...But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be witnesses for me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth." The Lord said to Paul, "...I have appeared to thee for this purpose, to appoint thee to be a minister and a witness to what thou hast seen, and to the visions thou shalt have of me." (Acts 26:16). Peter declared, "For we were not following fictitious tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eye-witnesses of his grandeur." (2 Pet. 1:16).

Realizing this important fact helps us to understand how the apostles witness to us today. They certainly do not do it through other ordained witnesses. It is impossible for one in our time to be a witness in the sense they were. Instead, it is through their writings--the holy Scriptures. The apostle John, in his introduction to his first epistle, declared that he was bearing witness to those things which they had heard, had seen with their eyes, and had touched with their hands, concerning the Word of life. John bore witness to those things by writing them for us. (See 1 John 1:1-4). The apostles' testimony given in their writings was to "all who call upon the name of our Lord in every place" (1 Cor. 1:2), and to "the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:1). The apostles witness to us today through their writings and this is the only way their unerring guidance is transmitted to the present.

Jesus prayed for unity of all those who would believe on Him through the word of the apostles. "Yet not for these only do I pray, but for those also who through their word are to believe in me." (John 17:20). In this prayer Jesus revealed how believers are to be made--through the apostles' word. Since we do not have the apostles present with us, we must inquire, "How are believers made through their word today?" It is not through their present day successors, but as John said, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31). Very simply, therefore, individuals were made believers at first as result of the inspired apostles witnessing to them while in their presence. Individuals are made believers today as result of the apostles witnessing through their inspired writings.

Catholic Successors

We are taught of God not to go beyond the things which are written (1 Cor. 4:6). We must abide in the doctrine of Christ or we don't have God (2 John 9). We must not take from, add to, or pervert the gospel of Christ because doing so causes the curse of God to come upon us (Rev. 22:18-19; Gal. 1:6-9). Thus, if Catholics are to sustain their doctrine that the authority of the apostles was transmitted to authorized successors, they must produce the passages which openly and plainly reveal it. This they have not done. Please notice the following from a Catholic source:

- ! "...The Christian faith has been taught, and was intended by its Divine founder to be taught, in all ages on the same plan that was adopted in the beginning; that is to say, by authorized human teachers, whose adherence to it has been secured by a special Divine assistance, as that of the apostles was in the beginning." (**Plain Facts For Fair Minds**, pp. 29-30).

The above Catholic writer affirms that the gospel was once in the inspired teachers and therefore must be learned from authorized human teachers today. No Bible was cited to prove his contention. The argument is unreasonable as well as unscriptural. We might as well argue that Adam and Eve were created and therefore "in all ages on the same plan that was adopted in the beginning" men are brought forth into the world today. However, we know that the miracle of creation was temporary and provisional; it was for that first pair alone. All others have come into the world by means of natural birth. In like manner the gospel was revealed by miracle to the apostles and prophets. The inspired word was for many years in the inspired men, but once the New Testament was completed and duly confirmed, the spiritual gifts that had brought the word and confirmed it ceased.

Notice the following quote from a Catholic source:

- ! "The guidance of Christ was, therefore, to continue with their successors. This is clearly disclosed by the words of Christ: 'Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.' Since the Apostles were not to live until the end of the world, Christ promised to be with them in the person of their successors unto the end of time." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 137).

The above Catholic writer quotes a passage of Scripture, Matt. 28:20, and declares that it discloses that the apostles were to have successors. Another Catholic writer quotes the same passage and asserts that Jesus was teaching that the church would never teach error. Please note the following:

- ! "Why can't the Catholic Church ever teach error? Because Jesus promised to be always with His church to protect it from error. 'Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world' (Matthew 28:19-20)." (**A Catechism For Adults**, p. 56).

Does it not seem strange that these Catholic officials can make the same passage teach two different doctrines when the passage says nothing about either? The promise of Christ was to the apostles and to them alone. In what way would He be with them to the end of the world? Notice the context. Just before He declared, "I am with you all days," he said, "...Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Thus, Christ would be with them in the teaching of His commandments. The apostles themselves would not remain forever, but their teachings, the commandments of Christ which they delivered, would. The same is taught in parallel passages. "For you have been reborn, not from corruptible seed but from incorruptible, through the word of God who lives and abides forever. For, 'All flesh is as grass, and all its glory as the flower of grass; the grass withered, and the flower has fallen--but the word of the Lord endures forever.' Now this is the word of the gospel that was preached to you." (1 Pet. 1:23-25). Also, Christ would be with them always in the same sense He is with all faithful Christians. He dwells in them while they live here on earth (John 14:23), and after death they depart to be with Him (Phil. 1:21-23).

The following chart illustrates that Catholics are without Scriptural authority for their doctrine of successors.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES	THAT WHICH THEY NEED BUT DON'T HAVE
Eph. 2:20, "...You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ himself as the chief corner stone."	"...You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets AND THEIR SUCCESSORS with Christ himself as the chief corner stone."
Eph. 3:5, "...Now it has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."	"...Now it has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets AND SUCCESSORS by the Spirit."
2 Cor. 5:20, "On behalf of Christ, therefore, we are acting as ambassadors, God, as it were, appealing through us."	"On behalf of Christ, therefore, we AND OUR SUCCESSORS are acting as ambassadors, God, as it were, appealing through us."
1 John 4:6, "We are of God: he that knoweth God listens to us; he who is not of God does not listen to us."	"We are of God: he that knoweth God listens to us AND OUR SUCCESSORS; he who is not of God does not listen to us."

John 20:21-23, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed upon them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.'"	"As the Father has sent me, I also send you AND YOUR SUCCESSORS . When he had said this, he breathed upon the, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you AND YOUR SUCCESSORS shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you AND YOUR SUCCESSORS shall retain, they are retained."
John 17:20, "Yet not for these only do I pray, but for those also who through their word are to believe in me."	"Yet not for these only do I pray, but for those also who through their AND THEIR SUCCESSORS' word are to believe in me."

If the Catholics are to sustain their idea of successors, they must produce the passages which plainly and openly reveal it. Anyone who teaches a doctrine not written in the Word of God incurs the displeasure and condemnation of God. Notice the following Scriptures:

- ! "Now, brethren, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos by way of illustration for your sakes, that in our case you may learn not to be puffed up one against the other over a third party, transgressing what is written." (1 Cor. 4:6).
- ! "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and work many miracles in thy name?' And then I will profess to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity!' " (Matt. 7:22-23).
- ! "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet of spiritual, let him recognize that the things I am writing to you are the Lord's commandments." (1 Cor. 14:37).
- ! "Anyone who advances and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, has not God; he who abides in the doctrine, he has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9).

The Only Succession

The Catholics cannot produce the passages for their doctrine of successors because none exist. We have already shown that the apostles were the only ones who were to receive the power from on high and were to wait in Jerusalem for it (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8). This power enabled them to speak in tongues, prophesy, and work miracles (Acts 2:4,43). Also, it gave them the ability to transmit the Holy Spirit by laying their hands on others. New Testament prophets were made in this manner and they also could speak in tongues, prophesy, and work miracles, but could not pass the power to others (Acts 8:4-6, 14-19). The apostles and prophets, and they alone, were the chosen ambassadors of Christ through which we are reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20). They were chosen to reveal God's will to mankind (Eph. 3:5). We are to receive their word as the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 4:6). They are the foundation on which we are built (Eph. 2:20). They were selected to deliver "the faith" to mankind and it has once and for all been delivered (Jude 3). Their message has the promise of God to remain forever (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

When the apostles and prophets approached their deaths they did not give successors to take their places.

Instead, they left their inspired writings. Peter said, "Moreover I will endeavor that even after my death you may often have occasion to call these things to mind." (2 Pet. 1:15). This would have been an excellent opportunity for Peter to tell us that he was leaving a successor through which we could recall the things of Christ, if indeed that was the truth regarding it. However, he said "This, beloved, is now the second epistle that I am writing to you wherein I stir up your pure mind to remembrance, that you may be mindful of what I formerly preached of the words of the holy prophets and of your apostles, which are the precepts of the Lord and Savior." (2 Pet. 3:1-2). Thus, Peter plainly declared that the things of Christ would be recalled through his writings. The inspired writings, therefore, are the only infallible succession that we have from the apostles and prophets.

The apostle Paul also demonstrated this fact. He said, "For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come." (2 Tim. 4:6; Catholic Edition RSV). Again, this would have been a wonderful opportunity for an apostle to teach that unerring guidance was to be handed down through their successors. He was writing to the young man Timothy who had received his spiritual guidance from him. Surely, if successors were to be ordained, he would have mentioned it to him so that he would know where to obtain unerring guidance. Or, if perhaps he had made Timothy his successor, surely he would have instructed him regarding it in order that he and others would know about it. However, there is no hint whatsoever of successors as this apostle approaches death. On the contrary, he points Timothy, as well as all men, to the sacred writings which the inspired men left us:

- ! "For from thy infancy thou hast known the Sacred Writings, which are able to instruct thee unto salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correcting, for instructing in justice; that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Please notice the following quotations from Catholic sources:

- ! "Jesus sends forth the Apostles with plenipotentiary powers to preach the Gospel. 'As the Father,' He says, 'hath sent me, I also send you.' (John 20:21). 'Going therefore, teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' (Matt. 28:19-20). 'Preach the Gospel to every creature.' (Mark 16:15). 'Ye shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.' (Acts 1:8).
- ! "This commission evidently applies not to the Apostles only, but also to their successors, to the end of time, since it was utterly impossible for the Apostles personally to preach to the whole world." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 56).
- ! "Since it was physically impossible for the Apostles to preach to the whole world, the mission must have been intended also for their successors to the end of time, our Catholic Bishops and priests." (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 145).

As before, the above Catholic writers assume that our Lord's words to the apostles demand successors. Their whole doctrine of successors is based on this assumption. The words of Jesus were spoken to the apostles only. There is no mention of successors in the verses. As Jesus had commanded them, the apostles went into all the world and preached the gospel to every creature. The apostle Paul said concerning the gospel, "It has been preached to every creature under heaven..." (Col. 1:23). The task of unerringly revealing the gospel was completed by the apostles and their many helpers, those on whom they

laid their hands, the New Testament prophets. The apostles and prophets still witness and preach to the world today through their writings. John said, "But these are written that you may believe..." (John 20:31), and "What we have seen and heard we announce to you...And these things we write to you..." (1 John 1:3-4). Furthermore, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." (Matt. 24:35). Thus, the apostles and prophets by means of inspiration delivered our Lord's words to mankind and they will remain forever.

It seems very strange and odd that the successor of a king is a king, the successor of a president is a president, and the successor of a governor is a governor, but the successor of an apostles is a Catholic bishop or priest!

Inheritors of Authority?

Please notice the following quotation from a Catholic source:

- ! "Christ conferred upon the Apostles the power to forgive sins: 'Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven, they are forgiven.' (John 20:23). St. Paul mirrors the faith of the Apostolic Church when he writes: 'God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.' (II Cor. 5:18).
- ! "As the inheritors of the power and authority of the apostles, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church exercise the ministry of reconciliation, forgiving penitent sinners in the name of Jesus Christ." (**The Faith of Millions**, pp. 71-72).
- ! "Did Christ intend that THIS POWER should BE EXERCISED BY THE APOSTLES ALONE?"
- ! "No, Christ intended that this power should *be exercised also by their successors, the bishops of church.*" (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 107).
- ! "Christ had given the Apostles full powers to choose successors, when He gave them the powers His Father had given Him (John 20:21).
- ! "It was the command of Christ that the Apostles should have successors to continue the Church, which He said *would last till the end of the world.* (Matt. 28:20). Without successors to the Apostles, the Church would have no rulers, and being unorganized would never have lasted." (Ibid., p. 107).

As one can see from the above, Catholics claim that the present day bishops and priests in the Catholic Church are successors to the apostles, being inheritors of their power and authority. This cannot be true. The Catholic bishops and priests were not promised the power from on high nor commanded to wait in Jerusalem to receive it (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8). They have no authority because they are not inspired of the Holy Spirit nor are they eyewitnesses of Jesus (John 20:22-23; Acts 1:8, 21-26). They cannot prove their authority by speaking in tongues, prophesying and working miracles (2 Cor. 12:12). They are not the chosen ambassadors who were selected to deliver God's message or "the faith" to mankind (Eph. 3:3-4; Jude 3). Moreover, they cannot be successors to the apostles and prophets because the only infallible succession to them are the inspired writings (2 Pet. 1:15; 3:1; 2 Tim. 3:14-17).

The words of Christ quoted by the above Catholic writers were addressed the apostles only. They were

not addressed to Catholic bishops and priests and it is sinful and wrong to apply the passage to them. This is done repeatedly in the Catholic Church as they try to prove their man made doctrine of successors. It was done by the above Catholic writers as he made reference to John 20:21-23; Matt. 28:20 and 2 Cor. 5:18. None of the passages made mention of successors nor referred to successors. They referred to the apostles and prophets only, and to apply them to anyone else is to twist and pervert the word of God. The wrath of God rests on all those who do such (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9; Rev. 22:18-19).

Catholic officials confuse the present Catholic bishops with the New Testament bishops. Notice the following:

- ! "The Apostles chose men to assist them, imparting to them *greater* or *less* powers. Before leaving a place, they chose a successor with full powers (Acts 14:22).
- ! "Those who received only *a small part of the powers* of the apostles were called *deacons*. Those given greater power were called *priests*. Those appointed successors to rule in the place *of the Apostles* were the *bishops*." (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 107).

The New Testament bishops were not successors to the apostles nor did they in any way resemble present day Catholic bishops. Their qualifications are clearly disclosed in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. We quote Paul's words to Timothy here for you careful consideration:

- ! "This saying is true: If anyone is eager for the office of bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then, must be blameless, married but once, reserved, prudent, of good conduct, hospitable, a teacher, not a drinker or a brawler, but moderate, not quarrelsome, not avaricious. He should rule well his own household, keeping his children under control and perfectly respectful. For if a man cannot rule his own household, how is he to take care of the church of God? He must not be a new convert, lest he be puffed up with pride and incur the condemnation passed on the devil. Besides this he must have a good reputation with those who are outside, that he may not fall into disgrace and into a snare of the devil." (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

A study of New Testament bishops, first of all, reveals they had to be married men. 1 Tim. 3:2 says, "It behoveth therefore a bishop to be blameless, the husband of one wife, sober, prudent, of good behavior, chaste, given to hospitality, a teacher..." (Catholic Rheims Translation). "Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife..." (1 Tim. 3:2; Catholic Revised Standard Version). Also, a bishop had to rule his own house well having his children in subjection (1 Tim. 3:4-5). The Catholic Church rejects the will of Christ in this matter. The inspired writers plainly revealed that among other things the great apostasy would "forbid marriage" (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

Secondly, the New Testament reveals that bishops are overseers of the local congregations. They were to be selected by each local church. They were to be "proved" or "tried" in view of the qualifications as were the deacons (1 Tim. 3:10). Deacons had no authority but were to "serve" in the local churches (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Once the bishops were selected, they were to oversee the local congregations wherein they had been chosen and ordained. Peter said to the bishops, "Tend the flock of God which is among you..." (1 Pet. 5:2). This was the extent of their oversight--overseeing only one church. The Catholic Church has changed the law of Christ in this matter also. Their bishops oversee not just one church but a whole diocese of churches. Paul showed that the great apostasy which was already underway in his time (2

Thess. 2:7) would begin among the bishops (Acts 20:28-31).

Thirdly, the New Testament disclosed that there was always a plurality of bishops in each local church. Acts 14:23 says, "In each church they installed presbyters and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith." (New Catholic Translation). Without exception there were always more than one bishop (or elder) in each church. Again, the Catholic Church has corrupted this form of governing as ordained by God. Instead of having several bishops (or elders) overseeing one church, they have one bishop overseeing several churches. The Council of Nica in Cannon 8 forbade having more than one bishop in a city (Disciplinary a Decrees of the General Councils, p. 34).

Catholic Mis-Translation

In the New Testament the words "elder," "bishop," or "pastor" are used interchangeably. The three terms refer to the same office which God placed in the local churches. Here is a list of the three words:

1. *Presbyter*, or *Elder* - Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1. It is translated from the Greek word *presbuteros*.
2. *Bishop*, or *Overseer* - Acts 20:28; Titus 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:1; Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:2. From the Greek word *episkopos*.
3. *Pastor*, *Shepherd*, *Tend*, or *Feed* - Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2; Eph. 4:11. From the Greek word *poimen*.

We mention again that all of the above terms refer to the same office because they are used interchangeably. Some passages use all three terms interchangeably in the same context, e.g., Acts 20:17,28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3. We call your attention to the fact that the term "priest" (Gr. *hierous*) is not among those synonymous terms, nor is it ever applied to the office of bishop or elder. The Catholic Church confuses this matter by saying that a "presbyter" is one official and a "bishop" is another. For example, "The word 'priest' is derived from the Greek *presbyter*..." (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 129). This is another example of their twisting of the Scriptures to prove their own doctrine. The Greek word "presbyter" does not mean "priest" and no reputable Greek scholar has ever rendered it as such. The word simply means "an old man, an elder." He had to have "believing children" (Titus 1:6), and, thus, only older men were qualified.

Catholic officials in their translations of Scripture insert the word "priest" into verses where it does not belong. In the Catholic Rheims Version, Acts 14:23 is translated, "And when they had ordained to them priests in every church..." All reputable Versions of the Scriptures, the King James, New King James, American Standard, New American Standard, etc., render this verse, "And when they had ordained elders in every church..." The word used in the verse is "presbuteros," which mean "elders" and not the word "hierous" which is "priests." When one checks all the Greek texts, he finds that no variations exist; each contain the word "presbuteros." We can only conclude, therefore, that the Catholic Hierarchy **inserted** the word "priest" when the word "hierous" wasn't there!

1 Tim. 5:17,19 - "Let the priests that rule well, be esteemed worthy of double honor...Against a priest receive not an accusation, but under two or three witnesses." (Catholic Rheims Version). This is another

devious attempt to give Scriptural support to the Catholic priesthood. In both of the foregoing verses, the word "priest," singular or plural, is a mis-translation. The Greek text used the word "presbuteros" in one of its forms which is correctly rendered, "elder" or "elders."

James 5:14 - "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priest of the church..." (Catholic Rheims Version). Again, the word "presbuteros" is the term used and "elders" is the correct translation. It is abundantly clear that the Catholic Church will stoop to any level, even to the changing of the Word of God, in order to sustain its priesthood.

To summarize regarding New Testament bishops or elders, God commanded that a plurality of them be chosen and appointed in each local church (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17,28). They had to be married men (1 Tim. 3:2) with believing children (Titus 1:6) and were to oversee only one church (1 Pet. 5:2). These are the only bishops ordained by God in the New Testament and, thus, are the only type which exist with His authority and sanction.

Present Day Hierarchy

The New Testament plainly reveals that a great corruption from the simple form of government which God ordained would slowly develop (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:1-11; Acts 20:28-31). The book entitled, **My Catholic Faith** lists the many offices in the present day hierarchy of the Catholic church.

- "1. In organization the Church is like a *vast army*; the *Pope*, its visible head, is commander-in-chief of this army.
- "2. Cardinals, appointed by the Pope, are his principal advisers and *assistants in the government of the Church*.
- "3. Patriarch is a bishop who holds the highest rank after the Pope, in jurisdiction.
- "4. An *archbishop* is the head of an *archdiocese*; a *bishop* of a *diocese*...
- "5. Legates, *nuncios*, *internuncios*, and *apostolic delegates* are *representatives* of the Holy Father.
- "6. Titular archbishops and *bishops* are those who hold the title of a see that formerly existed.
- "7. Honorary prelates are those with a title, but without jurisdiction." (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 129).

None of the above offices in the Catholic Church are mentioned in the New Testament of Christ. As we have shown, the New Testament does specify "bishops," but they in no way resembled present day Catholic bishops. There was always a plurality of men chosen and appointed in each local church (Acts 14:23). They had to be married men (1 Tim. 3:2) with believing children (Titus 1:6) and were to oversee only one church (1 Pet. 5:2). All of the above mentioned Catholic offices were slowly developed over a period of several hundred years. The following Catholic sources freely admit this.

- ! "The divine institution of the threefold hierarchy cannot of course be derived from our text; in fact it cannot in anyway be proved directly from the New Testament; it is a Catholic dogma by virtue of the dogmatic tradition, i.e., in a later period of ecclesiastical history the general

belief in the divine institutions of the episcopate, presbyteriate, and diaconate can be verified and thence followed on through the centuries. But the dogmatic truth cannot be traced back to Christ Himself by analysis of strict historical testimony." (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. VII, p. 334).

- ! "The word (hierarchy, DJR) first occurs in the work of pseudo-Dionysius on *Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies*. The signification was gradually modified until it came to be what it is at the present. A hierarchy now signifies a body of officials disposed organically in ranks and orders, each subordinate to the one above it." (**Catholic Dictionary**, p. 402).
- ! "In his (Paul's, DJR) opinion the words (presbuteros and episkopos, DJR) were at one time used one for the other, but there has been a gradual adaptation of names corresponding with the progressive evolution of the hierarchy..." (**A Catholic Commentary**, p. 1144).
- ! "Some parts of the governmental system of the Catholic Church are of divine origin; and many of them are human institutions." (**Externals of the Catholic Church**, p. 19).

Consequently, the present hierarchy of the Catholic Church was not ordained by Christ. All the modern offices in Catholicism were developed over a period of many centuries by men who had no regard or respect for God's arrangement. With this thought in mind, consider the absurdity of the following "official" claims.

- ! "History proves conclusively that the same doctrines were in the Church from the beginning." (**Catholic Facts**, p. 209).
- ! "Has the Catholic Church ever changed its teaching? No, for 2,000 years the Church has taught the same thing which Jesus taught." (**A Catechism For Adults**, p. 57).
- ! "It is a historical fact that the Catholic Church, from the twentieth century back to the first, has not once ceased to teach a doctrine on faith or morals previously held, and with the same interpretation; the Church has proved itself infallible." (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 145).

Call None "Father"

The Catholic Church has a multitude of religious titles and addresses that are given to their officials. We list some of them here from page 129 of the book, **My Catholic Faith**.

- ! "A priest is addressed '**Father**.'"
- ! "He (the Pope, D.R.) is formally addressed as '**Your Holiness**.'"
- ! "A cardinal is addressed '**Your Eminence**.'"
- ! "Arch bishops and bishops are entitled '**Most Reverend**,' and '**Your Excellency**'; the other prelates not bishops are entitled '**Right**' or '**Very Reverend Monsignor**' or '**Father**.'"

When Catholics address their priests and bishops as "Reverend" and "Father," they are using titles which belong only to God. Protestants who likewise label their clergymen as "Reverend" are doing the same. The term "Reverend" means basically "worthy of reverence; revered" and is used in the Bible to venerate the name of God. Psalm 111:9 says, "He has sent deliverance to his people; he has ratified his covenant forever; holy and awesome (also translated "reverend" D.R.) is his name." God alone is to be revered, revered and worshiped. "The Lord thy God shalt thou worship and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10).

Men should not seek the glory which belongs only to Deity. They should not accept it, nor endeavor to give it. Men commit a grave error when they take the titles and designations which belong to Almighty God and place them on mere men.

Jesus said, "And call no one on earth your father; for one is your Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters; for one only is your Master, the Christ" (Matt. 23:9-10). Thus, we are forbidden by our Lord to call men "father" in a religious sense. We plead with our Catholic friends not to openly defy this command given by our Lord.

Catholic priests try to dodge the force of Jesus' command by telling us that if we interpreted our Lord's words literally, we could not call our parent "father." (See **Questions Box**, p. 310). However, in the context of Matt. 23, Jesus is condemning the religious leaders of His time who did all their works to be seen of men (vs. 5), loved marks of distinction (vs. 6), and craved the flattering titles given by men (vs. 7). The writer of Hebrews by inspiration used the term "father" for our earthly parent. He said, "Furthermore, we had fathers of our flesh to correct us..." (Heb. 12:9). In view of these things, when Jesus said "call no one on earth you father," what could he have meant but that we are not to call men "father" in a religious sense?

A young Christian girl had opportunity to introduce the local preacher to her non-Christian friends. She said, "This is **my** brother Mr. _____." She demonstrated both the knowledge and obedience which the Lord requires. She gave no religious title and used the term "brother" in its proper sense. The term refers to the common bond of all Christians and is not a title that is to be given only to preachers.

All preachers and teachers of God's word should boldly refuse to be called by titles belonging to God. They should not be desirous of vain glory (Gal. 5:26), but should walk humbly before God (Micah 6:8). Also, believers in Christ should be careful not to address preachers as "Father" or "Reverend" or with any other flattering title. Job 32:21-22 says, "I would not be partial to anyone, nor give flattering titles to any. For I know nought of flattery; if I did, my Maker would soon take me away."

Can Priests Forgive Sin?

The Catholic Church claims that its bishops and priests have inherited from the apostles the power to forgive penitent sinners. Please notice the following:

- ! "Who has the power to forgive sin today?"
- ! "All bishops and priests of the Catholic Church can forgive sin." (**A Catechism for Adults**, p. 85).
- ! "Christ conferred upon the Apostles the power to forgive sins: 'Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven.' (John 20:23). St. Paul mirrors the faith of the Apostolic Church when he writes: 'God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation' (II Cor. 5:18).
- ! "As the inheritors of the power and authority of the Apostles, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church exercises the ministry of reconciliation, forgiving penitent sinners in the name of Jesus Christ." (**The Faith of Millions**, pp. 71-72).

Catholic bishops and priests are claiming a power which the apostles did not possess or exercise. Jesus

said to the apostles, "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John 20:22-23). Thus, only by the possession of the Holy Spirit would the apostles have the authority to forgive and retain sins. As the Holy Spirit guided them in their preaching and writing, they delivered God's plan for forgiving and retaining sins (Luke 24:45-49; Acts 2:38). This alone was their "power to forgive sins" and how it was exercised.

On one occasion the Scribes and Pharisees reasoned in their hearts concerning Jesus, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God only?" (Luke 5:21). Their error was in their failure to recognize that Jesus was God in the flesh. If Jesus was not God, they would have been correct in their accusation. God said through the prophet Isaiah, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." (Isa. 43:25).

On another occasion the Jews said, "Not for a good work do we stone thee, but for blasphemy, and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God." (John 10:33). Jesus did not deny that it was blasphemous for a man to presume to forgive sins. If the Jews had been right in their premise (that Christ was only a man), they would have been correct in their conclusion. The Catholic priests literally assume the prerogatives of God when they presume to forgive sins.

If Catholic priests have the power to grant absolution from sin, why don't they also possess the power to perform miracles? Jesus said it was just as easy for Him to say, "Arise, and walk," as to say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke 5:23). He added, "But that you man know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins--he said to the paralytic--I say to thee, arise, take up thy pallet and go to thy house." (Luke 5:24). Why can't the Catholic priests do the same? Since they cannot, we must conclude they do not have authority to forgive sins.

Some Catholics in effort to evade the blasphemous claim of priests being able to forgive sin, say that the priests only ask God to forgive sin. The following quotes show beyond doubt that the Catholic Church most certainly does claim that its priests can forgive sin.

- ! "In the institution of the sacrament our Lord did not say to His Apostles, 'Whose sins you shall ask to be absolved, shall be absolved,' but he instituted as the form of the sacrament, 'Whose sins you *shall* forgive, they are forgiven them.' These words show that the minister of the Sacrament of Penance does not pray for the absolution of the penitent, but pronounces the absolution as a judicial sentence, as one having judicial authority." (**Catholic Dictionary**, p. 5).
- ! "Its minister purifies souls from sin by an act of absolution, and as the Council of Trent defined, this absolution is not a mere declaration of what has taken place as effect of other causes, but a real efficacious judicial sentence actually freeing the sinner from guilt." (**Legislation on the Sacraments**, p. 190).
- ! "Unlike the authority given to the Priests of the Old Law, to declare the leper cleansed from his leprosy, the power with which the priests of the New Law are invested, is not simply to declare the sins forgiven, but, as the ministers of God, really to absolve from sins." (**The Catechism of the Council of Trent**, p. 175).

Again, Catholic bishops and priests are claiming a power which the apostles neither possessed nor

employed. Actually, they are assuming an authority above that of the apostles. When Jesus said, "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John 20:22-23), He was speaking to the apostles only. His words were not addressed to Catholic bishops and priests and there is no mention of successors. Furthermore, the power to forgive and retain sins was based upon the expression, "Receive the Holy Spirit." The Catholic writers always fail to quote this important part of our Lord's words, e.g., as in the above quote from the **Catholic Dictionary**. Only by possession of the Holy Spirit were the apostles able to forgive and retain sins. As the Holy Spirit guided them in their preaching and writing, they delivered the design of God for forgiving and retaining sins (Luke 24:45-49; Acts 2:38). This is how their authority to forgive sins was exercised. For instance, when Simon the sorcerer sinned (Acts 8:18-19), Peter did not say, "I absolve you," or "I forgive you;" instead, he merely revealed to him what he needed to do in order to be forgiven (Acts 8:22).

Language similar to that spoken to the apostles was addressed to Jeremiah the prophet. Jer. 1:9-10 says, "And the Lord said to me: Behold I have given my words in thy mouth: Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations, and over kingdoms, to root up, and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant." Jeremiah never literally rooted up, pulled down, destroyed, or planted nations and kingdoms. His mission was to declare to the nations the terms on which God would build up or destroy, reward or punish nations. Similarly, the apostles were given authority to declare the terms on which God would forgive and retain sins.

Confession to Priests?

We are taught in the New Testament to confess our sins to God and He will forgive and cleanse us from all iniquity. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9 Catholic RSV). Also, we are instructed that when we sin, Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father and the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1-2). In Heb. 4:14-16, the writer teaches that Christians have full and complete access to God through Jesus Christ and may come boldly to the throne of grace and obtain mercy.

The New Testament teaches that one's confession should be as public as the sin, e.g., "And many of those who believed kept coming, and openly confessed their practices." (Acts 19:18). If the sin was against God only, it needs to be confessed only to God (1 John 1:9). If the sin was committed against one or a number of individuals, it should be confessed to God and to those who have been wronged. James 5:16 says, "Confess, therefore, your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be saved." This means that Christians are to confess to each other and applies to sins committed against each other. It cannot mean that the Christian is to confess to the priest because it would require that the priest confess back to the Christian--"confess your sins to one another."

There is no command or example in the New Testament for Christians to confess sins to a priest to obtain absolution. The Testament gives instructions on every good work imposed upon children of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3), but it doesn't mention a single word regarding "auricular confession" or that which is done in the modern Catholic confessional. There is no allusion or indication, no command, example, or inference in the Scriptures regarding the confessional. In short, there is not the slightest hint concerning that

which is done by Catholics today. When one believes or practices something in religion which is not in the written New Testament, all of the following divine principles immediately apply.

- ! It is not a good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- ! It does not pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).
- ! It causes one to not have God (2 John 9).
- ! It is not authorized by Christ (Col. 3:17).
- ! It cannot be done by faith (2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17).
- ! It is going beyond what's written (1 Cor. 4:6).
- ! It is not as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11).
- ! It is not according to the pattern (Heb. 8:5).
- ! It does not pertain to the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11).
- ! It is not of righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-3).
- ! It is of "no such commandment" (Acts 15:24).
- ! It is iniquity (Matt. 7:23).
- ! It is of men (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:8).
- ! It is not of truth (John 4:24).
- ! It is another gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).
- ! It is adding to the Word of God (Rev. 22:18; Deut. 4:2).

The following quotes from Catholic sources show that the practice of auricular confession slowly and gradually developed.

- ! "When and why did Holy Mother Church dispense with public penance?"
- ! "The mitigation of public penance is first indicated in a letter of Pope St. Innocent in the year 405. A similar trend of leniency is found in the East (Greek Catholic, DJR) at the turn of the fifth century. One reason is due to the scandals which were sometimes consequent to public penance. For about a thousand years, there were modifications of the ancient usage. By the middle of the sixteenth century, public penance had practically disappeared. The churches found the patient more willing to accept exercises of prayer, piety and alms-giving which, in her clemency, she commuted from the enjoined penances once so severe." (**Brooklyn Tablet**, Jan. 20, 1962).
- ! "In the primitive Church there was no concept of the reconciliation of the Christian sinner by the authority of the Church, but the Church by very slow degrees only grew accustomed to this concept. Moreover even after penance came to be recognized as an institution of the Church, it was not called by the name of a sacrament." (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. XI, p. 620).
- ! "By the middle of the next century (ninth, DJR), when secret had generally replaced public confession..." (**Legislation on the Sacraments**, p. 293; see also **Canon Law, Corpus Juris**, p. 260).

The above quotations reveal that the present day Catholic system of confessing to a priest gradually developed. As the Apostate Church began to gain power and control over people's lives, the practice of seeking spiritual counsel and advice from the priest was turned into the confessional. Confessing only in secret was first introduced into the Catholic Church in the fifth century. However, it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, under Pope Innocent III, that private auricular confession was made compulsory on all Roman Catholics. This decree was ratified by the Council of Trent, in 1546, and remains

in force today.

Since there are no passages in the New Testament authorizing the Catholic confessional, it is a sinful practice. We emphasize again that we cannot go beyond the things that are written and be pleasing to God (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9). When we add the traditions and doctrines of men, our worship becomes vain (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:8). If we change, add to, delete from, or pervert the gospel of Christ, the curse of God rests upon us (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19).

Clerical Dress

The Catholic priests today are distinguished by their clerical dress and have a number of so-called sacred vestments which they use in their religious ceremonies. Like many other things in Catholicism, these slowly and gradually worked their way into the Catholic system. Please notice the following from Catholic sources.

- ! "During the first four or five centuries the dress of clerics did not differ from that of the laity either in form or color..." (**General Legislation in the New Code of Canon Law**, p. 209); see also **Short History of the Catholic Church**, p. 66 which states that clerical dress began to come into use in the sixth century.)
- ! "As a more effective separation from the rest of the world, and as a safe guard to the honor of the ministry, they are enjoined to wear a long black garment, different from the Common Mantle. Such is the origin of the present ecclesiastical costume." (**General History of the Catholic Church**, pp. 328-329).
- ! "Gradually the custom was introduced of making them of rich and costly materials, to add greater beauty to the rites of religion." (**Externals of the Catholic Church**, p. 163).
- ! "We need not shrink from admitting that candles, like incense and lustral water, were commonly employed in pagan worship and the rites paid to the dead. But the Church from a very early period took them into her service, just as she adopted many other things indifferent in themselves, which seemed proper to enhance the splendor of religious ceremonial. We must not forget that most of these adjuncts to worship, like music, lights, perfumes, ablutions, floral decoration, canopies, fans, screens, bells, vestments etc. were not identified with any idolatrous cult in particular; but they were common to almost all cults." (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. III, p. 246).

The distinguishing dress and various vestments used by the modern Catholic priesthood are nothing more than a gradual evolution of pagan customs and human traditions. Jesus strongly condemned the Jews for doing as Catholic priests do today. He said, "...All their works they do to be seen by men; for they widen their phylacteries, and enlarge their tassels, and love the first places at suppers and the front seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the market place, and to be called by men 'Rabbi.' But do not you be called 'Rabbi'; for one is your Master, and all you are brothers." (Matt. 23:5-8). Jesus continued, "And call no one on earth your father, for one is your Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters; for one only is your Master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." (Matt. 23:9-11).

Jesus repeatedly taught against doing things in religion to receive the attention and praise of men (Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18; John 5:44). Men have always had the problem of wanting to be exalted and revered by other men. It is called, "the pride of life." Jesus Himself was so much like ordinary men in dress and appearance that Judas had to arrange a sign with those evil rulers so they could identify and capture Him. This meek and lowly spirit of Christ was foretold by the prophets (Isa. 42:1-3; 53:2). Instead of seeking the praise of men and doing things to be seen of men, all men today would do well to exemplify the humble and lowly spirit of Jesus. He left us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 1:21).

The following is a classic example of how the Catholic Church lets human traditions creep in and then binds them as law.

- ! "The word surplice is derived from the Latin word, *super-pellicium*, which means over-furs. In medieval times the Cathedrals and Churches were not heated, yet the clerics entered, Winter and Summer, day and night, to chant the divine hours. In cold weather they kept themselves warm by wearing furlined cassocks." (**New Interpretation of the Mass**, p. 135).
- ! "Theologians pronounce it a grave sin to give Communion without the stole and surplice and a light one to omit either." (**Legislation on the Sacraments in the New Code of Canon Law**, pp. 157-158).

If men are to please God they must reject all human traditions. Jesus said to the Scribes and Pharisees, "You make void the commandment of God by your tradition, which you have handed down; and many suchlike things you do." (Mark 7:13). Paul said, "Hence rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith, and may not listen to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth." (Titus 1:13-14). Again Paul said, "See to it that no one deceives you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to human traditions, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ." (Col. 2:8; see also Eph. 4:14; 1 John 4:1). Hence, the Bible repeatedly warns against adhering to traditions of men. As a matter of fact, the most often condemned sin in the New Testament is the following of the doctrines of men. In spite of this, the Catholic Church has an abundance of human traditions and continually seek to justify them.

The Catholic priesthood has no foundation in the Bible and is contrary to the spirit and commands of Christ. It was derived from pagan and Jewish traditions. The apostles ordained in the New Testament a plurality of elders or bishops over each congregation (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:17,28) and they had to be married men (1 Tim. 3:2) with believing children (Titus 1:6). They proclaimed that all Christians are priests (Rev. 1:6) and constitute the holy priesthood of God (1 Pet. 2:5,9). In the Catholic Church today there is one bishop, a single man, over many churches. Also, there is a priestly caste who distinguish themselves by clerical dress, claim divine prerogatives, and exercise great authority and control over the souls of men. With these thoughts in mind, ponder carefully the following:

- ! "If it is not identical in belief, government, etc., with the primitive Church, then it is not the church of Christ." (**Catholic Facts**, p. 27).
- ! "If only one instance could be given in which the Church ceased to teach a doctrine of faith which had been previously held, that single instance would be the death blow of her claim of infallibility." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 61).

The Catholic Priesthood

The following quotes from Catholic sources reveal that the priesthood of the Catholic Church slowly and gradually developed:

- ! "In the Roman Church the change had taken place apparently when, in the course of the third or fourth century, priests became the ordinary ministers of baptism." (**Legislation on the Sacrament**, p. 16).
- ! The priesthood evolved." (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, pp. 406, 415).
- ! "Priests were not so called in the very earliest Christian times; rather they were the presbyters or elders." (**Mass of the Future**, p. 66).
- ! "The following seems to be on the whole the way the term "clergy" gradually assumed a technical and restricted sense." (**Catholic Dictionary**, p. 189).
- ! "The Apostolic Fathers abstain from any mention of a Christian priesthood." (Ibid., p. 693).
- ! "Clergy, the term *clerus* (Latin, part or portion falling to one by lot) was first applied to the whole church or people of God as being the Lord's special possession or property (I Pet. v. 3), but soon it became appropriated to the ministers of religion as belonging to God in a special manner." (**General Legislation in the New Code of Canon Law**, pp. 233-234).

A study of the New Testament reveals that all Christians are priests. Peter said, "Be you yourselves as living stones, built thereon into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:5). Thus, all Christians are of that holy priesthood and can offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. There is not a man or group of men on earth who can offer unto God spiritual sacrifices for others. All Christians have the right to go to God through Jesus Christ, our High priest (Heb. 4:14-16). There is no priesthood on earth that has the right to forbid each Christian to go directly to God through Christ, or to assume the authority to administer graces and obtain mercy for others.

Peter continued, "You, however, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you may proclaim the perfections of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Pet. 2:9). Rev. 1:5-6 says, "To him who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us to be a kingdom, and priest to God his Father--to him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Thus, the New Testament repeatedly teaches that all Christians are priests. When they obey the gospel of Christ, they are added to the body of Christ and are thereby recognized as God's holy priesthood. As priests, they all can offer up spiritual sacrifices and can draw nigh to God through the mediatorship of Jesus.

A sacrificing priesthood of men was indeed appointed under the law of Moses, but the animal sacrifices offered by the priests of the Old Testament were mere types and shadows of the one sacrifice made by Christ. By the one sacrifice made by Jesus, He put an end both to the Levitical priesthood and to the Old Testament law. Heb. 7:23-25 says, "And the other priests indeed were numerous, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he, because he continues forever, has an everlasting priesthood. Therefore he is able at all times to save those who come to God through him, since he lives always to make intercession for them."

Jesus is now at the right hand of God and ever lives to make intercession for His people (Heb. 7:25; 9:24). Through the one sacrifice of Himself, He became the sole mediator through which men can come to God (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:26-27; 9:24-28; Eph. 2:18). Heb. 7:27 says, "He does not need to offer sacrifices daily (as the other priests did), first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people; for this latter he did once for all in offering up himself." Heb. 9:24 says, "For Jesus has not entered into a Holies made by hands, a mere copy of the true, but into heaven itself, to appear now before the face of God on our behalf..." There is no need of an interceding or mediating priestly caste today. Jesus Christ is the one and only great High Priest and all those in Christ are a royal priesthood who can offer up spiritual sacrifices and draw nigh to God through Him.

Please notice the following unscriptural claims the Catholic Church makes for its priesthood.

- ! "It is really God who calls to the priesthood, to help him in work of the salvation of souls. He wants you to be a mediator between heaven and earth, to speak to men of God, to speak to God of men and their needs." (**Our Priesthood**, p. 22).
- ! "The priest is a storm; hurricane, cyclone, tornado rolled into one. Like Christ in the temple. Like Christ before the Pharisees. Like Christ hanging on the cross...No. He is more than that. The Priest is not just the cross, he is Christ himself." (**Lone Star Catholic**, March 1, 1959).
- ! "...Glorious priests...oracles of the Eternal Word...chiefs in the celestial militia...custodians of the Keys of Heaven. (**The Priest, His Dignity and Obligations**, XXV).
- ! "St. Gregory Nazianzen asserts that the priest is a 'God who makes gods.'" (Ibid., p. 13).
- ! "Clement of Alexandria attributes to the priests the role of redeemers... You are visible gods in the world, children of God, fathers of God. In the work the Celestial Hierarchy, St. Dionysius invests you with these three attributes; you are gods because you take the place of God in this world and are clothed with His qualities, His prerogatives and powers." (Ibid., p. 21).

Catholic writers, to say the least, use many superlatives in advancing their priesthood. Practically every scriptural title that is applied to Christ is appropriated to themselves by Catholic priest, e.g., mediator, redeemer, spouse of the church. 1 Tim. 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus." It is the height of blasphemy for the Catholic Church to take the blessed offices and functions which belong only to Christ and place them upon mere men.

Today, the whole Catholic system is built around its priesthood. Every blessing and sacrament leads to the priests. For example, couples must be married by the priest. The mass must be conducted by the priest. Forgiveness of sins is dependent on the priest for without confession to him there is no absolution. Indeed, the priests have a stronghold over their parishioners from birth until death.

The whole Catholic arrangement is a corruption and apostasy from the order described in the New Testament. The Catholic priesthood slowly and gradually developed into what it is today by means of unscrupulous men who had no regard or respect for what God originally ordained. The gradual departure and evolution has resulted in what presently exists--a priestly caste with no divine authority whatsoever claiming divine prerogatives and exercising great authority and control over the souls of men.

Obedience to Priests

The following quotes from Catholic sources show that Catholics are taught to blindly obey their priests.

- ! "There is only one remedy for this evil (a troubled conscience, DJR), and that remedy is absolute and blind obedience to a prudent director. Choose one, consult him as often as you desire, but do not leave him for another. Then submit punctiliously to his direction. His conscience must be yours for the time being. And if you should err in following him, God will hold him, and not you responsible." (**Explanations of Catholic Morals**, p. 24).
- ! "God designs to make prelates, His own equals...If then you receive a command of one who holds the place of God, you should observe it with the same diligence as if it came from God Himself." (**True spouse of Christ**, p. 93).
- ! "Obey blindly, that is, without asking reasons. Be careful then, never to examine the directions of your confessor...In a word, keep before your eyes this great rule, that in obeying your confessor you obey God. Force yourself, then, to obey him in spite of all fears. And be persuaded that if you are not obedient to him it will be impossible for you to go on well; but if you obey him you are secure. But you say, I am damned in consequence of obeying my confessor, who will rescue me from hell? What you say is impossible." (Ibid., p. 352).

Hence, the Catholic Church requires implicit obedience to its priests maintaining that if a priest should err in his guidance, he only is held responsible and not those mislead. Speaking of false teachers, Jesus said, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides of blind men. But if a blind man guide a blind man, both fall into a pit." (Matt. 15:13-14). Peter said, "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29). We are taught in the Scriptures that each person is responsible for himself. He is to use all care to present himself approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15), and must personally seek to understand the will of the Lord (Eph. 5:17). He should strive to make his calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10), test all things (1 Thess. 5:21), and examine every teacher (1 John 4:1). No one else can do these things for us; each will be held responsible for himself. "Therefore every one of us will render an account for himself to God." (Rom. 14:12). As shown in the following, the Bible repeatedly warns against following men:

- ! "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not his: neither is it in a man to walk, and to direct his steps." (Jer. 10:23).
- ! "Sometimes a way seems right to a man, but the end of it leads to death." (Prov. 16:25).
- ! "See to it that no one deceives you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to human traditions, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ." (Col. 2:8).
- ! "And in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." (Matt. 15:9).
- ! "For God is true, and every man is a liar..." (Rom. 3:4).
- ! "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matt. 7:15).

Consequently, the following of man will condemn the soul. Only by following God as revealed in the

Scriptures are we safe. The apostle John said, "These things I am writing to you that you may know that you have eternal life--you who believe in the name of the son of God." (1 John 5:13). Thus, when one follows the sacred writings he can **know** (be assured beyond any shadow of doubt) that he has eternal life. To follow the Word of God is a safe course that is right and cannot be wrong. We wonder how or what Catholics will answer in the day of judgment when accused of having followed the commandments of men rather than the Word of God. What will they answer for having obeyed a human priesthood instead of our High Priest and Savior Jesus Christ? Our Catholic friends should seriously meditate upon these things and determine now to obey God rather than men. We hope and pray that they will.

Conclusion

All men will be judged in the last day by the things which the apostles and prophets bound upon us (John 12:48; Rom. 2:16; James 2:12; Rev. 20:12). All things which they bound are recorded in the New Testament. The New Testament constitutes "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). What the apostles and prophets bound on earth was bound in heaven. Who will affirm that it has been loosed again? What the apostles loosed on earth was loosed in heaven. By whom has it been bound again? The only excuse men could have for pretending to be successors to the apostles is that they want to bind upon earth what the apostles have loosed, or loose what the apostles have bound. There are no successors to the apostles and prophets. The alleged Catholic doctrine of "apostolic succession" is not taught in the Bible.

There is no need whatsoever for successors to the apostles and prophets. The apostles and prophets were God's chosen ambassadors to deliver "the faith" to mankind and their work has been completed. No one today possesses their qualifications. No one has their spiritual gifts and miraculous powers. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit they were guided into all truth as Jesus had promised. When we read the things they wrote, we can understand their knowledge in the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:3-4). All things of the will of Christ are recorded in the written New Testament of Christ (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). It contains all that God has bound upon us and all by which we will be judged in the last day.

No man on earth today has authority to forgive sins. The apostles did not have the authority to arbitrarily say to penitent sinners, "I absolve you," but by the Holy Spirit they revealed to sinners how their sins were to be forgiven or retained. The apostles did not instruct us to confess our sins to a priest. In the New Testament all Christians are priests (1 Pet. 2:5,9).

We close by calling your attention to the following Scriptures which solemnly warn against false apostles and prophets.

- ! "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone forth into the world." (1 John 4:1).
- ! "I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men; but hast tried those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them false." (Rev. 2:2).
- ! "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them." (Matt. 7:15-16).
- ! "For they are false prophets, deceitful workers, distinguishing themselves as apostles of Christ.

And no wonder, for Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light. It is not great thing, then, if his ministers disguise themselves as ministers of justice." (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

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The Gates of Hell

By David J. Riggs

Catholic officials claim that when Jesus used the expression, "the gates of hell" in Matt. 16:18, He was teaching that the church would never fall into error. Notice the following from Catholic sources:

- ! "Jesus Christ promised to preserve the Church from error. If His prediction and promises were false, then he would not be God, since God cannot lie. Christ said: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' *If therefore the Church falls into error, the gates of hell certainly would prevail against it.*" (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 144).
- ! "Our Blessed Lord, in constituting St. Peter Prince of His Apostles, says to him: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Christ makes here a solemn prediction that no error shall ever invade His Church, and if she fell into error the gates of hell certainly prevailed against her." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 55).

The Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, by W.E. Vine defined the word "hell" of Matt. 16:18 as, "HADES, the region of departed spirits of the lost (but including the blessed dead in periods preceding the Ascension of Christ)." (p. 187). Mr. Vine on page 188 added, "The word is used four times in the Gospels, and always by the Lord, Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; it is used with reference to the soul of Christ, Acts 2:27,31; Christ declares that He has the keys of it, Rev. 1:18..." **The Theological Word Book of the Bible**, edited by Alan Richardson, says of the word, "The name for this region was SHEOL (Heb.) or HADES (Gk.)...It was in Sheol that a man was 'gathered to his fathers'; the dead may not return to earth, but the living must eventually go to them (cf. II Sam. 12:23)." (p. 106).

When Jesus said, "...Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," He did not promise to preserve the church from error. He simply meant that the gates of hell would not prevail against Him in preventing Him from building His church. Acts 2:31-32 says, "...He, foreseeing it, spoke of the resurrection of the Christ. For neither was He abandoned to hell, nor did His flesh undergo decay. This Jesus God has raised up, and we are all witnesses of it." Hence, Jesus was not stopped from building His church by being left in hell ("hades" in the Greek, meaning the place of the disembodied spirits) because His spirit was again reunited with His body. If He had been confined to hades, it would have prevailed against Him.

A parallel constructed sentence to Matt. 16:18 is, "The students are going near the swamp, and the faculty does not like it." The faculty does not like what--the students? No, the faculty does not like the students **going near the swamp**. Jesus said, "...I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The gates of hell shall not prevail against what? They would not prevail against Christ **building His church**.

Is a Historical Succession Necessary?

By David J. Riggs

Catholics claim that a church must be able to authentically trace its history back to Christ in order to be the true church. Notice the following from a Catholic source:

- ! "How do you know the Catholic Church is the only true church? History shows that it is the only Christian church that can be traced back to Christ." (**A Catechism For Adults**, by William J. Cogan, Q. 10, p. 54).
- ! "Their ministers (Protestant churches, D.R.) cannot trace their succession from the Apostles." (**My Catholic Faith**, by Louis L. Morrow, p. 113).
- ! "The Catholic Church is the only Church which traces her origin back to Christ: all other Churches were established by men." (Ibid., p. 152).

We do not need a continual succession back to the original church for that same church to exist today. We need only to plant the word of God (the incorruptible seed of the kingdom--Luke 8:11; Matt. 13:19; 1 Pet. 1:23) in the hearts of individuals. Those who believe and obey the word constitute the church in any given locality. The Lord Himself adds to His church any who obey the gospel (Acts 2:38,41,47).

If one wanted to grow Florida watermelons in Kentucky, he would not need to go to Florida and stretch a vine back to Kentucky, but would need only to obtain the seed and plant it in Kentucky. Likewise, in order to have the true church today, a historical succession is not necessary; one needs only to plant the same seed which produced the church in the first century.

Immersion versus Pouring

By David J. Riggs

The book, **My Catholic Faith**, on page 270 gives the present day practice of the Catholic Church on baptism. It says, "How would you give baptism? I would give baptism by pouring ordinary water on the forehead of the person to be baptized..."

The Bible clearly teaches that baptism is a burial in water, not a pouring of water. Our English word "baptism" is from the Greek word "baptisma" and means "immersion, submersion and emergence" (**Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, p. 96), "to dip, immerse, submerge" (**Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon**, p. 94).

Consider the act of baptism as suggested by the baptism of Jesus. Mark writes, "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove." (Mark 1:9-10). Furthermore, examine the manner in which the eunuch of Ethiopia was baptized. "And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:38-39).

The apostle Paul said, "And you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." (Col. 2:12). In Rom. 6:4, Paul said, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Consequently, it is abundantly clear that the baptism which God ordained is a burial or immersion in water.

The following Catholic officials freely admit that immersion was the common practice for many years.

- ! "Baptism took place by immersion in ancient times." (**New Interpretation of the Mass**, p. 120).
- ! "Catholics admit that immersion brings out more fully the meaning of the sacrament, and that for twelve centuries it was the common practice." (**Question Box**, p. 240).
- ! "Baptism used to be given by placing the person to be baptized completely in the water: it was done in this way in the Catholic Church for 1200 years." (**Adult Catechism**, pp. 56-57).
- ! "The church at one time practiced immersion. This was up to the thirteenth century. The Council of Ravenna, in 1311, changed the form from immersion to pouring." (**Our Faith and the Facts**, p. 399).

We raise a simple question here, "Who gave the Catholic Church the authority to change what the Lord ordained?" We are taught in God's holy word that we must follow the laws of the Lord without change or variation (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19). When we follow the traditions and doctrines of men, our religion becomes vain (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:8; Titus 1:13-14). The Bible plainly reveals that there would come a

great "falling away" (2 Thess. 2:1-12) or "departing from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1-5). In the last day many sincere religious people will be rejected because they have worked iniquity or acted without law (Matt. 7:22-23).

Consider the ridiculousness of the following "official" claims:

- ! "Has the Catholic Church ever changed its teaching? No, for 2000 years the Church has taught the same things which Jesus taught." (**Catholic Catechism for Adults**, p. 57).
- ! "It is a historical fact the Catholic Church, from the twentieth century back to the first, has not once ceased to teach a doctrine on faith or morals previously held, and with the same interpretation; the church has proved itself infallible." (**My Catholic Church**, p. 145).

The following Catholic official openly acknowledges that the Catholic Church changed from immersion to pouring simply because it was more convenient. "The present mode of pouring arose from the many inconveniences connected with immersion, frequent mention of which are made in the writings of the early Church Fathers." (**Question Box**, p. 366). The wicked king Jeroboam made things convenient for the people by setting up idols and saying, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." (See I Kings 12:28-33). Two of the priests under the Mosaic system thought they would do what was convenient and "offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not" (Lev. 10:1). The very next verse says, "And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:2). To please God we must do exactly as He commanded and not that which might be more suitable to us. No one man or group of men have a right to change the law of God. God commanded a burial in water, and this is what must be done.

**"Pope Offers Catholics Time out of Purgatory by Y2K Indulgences"
By Steven F. Deaton**

The above was the headline of a recent article in the
HOUSTON CHRONICLE (Nov 28, 1998, p. 26A).

The article said:

- ! "Pope John Paul II announced Friday that throughout the millennium celebration, penitents who do a charitable deed or give up cigarettes or alcohol for a day can earn an 'indulgence' that will eliminate time in purgatory..."
- ! "The medieval church sold indulgences, a practice that drove Martin Luther to rebel, leading to the Reformation..."
- ! "The pope said individual sinners would be granted 'plenary indulgences,' a full pardon for sins as opposed to a shortening of the time spent in purgatory...He included personal acts of penitence or local charity as a way of earning an indulgence."
- ! "Throughout the period, believers will be offered a wider selection of ways to receive a plenary indulgence. They may follow tradition and attend a Mass in one of several designated churches and perform such devotions as the rosary or the stations of the cross. Or, as an appendix to the pope's letter explains, they may visit the sick, the imprisoned, or the handicapped, or give to the poor. Or they may choose an act of private sacrifice...This would include abstaining for at least one whole day from unnecessary consumption (for example, from smoking, or alcohol, or by fasting)."

Wouldn't that be nice? Wouldn't it be great if we could receive "a full pardon for sins" by simply going to see someone in prison or on their sickbed, or ... imagine this Christian brothers and sisters ... if we could give up our sinful practice of drinking alcohol for only a day!!! Wow! Think about it. That would mean we could avoid the painstaking instructions given by the INSPIRED JOHN when he said, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Too, we could ignore James' admonition to "confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed" (Js 5:16). "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).

Please don't misunderstand, we are for doing good deeds (Mt 25:31-46). We are for people giving up their sins, but for more than a day (Col 3:5-10). However, when you read the Bible "from cover to cover" you will never read of a thing called "indulgences." It is purely a tradition of man, established by man's authority, not from God in heaven (Mt 15:1-9; cf., Acts 8:18-24; 1 Jn 1:10; Js 5:16).

Moreover, there is no such thing as purgatory. Again, we submit that nowhere in God's inspired word will one find the doctrine that says people leave this world and enter purgatory to cleanse themselves before they get to heaven. Rather, the Bible teaches that upon our death, we will either go to paradise or torments, and can never cross over to the other, to await the final judgment (Lk 16:19-31).

Further, the article mentioned "rosary" and "stations of the cross," two things which are not as the oracles

of God (1 Pet 4:11).

It is worth noting that Martin Luther was right to rebel against the Catholic church and its teachings, but he went FROM BABYLON PAST JERUSALEM TO EGYPT. His disgust for Catholic perversions drove him to an equally sinful extreme--faith only. The Bible teaches that one must OBEY, DO, FOLLOW, and WORK in order to be pleasing to God (Heb 5:9; Mt 7:21-27; Jn 10:27; Mk 8:34-38; 2 Pt 1:10-11).

God's word foretold of those who would set themselves up as God and teach perversions of truth (2 Ths 2:3-4, 9-12; 1 Tm 4:1-3). These men and their doctrines are to be rejected (Gal 1:6-9; 2 Jn 9-11). Therefore, let us abide only in the doctrine of Christ!

Infant Baptism

By David J. Riggs

The **Catholic Catechism for Adults** of page 71 says, "Do babies have to be baptized? Yes, because they have Original Sin in their souls, which means they have no grace." Notwithstanding, infant baptism was not practiced by the apostles and early Christians. All of the cases of conversion in the book of Acts show that individuals heard the gospel, believed, and were baptized. There is not a single instance in the New Testament of infants being baptized, but rather a glaring lack of it. For example, Acts 8:12 says, "But when they believed Philip as he preached the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

Some Catholic officials readily admit that infant baptism cannot be proven by the Bible. "There is no express mention of the baptism of infants in the New Testament" (**Question Box**, p. 23). "It is difficult to give strict proof from the scriptures in favor of it" (**Catholic Dictionary**, p. 61). "Catholic controversialists soon proved to the Protestants that to be logical and consistent they must admit unwritten tradition. Otherwise by what right did they rest on Sunday and not on Saturday? How could they regard infant baptism as valid, or baptism by infusion?" (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. XV, p. 7).

Like many other doctrines of the Catholic Church, the baptism of infants slowly and gradually developed. "Ecclesiastical custom with regard to the administration of Baptism has undergone a change in the course of history. Whereas the early Church baptized adults only, the baptism of children soon became the usual practice." (**Pastoral Medicine**, pp. 32-33). "Where in the fourth and fifth centuries the doctrine of original sin became better known, the practice of infant baptism progressed rapidly." (**Legislation on the Sacraments in the New Code of Canon Law**, p. 72). "When all fear of persecution had passed away, and the empire had become almost entirely Christian, the necessity for a prolonged period of trial and instruction no longer existed, about the same time the fuller teaching on the subject of original sin, occasioned by the Pelagian heresy, gradually led to the administration of baptism of infants." (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. V, p. 78).

The baptizing of infants originated from the false idea that babies inherit the sin of Adam--termed, "original sin." In defining different kinds of sins, the book, **My Catholic Faith**, on page 50 says, "*Original sin* is the kind of sin that we inherit from Adam." There is nothing in the Bible which teaches that men inherit the sin of Adam, or that men are born in a state of sin. A person becomes a sinner when he commits sin, and he commits sin when he transgresses God's law. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4; see also James 1:13-15). A baby cannot be a sinner because he has not transgressed God's law. The prophet Ezekiel said, "The soul that sinneth, the same shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, and the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son: the justice of the just shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Ezek. 18:20; Catholic Confraternity Version). Hence, sin is not transferred from one generation or person to another. All men are sinners, not because they have inherited sin, but because "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23).

An infant is not a subject of the baptism ordained by God in His Holy Word. First, a candidate for baptism

must be a **hearer** of the Word of God (Rom. 10:17; Acts 2:22, 37; 15:7). He must be **taught** and he must **learn** the will of God. Jesus said, "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they all shall be taught of God.' Everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned, comes to me..." (John 6:45). In the great commission, the Lord said, "Going therefore teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." (Matt. 28:19-20; Catholic Rheims Version). Furthermore, one must **believe** the gospel before being baptized. Again Christ said, "Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:16). Another prerequisite to baptism is **repentance**. Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..." (Acts 2:38). A verbal **confession** of Christ is also necessary before baptism. "For if thou confess with thy mouth that Jesus is the Lord, and believe in thy heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. 10:9; see also Acts 8:37). Consequently, infants cannot be subjects for baptism because they cannot: (1) be taught of God, (2) believe, (3) repent, (4) confess. Those who baptize infants today are doing so against God's will. John said, "Anyone who advances and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, has not God; he who abides in the doctrine, he has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9).

Instrumental Music

By David J. Riggs

The New Testament of Christ does not include instrumental music as part of the worship of Christians. They were used many times in the Old Testament (2 Chron. 29:20-28; Psalm 150), but the New Testament is completely silent regarding them. Singing and making melody in the heart is the only thing that is mentioned (Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; James 5:13). Since there are no passages in the New Testament authorizing mechanical instruments of music in worship, it is wrong and sinful to use them. We cannot go beyond the things that are written and be pleasing to God (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9). When we add the traditions and doctrines of men, our worship becomes vain (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:8).

The following quotations show that instrumental music was introduced by the Roman Catholic Church many years after the New Testament was written.

- ! "Pope Vitalian is related to have first introduced organs into some of the churches of Western Europe, about 670..." (**The American Encyclopedia**, Vol. 12, p. 688).
- ! "In the Greek church the organ never came into use. But after the eighth century it became more and more common in the Latin church; not, however without opposition from the side of the Monks...The Reform Church discarded it; and though the church of Basel very early introduced it, it was in other places admitted only sparingly and after long hesitation." **Scaff-Herzog Encyclopedia**, Vol. 2, p. 280).
- ! "Pope Vitalianus in 658 introduced the organ into the Roman churches to accompany the singers." (**London Encyclopedia**, Vol. 15, p. 280).

Consequently, the only authority for instruments of music in worship is the Roman Catholic Church. They were not authorized by Christ, but were introduced by men many years after the law of Christ was once for all delivered. Our denominational friends and neighbors no doubt do not realize they are blindly following the Catholic Church in this matter. Let me pose a question here. "What causes men today to choose an organ or piano as the instrument to be used? Why not play a trumpet or a drum?" Most say they prefer the organ because it seems to be more suitable to the mood of worship. In other words, men have chosen the instrument they want purely on the basis of what best excites their physical emotions to be a temperament they feel is better for worship. The whole idea is based on what pleases them, on what seems best to their own physical senses, personal desires, and tastes.

The worship of the New Testament is a spiritual worship in which one pours out his soul in adoration and reverence to God. It is not a carnal worship devised to please the physical senses of man. Man does not have a right to choose what seems best or what pleases him in worship to God. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24).

A television documentary on foreign countries showed a family that had a rotation wheel in their home which was used with praying. Supposedly, when the wheel was spun, it sent the worshiper's prayers up to God. Actually, there is no difference in praying or singing with an instrument. Both violate the principles of faith (2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17), make void the word of God (Mark 7:13). They cannot be done in the

name of Christ because they are without His authority (Col. 3:17). Christ alone is the head of His church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18) and He alone has the right to state what should be done in worship. Since His New Testament does not authorize mechanical instruments in worship, they cannot be used.

Is the Catholic Church Infallible?

By David J. Riggs

None will deny the importance and need of infallibility in religion. To assure man of his salvation, he wants and needs an unerring guide or an infallible authority. Such a guide cannot be produced by man because he is sinful, changeable and perishable. It cannot reside in a religious organization because it is subject to the same limitations that handicap man. Certainly, a guide of absolute truth can be produced only by God Almighty. God through His infinite goodness and mercy provided His written Word as our authority and guide. Jesus said, "Thy (God's) word is truth." (John 17:17). The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into "all truth" (John 16:13) and they alone with the inspired New Testament prophets wrote God's truth for us (Eph. 3:2-5). They were God's chosen ambassadors to deliver His infallible message to man and it has once and for all been delivered (Jude 3). God's written Word, therefore, is man's sole unerring guide from earth to heaven. It is the standard by which all men will be judged in the last day (John 12:48; Rom. 2:16; James 2:12; Rev. 20:12).

Catholics affirm that God, instead of making His written Word the sole infallible guide, made the Catholic Church an infallible authority. Thus, in this work we will examine the truthfulness of their claim. All scriptural quotations in this essay are from authorized Catholic translations (from the Confraternity Version unless otherwise indicated), and all quotes are from authorized Catholic books (books bearing the "Nihil obstat" - "nothing hinders" and the "Imprimatur" - "let it be printed"). A complete bibliography is furnished at the close of this composition.

Catholics claim that the church has the right to make laws as is noted in the following quotes:

- ! "Akin to these divine laws is the purely ecclesiastical law or the law of the Church. Christ sent forth his Church clothed with his own and his Father's authority, 'As the Father sent me, so I send you'. She was to endure, perfect herself, and fulfill her mission on earth. To enable her to carry out this divine plan she makes laws, laws purely ecclesiastical, but laws that have the same binding force as the divine laws themselves, since they bear the stamp of divine authority." (**Explanation of Catholic Morals**, p. 26).
- ! "Does everyone have to obey the Catholic Church? Yes, because she alone has the authority of Jesus to rule and to teach. To disobey the Catholic Church knowingly is just as much a sin as to disobey Jesus or His Apostles." (**A Catechism for Adults**, p. 54).

Christ did not give His church the right to make laws. He gave the apostles and prophets the authority to **reveal** His laws, e.g., "...The things I am writing to you are the Lord's commandments" (1 Cor. 14:37), but He did not delegate to them nor to His church the authority to **make** laws. Jesus has **all** authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), and He is head over **all** things of the church (Eph. 1:22); therefore, He alone has the right to ordain what pleases Him in His church. The responsibility of the church is not to make or change laws, but to follow the laws made. The authority is not in the body but in the Head; the ruling is not in the kingdom but in the King; the authority is not in the church but in Christ.

The Bible does speak of a body of people who would make laws; however, it is not the Lord's church but the great apostasy:

- ! "Now the Spirit expressly says that in after times some will depart from the faith, giving heed

to deceitful spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies hypocritically, and having their conscience branded. They will forbid marriage, and will enjoin abstinence from foods, which God has created to be partaken of with thanksgiving by the faithful and by those who know the truth." (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

In the above passage the apostle foretold that the group which would depart from the faith would "forbid marriage and will enjoin abstinence from foods." None can deny the fact that ecclesiastical law in the Catholic Church does forbid marriage. The vows which the priest and nuns choose to take forbid them to marry. Furthermore, all know that the Catholic Church has at times, and still does, e.g., the Lenten fast, enjoined abstinence from foods.

The Catholic writer in our initial quote said, "Christ sent forth his church clothed with his own and his Father's authority, 'As the Father sent me, so I send you'." Following are similar quotes from a Catholic source:

- ! **"Christ appointed the Church to teach whatever He taught:** 'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Matt. 28:19-20).
- ! **"Christ gave the Church full authority and power saying,** 'As the Father has sent me, I also send you' (John 20:21).
- ! **"Christ, upon leaving the earth, gave to His Church full power and authority to carry on His work.** 'He who hears you, hears me; and he who rejects you, rejects me' (Luke 10:16)." (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 143).

In all of the passages quoted by the above Catholic writers, Jesus was speaking to the apostles **only**. The passages do not make the church infallible nor give authority to the church because they were not spoken to it and do not refer to it. The apostles were not the church, but only part of the church. On the very day the church was established, three thousand souls were added to it (Acts 2:41,47). The three thousand did not constitute an infallible group; only the apostles within the group were infallible. They were infallible because they had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. They had authority because Jesus has said to them, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (John 10:21). To take the passages which were spoken to them and apply them to the church is to twist and pervert the Word of God.

Please notice the following from Catholic sources:

- ! "In the same explicit way Christ promises to send the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, upon the apostles: 'And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you forever. The Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him; because he shall abide with you, and shall be in you...But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.' (John 14:16-17, 26).
- ! "In these words Christ assures the infant Church of the abiding presence of the Spirit of Truth guiding her in her teaching mission." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 136).
- ! "He is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world of unbelievers (John xv. 19; xvii. 9, 25) cannot receive (John xiv. 13-17, 25, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 13). The Church that witnessed (Luke xxiv. 28; Acts i. 9) to Christ must be infallible." (**The Question Box**, p. 96).

- ! "The Holy Spirit preserves the Church from all error in its teaching..." (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 105).

As we noticed before, the Catholic writers in effort to prove that the church is infallible are quoting passages which referred to the apostles only and are applying them to the church. The apostles alone were given the promise of the Holy Spirit. It was not given to the infant church. The apostles were the only ones with Jesus when the promise was made and it was made directly to them. (See John chapters 13-16). They were to wait in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49). The promise of the Holy Spirit was the same as the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5, 8) and was the power they were to receive (Acts 1:8). They received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and it enabled them to speak in tongues, work miracles (Acts 2:1-4, 43) and to deliver God's laws to man (Acts 2:38, 42). This was in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures which stated that the law would go forth out of Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3; Micah 4:2).

The apostles received the Holy Spirit and it made them infallible in their speaking and writing. They were infallible, preserved from error, because they were inspired of God. Jesus didn't make the promise of the Holy Spirit to the church--the word "church" is not mentioned in the passages--therefore, the church is not infallible. To take the passages which were spoken to the apostles and apply them to the church is to twist and pervert the Word of God. Those who do such are transgressing the law of God.

Again, please notice the following from a Catholic source:

- ! "10. **Why can't the Catholic Church ever teach error?** Because Jesus promised to be always with His church to protect it from error. 'Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:19-20). (**A Catechism for Adults**, p. 56).

One can easily see that the above Catholic writer is again taking the words which Christ spoke to His apostles and is applying them to the church. The word "church" is not in the passage; it does not say anything about the church much less that it would never teach error. Another Catholic writer makes the same passage teach something altogether different:

- ! "The guidance of Christ, was therefore, to continue with their successors. This is clearly disclosed by the words of Christ: 'Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.' Since the Apostles were not to live until the end of the world, Christ promised to be with them in the person of their successors unto the end of time." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 137).

One Catholic writer makes it teach that the church could never teach error and another makes it teach that the apostles must have successors. However, the passage mentioned neither the church nor successors. False teachers jerk passages out of context in this manner to make the Scriptures teach what they want them to teach. Those who do such have the curse of God resting on them (Gal. 1:6-9) and those who blindly follow their false teaching are likewise condemned. Jesus said of the Pharisees and their false teaching, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides of blind men. But if a blind man guide a blind man, both fall into a pit." (Matt. 15:

13-14).

The passage in Matt. 28:19-20 was spoken to the twelve and therefore refers to them alone. There are at least two ways in which Christ would be with His apostles. Christ would be with them in the sense that He is with all who live godly--His Spirit dwells in them (John 14:23) and after death they depart to be with Him (Phil. 1:21-23). Also, Christ would always be with them in the teaching of His commandments. He instructed them to teach His commandments, "teaching them (all nations) to observe all I have commanded you" and He followed by saying, "and behold, I am with you all days..." He promised to be with them as they taught His will to the world. He also added, "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." He is yet with them in the teaching of His commandments and will always be for they were commissioned by Him and bore His authority. Moreover, He causes their word to remain forever (1 Pet. 1:23-25) and is thereby yet with them as they teach His commandments to the world.

Catholic officials often make the unreasonable distinction between the time when the church was established and the written New Testament was completed. In other words, to them the Bible is secondary in authority because it followed the establishment of the church. Please notice the following from Catholic sources:

- ! "It is well to remember, however, that the Church was a **going concern**, a functioning institution, teaching, preaching, administering the sacraments, saving souls, before the New Testament saw the light of day.
- ! "She is not the child of the Bible, as many non-Catholics imagine, but its mother. She derives neither her existence nor her teaching authority from the New Testament. She had both before the New Testament was born: she secured her being, her teaching, her authority directly from Jesus Christ." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 146).
- ! "In other words, the church in her worship and religious and moral observances, was a **going concern** before a word of the New Testament was written. She is not dependent on it for her existence, nor is she limited in her doctrines to it." (Ibid., p. 154).
- ! "You see, Mr. Jackson, the Church was to represent Christ not only as Teacher; it was to perpetuate all His works--which the Bible would be incapable of doing. **The Church produced the Bible, and not the Bible the Church.** The New Testament was written only after the Church was fully organized and hard at work." (**Father Smith Instructs Jackson**, p. 35).

The fact that the written New Testament was completed after the church was established does not prove the church is infallible. The early church was guided by the same source as the church today--the Word of God. There was a time when all the Word of God was given orally--by word of mouth of the inspired apostles and prophets. When people heard, believed and obeyed the Word given by the inspired teachers, the Lord added them to His church (Acts 2:47). In other words, upon obedience, they then constituted the church or the body of the saved. When they became "the church," they had no authority in making or changing the laws of the Lord. Their responsibility, as today, was to follow the commandments given by those who were guided by the Holy Spirit.

In all the accounts of conversion in the book of Acts, it is revealed that the Word of God was first preached (Acts 2:14-41; 8:5-13; 35-39; 9:17-18; 10:34-38; 16:13, 32). Thus, churches were established as result

of the preaching of God's Word, and after being established, they continued to be guided and instructed by the inspired men who were present with them (See Acts 20:17-28). The Word of God given orally was the guide and standard of authority in that early period. If Christians in any given locality wished to be pleasing to God, they had to receive the Word of the inspired teachers as coming from God Himself (1 Thess. 2:13).

There was a period when the Word of God was given both orally and written; the apostles and prophets began delivering God's will both by preaching and writing. 2 Thess. 2:15 says, "So the, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter." (Catholic Edition RSV). Thus, there was a time when the church was guided either by having inspired men in their presence or by epistles written by inspired men. Both of these had equal authority because both were the product of the Holy Spirit. When the apostles passed from the earth, their inspired writings became the only source of authority in religion. Therefore, today the church must look into the perfect law of liberty or the written New Testament to learn what it should be and must teach. The written word is the guide from earth to heaven (2 Tim. 3:15-17); it contains the laws of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). The written Word produces the faith in the hearts of men which brings life in the name of Jesus (John 20:31). It was given to protect us from sin (1 John 2:1) and to show us how we ought to conduct ourselves in the church (1 Tim. 3:14-15). The church cannot go beyond the written Word and be pleasing to God (1 Cor. 4:6).

Consequently, the Word of the New Testament existed before the church (first given orally and then written). The church was born of the Word (Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:11). The Word was not born of the church nor is the church the mother of the Word. How could it be the "New Testament church" except that the New Testament had been first? When Catholic officials argue that the church existed before the written New Testament, are they trying to say that the church existed without the faith that comes by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17)? We see, therefore, that their argument amounts to nothing more than another feeble attempt to exalt the church as an authority in addition to the Bible.

Catholic officials claim that when Jesus used the expression, "the gates of hell" in Matt. 16:18, He was teaching that the church would be preserved from error. Notice the following from Catholic sources:

- ! "***Jesus Christ promised to preserve the Church from error.*** If His prediction and promises were false, then he would not be God, since God cannot lie. Christ said: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' ***If therefore the Church falls into error, the gates of hell certainly would prevail against it.***" (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 144).
- ! "Our Blessed Lord, in constituting St. Peter Prince of His Apostles, says to him: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Christ makes here a solemn prediction that no error shall ever invade His Church, and if she fell into error the gates of hell certainly prevailed against her." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 55).

The Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, by W.E. Vine defined the word "hell" of Matt. 16:18 as, "HADES, the region of departed spirits of the lost (but including the blessed dead in periods preceding the Ascension of Christ)." (p. 187). Mr. Vine on page 188 added, "The word is used four times

in the Gospels, and always by the Lord, Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; it is used with reference to the soul of Christ, Acts 2:27,31; Christ declares that He has the keys of it, Rev. 1:18..." The **Theological Word Book of the Bible**, edited by Alan Richardson, says of the word, "The name for this region was SHEOL (Heb.) or HADES (Gk.)...It was in Sheol that a man was 'gathered to his fathers'; the dead may not return to earth, but the living must eventually go to them (cf. II Sam. 12:23)." (p. 106).

When Jesus said, "...Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," He did not promise to preserve the church from error. He simply meant that the gates of hell would not prevail against Him in preventing Him from building His church. Acts 2:31-32 says, "...He, foreseeing it, spoke of the resurrection of the Christ. For neither was He abandoned to hell, nor did His flesh undergo decay. This Jesus God has raised up, and we are all witnesses of it." Hence, Jesus was not stopped from building His church by being left in hell ("hades" in the Greek, meaning the place of the disembodied spirits) because His spirit was again reunited with His body. If He had been confined to hades, it would have prevailed against Him.

A parallel constructed sentence to Matt. 16:18 is, "The students are going near the swamp, and the faculty does not like it." The faculty does not like what--the students? No, the faculty does not like the students **going near the swamp**. Jesus said, "...I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The gates of hell shall not prevail against what? They would not prevail against Christ **building His church**.

The Catholic writers try to teach that the church could never go into error and is preserved from error. There are many passages in the New Testament which reveal that the opposite is true. Please carefully examine the following passages: Acts 20:17, 28-30; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:3-11.

From the above passages we see that there was to come a great falling away from the truth. In Acts chapter twenty we learn that perverse things would come from the bishops of the church. Peter said (2 Pet. 2) that false teachers would arise among you (working from within) and there would be **many** who would follow them. Paul tell us (2 Thess. 2) that the apostasy was already underway, "for the mystery of iniquity is already at work..." (Verse 7). It started in Paul's day and was to continue until the second coming of Christ. He added, "...Whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth and will destroy with the brightness of his coming." (Verse 8).

We cannot harmonize that which the inspired apostles said (there shall arise false teachers among you) with that which the Catholic writers say (shall be preserved from error). Furthermore, we call your attention to the fact that the characteristics of the departing group are identical with those of the Catholic Church. Everyone knows that the Catholic Church has forbidden its people to eat meat on Friday and at the present it forbids some from marriage. Also, the only way for the wicked one to last from Paul's day to the second coming of Christ is to have a continual succession. It could not be some wicked person of the past because he will not be here for the Lord to slay when He comes. Furthermore, it could not be ones in the future because their iniquity would not have started in Paul's day. It must, therefore, be a continual succession from the beginning until now. The Catholic Church is the only group which perfectly fits the apostles'

description of the great apostasy.

Consider, again, these quotes from Catholic sources:

- ! "Our Savior said to Peter: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Our Blessed Lord clearly intimates here that the Church is destined to be assailed always, but to be overcome, never." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 43).
- ! "1. **Christ meant His church to endure to the end of the world.** It is to be indestructible and unchanging,--**to possess indefectibility.**
- ! "3. After telling His Apostles to teach all nations, Christ said: '**Behold, I am with you all days**, even unto the consummation of the world' (Matt. 28:20).
- ! "As the apostles were not to live to the end of the world, Christ **was addressing them as representatives of a perpetual Church.**
- ! "5. **If the Church lost any of the qualities that God gave it**, it could not be indefectible, because it would not be the same institution. **Indefectibility implies** unchangeability.
- ! "**Our Lord promises to abide by the Church**, to assist it, and to send the Holy Spirit to remain in it. God does not change: 'Behold, I am with you all days, **even unto the consummation of the world.**' (Matt. 28:20).
- ! "6. Because of its **indefectibility the truths** revealed by God will always be taught **in the Catholic Church.**" (**My Catholic Faith**, pp. 148-149).

In the above quotes, the Catholic writers declare that Christ made His church perpetual and indefectible. They mean that the church could never defect from truth or cease to be the true church. Notice which Scriptures they use to sustain their claim. It is truly amazing how the Catholics obtain so many doctrines from the same passages. They claim that Matt. 16:18 teaches (1) the church can never teach error; (2) the church is perpetual. They affirm Matt. 28:20 teaches (1) the apostles have successors; (2) the church is preserved from error; (3) the church is endowed with perpetual life. We have already shown that Matt. 16:18 simply said the gates of hell would not prevail against Christ building His church. Matt. 28:20 was spoken to the twelve apostles and therefore refers to them alone. The word "church" is not mentioned nor addressed in the verse. The Catholic's claim of an unchanging and ever-existent church--they mean always acceptable to Christ--does not allow for the great apostasy revealed in the Bible. The apostasy was to arise from within and would likewise claim to be of divine origin.

After making their claim of a perpetual and indefectible church, Catholic teachers proceed to show by history that the Catholic Church has always existed in spite of the many attacks brought against it. Notice the following:

- ! "**The Catholic Church** has, throughout its long history, **proved itself indefectible, against all kinds of attack** from within and without, against every persecution and every heresy and schism." (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 149).
- ! "No one but God Almighty could found a perpetual and infallible society. The existence of the Catholic church today is proof that her founder was divine, for no merely human society could endure throughout the centuries as the Catholic church has done.
- ! "Unless the Church was a divine institution she had perished long ago. Her existence today is a great miracle as the resurrection." (**Answer Wisely**, pp. 49-50).

Bear in mind that the great apostasy was to exist throughout the centuries--from Paul's day (2 Thess. 2:7) to the second coming of Christ (2 Thess. 2:8). Thus, through the years the opposition described by the apostasy in some cases may be the people of God trying to expose the error of the apostasy, and likewise the affliction the people of God were suffering may be that ministered by the apostasy. Does the fact that the great apostasy existed from the beginning prove that it is infallible and unchangeable? If the "always existed" argument proves infallibility for the church, it proves it for the apostasy. If it proves the church to be divine, it proves the apostasy to be divine. The point is that the "always existed" argument proves nothing. It is one of the identifying characteristics of the great apostasy rather than the true church.

Catholic officials often ask, "Where was the true church when Martin Luther was born if the Roman Catholic Church was not that church? They are assuming there were no religions other than Roman Catholicism in the time of Luther. Also, their question is built on the assumption the Lord's church must have an authentic (verified by historical documentation) succession from the time of the apostles. Where does God's Word teach that a historical succession is necessary for a the church to be Lord's church? We have already shown that the expression "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" is not referring to a historical succession, but "hades" would not prevail against Jesus building His church. The term "with you always, even to the end of the world" was spoken to the apostles, not the church.

The history of the Catholic Church from its inception records no period when there have been no "heretics" as the objects of its wrath. At all times there have been persons claiming to be Christians who repudiated the Roman Catholic faith. Could these not have been the Christians? The prophet Elijah thought himself to be the only one who had remained loyal to God, but God told him there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal (Rom. 11:2-5). Likewise, in past centuries there have been many who did not claim allegiance to the pope nor bowed the knee to the traditions and doctrines of men in the Catholic Church.

The gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes" (Rom. 1:16), and its power is nowhere limited to an unbroken succession of God's faithful on earth. "The seed" (of the kingdom) "is the word of God" (Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:11). "For you have been reborn, not from corruptible seed but from incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever." (1 Pet. 1:23). The life-giving germ remains in the gospel and when believed and obeyed, it produces Christians or the Lord's church. Even if there was a lapse of a thousand years since true Christians lived on earth, the gospel would still be the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes. When the gospel is believed and obeyed at any time by anyone, no matter what nationality, race or sex, the Lord adds them to His church (Acts 2:41,47). The association of any number of such believers constitutes the church of God, or the church of Christ, or simply "the church" as it is frequently called in the New Testament.

Even if the great falling away, the mystery of lawlessness which had already begun its work in Paul's day, grew to such proportions that it embraced all the professed Christians on earth, it does not mean that the church was permanently destroyed or annihilated. The kingdom of Christ is an eternal one (Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28) because it is perpetuated by an eternal seed (1 Pet. 1:23-25). There is no reason or Scripture to support the claim that a continuous, unbroken succession of Christians is necessary to acceptable obedience to the gospel or to have the true church. If one wanted to grow Florida watermelons in

Tennessee, he would not need to stretch a vine from Florida to Tennessee, but would simply need to bring the seeds to Tennessee and plant them. Similarly, we don't need a broken succession back to the first church to have the true church today. We simply need to plant the seed (the Word of God) in the hearts of individuals, and when they believe and obey it, they become "the church" in any given locality.

When an apple seed is planted, it always produces only an apple tree; an acorn grows only an oak. There are no exceptions to this because God ordained all plants to yield after their kind (Gen. 1:11). Likewise, when the seed of the kingdom is planted in the hearts of men, it always produces only Christians and the New Testament church. It produces only after its kind--that which is identical to the primitive church. If a person is something religiously about which nothing is said in the New Testament, some doctrine has been planted besides the pure and simple Word of God. Taking some of the New Testament, mixing it with human teaching, and planting it in the hearts of men produces a human religion, not the church or kingdom of Christ.

In our world of religious division and confusion, many ask, "How can I know which church is right and which is wrong?" We ask, "How would you know whether a tree is an apple tree or an oak? If a tree has apples on it, you would know that it is an apple tree. Likewise, when a church is identical in name, faith, and practice, etc., to the early church, it is the church of Christ. It is not a matter of finding something similar to the New Testament church, but building and maintaining that same institution. To be the New Testament church, it must be identical in every detail to the church of the New Testament.

In New Testament times when people in any given community received and obeyed the Word of God, they collectively constituted the church or kingdom in that place. They then submitted themselves to the law of Christ in all matters relative to the church. Even so, in modern times, if a religious body is governed by the same authority, has the same name, organization, worship, work, requirements for membership, etc., as did the original church, it is without question the same church.

Again, we affirm there is no need to have a church succession back to the original church. We need only to plant the seed of the kingdom once again. Wheat seed found in the ancient pyramids of Egypt though thousands of years old, when planted, germinated and bore the same wheat grown in that ancient time. So today, when the seed of the kingdom is planted, it will again produce after its kind.

Let us examine from the Scriptures the true relationship the church sustains to Christ. The seven short epistles to seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation reveal the relationship the church bears to Christ.

- ! "To the angel of the church at Ephesus write:...I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men; but hast tried them who say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them false...But I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou hast fallen, and repent and do the former works; or else I will come to thee, and will move thy lamp-stand out of its place, unless thou repentest." (Rev. 2:2-5).
- ! "And to the angel of the church at Pergamos write:...But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, that they might eat things sacrificed to idols and

commit fornication. So thou hast also some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. In like manner repent..." (Rev. 2:12, 14-15; see also 2:18-20; 3:1-3, 14-15).

The above verses (and many other similar ones) plainly reveal that when a church continues in Christ's Word, it keeps its identity as His church, but when it fails to abide in His Word, it is no longer regarded as His church. Also, they reveal that Christ did not establish His church as one that could never fall into error, because some of those churches went into error. Someone might say that the passages in Revelation referred to the various parishes or congregations rather than the whole church. It is true that the verses were speaking of local churches; nevertheless, the same principle that applied to them relates to the whole church. The Lord does not have a rule for one congregation which is not equally applicable to all. If one church is rejected for embracing error, all others who likewise embrace error are rejected.

Many times during the Old Testament period, the whole Israelite nation left the truth. Jeremiah the prophet recorded that false prophets and priests had turned the people from the truth and none were right (Jer. 5:31; 6:13; 8:10; 13:25; 14:14; 23:32). Isaiah said, "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice hath stood far off: because truth hath fallen down in the street, and equity could not come in. And truth hath been forgotten..." (Isa. 59:14-15). Time and time again the whole Israelite nation left the truth and followed error--Judges 2:10-12; Psalm 14:2-3; 53:2-3; Micah 7:2 etc. Some generations, however, abandoned error and turned back to the Word of God. A good example is when the book of the Lord was found in the temple and reforms were made (2 Kings 22 & 23).

The Old Testament examples of the people of God falling away reveal the proper relationship the church sustains with Christ because the New Testament writers declared that those things serve as warnings for us. 1 Cor. 10:11 says, "Now all these things happened to them as a type, and they were written for our correction, upon whom the final age of the world has come." (See 1 Cor. 10:1-12; Rom. 15:4). If God's chosen people under the Old Testament went into error, and the inspired writers declared that those things were written as a type to admonish us, it necessarily follows that God's people under the New Testament can go into error. This shows conclusively that the church is not infallible.

The relationship that the church sustains to Christ is the same as that of the individual Christian. As long as the individual abides in the Word of the Lord, he will never perish and no outside forces can remove him from the Lord's favor. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. And I give them everlasting life; and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28). Did Jesus mean "once saved, always saved?" No, He meant that no outside forces can remove one from Him; however, it still remains that one can remove himself by not abiding in His Word. Likewise, there are no outside forces that can destroy the church, e.g., "a kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Heb. 12:28), but it can cause itself to be rejected by embracing error. As long as the church is abiding in the Word of Christ there are no outside forces that can destroy it, but when it is overtaken by error, by its own actions it loses its identity as His church.

Catholics sometimes quote 1 Tim. 3:15 which states, "...The church of the living God, the pillar and mainstay of the truth" to prove that the church is invested with authority to legislate in divine matters. (See **Father Smith Instructs Jackson**, p. 35; **The Question Box**, p. 96). The phrase "pillar and of truth" does not mean that the church is the originator of truth, or that it can make or change the laws of God. It

simply means that it is the upholder, defender and proclaimer of the truth. The apostles often praised churches for proclaiming the truth, "for from you the word of the Lord has been spread abroad" (1 Thess. 1:8). They commended them for defending the truth, "partakers with me...in the defense and confirmation of the gospel" (Phil. 1:7). However, there is not a single verse in all of the holy Scriptures which indicates that the church has the authority to originate truth or to decree laws for God.

The apostles and prophets and they alone were commissioned by the Lord, not to **originate** truth--"For ever, O Lord, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens" (Psalm 119:89 Catholic Edition RSV)--but to **reveal** the truth. Their task was once and for all completed for they gave us the written New Testament of Christ. The responsibility of the church today is simply to follow, defend and proclaim the truth which they revealed. The **Catechism for Adults**, page 54 says, "The Catholic Church alone has the authority to rule and to teach." However, the authority is not in the body, but in the Head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The ruling is not in the kingdom, but in the King (Heb. 7:1-2; Rev. 1:5-6). The authority is not in the church, but in Christ (Matt. 28:18; 1 Pet. 3:22). The church is not the Savior, but simply the body of the saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:22-24).

The only reason a church would want to claim infallibility is to deceive the people into thinking that no matter what it teaches, it is always acceptable to God. Through the doctrine of infallibility, it changes God's laws and its people ignorantly and blindly accept them. Following are some examples of such changes in the Catholic Church:

- ! "Baptism took place by immersion in ancient times." (**New Interpretation of the Mass**, p. 120).
- ! "Catholics admit that immersion brings out more fully the meaning of the sacrament, and that for twelve centuries it was the common practice." (**Question Box**, p. 240).
- ! "Baptism used to be given by placing the person to be baptized completely in the water: it was done in this way in the Catholic Church for 1200 years." (**Adult Catechism**, pp. 56-57).
- ! "The church at one time practiced immersion. This was up to the thirteenth century. The Council of Ravenna, in 1311, changed the form from immersion to pouring." (**Our Faith and the Facts**, p. 399).

The book, **My Catholic Faith**, on page 270 gives the present day practice of the Catholic Church on baptism. It says, "How would you give baptism? I would give baptism by pouring ordinary water on the forehead of the person to be baptized..." The Bible clearly teaches that baptism is a burial in water, not a pouring of water. Our English word "baptism" is from the Greek word "baptisma" and means "immersion, submersion and emergence" (**Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, p. 96), "to dip, immerse, submerge" (**Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon**, p. 94).

Consider the act of baptism as suggested by the baptism of Jesus. (Mark 1:9-10). Furthermore, examine the manner in which the eunuch of Ethiopia was baptized. (Acts 8:38-39). The apostle Paul said, "And you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." (Col. 2:12). In Rom. 6:4, Paul said, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Consequently, it is abundantly clear that the baptism which God

ordained is a burial or immersion in water.

We raise a simple question here, "Who gave the Catholic Church the authority to change what the Lord ordained?" We are taught in God's holy Word that we must follow the laws of the Lord without change or variation (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19). When we follow the traditions and doctrines of men, our religion becomes vain (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:8; Titus 1:13-14). The Bible plainly reveals that there would come a great "falling away" (2 Thess. 2:1-12) or "departing from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1-5). In the last day many sincere religious people will be rejected because they worked iniquity or acted without law (Matt. 7:22-23).

The following Catholic official openly acknowledges that the Catholic Church changed immersion to pouring simply because it was more convenient. "The present mode of pouring arose from the many inconveniences connected with immersion, frequent mention of which are made in the writings of the early Church Fathers." (**Question Box**, p. 366). The wicked king Jereboam made things convenient for the people by setting up idols and saying, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." (See I Kings 12:28-33). Two of the priests under the Mosiacal system thought they would do what was convenient and "offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not" (Lev. 10:1). The very next verse says, "And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:2). To please God we must do exactly as He commanded and not that which might be more suitable to us. No one man or group of men have a right to change the law of God. God commanded a burial in water, and this is what must be done.

Catholic officials readily admit that infant baptism cannot be proven by the Bible. Notice the following:

- ! "There is no express mention of the baptism of infants in the New Testament" (**Question Box**, p. 23).
- ! "It is difficult to give strict proof from the scriptures in favor of it" (**Catholic Dictionary**, p. 61).
- ! "Catholic controversialists soon proved to the Protestants that to be logical and consistent they must admit unwritten tradition. Otherwise by what right did they rest on Sunday and not on Saturday? How could they regard infant baptism as valid, or baptism by infusion?" (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. XV, p. 7).

Like many other doctrines of the Catholic Church, the baptism of infants slowly and gradually developed. Again, notice the following:

- ! "Ecclesiastical custom with regard to the administration of Baptism has undergone a change in the course of history. Whereas the early Church baptized adults only, the baptism of children soon became the usual practice." (**Pastoral Medicine**, pp. 32-33).
- ! "Where in the fourth and fifth centuries the doctrine of original sin became better known, the practice of infant baptism progressed rapidly." (**Legislation on the Sacraments in the New Code of Canon Law**, p. 72).
- ! "When all fear of persecution had passed away, and the empire had become almost entirely Christian, the necessity for a prolonged period of trial and instruction no longer existed, about the same time the fuller teaching on the subject of original sin, occasioned by the Pelagian

heresy, gradually led to the administration of baptism of infants." (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. V, p. 78).

The baptizing of infants originated from the false idea that babies inherit the sin of Adam--termed, "original sin." In defining different kinds of sins, the book, **My Catholic Faith**, on page 50 says, "*Original sin* is the kind of sin that we inherit from Adam." There is nothing in the Bible which teaches that men inherit the sin of Adam, or that men are born in a state of sin. A person becomes a sinner when he commits sin, and he commits sin when he transgresses God's law. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4; see also James 1:13-15). A baby cannot be a sinner because he has not transgressed God's law. The prophet Ezekiel said, "The soul that sinneth, the same shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, and the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son: the justice of the just shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Ezek. 18:20; Catholic Confraternity Version). Hence, sin is not transferred from one generation or person to another. All men are sinners, not because they have inherited sin, but because "all have sinned" (Rom. 3: 23).

An infant is not a subject of the baptism ordained by God in His Holy Word. First, a candidate for baptism must be a **hearer** of the Word of God (Rom. 10:17; Acts 2:22, 37; 15:7). He must be **taught** and he must **learn** the will of God. Jesus said, "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they all shall be taught of God. Everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned, comes to me...'" (John 6:45). In the great commission, the Lord said, "Going therefore teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." (Matt. 28:19-20; Catholic Rheims Version). Furthermore, one must **believe** the gospel before being baptized. Again, Christ said, "Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:16). Another prerequisite to baptism is **repentance**. Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..." (Acts 2:38). A verbal **confession** of Christ is also necessary before baptism. "For if thou confess with thy mouth that Jesus is the Lord, and believe in thy heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. 10:9; see also Acts 8:37). Consequently, infants cannot be subjects for baptism because they cannot: (1) be taught of God, (2) believe, (3) repent, (4) confess. Those who baptize infants today are doing so against God's will. John said, "Anyone who advances and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, has not God; he who abides in the doctrine, he has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9).

In view of the foregoing, consider the ridiculousness of the following "official" claims:

- ! "Has the Catholic Church ever changed its teaching? No, for 2000 years the Church has taught the same things which Jesus taught." (**Catholic Catechism for Adults**, p. 57).
- ! "It is a historical fact the Catholic Church, from the twentieth century back to the first, has not once ceased to teach a doctrine on faith or morals previously held, and with the same interpretation; the church has proved itself infallible." (**My Catholic Church**, p. 145).

Furthermore, please carefully consider the following quote from a Catholic source:

- ! "If only one instance could be given in which the Church ceased to teach a doctrine of faith

which had been previously held, that single instance would be the death blow of her claim of infallibility." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 61).

Thus, by our above examples of the Catholic Church ceasing to teach and practice doctrines of faith which had been previously held, we have struck the **death blow** to her claim of infallibility. Dear reader, surely you can see that the Catholic Church is not infallible. The Lord Jesus did not make His church infallible. He did not promise to protect it from error (2 Pet. 2:1-2; Acts 20:29-30); instead, there was to come a great departure from the truth (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:2-12). The examples of the Israelites falling away serve as an example to warn God's people under the New Testament (1 Cor. 10:5-11). Some of the early churches failed to heed such warnings and went into error (Rev. 2 & 3). Furthermore, an understanding of the true relationship of the church to Christ reveals that the church is not infallible. The early churches had to earnestly contend for the faith, and to continually be on guard against error arising from within. The doctrine of infallibility causes the Catholic Church to fail in this. We conclude this first part of our study, therefore, by affirming that the Catholic Church is not infallible, but is the great apostasy foretold in the Bible, and is a church which neither recognizes nor corrects its errors.

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Is the Catholic Church the Interpreter of the Bible?

By David J. Riggs

Catholics try to prove the infallibility of the Catholic Church by stating that the Catholic Church is the infallible interpreter of the Bible. Their claim makes the church equal, if not superior, to the Bible and is another of their efforts to present the Catholic Church as an authority in religion instead of the Bible only. Please notice the following from Catholic sources:

- ! "To make it in any sense an infallible revelation, or in other words a revelation at all to us, we need a power to interpret the testament that shall have equal authority with that testament itself." (**The Question Box**, p. 95).
- ! "An infallible Bible is no use without an infallible interpreter..." (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 145).
- ! "...The Scriptures can never serve as a complete Rule of Faith and a complete guide to heaven independently of an authorized, living interpreter." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 68).
- ! "The Church is the only divinely constituted teacher of Revelation. Now, the Scripture is the great depository of the Word of God. Therefore, the Church is the divinely appointed Custodian and Interpreter of the Bible. For, her office of infallible Guide were superfluous if each individual could interpret the Bible for himself...God never intended the Bible to be the Christians' rule of faith independently of the living authority of the Church." (Ibid., p. 77).

There are no passages in the Bible which state that Christ made His church the infallible interpreter of His Word. There are none that mention an infallible interpreter and none that hint or remotely imply that Christ wanted one. How, then, do the Catholic officials go about proving their tremendous claims? First they try to do so by implying that the Bible cannot be understood. Notice the following:

- ! "For the Scripture is not like other books, dictated by the Holy Ghost, it contains things of deepest importance, which in many instances are very difficult and obscure. To understand and explain such things there is always required the coming of the same Holy Ghost." (**The Great encyclical Letters of Leo XII**, p. 227).
- ! "We must, therefore, conclude that the Scriptures **alone** cannot be a sufficient guide and rule of faith...because they are not of themselves clear and intelligible even in matters of the highest importance..." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 73).
- ! "Is it possible to misunderstand the Bible? Yes, even the Bible itself says so. 'In these epistles there are certain things difficult to understand, which the unlearned and the unstable distort, just as they do the rest of the Scriptures also, to their own destruction' (2nd Peter 3:16)." (**A Catechism for Adults**, p. 10).

Catholic officials follow up this claim by stating that one can get the true meaning only from the Catholic Church. **A Catechism for Adults** on page 10 says, "How can you get the true meaning of the Bible? You can get it only from God's official interpreter, the Catholic Church." As we said before, the Catholics have no passages which mention an official interpreter and, thus, they try to support their claim through human logic and reasoning. Anytime men do such, it amounts to nothing more than human philosophy rather than Scriptural proof. The Bible says, "Let God be true, but every man a liar..." (Rom. 3:4). It also warns, "See to it that no one deceives you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to human traditions, according

to the elements of the world and not according to Christ." (Col. 2:8). The inspired writers taught that we most certainly can understand the Scriptures. "For we write nothing to you that you do not read and understand." (2 Cor. 1:13). "...How that, according to revelation the mystery has been made known to me, as I have written above in few words, as you reading may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:3-4; Douay-Rheims Version). "Therefore do not become foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. 5:17).

2 Pet. 3:15-16, alluded to above, does say that Paul wrote some things hard to be understood and no one denies it; however, neither does that verse, nor any other, tell us that we must go to the infallible interpreter for the true meaning. Instead, we are commanded and exhorted: grow in knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), study (2 Tim. 2:15), exercise senses (Heb. 5:14), search (Acts 17:11), receive (James 1:21), read (Eph. 3:3-4), desire it (2 Pet. 2:2), let it unfold (Psalm 119:130), meditate on it day and night (Psalm 1:2) hear it read (Rev. 1:3), have it preached (2 Tim. 4:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:11), test what is said (1 John 4:1; Matt. 7:15-16), prove all things (1 Thess. 5:21). This is God's way--the only one He gives--for understanding the holy Scriptures.

The next step by which Catholics try to support their claim that the Catholic Church is the infallible interpreter of the Bible is the argument of "interpretation." They say that an individual cannot make a private interpretation of Scripture and is therefore dependent on the Catholic Church for the correct interpretation. One can easily see the similarity between this and their first argument. They often use 2 Pet. 1:20 in effort to prove that one cannot have a private interpretation. Please notice the following:

- ! **"How can you get the true meaning of the Bible?** You can get it only from God's official interpreter, the Catholic Church. 'This, then, you must understand first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation' (2nd Peter 1:20)." (**A Catechism for Adults**, p. 10).
- ! **"No prophecy of scripture is made by private interpretation.** This shows plainly that the scriptures are not to be expounded by any one's private judgment or private spirit..." (From the footnote on 2 Pet. 1:20, Douay- Rheims Version, p. 582).
- ! "...St. Peter...declared against private interpretation of the Scriptures (2 Pet. I, 20..." (**Father Smith Instructs Jackson**, p. 53).

We call your attention to the fact that they want you to make a private interpretation of the above verse. What kind of rule is it that says we can make a private interpretation of a verse which says we can't make a private interpretation! Catholics are always inconsistent on this point. They quote Scripture to support their doctrine expecting us to understand and to make a private interpretation. However, when we quote a passage which refutes their doctrine, they tell us that it is wrong to make private interpretations!

In the following we quote 2 Pet. 1:20 and the verse which follows it from two Catholic Versions. Please examine them carefully.

- ! "This, then you must understand first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation. For not by will of man was prophecy brought at any time; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (Confraternity Version).
- ! "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the

Holy Spirit spoke from God." (Catholic Edition, Revised Standard Version).

Catholic writers usually only quote the first verse (vs. 20). However, when viewing the two verses together, it is easy to see that Peter is not saying one cannot have a private interpretation of Scripture, but is teaching that no prophecy of Scripture ever **came** by private interpretation. W.E. Vine's **Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** says, "prophecy" signifies "the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God...in the N.T. it is used...either of the exercise of the gift or of that which is prophesied..." **Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary** says, "prophecy" means "1: the vocation of a prophet; specif: the inspired declaration of divine will and purpose 2: an inspired utterance of a prophet." Thus, Peter is saying that no prophecy of Scripture (divine utterance of a prophet in writing) is a matter of one's own interpretation (i.e., not a matter of the prophet's own interpretation) **because** no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but it came as the prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit. The passage affirms the inspiration of the Scriptures. They did not originate from private interpretations or private wills of men, but from holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Catholic officials sometimes refer to the case of the Ethiopian nobleman in which Philip asked if he understood what he was reading, and the reply, "Why, how can I, unless someone shows me?" and argue that every one must depend on an official interpreter. (See **The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 70; **The Faith of Millions**, p. 153). However, the Eunuch only had the prophecy of Isaiah in his hands which words could not be understood without a knowledge of what had happened at Calvary. (See Acts 8:29-35). Of course, in this formative period when the gospel message had not been fully revealed and the story of the cross had not been told, one would have to be guided to the fulfillment of this dark prophecy to know who it was that "was led like a sheep to slaughter; and just as a lamb dumb before its shearer, so did he not open his mouth." However, now that we have the inspired record of the exact literal fulfillment of the prophecy, we do not need an interpreter to tell us what it means.

Actually, there is no difference between the "private interpretation" argument and the one on understanding. To say that one cannot have a private interpretation of the Scripture is the same as saying that one cannot have his own understanding of the Scriptures. The word "interpretation" means "1: to explain the meaning of 2: to conceive in the light of individual belief, judgment, or circumstance." (**Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary**). The inspired writers taught that men can privately interpret or understand the Scriptures. "How that, according to revelation the mystery has been made known to me, as I have written above in few words, as you reading may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:3-4 Douay-Rheims Version). "For we write nothing to you that you do not read and understand." (2 Cor. 1:13). In spite of this, Catholic officials constantly ridicule the thought of private interpretations. Notice the following:

- ! "Its roots must be traced back to the principle of subjectivism which Luther introduced into religion by making the private judgment of the individual autonomous and supreme. According to this principle, the subjective reaction of the individual, with its large core of feeling and emotion, constitutes the sole criterion of religious truth and error." (**The Faith of Millions**, pp. 35-36).
- ! "Either my dear friend, you are infallibly certain that your particular interpretation of the Bible is the correct one or you are not. If you maintain that you are infallibly certain, then you claim for yourself--and you cannot very well deny the same for every other reader of the Bible--a

personal infallibility which you deny only to the pope and which we claim only for him.

- ! "If you do not claim to be infallibly certain that your interpretation of the whole Bible is correct, then of what value is it to have an infallible Bible without an infallible interpreter? In either case your statement crumbles. The plain fact is that **an infallible Bible without and infallible living interpreter is futile**. Infallibility never gets from the printed pages to the one place it is needed: the mind of the reader." (Ibid., p. 138).

The reasoning of the above Catholic writer is worse than ridiculous. He argues that when one makes a private interpretation of the Scriptures, he claims for himself a personal infallibility. When an individual reads and interprets the Bible, it no more makes him infallible than does reading of Abraham Lincoln makes him Abraham Lincoln! The individual with his feelings and emotions does not constitute an infallible authority; the Word itself is the infallible authority. Infallibility gets from the printed page to the mind of the reader simply by the reader comprehending what he reads.

Catholics raise tremendous opposition to private interpretation of the Bible; however, a study of the holy Scriptures plainly reveals that God requires and expects man to make private interpretations of His Word. The powers and blessings of the Word of God comes only to those who privately interpret the Word. For example: "refreshing the soul" (Psalm 19:8), "giving understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:130), "which is able to build you up" (Acts 20:32 Catholic Edition RSV), "a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12), "I write to you in order that you may not sin" (1 John 2:1), "that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). These things are not received and are not accomplished unless one makes a private interpretation of the Word, thus, showing that a private interpretation is required. Man must exercise his senses upon the Word of God that he might be able to discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:14).

Jesus expected the people of His day to privately interpret the Scriptures. He used such terms as "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39), "have you not read?" (Matt. 12:3; 12:5; 19:4; 21:16,42; 22:31), "is it not written in your law?" (John 10:34; Luke 10:26) which show that the people were obligated to read and interpret the Scriptures. Furthermore, He quoted the Scriptures as the final source of authority (Matt. 22:29-32; Mark 7:9-13) and He always showed the consequences of failing to do so, e.g., "You err, not knowing the Scriptures..." (Matt. 22:29 Douay-Rheims Version), "...Thus making void the word of God through your tradition" (Mark 7:13 Catholic Edition RSV). These things show that Jesus wanted and required a private interpretation of Scriptures.

The common people readily heard and understood Christ's teaching without an infallible interpreter. Mark 12:37 says, "And the mass of the common people like to hear him." Jesus said, "I praise thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them to little ones." (Matt. 11:25). In Matt. 13:51, Jesus said to His disciples, "Have ye understood all these things? They said to him, 'Yes'." If the common people could interpret Jesus's Word, and much of the New Testament is simply the Word which Jesus spoke to the people, so can we. Isaiah, prophesying of the New Testament Way, said, "A path and a way shall be there...and this shall be unto you a straight way, so that fools shall not err therein." (Isa. 35:8). God has endowed us with reason and the power to choose between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and error. These are all set before us and the responsibility

rests upon us to function as intelligent free agents. God will judge every man in accord with his response to His holy Word. Jesus said, "He that despiseth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48 Douay-Rheims Version). All these things show that a private interpretation is possible and necessary.

After the church was established, the apostles and prophets likewise required that people make a private interpretation of Scripture (Acts 9:22; 18:28) and the people did that very thing (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:15). When churches began to be established as result of the preaching of God's Word and when the New Testament Scriptures began to be written, never in one instance did the apostles and prophets declare that private interpretation must now cease because the church was not the official interpreter of the Scriptures. They did not direct the people to an infallible interpreter of the Word, but to the Word itself. Please note carefully the following:

Holy Scriptures	That Which is Sorely Lacking
"These things I am writing to you that you may know that you have eternal life..." (1 John 5:13).	"These things I am writing to you that when you obtain the infallible interpretations thereof you may know that you have eternal life..."
"...The things I am writing to you are the Lord's commandments." (1 Cor. 14:37).	"...The things I am writing to you when officially interpreted are the Lord's commandments."
"...As you reading, my understand may knowledge in the mystery of Christ..." (Eph. 3:4 Douay-Rheims Version)	"...As you reading, and have officially interpreted , may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ."
"...The Sacred Writings, which are able to instruct thee unto salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15)	"...The Sacred Writings, which when infallibly interpreted are able to instruct thee unto salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus."
"...With meekness receive the ingrafted word which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21)	"...With meekness receive the infallible interpretations of the ingrafted word which is able to save your soul."
"And the dead were judged by what was written in the books..." (Rev. 20:12 Catholic Edition RSV)	"And the dead were judged by what was written in the books in accord with the infallible interpretations thereof. "

The passages which require us to test teachers (1 John 4:1; Matt. 7:15-16; Acts 17:11) and to withdraw from those in error (2 John 9-11; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6) require a private interpretation. How can we obey these commands without making a private judgment in regard to what is and is not in accord with Scripture? The passages which require study show that we must make a private interpretation (2 Tim.

2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 5:11-14). How can one study the Scriptures without making a private interpretation of Scripture? Actually, every passages in the Bible that is addressed to the individual shows that God wants and expects a private interpretation. God, through His Word, addresses each individual as an intelligent being. Each person is responsible for himself; another cannot decide or act for him. "...Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12 Catholic Edition RSV). "Therefore every one of us will render an account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:12).

The blessings of God are for those who obey His Word (James 1:25; Rev. 1:3). The curses are on those who do not obey (1 Pet. 4:17-18; 2 Thess. 1:6-9). At the judgment each individual will be judged by the things written in the Bible. "...And the dead were judged by the things which were written in the books..." (Rev. 20:12 Douay-Rheims Version; also see John 12:48; Rom. 2:16; James 2:12). The fact that God will judge each individual by the written Word shows that each individual is required to interpret the Word. Also, it shows that man is responsible to no other authority in religion.

The doctrine of an "infallible interpreter" is completely false and wholly unworthy of acceptance for the following reasons. First, it implies that the common people are too ignorant to understand. The religious leaders of Jesus's day thought the same when they said, "Has any one of the rulers believed in him, or any of the Pharisees? But this crowd, which does not know the Law, is accursed." (John 7:48-49). They thought the people were too ignorant of the Law to be able to decide if Jesus was the Christ. Nevertheless, the common people accepted Jesus but the rulers rejected Him.

Secondly, the doctrine of an "infallible interpreter" implies that religious leaders should make decisions for the people. It does not allow one to make his own interpretation of Scripture, but demands a dependance on Catholic officials for interpretation. Please notice the following:

- ! "What Catholics **do** believe is that the church, not the individual, must interpret and explain Christ's teaching, including those set forth in the Bible. Christians outside the Catholic fold do not of course accept this authority, but for Catholics it eliminates the doubts, confusion and misunderstanding which inevitably results from individual interpretations.
- ! "The intolerance of the Church toward error, the natural position of one who is the custodian of truth, her only reasonable attitude makes her forbid her children to read or to listen to heretical controversy, or to endeavor to discover religious truths by examining both sides of the question." (**Explanation of Catholic Morals**, p. 35).
- ! "In matters of faith and morals pertaining to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be held as the true sense of the Sacred Scriptures which the Holy Mother Church as held and does hold, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of Holy Scriptures, and therefore that it is permitted to no one to interpret the said Scriptures against this sense or, likewise, against the unanimous consent of the Fathers." (**The Vatican Council, confirming the decree of the Council of Trent--Fourth Session**, April, 1546).

The "**unanimous consent of the Fathers**" is as much a non-entity as Paul Bunyan and Babe, the immense Blue Ox! Even if one could find something on which the early church fathers unanimously agreed, it still remains that they were purely uninspired writers with no authority whatsoever. We will not be judged by their writings in the last day. If there was any consent at all among them, it was in declaring the necessity and importance of the Scriptures as the only authority in faith and morals.

The above Catholic writers reveal that no Catholic can enjoy the right of private or individual interpretation because only the church can give the true and authentic interpretation of Scripture. Thus, like the wicked priests and false prophets of the Old Testament era, the Catholic Church has taken the Word of God from the people. It does not want its people to have the Word of God for it claims sole interpretation for itself and puts footnotes in its Versions to explain away the meaning of passages which contradict its doctrine. Consequently, the Catholic people being forbidden to be guided directly by the Word of God, are left with a human and fallible guide, the church. They must follow men rather than God; they must bow their heads to the commandments of men rather than God's holy precepts.

The Bible teaches that each individual is responsible for himself and is not to blindly follow religious leaders. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matt. 7:15). Paul said, "And no wonder, for Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light. It is no great thing, then, if his ministers disguise themselves as ministers of justice. But their end will be according to their works." (2 Cor. 11:14-15). The Bible nowhere implies that one is dependent on religious leaders for interpretation; instead, it commands the individual Christian to test every teacher by the written Word (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 5:21). In the following, a Catholic authority affirms that we should do as the Jews of the Old Testament and follow the priests.

- ! "But in those times the faithful did not attempt to interpret scripture for themselves. For the Jewish people in the pre-Christian era, the synagogue was their voice of scriptural authority; and the Old Testament was preached to them by the Rabbis and fathers of their faith. In like manner, the Catholic Church was the custodian of the inspired writings of the New Testament Gospel nearly four centuries before these writings were collected into a single book and formally declared to be inspired.
- ! "Today Catholics listen to one authoritative voice--the Church--in the interpretation of God's word." (Knights of Columbus, Ad., "**The Bible Is A Confusing Book**").

The Jews of old were to listen to God's Word, not to man's interpretations. When they became dependent on their leaders for interpretations, it proved disastrous to them. Notice the following from the Word of God.

- ! "But these also have been ignorant through wine, and through drunkenness have erred: the priest and the prophet have been ignorant through drunkenness, they are swallowed up with wine, they have gone astray in drunkenness, they have not known him that seeth, they have been ignorant of judgment." (Isa. 28:7).
- ! "The prophets prophesied falsehood, and the priest clapped their hands: and my people loved such things: what then shall be done in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:31).
- ! "Therefore will I give their women to strangers, their fields to others for an inheritance: because from the least even to the greatest all follow covetousness: from the prophet even to the priest all deal deceitfully." (Jer. 8:10).
- ! "For the prophet and the priest are defiled: and in my house I have found their wickedness, saith the Lord." (Jer. 23:11).
- ! "Her priests have despised my law, and have defiled my sanctuaries: they have put no difference between holy and profane: nor have distinguished between the polluted and the clean: and they have turned away their eyes from my Sabbaths, and I was profaned in the midst of them." (Ezek. 22:26).

- ! "And like the jaws of highway robbers, they conspire with the priests who murder in the way those that pass out of Sichem: for they have wrought wickedness." (Osee 6:9).
- ! "Her prophets are senseless men without faith: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have acted unjustly against law." (Soph. 3:4).

The above passages (there are numerous others) reveal the fatal result of depending on priest and religious leaders for interpretation. Isaiah said, "For these who lead this people lead them astray, and those who are led by them are swallowed up." (Isa. 9:16; Catholic Edition RSV). It was the priests and religious leaders who led in the crucifying of the Son of God. In spite of this abundant evidence of the wickedness of the priests and prophets of the Old Testament, Catholic officials today argue that people must depend on them for interpretation as did the Jews on their leaders. Peter warned, "But there were false prophets also among the people, just as among you will be lying teachers who will bring in destructive sects." (2 Pet. 2:1).

Thirdly, the doctrine of the "infallible interpreter" implies that God did not make Himself clear. It implies that God gave us a revelation that still needs revealing. Did God fail in His attempt to give man a revelation? Do the Catholic officials want us to believe they can express God's will more clearly than God Himself? We believe that God made the mind of man and is fully capable of addressing man in words which man can understand.

The Catholic Church is far more confusing than the Bible because it is a very complicated and ever changing organization. Think of how many human laws nearly 300 so-called popes could make through the centuries. The following quotation states that only two of them issued nearly nine thousand. "Alexander III is said to have issued thirty-nine hundred and thirty-nine decrees and Innocent II over five thousand." (**General Legislation in the New Code of Canon Law**, p. 42). Another example of how burdensome and perplexing this maze of human doctrine has become, just the "Bulls" of the popes from 540 to 1857 fills forty-one volumes. This does not include the countless laws formulated by synods and councils. It is no wonder that a cry of despair went up from the Catholic bishops for relief from this babel of confusion.

- ! "Moreover, not a few ordinances, whether included in the Corpus Juris or of more recent date, appear to be contradictory; some have been repealed, others had become obsolete by long disuse; others, again, had ceased to be useful or applicable in the present condition of society. Great confusion was thus engendered and correct knowledge of the law was rendered very difficult even for those who had to enforce it." (**General Legislation in the New Code of Canon Law**, p. 70).
- ! It is very evident and has long been recognized by all and proclaimed everywhere that some revision and reformation of Canon Law is necessary and very urgent. For, owing to the changes that have taken place in society, many laws have become useless and others very difficult if not impossible to observe; of others it is doubtful whether they are still in vigor or not. Finally in the course of centuries, their number is so multiplied and they have been heaped up in voluminous collections that, in a sense, we may say, we are buried beneath the laws. Hence it is that the study of Canon Law is beset with almost inextricable difficulties, the door is open to disputes and litigations, consciences are troubled with a thousand anxieties, and people are driven to despise the law." (Ibid, p. 71; see also **Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. I, p. 645 and Vol. IX, p. 64).

Truly, the Bible gives a much simpler and easier explanation of God's will than the works written and published by the authority of the Catholic Church. I have read many Catholic books and it is much easier to understand the simple words of the Bible than to understand the complicated words of the Catholic vocabulary. For example, in 1 Cor. 11:20, the Bible speaks of "the Lord's supper." This simple term is taken away from the people by the clergy and for it they are given the word, "Eucharist," and if that is not confusing enough, try the word, "transubstantiation." The reason the Bible is easier to understand is because it is from God. It is indeed understandable and is the only safe guide which can instruct us to heaven (2 Tim. 3:15-17). It is concise, complete, and will remain the same until the end of time (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

Fourthly, the doctrine of an "infallible interpreter" is impractical and unfeasible. A few pertinent questions reveal the absurd and ridiculous nature of the doctrine. For example, if a sincere, honest person found a passage which he could not understand, to whom must he go for an infallible interpretation? Could a priest give the infallible interpretation of the passage? The priest could not because he is not infallible. Could a bishop, archbishop, or cardinal give it? They likewise cannot give infallible interpretations. The only person who can give an infallible interpretation is the pope and he can do it only when he is speaking ex-cathedra. Notice the following:

- ! "The Church teaches infallibly when it states, through the Pope alone, **that he speaks officially (ex-cathedra) as the Supreme head, for the entire universal church.**
- ! **"In order to speak infallibly, the Pope must speak ex-cathedra, or officially,** under the following conditions:
 - ! "1. **He must pronounce himself on a subject of faith or morals.**
 - ! "2. **He must speak** as the Vicar of Christ, in his office as Pope, and **to the whole Church,** to all the faithful throughout the world. In his capacity as private teacher, he is as any other teacher of the Church.
 - ! "3. **He must make clear** by certain words **his intention to speak ex-cathedra,** that is, to make use of his supreme authority." (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 147).

Therefore, in spite of all the tremendous claims about the Catholic Church being infallible, we learn from Catholic doctrine that the church is infallible only in the person of the pope and he is infallible only when he speaks ex-cathedra! In other words, all their boastful arguments of the Catholic Church being infallible only mean that the pope is infallible because according to them the church is infallible only in and through him. This makes all their exaggerated claims very narrow and limited to say the least.

The Catholic officials themselves have made up all of the above "ex-cathedra" conditions. There are no such conditions in the Bible; none like them were placed on the apostles and prophets. They did not follow the ex-cathedra procedure. The conditions which Catholic leaders have devised are a convenient means to evade the mistakes of the popes. For instance, a man named Galileo, an astronomer of the 17th century, taught that the earth was round and moves around the sun and rotates making night and day. He was tried by the Inquisition with pope Paul V as chairman and was condemned as a heretic for teaching, as they said, "Contrary to the sacred and divine Scriptures." The pope and the others with him condemned Galileo because they believed the opposite at that time--that the earth was flat and stands still and the sun moves around it making night and day. The following Catholic sources freely admit this mistake.

- ! "...There is no doubt that he fully approved the decision, having presided at the session of the Inquisition wherein the matter was discussed and decided. In thus acting, it is undeniable that the ecclesiastical authorities committed a grave and deplorable error, and sanctioned an altogether false principle as to the proper use of the Scripture." (**Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. VI, p. 544).
- ! "So Tanquary in his 'Synopsis Theologica,' published in New York, writes, 'We readily grant that these congregations (Index and Inquisition) were wrong in condemning Galileo...and that the two popes (Paul and Urban VII) erred, not only as private persons, but as the heads of these congregations, whose decree are valueless unless approved by the pope'." (**The Question Box**, p. 318, 1913 Edition).

The above is a clear example of the worth of their so-called "infallible interpretations." Catholic officials conveniently dodge such mistakes of the popes by saying that they weren't speaking ex-cathedra. Nevertheless, when the apostles and prophets stated that something was or was not in accord with Scripture (e.g., concerning application of the Old Testament Scripture), they made no mistakes.

Referring again to our main thought, it is impossible for a sincere, honest person to receive an infallible interpretation. We ask, "Has it been practical for men in every age and country to travel to Rome for infallible interpretations?" Moreover, "If one went to Rome, could he expect to meet with the pope and have the pope give an ex-cathedra interpretation just for him?" Such has never occurred in the past. The average Catholic would be surprised to know that in spite of all the emphasis their officials put on "official interpretations," there has been very few infallible interpretations given in the nearly two thousand years since Christ, and besides, the average Catholic does not know what those interpretations are. If one should ask the average Catholic, "What are the infallible interpretations which have been given by the Catholic Church," he would probably answer, "What do you mean by infallible interpretations?" We say, therefore, that the doctrine of an infallible interpreter is impractical and is nothing more than a man-made argument to boast the church as an authority in opposition to the Bible only.

We raise other vital questions, "If we cannot understand the inspired writings of Peter, the supposed first pope, how do we know we can understand the infallible interpretations of the present pope? Catholic officials argue, "In order that he (the pope, DJR) should be infallible...it is necessary that his teaching should not be given by word of mouth, but in writing, in a regular document; for if he merely spoke, some uncertainty would exist as to what he actually said." (**Plain Facts for Fair Minds**, pp. 38-39). They should be able to see that in order to prevent uncertainty concerning His will, God has already given infallible writings.

Furthermore, we ask, "Who gives the infallible interpretations of the infallible interpreter?" In other words, "Will they place another to give infallible interpretations of the pope's interpretations if some do not understand? The point is, man needs a starting point somewhere. He needs an infallible standard which stands as the one supreme authority. God has given that standard--His sacred writings--and He has made it readily available for all who want it. Nowhere did God tell us to go to an infallible interpreter to get the true meaning of His holy Word. God did not give us an infallible interpreter of the Word, but gave us the Word itself, and He wants and expects all to properly interpret it. This does not mean that man will always correctly interpret it. Man often fails and does not measure up to what God requires of him. When man

fails in his effort to interpret the Word, it does not mean that the Word is useless without an infallible interpreter. When he fails, the fault lies with him and not with the Word itself.

Man often allows certain hindrances which causes him to mis-interpret the Bible, e.g., ignorance (Matt. 22:29), lack of study (2 Tim. 2:15), no desire for knowledge (2 Pet. 3:17-18), following leaders without investigation (2 Pet. 2:1-3; Rom. 16:17-18), being prejudiced and closed minded (Matt. 13:15), twisting and corrupting the Word (2 Pet. 3:16; 2 Cor. 2:17), having no love for truth (2 Thess. 2:10-11). If a man carefully and faithfully follows the commands of God, he will properly interpret God's written Word, e.g., study (2 Tim. 2:15), exercise senses (Heb. 5:14), search (Acts 17:11), receive (James 1:21), read (Eph. 3:3-4), desire it (1 Pet. 2:2), grow in knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), strive to understand (Eph. 5:17), let it unfold (Psalm (Psalm 119:130), meditate on it day and night (Psalm 1:2), hear it read (Rev. 1:3), have it preached (2 Tim. 4:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:11), test what is said (1 John 4:1; Matt. 7:15-16), prove all things (1 Thess. 5:21). If an individual continually obeyed all these commands, would he understand God's Word? Compliance to these commands is the only way the sincere, honest person can obtain the correct interpretation of a passage. This is the correct way because it is God's way.

The following Catholic officials argue that private interpretation of the Scriptures causes division.

- ! "Must it not be evident to the thoughtful reader of these lines, whether he be Protestant or Catholic, that the estrangement of such a vast number of our countrymen is traceable in large measure to the division, dissension and anarchy which the principle of making each individual supreme and a Court of Last Appeal in the interpretation of Scripture has brought into the world? (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 156).
- ! "Others believe in placing the Bible in every home and permit all readers to interpret it in their own way. This unreasonable theory is still advocated even though it has split up Christianity into a thousand divisions. (**Father Smith Instructs Jackson**, p. 52).
- ! "The reformation produced indeed an exaggerated individualism, which by declaring every man equally competent to find out the doctrine of the Saviour from his own private reading of the Scriptures, has led millions to the utter denial of Christ." (**The Question Box**, p. 131; there is a similar statement from Archbishop Spalding in his book entitled, "**Miscellanea**," p. 393).

It is not the private interpretation of the Scriptures, but Catholicism's continuous flood of false arguments to displace the Bible as the sole authority that causes division, e.g., the Catholic Church has the right to make laws (**Explanation of Catholic Morals**, p. 26), Jesus promised to protect His church from error (**A Catechism for Adults**, p. 56), if she had not carefully selected and gathered the books, there would be no New Testament (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 145), it is wrong to make a private interpretation of Scripture (**Father Smith Instruct Jackson**, p. 53), an infallible Bible without an infallible interpreter is futile (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 138), the church is the sole interpreter of the Bible (**Council of Trent, Fourth Session**), we should follow the priests as did the Jews of the Old Testament (**Knights of Columbus, Ad.**). The general public (especially Protestantism) has been bombarded with a constant array of these Catholic arguments all of which are designed to exalt the Catholic Church and to raise questions and doubts about the Bible as the only authority. Such arguments have weakened men's faith in the Bible as the only authority so much so that very few so-called Protestants accept the Bible as the only rule of faith today. Very few Catholics have any love and respect for the Bible for they have been taught that it cannot

be the final and absolute authority.

The Catholic Church is the major cause of division in Christianity, not private interpretation of Scripture. The Catholic Church is truly the mother of division because every major division in Christianity originated and came out of the Catholic Church. Most of the human traditions in Protestantism today originated in Catholicism, e.g., infant baptism, instrumental music in worship, observance of Christmas and Easter, etc. Nearly all denominations have been influenced by the Catholic Church which is the great apostasy, the mother of division. The only way to obtain true unity is by complete abandonment of the traditions and doctrines of men and going back to the Bible. Men must begin studying the Scriptures for themselves and begin demanding a "thus saith the Lord" in all matters of faith and practice. Paul said, "Carefully study to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15 Douay-Rheims Version). Unity based on God's holy Word is the only kind of unity that is pleasing to God.

The doctrine that the Catholic Church is the infallible interpreter of the Bible is completely false because (1) It implies that the common people are too ignorant to understand. (2) It demands that religious leaders make decisions for the people. (3) It indicates that God cannot make Himself clear. (4) It is impractical and unfeasible. (5) The Scriptures nowhere indicate that God gave us an infallible interpreter of His Word, but plainly reveal that He simply gave us His infallible Word. (6) The Bible teaches that private interpretation of Scripture is possible and necessary.

We conclude this study by emphasizing that Jesus and His apostles placed no authority whatsoever in the church, but instead exalted the holy Scriptures as man's infallible guide. Jesus said, "Search the scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting; and the same are they that give testimony of me." (John 5:39 Douay-Rheims Version). He often said, "Is it not written in your law," expecting the people to have read and understood. In His story of the rich man and Lazarus the sufficiency of the Scriptures is again stressed in the words, "They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hearken to them." The rich man insisted that Abraham should send someone from the dead in order to convince his brothers on earth, but Abraham answered, "If they do not harken to Moses and the Prophets, they will not believe even if someone rises from the dead." (Luke 16:29-31).

We beseech our Catholic friends and relatives, who insist on the living voice of the church as their rule of faith, to carefully examine these and others passages for they place the authority not in the priesthood or church, but in the written Word of God. The Scriptures were given by the inspiration of God and furnish the man of God completely to every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17). They are complete, sufficient, and provide all things necessary to produce the faith which brings life in the name of Jesus. (John 20:31). Jesus said, "I have given them thy word...Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth." (John 17:14,17). Therefore, only in the holy Bible can we find truth and eternal life. There is no other authority; none can be substituted or added to it. Again, we beseech and invite our Catholic friends to receive the Word of God and it alone as their infallible standard and guide in religion. May God be with you in your endeavors to serve Him.

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Is the Bible a Catholic Book?

By David J. Riggs

Catholics tell us that the Bible is a Catholic book. If the Bible is a Catholic book,

1. Why does it condemn clerical dress? (Matt. 23:5-6).
2. Why does it teach against the adoration of Mary? (Luke 11:27-28).
3. Why does it show that all Christians are priests? (1 Pet. 2:5,9).
4. Why does it condemn the observance of special days? (Gal. 4:9-11).
5. Why does it teach that all Christians are saints? (1 Cor. 1:2).
6. Why does it condemn the making and adoration of images? (Ex. 20:4-5).
7. Why does it teach that baptism is immersion instead of pouring? (Col. 2:12).
8. Why does it forbid us to address religious leaders as "father"? (Matt. 23:9).
9. Why does it teach that Christ is the only foundation and not the apostle Peter? (1 Cor. 3:11).
10. Why does it address only God Himself as the "Holy Father." (John 17:11).
11. Why does it teach that there is one mediator instead of many? (1 Tim. 2:5).
12. Why is it completely silent about infant baptism, instrumental music in worship, indulgences, purgatory, confession to priests, the rosary, the mass, and many other things in the Catholic Church?

Is the Bible Incomplete?

By David J. Riggs

The Catholic Church insists that the Bible does not contain all truth and therefore it alone cannot be our rule of faith. A Catholic writer by the name of James Gibbons said, "The Catholic Church correctly teaches that our Lord and His Apostles inculcated certain important duties of religion which were not recorded by the inspired writers. (See John xxi. 25)." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 73). John did not say that certain important duties were not recorded by the inspired writers. The verse simply says, "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." (John 21:25).

John was emphasizing that his gospel was only a brief account of what Jesus did. To write every detail of every breath, thought, and move of the life of Jesus would take a world full of books. John, through the power of the Holy Spirit, wrote only those things which are essential. In a parallel verse, John himself said, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30-31).

Mr. Gibbons said that "worship on Sunday" is an example of an important Christian duty that was left out of the inspired writings. He said "But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, pp. 72-73; see also **The Faith of Millions**, p. 154). By this argument, the Catholic officials reveal their lack of knowledge of the Bible. It is truly sad that through such falsehoods they deceive the hearts of millions of people.

The Bible explicitly enjoins the first day of the week (Sunday) as the day of worship. "Now concerning the contribution for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of the week, each of you is to put something aside..." (1 Cor. 16:1-2 Catholic Edition Revised Standard Version). "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." (Acts 20:7). Col. 2:14-17 and other passages clearly show that the law of Moses, Sabbath day worship included, was nailed to the cross.

The assertions that the Bible does not contain all truth by the Catholic writers reveal the true attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Bible. The Catholic Church does not have love and respect for the Bible; otherwise, why raise such claims? The Catholic Church is not building men's faith in the Bible alone as the authority but is destroying it. It wants to place on equality with the Bible its own man made authorities; namely, Catholic human traditions, a human church, and the pope. However, those of us who truly love the Lord will follow only the Bible. It contains all truth, is a perfect and complete guide to heaven, and is the only standard by which we will be judged in the last day.

Is the Bible Understandable?

By David J. Riggs

The Catholic Church teaches that the Bible is not understandable. Notice the following:

- ! "Secondly, the Bible is not a clear and intelligible guide to all. There are many passages in the Bible which are difficult and obscure, not only to the ordinary person, but to the highly trained scholar as well. St. Peter himself tells us that in the Epistles of St. Paul there are 'certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and the unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction' (II Peter 3:16)." (**The Faith of Millions**, pp. 152-153).
- ! "We must, therefore, conclude that the Scriptures **alone** cannot be a sufficient guide and rule of faith...because they are not of themselves clear and intelligible even in matters of highest importance..." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 73).

The passage quoted above by the Catholic writer (2 Pet. 3:16) does not state that the Scriptures are not clear and intelligible to all. Peter simply said that in Paul's writings are certain things "hard" (not "impossible") to be understood. He said that the unlearned and unstable wrest (twist, distort) these, as they do the other Scriptures (the Old Testament ones) to their own destruction. In other words, their misuse (twisting, distorting, mis-applying) of the Scriptures would cause their eternal destruction.

Peter went on to say in the next verses, "You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 3:17-18). Thus, Peter admonished Christians to grow in knowledge lest they, too, like the unlearned and unstable, wrest or distort difficult passages to their own destruction. This instruction of the beloved apostle is far removed from the Catholic claim.

There is much misunderstanding of the Bible when men try to harmonize Catholic teaching with the Bible for in many instances it is contrary to it. For example, the Catholic Church practices pouring water as a mode for baptism, but the Bible teaches immersion or a burial in water (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12; Acts 8:38-39). Thus, in such matters, instead of rejecting the false teachings of the Catholic Church, many conclude that the Bible is not a clear and intelligible book. Many so-called Protestants do likewise. When comparing their human traditions with the Bible, instead of abandoning their man-made doctrines, they say, "the Bible is a mysterious and difficult book."

The inspired writers declared that the things which they wrote were understandable (1 Cor. 1:13; Eph. 3:3-5). The many passages which compel us to read, study, search, and grow in knowledge imply that the Scriptures are understandable. The fact that God commanded these things shows that He Himself considers His Word understandable. God made the mind of man and is fully capable of addressing man in words which he can understand. God will judge all men by the Scriptures in the last day (Rev. 20:12). Will He judge men by a standard which cannot be understood?

Is the Church Infallible?

By David J. Riggs

The seven short epistles to seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation reveal the relationship the church sustains to Christ (See Rev. chapters 2 and 3; see especially 2:1-5, 12-14, 18-20; 3:1-3, 14-15). Those verses plainly reveal that when a church continues in Christ's word, it keeps its identity as His church, but when it fails to abide in His word, it is not longer regarded as His church. Also, they reveal that Christ did not establish His church as one that could never fall into error, because some of those churches went into error. Someone might say that the passages in Revelation referred to the various parishes or congregations rather than the whole church. It is true that the verses were speaking of local churches; nevertheless, the same principle that applied to them relates to the whole church. The Lord does not have a rule for one congregation which is not equally applicable to all. If one church is rejected for embracing error, all others who likewise embrace error are rejected.

Many times during the Old Testament period, the whole Israelite nation left the truth. Jeremiah the prophet recorded that false prophets and priests had turned the people from the truth and none were right (Jer. 5:31; 6:13; 8:10; 13:25; 14:14; 23:32). Isaiah said, "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice hath stood far off: because truth hath fallen down in the street, and equity could not come in. And truth hath been forgotten..." (Isa. 59:14-15). Time and time again the whole Israelite nation left the truth and followed error--Judges 2:10-12; Psalm 14:2-3; 53:2-3; Micah 7:2 etc. Some generations, however, abandoned error and turned back to the word of God. A good example is when the book of the Lord was found in the temple and reforms were made (2 Kings 22 & 23).

The Old Testament examples of the people of God falling away reveal the proper relationship the church sustains with Christ because the New Testament writers declared that those things serve as warnings for us. 1 Cor. 10:11 says, "Now all these things happened to them as a type, and they were written for our correction, upon whom the final age of the world has come." (See 1 Cor. 10:1-12; Rom. 15:4). If God's chosen people under the Old Testament went into error, and the inspired writers declared that those things were written as a type to admonish us, it necessarily follows that God's people under the New Testament can go into error. This shows conclusively that the church is not infallible.

The relationship that the church sustains with Christ is the same as that of the individual Christians. As long as the individual abides in the word of the Lord, he will never perish and no outside forces can remove him from the Lord's favor. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. And I give them everlasting life; and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28). Did Jesus mean "once saved, always saved?" No, He meant that no outside forces can remove one from Him; however, it still remains that one can remove himself by not abiding in His word. Likewise, there are no outside forces that can destroy the church, e.g., "a kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Heb. 12:28), but it can cause itself to be rejected by embracing error. As long as the church is abiding in the word of Christ there are no outside forces that can destroy it, but when it is overtaken by error, by its own actions it loses its identity as His church.

Is Mary a Co-Redeemer?

By Evan Casey

I was shocked to find an article in the August 25th edition of Newsweek magazine entitled "Hail Mary." The subheading of this article reads, "A growing movement in the Roman Catholic Church wants the people to proclaim a new, controversial dogma: that Mary is a Co-Redeemer." Such a move would dramatically elevate Mary's status beyond what most Christians profess. In the last four years, the pope has received petitions from 157 countries with more than 4,300,000 signatures supporting this proposed dogma. This represents an average of 100,000 signatures a month. Some supporters of this movement are the late Mother Teresa, nearly 500 bishops and 42 cardinals, including John O'Connor of New York. Although Vatican officials have denied that the pope has even considered officially naming Mary Co-Redeemer, this movement illustrates a long tradition of Mary-worship within the Catholic Church.

There are many other beliefs surrounding Mary, such as the Immaculate Conception: the idea that she did not have original sin. Another Catholic tenet holds that Mary was a perpetual virgin, that Mary stayed a virgin even after Jesus was born.

Despite all of man's theories and wishes to the contrary, Mary is *not* a Co-Redeemer. We find in 1 Tim. 2:5, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." This passage teaches that there is only one mediator, and that person is Jesus Christ.

We also find in 1 Peter 1:18-19, "...Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Peter says that Jesus is our Redeemer. Jesus is the one who came to earth and suffered on the cross. Then he died and was resurrected, so that we might be saved. Mary did not do any of these things. Mary is not our Redeemer, nor is she a Co-Redeemer.

Why is it necessary to tamper with God's approved, stated Biblical pattern of salvation? Does it make us feel more important or self-satisfied to "improve" or modify the word of God? In Leviticus 10:1-2, Nadab and Abihu were killed because they changed God's laws and offered strange fire before the Lord. We read in Revelation 22:18-19, "If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life..." From these two passages, we learn how dangerous it is to add to God's word.

In conclusion, there is not one passage in Scripture that states that Mary is a Co-Redeemer, nor does she act like one. God has shown in no uncertain terms how wrong it is to go beyond or change God's plan. (From "**The Bulletin**," A Monthly Publication of the Taylorsville Road church of Christ, Louisville, Kentucky, October, 1997).

The Development of Mariology

By Greg Litmer

"Nothing is more distinctly Catholic than devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary." So states J.D. Conway in the authorized Catholic work, "**What the Church Teaches**." Those familiar with the outpouring of devotion toward Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the numerous doctrines concerning her in Roman Catholicism recognize the truthfulness of Conway's statement. The purpose of this article will be to seek to determine the source of this Roman Catholic devotion to Mary and the authority for their Marian doctrines. Well do I remember my days as a student at St. John's the Evangelist in Cincinnati, Ohio. Each May, one eighth-grade girl would be chosen from her class to receive the honor of placing a crown upon a statue of Mary that stood in the churchyard. The entire school took part in the procession leading up to the climax which was her crowning. It was a marvelously inspiring ceremony, and as a child it never occurred to me to ask where it came from. Yet such a question is important. Did God authorize in His Holy word such devotion to Mary? Did He teach the various doctrines concerning her therein? Or is the entire system of Roman Catholic Mariology entirely man-made and without divine authority?

Mary in the Scriptures

Mary, the mother of Jesus, appears in the following New Testament passages: She is found in the narratives concerning the events surrounding Jesus' birth, Matthew 1 and 2 and Luke 1 and 2; we read of Mary at the wedding feast in Cana, John 2:1-11; we read of her in the event described in Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:32-35; we read of her at the cross of Jesus in John 19:25-27; and, finally, we read of Mary in Acts 1:14 in the upper room in Jerusalem. The passage in the first chapter of Acts is the last time that we read of Mary. There she is said to be joined with the disciples and other women in prayer and supplication along with the brethren of Jesus. In the twenty-two books of the New Testament that follow the Acts of the apostles, Mary is not mentioned. John, who was entrusted with her care by Jesus, does not mention her in any of his three epistles or in the book of Revelation. There is no place of prominence, no position of extraordinary honor, given to Mary in the pages of God's word. At no time can we read of prayer being offered to her or through her. The **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia** gives this summation of what we can learn about Mary from the Biblical accounts concerning her. It says,

! "The sum of the matter concerning Mary seems to be this: The mother of Jesus was a typical Jewish believer of the best sort. She was deeply meditative, but by no means a daring or original thinker. Her inherited Messianic beliefs did not and perhaps could not prepare her for the method of Jesus which involved so much that was new and unexpected. But her heart was true, and from the beginning to the day of Pentecost, she pondered in her heart the meaning of her many puzzling experiences until the light came. The story of her life and of her relationship to Jesus is consistent throughout and touched with manifold unconscious traits of truth. Such a narrative could not have been feigned or fabled."

There is absolutely no indication in God's word of anything that even remotely resembles Roman Catholic Mariology. Where did it come from? How did this system of veneration grow into what it is today?

As it Developed

It is safe and correct to say that the early church knew nothing of what has come to be called Mariology. Standing in sharp contrast to the Biblical account, there appeared certain apocryphal writings in the latter part of the second century that greatly expanded upon Mary's role and did so in legendary fashion. The most prominent of these was called "**The Protoevangelium of James.**" In this work all sorts of things about Mary are stated, such as the names of her parents, that she stayed for a time in the temple as a little girl, a rather imaginative story about her birth, and it also states that she remained a virgin throughout her life. Roman Catholic authorities have rejected this work as spurious, and yet have absorbed many of its legends into their system of Mariology.

As time went on, many other writers added other elements to the story. It is interesting to notice that a "church father" who is often quoted by Roman Catholic authorities as a Roman Catholic source raised his voice against these legends and denied that Mary remained a virgin throughout her life. His name was Tertullian and he died in 222 A.D. There is a picture of Mary found in a catacomb in Rome that is dated from the latter part of the second century. The necessary conclusion is that for a least 150 years after the establishment of the church, there was no special attention paid to Mary. It was not until the middle of the second century that legends concerning her began to appear.

In the centuries that followed, various groups arose that denied that divinity of Jesus as born from Mary. They taught that the child conceived in Mary's womb was solely man and not divine until after his birth. In response to this, the Council of Ephesus declared Mary the "mother of God" in 431 A.D. From this decree the theologians engaged in all sorts of speculations. By 449 A.D., we find Mary being referred to as a perpetual virgin. The reasoning behind this is not hard to understand. As the mother of God, surely purely human seed would not taint her womb. From there the process of elaboration continues with Mary being declared personally sinless and the teaching that she ascended bodily into heaven. This process has not stopped. Currently, strides are being taken to have Mary declared co-mediatrix with Jesus. Over the years, the Roman Catholic church has given her the title of Virgin of Virgins, Gate of Heaven, Queen of Heaven, Co-Redemptrix, Queen of Sorrows, Virgin Most Merciful, and many, many others. The whole system has no scriptural basis.

Since there is no scriptural support for Mariology, as well as no historical evidence to sustain it either, how does the Roman Catholic church justify it? It think a quote from the **Manual of Catholic Theology** concerning just one doctrine in the system of Mariology will explain their approach. It says, "Mary's corporeal assumption into heaven is so thoroughly implied in the notion **of her personality as given by the Bible and dogma, that the church can dispense with strict historical evidence of the fact.**" I suppose that if that's the approach that one chooses to take, then the facts make very little difference. In other words, the Roman Catholic authorities believe their system of Mariology to be true because they say it is true. (From "**Catholicism Examined,**" Edited by Greg Litmer and David Riggs, p. 112-114).

Mary - "Ever Virgin"

By Greg Litmer

In Isaiah 7:14 we find: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Here is the prophecy concerning the miraculous character of the birth of Jesus. He would be born of a virgin. The gospel accounts of the events surrounding His birth demonstrate that this came to pass. Jesus was born of a virgin, meaning that Mary conceived Jesus in a miraculous way, by the Holy Spirit, without having "known" a man prior to the birth. This is what we have been told in the scriptures and all who respect the Word of God believe it.

The Roman Catholic Church has a great deal to say about the virginity of Mary, indeed, much more than God ever did. Not content with what has been revealed, Roman Catholic theologians and scholars have allowed their imaginations to run wild resulting in an elaborate doctrine that can be called "The Perpetual Virginity of Mary." This belief involves three stages of Mary's virginity: her conception of Jesus without the co-operation of man, giving birth to Christ without violating her integrity, and remaining a virgin after Jesus was born. This belief did not come into being in its entirety all at once, but rather gradually developed over a period of hundreds of years. In this article we will examine that development, notice exactly what these beliefs concerning Mary involve, and determine whether or not they are purely the speculation of man or if they have their basis in divine truth.

The Development

Very early in the existence of the Church, Christians found it necessary to defend the virgin birth of the Lord because of its denial by various groups. In the second century the Gnostics, under Cerinthus, voiced opposition to the revealed truth that Jesus was born of a virgin. In the third century opposition came from a group led by Celsus. In response to these denials the early Christians stood firmly upon the Word of God. Such men as Ignatius of Antioch and Justin Martyr uniformly defended the accounts of the virgin birth as given by Matthew and Luke in their gospels. What they defended was what had been revealed. Jesus had been miraculously conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit. She was a virgin when this occurred and remained a virgin until the birth of our Lord. Had men been content with what God had revealed, there would be no such thing as the doctrine of the "perpetual Virginity of Mary." But they were not.

As time went on, the revealed truth was taken a step further by uninspired men. Some began to teach that not only did Mary conceive without carnal intercourse, but her physical virginity was also not violated in giving birth to Christ. As early as 390 A.D., we can find the synod at Milan condemning the proposition that "a virgin conceived, but a virgin did not bring forth." Without going into physiological detail, this proposition was not teaching that after the conception, but prior to the birth, Mary had relations with Joseph. Rather it was teaching that, in the natural course of things, during the birth the passage was opened. Uninspired men denied that this was true.

Augustine wrote in **Sermons**: "For as a virgin she conceived, as a virgin she gave birth, a virgin she

remained." In **DeTrinitate**, he wrote: "For neither do we know the countenance of the Virgin Mary, from who, untouched by a husband, not tainted in the birth itself, He was wonderfully born."

In **Commentary of the Apostles' Creed**, from the 5th century, Rufinus wrote: "The gate which was shut (Ezech. 44,2) was her virginity. Through it the Lord God of Israel entered; through it He advanced into this world from the virgin's womb. And, because her virginity was preserved intact, the Virgin's gate has remained shut for ever."

Collier's Encyclopedia, Vol. 15, tells us, "Ancient writers such as Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome employ various analogies - the emergence of Christ from the sealed tomb, the penetration of light through glass, or human thought leaving the mind" to explain how Jesus could have been born and yet Mary remain intact.

Having taken this step in their thinking, uninspired men took yet another one. Since Mary conceived as a virgin, and since she remained "intact" in the birth of Christ, they reasoned that she surely must have remained a virgin for the rest of her life, never engaging in normal marital relations with her husband, Joseph. From the 4th century we find these words from Basil; "The friends of Christ do not tolerate hearing that the Mother of God ever ceased to be a virgin." By the Fifth General Council of Constantinople in 553 Mary had received title "Perpetual Virgin." Today the **Baltimore Catechism** says, "Mary, the Mother of God, remained a virgin not only in the conception of Christ but also in His birth and during the rest of her life."

Besides forcing Roman Catholic authorities to do a great deal of explaining concerning New Testament passages that speak of the "brethren of the Lord," such as Matt. 12:46-50, the doctrine of the "perpetual virginity of Mary" raises another very serious question. The Bible teaches that the marriage bed is undefiled (Heb. 13:4) and that a husband and wife have the God-given responsibility to tend to the sexual needs of each other (1 Cor. 7). If Mary remained a virgin throughout her life, then she and Joseph were married in appearance only and were recreant to one another in clear violation of God's decrees concerning this holiest of human relationships. We can get an idea of the type of thinking that gave rise to this doctrine in a letter from the 4th century from Siricius. He wrote: "We surely cannot deny that you were right in correcting the doctrines about children of Mary, and Your Holiness was right in rejecting the idea that any other offspring should come from the same virginal womb from which Christ was born according to the flesh. For the Lord Jesus would not have chosen to be born of a virgin if he had judged that she would be so incontinent as to taint the birthplace of the body of the Lord, the hope of the eternal king, with the seed of human intercourse." Truly, there would have been absolutely nothing incontinent about Mary fulfilling her obligations as a wife. Not to do so would have been sinful.

It is interesting, and revealing, that the idea of the "perpetual virginity" of Mary is not found in the scriptures. That Jesus was conceived in the womb of a virgin by the Holy Spirit is to be found there. The rest of the Roman Catholic doctrine concerning her virginity springs not from the mind of God, but from the imaginations of men. (From "**Catholicism Examined**," Edited by Greg Litmer and David Riggs, p. 123-125).

The Assumption of Mary

By Greg Litmer

On Nov. 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII issued the following declaration: "By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." With these words, the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary was formally defined and made an article of faith in the Roman Catholic Church. How this idea ever reached the level of an "article of faith" is a tale of pure speculation, human reasoning, fanciful flights of imagination, and complete disregard for scriptural or historical evidence.

The Growth of a Doctrine

I would like to present a question and answer from the book, **The Question Box**, by Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, bearing the Imprimatur of Patrick Cardinal Hayes. The book was written in 1929, so it was before the official declaration of the Assumption by Pius XII, but it reveals a great deal about how such a doctrine came into being. Here are the questions and the answer:

- ! "Is there any Biblical or historical proof of the ascension of the Virgin Mary into heaven? Is the Assumption a dogma of the faith?" Ans. "The dogma of the Assumption means the Blessed Virgin's entrance into heaven, body and soul by the power of God. The active term Ascension is used only of Jesus Christ's entrance into heaven by His own divine power. The doctrine has never been defined by the Church, although it's wide acceptance since the sixth century renders it a certain doctrine, that cannot be denied by Catholics without rashness.
- ! "It cannot be proved from the Bible, or from contemporary historical witness, but it rests on such solid theological principles that many Bishops have written the Apostolic See, requesting it's definition as a dogma of faith.
- ! "Some may think it strange that the Fathers of the first five centuries do not mention it. But as St. Augustine says: 'There are many things that the universal Church maintains and that we reasonably believe were preached by the Apostles, although they never have been put in writing' (De Bapt., v., 23). We can readily conjecture reasons for their silence. Perhaps they feared that certain heretics, like the Valentinians, might cite this doctrine in proof of their errors concerning the Body of Christ. Perhaps again they wished to keep the cultus of the Blessed Virgin in the background on account of the prevalent idolatry. Moreover, when bitter controversy was being waged on such important dogmas as the Trinity and the Incarnation, less important doctrines might well be ignored.
- ! "It certainly seems most fitting that the body of the Immaculate Mother of God should not taste corruption, and that it should share in the triumph of her Son, the Risen Christ. Kellner tells us that the feast of the Assumption in the East is older than the sixth century, for it was celebrated by the heretical sects that separated from Rome in the fifth century, viz., the Monophysites, the Nestorians, the Armenians and the Ethiopians. The most ancient writer to

speak of it in the West is St Gregory of Tours (539) who writes: "The Lord has the most holy body of the Virgin taken into heaven, where, reunited to her soul, it now enjoys with the elect, happiness without end."

From the quote just presented, we can see that as far as the Assumption is concerned, Roman Catholic authorities readily admit that there is no biblical evidence to support it, nor is there any contemporary historical evidence to support it. Lack of substantive evidence proves no problem to them. One Roman Catholic writer put it this way: "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." (**The Manual of Catholic Theology**).

Again from the statement from the **Question Box**, we find it admitted that the early church was silent on the subject for the first five centuries. Several conjectured reasons were given for this silence, and yet the most obvious reason for the silence was left out - that being that the early church knew nothing of an Assumption of Mary and did not believe it.

Finally, over 500 years after the establishment of the Church, Gregory of Tours mentions the Assumption of Mary in his book, **In Gloriam Martyrum**. While nothing is said of the nature of Gregory's book in the **Question Box** quote, it is little more than a fairy tale. The book tells that as Mary lay dying the apostles gathered around her bed. Into this scene Jesus appears with His angels and commits the soul of Mary to the care of Gabriel and her body is carried away in a cloud. Of this story, Tanis remarks in **What Rome Teaches**, "There is no more evidence for the truth of this legend than for the ghost stories told by our grandfathers." It is utterly unbelievable that such a legend could have grown into an official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

The quote from the **Question Box** also told us that the doctrine rested upon solid theological principles. What are those principles? I want us to notice an amazing uniformity in approach. In the **Question Box** quote we saw it stated, "It certainly seems most fitting..." John of Damascus, an 8th century writer, wrote in **Homily 2 on the Assumption**, "**It was fitting** that she, who had kept her virginity intact in childbirth, should keep her own body free from all corruption even after death. **It was fitting** that she, who had carried the Creator as a Child at her breast, should dwell in the divine tabernacles. **It was fitting** that the spouse, whom the Father had taken to Himself, should live in the divine mansions. **It was fitting** that she, who has seen her Son upon the Cross and who had thereby received into her heart the sword of sorrow which she had escaped in the act of giving birth to Him, should look upon Him as He sits at the right hand of the Father. **It was fitting** that God's Mother should possess what belongs to her Son, and that she should be honored by every creature as the Mother and as the Handmaid of God."

Even **Collier's Encyclopedia** says, "In the absence of a dogmatic pronouncement, modern theologians generally believe that Mary died. Though they admit she was not bound by the law of mortality, because of her exemption from sin, (this is another subject altogether - g.l.) they believe **it was fitting** that Mary's body should resemble that of her Son, who allowed Himself to die for the salvation of men."

I think that we can recognize the "solid theological principles" involved here. They can be summed up with the words, "It certainly seemed fitting..." In other words, "It seems like it ought to be true, therefore it is."

I wonder if any Roman Catholic theologian would like to be tried for a crime on the basis of "It certainly seems fitting that he did it," or if they would be willing to "dispense with strict historical evidence of the fact"?

Four years before defining the Assumption of Mary as an article of faith, Pius XII asked all of the bishops in communion with Rome whether or not they believed it and, if so, whether or not a solemn declaration was in order. Practically the whole episcopate answered yes to both questions, so Pius XII decided to make it official. My friends, the basis for the declaration was, "We believe it, therefore it is true." It has been readily admitted that there is no scriptural or historical evidence to prove this doctrine, and the personal beliefs of the Roman Catholic bishops are not good enough. (From "**Catholicism Examined**," Edited by Greg Litmer and David Riggs, p. 141-143).

Mary, Mediatrix?

By Greg Litmer

In the book, **What the Church Teaches**, Conway writes on pages 211 & 212,

- ! "It is the common and explicit teaching of the Church today that every grace given to men comes to them through Mary. She is the almoner for her generous Son. She hands out His treasures, as a Mother's right. Being mediatrix is simply a Mother's privilege. She was intimately associated with Her Son in everything pertaining to our Redemption and salvation while they were both on earth. Why should He change the order of things now that they are both in heaven?
- ! "Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. He brought God to us when He became man. He takes us back to God with Him through His redemptive grace. He permits us to understand something about God, first, by bringing God down to the human level, in the Incarnation; and second, by giving us a bit of divine intelligence, in Faith.
- ! "Mary, the mediatrix, brought Jesus to us, and brings us to Jesus."

Thus, in an authorized Catholic book, the teaching of Mary as "Mediatrix" is set forth. Further explanation of this peculiar Catholic teaching is presented in Vol. 15 of **Collier's Encyclopedia**, p. 472. It states, "Related to Mary's position as mother of the Saviour is her dignity as intermediary between Christ and the human race. There are, however, two aspects of this mediation, which should be carefully distinguished. It is certain in Catholic theology that, since Mary gave birth to the Redeemer who is the source of all grace, she is the channel of all graces to mankind. But it is only probable, as a legitimate opinion, that, since Mary's Assumption into heaven, no grace is received by humans without her cooperation and intercession."

Such explanations of the "mediation" of Mary are utilized by Roman Catholic authorities to answer critics who charge that making Mary a "mediatrix" usurps the position of Jesus Christ. They claim to teach that Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man and that Roman Catholic teaching concerning Mary does not interfere with that. What it does do is to add another step to what God has decreed. Jesus is the mediator between God and man, but to get to Jesus, one must go through Mary. Two things stand out about this doctrine. Number One is that it is a completely man-made doctrine, the result of human reasoning and imagination that began back with Mary being defined as the "Mother of God" by the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. and has continued to grow and be added to unto this day. The second major thing about this teaching that stands out is that regardless of claims to the contrary, it does indeed usurp the position of Christ as the "One Mediator" between God and man and adds a step in the mediatorial process that God did not put there, namely, Mary.

Within Roman Catholicism's history, few men have promoted the growth of Mariology to the extent the Alphonse de Liguori has. He has been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church and his books have been widely published in numerous languages. Perhaps his best known book is called **The Glories of Mary**. We are going to notice a few statements from that book and compare them with what God's Word has to say, but before doing that I want to notice the editor's comments from the 1931 edition of **The Glories of Mary**. The editor wrote: "Everything that our saint has written is, as it were, a summary of Catholic tradition on the subject that it treats; it is not an individual author; it is, so to speak, the church herself that

speaks to us by the voice of her prophets, her apostles, her pontiffs, her saints, her fathers, her doctors of all nations and ages. No other book appears to be more worthy of recommendation in this respect than **The Glories of Mary.**" It is important to realize that as we read Liguori's comments we are reading the Roman Catholic position. As we saw, it is not so much Liguori speaking as the Roman Catholic Church herself. Let's notice whether the teaching of Mary as "Mediatrix" usurps the position of Jesus or not.

Liguori says on pages 80, 82, & 83, "Mary is our life...Mary is obtaining this grace for sinners by her intercession, thus restores them to life." "And she is truly a mediatrix of peace between sinners and God. Sinners receive pardon by...Mary alone."

On page 94 Liguori writes: "He fails and is lost who has not recourse to Mary."

On page 169 & 170 Liguori says: "The Way of Salvation is open to none otherwise than through Mary, our salvation is in the hands of Mary...He who is protected by Mary will be saved, he who is not will be lost."

On page 193 Liguori says of Mary: "...Is also the Advocate of the whole human race...for she can do what she wills with God."

On page 197 we find: "Mary is the Peace-maker between sinners and God."

How do these statements by Liguori compare with the Word of God? We can see for ourselves: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..." (1 Tim. 2:5).

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." (John 14:6).

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and for not ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1-2).

An individual does not have to be a bible scholar to detect major differences between what God's Word says and what the Church of Rome, through Liguori, says. Much of the work attributed to Mary in **The Glories of Mary**, is actually work God has given His Son to do.

Because of the man-made teaching concerning Mary as "Mediatrix" it has been necessary for the Roman Catholic Church to present a convoluted view of God the Father and our Lord. Here are some examples. On page 124 of **The Glories of Mary**, Liguori writes: "If God is angry with a sinner, and Mary takes him under her protection, she withholds the avenging arm of her son, and saves him." On page 248 of the same book we find: "O Immaculate Virgin, prevent thy beloved Son, who is irritated by our sins, from abandoning us to the power of the devil." Also, "We often obtain more promptly what we ask by calling on the name of Mary than by invoking that of Jesus."

Liguori presents this imaginary scene. A burdened sinner sees two ladders ascending to heaven. At the head of one is Jesus, at the head of the other is Mary. As he tries to climb the ladder at which Jesus stands, he sees the angry face of the Lord and fails. As he turns away he hears a voice saying, "Try the other ladder." He does and climbs easily meeting Mary at the top. She in turn brings him to heaven and presents him to her Son. Does that resemble at all the Biblical picture of our Lord who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heaven laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

I believe that Loraine Boettner, in his book, **Roman Catholicism**, aptly states the result of the Roman Catholic teaching that presents Mary as the "Mediatrix" on pages 147 & 148 when he writes:

! "What a travesty it is on Scripture truth to teach that Christ demands justice, but that Mary will extend mercy! How dishonoring it is to Christ to teach that He is lacking in pity and compassion for His people, and that He must be persuaded in the end by His mother! When He was on earth it was never necessary for anyone to persuade Him to be compassionate. Rather, when He saw the blind and the lame, the afflicted and hungry, He was "moved with compassion" for them and lifted them out of their distress. He had immediate mercy on the wicked but penitent thief on the cross, and there was no need for intercession by Mary although she was there present. His love for us is as great as when He was on earth; no other intermediary, neither His mother after the flesh, nor any saint or angel, to entreat Him on our behalf."

Mary is not honored by creating doctrines that give her positions of power and influence that God did not give her. Indeed to do so, besmirches the simple biblical picture of the humble, faithful mother of Jesus.

The New and Improved Mary?

By Jerry Bates

Just when you think that religious people cannot get any further from revealed truth, another event happens which shakes you back to reality. Recently, I read that many Catholics were petitioning the Pope to proclaim a new dogma: "that the Virgin Mary is Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces and Advocate of the People of God." (Newsweek, Aug. 15, 1997). This movement supposedly is supported by several prominent Catholics. Of course, for centuries Catholics have elevated Mary to a position far higher than has been revealed in Scripture, but to proclaim her to be an equal with Jesus Christ, Himself, is something else.

How could many sincerely religious people support such an idea? I believe that it can be answered very simply. Either people do not know the Bible or do not respect the simple written authority of the Bible. The author of the article made this very revealing statement:

! "The secret of Mary's mysterious power may be just this: having no history of her own, she entices every new generation to draw her portrait. The Bible offers only scraps to build on."

In other words, it doesn't matter what the Bible says. It is not particularly important that the Bible says absolutely nothing about such a doctrine. It makes little difference that such a doctrine contradicts a plain teaching of Paul when he wrote: "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). Just forget that John warns, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God" (2 John 9). The crux of the matter for the bishops is this: "We like it; we want it; let's have it!"

Mary, an Object of Worship in Roman Catholicism

By Greg Litmer

I can envision a Roman Catholic priest reading the title of this article and thinking, "There goes another one claiming that we worship Mary and that is not true!" In many authorized Roman Catholic books it is denied that the Roman Church teaches that Mary is to be worshiped. The position that is taken is that Mary is viewed as a human being, but only a human being and in no way equal with God.

In the book, **What the Church Teaches**, by Conway, which bears the Nihil Obstat and the Imprimatur, this statement is made:

- ! "God's Mother is worthy of honor. He honored her Himself in choosing her from among all His creatures. We never forget the basic truth of our religion: there is only one God, and He alone is to be worshiped. But that does not mean that we are forbidden to pay reasonable, sensible honor to creatures. God explicitly commands you to honor your own father and mother. Is it then wrong to honor God's Mother?"
- ! "From the beginning, the Church has given to Mary the highest form of honor that can be properly given to any creature. She is human, just as we are. We must never adore her; that is for God alone. But otherwise we cannot honor her to excess, because it is not possible to overestimate the privileges God gave her in making her His own Mother.
- ! "Most of the opposition to Catholic devotion to Mary results from a misunderstanding of the nature of that devotion. We do not try to deify Mary nor make her equal to God in any respect."

Despite statements such as this, it is obvious that in the Roman Catholic Church there is a great deal of emphasis placed upon Mary. There are Holy Days of Obligation devoted to Mary, there are prayers whose subject is Mary, there are shrines devoted to Mary that are visited by thousands of pilgrims a year, and there are doctrines in Catholicism that separate Mary from all others. The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was born without sin, while all others were born in sin. It teaches that she was received into heaven bodily. It teaches that she is the Co-Mediatrix with Christ. It calls Mary: Virgin of Virgins, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, Queen of Sorrows, Refuge of Sinners, Virgin Most Merciful, and on and on. If such does not constitute worship, exactly what is it?

Roman Catholic theologians, recognizing that there is no scriptural authorization for their attitude toward Mary, have arrived at the following formula, presented in the **Code of Canon Law**, Canon 1255 (20th century), to distinguish between the worship given to God and what they give to Mary. It reads:

- ! "The worship due to the most holy Trinity, to each of the divine Person, to our Lord Jesus Christ, even under the sacramental species, is called *cultus latria* (highest kind of worship, adoration); that which is due to the blessed Virgin Mary is called *cultus hyperduliae* (special veneration or worship); that which is due to the others who reign with Christ in heaven is called *cultus duliae* (veneration or worship). To sacred relics and images there is also due a veneration and worship which is relative to the persons to whom the relics and images refer."

To put it simply, the Roman Catholic Church divides worship into three kinds; *Latria*, which is the highest form of worship and is to be given to the Godhead only; *Dulia*, which is something of a secondary form of

eneration that is given to saints and angels; Hyperdulia, which is a higher form of veneration, called in the **Canon Law** a special veneration or worship. Even though such a formula is totally without scriptural precedent, it may sound plausible to the uninformed reader. In actual practice, though, this theological formula is useless. Most Roman Catholics do not, or cannot, make the distinctions. In truth, most do not know that they exist.

During the twelve years of parochial school education, I did not once hear of latria, dulia, and hyperdulia. If I had, how could a second grade child make such a distinction when he takes part in the May Festival Crowning of the statue of Mary with prayers and songs being offered to her? Each classroom had a crucifix, but each classroom also had a statue of Mary. We were told again and again of Fatima and Lourdes, and the wondrous things done there. We were taught to go to Mary in prayer, indeed the Rosary contains fifty Hail Mary's. I remember well in high school, the football coach was Gerry Faust, now coach at Notre Dame University. Before every game the players were to kneel before the statue of Mary and offer prayers to her. During the game, at crucial times, Mr Faust wandered the side lines yelling, "Everybody say a Hail Mary!" There may be a distinction made in theory, but no distinction exists in practice.

To me, the true attitude that the Roman Catholic laity is taught to possess toward Mary is expressed in some of the prayers they are taught to say to her by rote. Consider the words of the Hail Mary. "Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

Another prayer we were taught went like this: "Remember, O most loving Virgin Mary, that never was it known that any one who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, and sought thy intercession, was left forsaken. Filled, therefore with confidence in thy goodness, I fly to thee, O Mother, Virgin of Virgins; to thee I come, before thee I stand a sorrowing sinner. Despise not my words, O Mother of the Word, but graciously hear and grant my prayer."

The same things that a Catholic requests of God the Father and our Lord Jesus, in Roman Catholic prayers, are the same things requested of Mary.

While the formula of latria, dulia, hyperdulia does permit the Roman Catholic Church to **officially** deny worshipping Mary, its actual practice shows otherwise. God is to be the object of our honor and reverence and we must be careful not to give honor due to Him and His Son to anyone else. The first century church did not afford Mary any special position, and it certainly gave her no special veneration or worship. Hyperdulia, as well as the formula of which it is a part, is a theological attempt to justify a system of belief that promotes the worship of Mary. (From **Catholicism Examined**, edited by Greg Litmer and David Riggs, p. 160-162).

New Testament Bishops

By David J. Riggs

Qualifications for New Testament bishops are clearly disclosed in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. New Testament bishops, first of all, had to be married men. 1 Tim. 3:2 says, "It behoveth therefore a bishop to be blameless, the husband of one wife, sober, prudent, of good behavior, chaste, given to hospitality, a teacher..." (Catholic Rheims Translation). "Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife..." (1 Tim. 3:2; Catholic Revised Standard Version). Also, a bishop had to rule his own house well, having his children in subjection (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

Secondly, the New Testament reveals that bishops are overseers of the local congregations. They were to be selected by each local church. They were to be "proved" or "tried" in view of the qualifications as were the deacons (1 Tim. 3:10). Deacons had no authority but were to "serve" in the local churches (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Once the bishops were selected, they were to oversee the local congregations wherein they had been chosen and ordained. Peter said to the bishops, "Tend the flock of God which is among you..." (1 Pet. 5:2). This was the extent of their oversight--overseeing only one church.

Thirdly, the New Testament disclosed that there was always a plurality of bishops in each local church. Acts 14:23 says, "In each church they installed presbyters and, with prayer and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith." (New Catholic Translation). There are three passages in the New Testament which use the terms "presbyter" (elder) and "bishop" (overseer) interchangeably--Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:17,28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2. Consequently, the terms refer to the same office which God placed in the local churches, and without exception there were always more than one in each church.

In summary, God commanded that a plurality of bishops be chosen and appointed in each local church (Acts 14:23). They had to be married men (1 Tim. 3:2) with believing children (Titus 1:6) and were to oversee only one church (1 Pet. 5:2). These are the only bishops ordained by God in the New Testament and, thus, are the only type which exist with His authority and sanction.

Origin of the Catholic Church

By David J. Riggs

There is no specific exact date for the beginning of the Catholic Church. However, the Papacy (and that which grew out of it) has already fulfilled the prophecy in 2 Thess. 2:3-12. We quote the prophecy in full:

! "Let no one deceive you in any way, for the day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and is exalted above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God and gives himself out as if he were God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I used to tell you these things? And now you know what restrains him, that he may be revealed in his proper time. For the mystery of iniquity is already at work; provided only that he who is at present restraining it, does still restrain, until he is gotten out of the way. And then the wicked one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth and will destroy with the brightness of his coming. And his coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all wicked deception to those who are perishing. For they have not received the love of truth that they might be saved. Therefore God sends them a misleading influence that they may believe falsehood, that all may be judged who have not believed the truth, but have preferred wickedness."

The Papacy, and the error proceeding from it, fulfills the above prophecy because it agrees in all the following points:

1. It has one official man as its head, and the arrogance of its claims are centered in him.
2. That man came with and out of an apostasy, the very kind the apostles describe elsewhere (1 Tim. 4:1-3; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).
3. He exalts himself against all that is called God; i.e., he is addressed by terms (Pope, Supreme Pontiff, Holy Father, etc.) which belong only to God.
4. He sits in the temple of God, i.e., his sphere of dominion is in the church.
5. His appearance was hindered by some force in Paul's time (2 Thess. 2:6-7); i.e., when the bishops of Rome began to assert power, they were in conflict with the Roman civil government which dominated and persecuted; however, when the Roman empire collapsed, the Roman church became powerful.
6. The mystery of iniquity was already working in Paul's day (2 Thess. 2:7) and would continue until the Lord's coming (2 Thess. 2:8).
7. The Lord shall destroy him with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). Only by a continual succession of these men of sin could be this possible.
8. The apostasy would produce fraudulent miracles, signs and wonders; i.e., supposed cures brought about by relics and shrines.
9. The whole system is perfected through people's lack of love for truth (2 Thess. 2:10); i.e., Catholics do not love and respect the holy Scriptures as the only authority in religion, but rely on the Pope along with the Scriptures.

The above clearly reveals the origin of the Catholic Church. It had its beginning in Paul's day (2 Thess. 2:7) and will continue until the Lord returns (2 Thess. 2:8). The Catholic Church is not the one church revealed

in the Bible, but is the great "falling away" predicted in it. May the Lord help us to turn from all the false teachings of the great apostasy and become simple New Testament Christians, lovers of truth, followers of Christ, and members of His one true church.

Pillar and Ground of Truth

By David J. Riggs

Catholics sometimes quote 1 Tim. 3:15 which states, "...The church of the living God, the pillar and mainstay of the truth" to prove that the church is invested with authority to legislate in divine matters. (See **Father Smith Instructs Jackson**, p. 35; **The Question Box**, p. 96). The phrase "pillar and ground of truth" does not mean that the church is the originator of truth, or that it can make or change the laws of God. It simply means that it is the upholder, defender and proclaimer of the truth. The apostles often praised churches for proclaiming the truth, "for from you the word of the Lord has been spread abroad" (1 Thess. 1:8). They commended them for defending the truth, "partakers with me...in the defense and confirmation of the gospel" (Phil. 1:7). However, there is not a single verse in all of the holy Scriptures which indicates that the church has the authority to originate truth or to decree laws for God.

The apostles and prophets and they alone were commissioned by the Lord, not to **originate** truth--"For ever, O Lord, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens" (Psalm 119:98 Catholic Edition RSV)--but to **reveal** the truth. Their task was once and for all completed for they gave us the written New Testament of Christ. The responsibility of the church today is simply to follow, defend and proclaim the truth which they revealed. The **Catechism for Adults**, page 54 says, "The Catholic Church alone has the authority to rule and to teach." However, the authority is not in the body, but in the Head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The ruling is not in the kingdom, but in the King (Heb. 7:1-2; Rev. 1:5-6). The authority is not in the church, but in Christ (Matt. 28:18; 1 Pet. 3:22). The church is not the Savior, but simply the body of the saved (Acts 2:46; Eph. 5:22-24).

No Office of Pope in the Scriptures

By David J. Riggs

Those who claim that Peter was the Supreme Pontiff, the Pope, look to him and his successors as a source of authority. Christians, who deny that Peter was the Prince of the Apostles, look to the holy Scriptures alone as the standard of authority. Of course all understand that Jesus Christ, being the Son of God, Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, is the true source of authority in religion. However, does Christ express Himself, and thus guide and govern His church, through the Pope, or through the Scriptures alone?

If the Pope is a source of authority in religion, and not the Scriptures alone, we must look to him for instruction and guidance in matters of faith and practice. However, if the Bible is our only source of authority, we must look to it to furnish us to every good work and to guide us to heaven. If the Pope is not a true standard of authority, he is therefore the most colossal fraud ever perpetrated on man, and is the fulfillment of the prophecy of the "man of sin" in 2 Thess. 2:3-4. Here the apostle Paul declared, "Let no one deceive you in any way, for the day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and is exalted above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God and gives himself out as if he were God."

The holy Scriptures contain the laws of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). All teachers are to be tested by the Scriptures to verify the truthfulness of their teaching (1 Cor. 4:6; Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1). The sacred writings are the standard which will judge us in the last day (Rev. 20:12). The Scriptures repeatedly warn us not to follow men (Col. 2:8; Eph. 4:14; Matt. 15:9; 2 Cor. 11:13-15). Indeed, "...Let God be true but every man a liar." (Rom. 3:4).

In order to prove the authority of the present day Pope, at least three things must be established by the holy Scriptures. First, it must be proven that Christ established such an office or position as that of Pope, or Vicar of Himself. Secondly, it must be established that Christ appointed Peter to the first such office. Thirdly, it must be proven that Christ ordained that Popes or Vicars would continue in succession from Peter to the end of time.

Let us consider first of all, "Did Christ establish such an office as that of Pope, or Vicar of Himself." An office of such magnitude as "Pope," "Supreme Pontiff," or "Vicar of Christ," should be clearly revealed in the Scriptures. If the office of Pope is true, it is without question the greatest office and position which has ever been or could be bestowed upon man. When we search the Scriptures, we discover that there is not a single reference which gives the slightest hint that Christ wanted a Vicar of Himself. The terms "Pope," "Supreme Pontiff," "Primacy of Peter" are not mentioned in the Scriptures. As a matter of fact, the only reference to someone taking the place of God (Christ Himself is God) is the "man of sin" in 2 Thess. 2:3-12. The only reference to the "Holy Father" is to God Himself (John 17:11). Surely, if Christ had intended to establish such a magnificent, supreme office as a Pope, He would have stated its powers, duties, and given the qualifications for its officers. Undoubtedly, He would have revealed to mankind how such officers are to be selected, and by what means they are to succeed one another.

When God appointed the Levitical priesthood in the Old Testament era, He defined in elaborate detail their

qualifications and duties, i.e., the whole book of Leviticus. In the New Testament, bishops (also called pastors or elders) who were overseers of the local congregations, are distinctly and repeatedly mentioned (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28-31; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). The terms "bishop" and "office" are clearly established (1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:5-7). Their qualifications and how they were to be appointed are plainly and clearly specified (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11). Moreover, their functions and responsibilities are explicitly defined as is shown by the following:

- ! Bishops (or elders) are to take heed to themselves. Acts 20:28.
- ! Bishops are to oversee the church. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2; 1 Tim. 3:2-5.
- ! Bishops are to feed the flock. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2; Eph. 4:11.
- ! Bishops should seek to rule well. 1 Tim. 5:17; Rom. 12:5-8.
- ! Bishops are to admonish us. 1 Thess. 5:11-12.
- ! Bishops are stewards of God. Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:3.
- ! Bishops are to watch for souls. Heb. 13:17.

Furthermore, the duties of the members toward the bishops are abundantly revealed in the Scriptures. Our responsibilities toward them are:

- ! Recognize and esteem them highly. 1 Thess. 5:12-13.
- ! Obey and submit. Heb. 13:17.
- ! Receive the food and follow their example. 1 Pet. 5:1-3.
- ! Give double honor to those who rule well. 1 Tim. 5:17-18.
- ! Don't receive gossip against them. 1 Tim. 5:19.
- ! Use them. James 5:14-15.

In contrast to the above, we do not find in the holy Scriptures a single mention or allusion to the office of a Pope. The qualifications for one, and the duties or powers of one are nowhere revealed. Successors are not mentioned. The responsibilities of the members toward such officer is never mentioned. In all of the holy Scriptures, there is not a single hint or allusion to an office of a Pope or Vicar of Christ. Instead, the Bible is emphatic in stating that Christ is the only foundation on which we can lay. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11). The Scriptures strongly affirm that Christ has all authority both in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). They state that Christ is head over all things in the Church (Eph. 1:22-23), and that He is "the" head, not "a" head, but "the" head of the body, the church (Eph. 5:23). They proclaim that in all things Christ holds the preeminence (Col. 1:18). For a mere man to claim to be head of Christ's body, the church, is to supplant the Lord, and is the height of arrogance and blasphemy. Truly, only the "man of sin" would attempt such (2 Thess. 2:3-12).

Catholics tell us that Christ is the head, but the Pope is the visible, sub-head of the church. They have simply assumed and then asserted that the Pope is the visible head. To assume something and then assert it, is no way to prove anything. We ask, "Where in the Scriptures does it mention a visible head of the church?" The church or kingdom is a spiritual one (Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36), and therefore needs a spiritual head or king. For Catholics to prove the authority of the Pope, they must prove that Christ wanted a visible sub-head, a viceregent, a representative or proxy. This is what the Pope is supposed to be. The Scriptures do not sanction or allow such. They clearly teach that Christ is "the" head over ALL things to the church.

In Eph. 5:23-24 the apostle Paul declares, "...Because a husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church, being himself savior of the body. But just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things." Thus, the Scriptures plainly state that the church is subject to Christ, not to Peter as Christ's Vicar. Certainly, if Christ had appointed a Vicar to be the visible head of His church, the apostles would have mentioned it at least once in their inspired writings. Surely, they would have mentioned it in their discourses on the head and to whom the church is subject. Friends, the Sacred Oracles say that the church is "subject to Christ." To whom will you be subject, to Christ, or, to an authority which can only be established by humans? As we mentioned, "Let God be true, but every man a liar..." (Rom. 3:4).

The Scriptures teach that the wife is subject to her husband as the church is to Christ. Just as the wife is subject to only one head--her husband, the church is subject to only one head--Christ. Just as the husband does not send a substitute or vicar to rule over his wife, Christ does not authorize a vicar to rule over His body, the church.

The church is often compared to the human body in the Scriptures. The members of the church are represented as the various parts of the body. Christ is always said to be the head. (See 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16). Our question is: "What part of the body is the Pope?" Also, "How does one get the idea of a sub-head into the body?"

In Eph. 4:11-12, Paul lists the officers of the church over which Christ is the head, "And he himself gave some men as apostles, and some as prophets, others again as evangelists, and others as pastors and teachers, in order to perfect the saints for a work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..." Paul lists: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, but no Pope. Definitely, this would have been a logical place to mention the office of Pope, but alas, it is not there. He lists the offices which are clearly established in the Scriptures both here and elsewhere. However, both here and elsewhere, there is absolutely no mention of a Pope. There is no mention of any of the other names by which the Pope is addressed. As we mentioned, the only time the term, "Holy Father" is found, it is used of God Himself (John 17:11). Notice that in Eph. 4:11-12 those offices were given for the perfecting of the saints and building up of the body. Thus, the office of Pope adds nothing to the perfection of the saints or edification of the body. It adds nothing because it comes from man rather than God.

Since there is no mention of the office of the Pope, or any of the many other names which the Pope has assumed (Supreme Pontiff, Vicar of Christ, Holy Father), we must conclude that such an office does not exist. If the office does not exist, Peter could not have been placed into that office, and there could be no successors to that office. As we mentioned, the nearest thing to one claiming to take the place of God is the "man of sin" revealed in Paul's prophecy of the great apostasy. We quote it in full here, and encourage you to read and study it carefully.

"Let no one deceive you in any way, for the day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and is exalted above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God and gives himself out as if he were God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I used to tell you these things? And now you know what restrains him, that he may be revealed in his proper time. For the mystery of iniquity is already at work;

provided only that he who is at present restraining it, does still restrain, until he is gotten out of the way. And then the wicked one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth and will destroy with the brightness of his coming. And his coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all wicked deception to those who are perishing. For they have not received the love of truth that they might be saved. Therefore God sends them a misleading influence that they may believe falsehood, that all may be judged who have not believed the truth, but have preferred wickedness."

The Papacy has already fulfilled the prophecy, for it agrees in all the following points:

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2. That man came with and out of an apostasy, the very kind the apostles describe elsewhere (1 Tim. 4:1-3; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).
3. He exalts himself against all that is called God; i.e., he is addressed by terms (Pope, Supreme Pontiff, Holy Father, etc.) which belong only to God.
4. He sits in the temple of God, i.e., his sphere of dominion is in the church.
5. His appearance was hindered by some force in Paul's time (2 Thess. 2:6-7); i.e., when the bishops of Rome began to assert power, they were in conflict with the Roman civil government which dominated and persecuted; however, when the Roman empire collapsed, the Roman church became powerful.
6. The mystery of iniquity was already working in Paul's day (2 Thess. 2:7) and would continue until the Lord's coming (2 Thess. 2:8).
7. The Lord shall destroy him with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). Only by a continual succession of these men of sin could be this possible.
8. The apostasy would produce fraudulent miracles, signs and wonders; i.e., supposed cures brought about by relics and shrines.
9. The whole system is perfected through people's lack of love for truth (2 Thess. 2:10); i.e., Catholics do not love and respect the holy Scriptures as the only authority in religion, but rely on the Pope along with the Scriptures.

This is a serious matter. Eternity is involved. Please ask yourself these questions: "Am I following the man of sin of the great apostasy or, am I following Christ?" "Have I been building my hope of heaven on the false assumption that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ?" We hope you will turn from that false assumption and become a simple New Testament Christian, a follower of Christ and none other, a member of Christ's church, and nothing else.

Outlandish Claims Made for the Pope

By David J. Riggs

The New York Catholic Catechism, under: Pope, 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, 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 one, God himself on earth."

In his encyclical, "The Reunion of Christendom" (1885), Pope Leo XIII stated that the pope holds "upon this earth the place of God Almighty."

The Council of Trent declared: "Sitting in that chair in which Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, sat to the close of life, the Catholic Church recognizes in his person the most exalted degree of dignity, and the full jurisdiction not based on constitutions, but emanating from no less authority than from God Himself. As the Successor of St. Peter and the true and legitimate Vicar of Jesus Christ, he, therefore, presides over the Universal Church, the Father and Governor of all the faithful, of Bishops also, and of all other prelates, be their station, rank, or power, what they may be."

The Catholic book, "My Catholic Faith" which is based on the Baltimore Catechism, on page 251, says, "The Pope can make and unmake laws for the entire Church; his authority is supreme and unquestioned. Every bishop, every priest, every member of the Church is subject to him."

Not only are outlandish claims, such as those above, made regarding the authority of the pope, but he is addressed by various terms (Supreme Pontiff, Holy Father, etc.) which belong only to God. No such terms were given to a mere man in the holy Scriptures. The term "Holy Father" is used only once in God's word. It is used by Jesus in John 17:11 as He prayed to God the Father. For a mere man to assume the authority and titles which belong only to God, is surely the height of arrogance and blasphemy. If not, why not?

Papal Infallibility

By David J. Riggs

From the past and present, here are some things that have been said about papal infallibility by Catholics themselves:

- ! "Unless I am convinced by the testimonies of Scripture or evident reason (for I do not believe either Pope or councils alone, since it is certain that they have both erred frequently and contradicted themselves)...I neither can nor wish to revoke anything." (This was said by Martin Luther at Worms in 1521 while still a Catholic priest).
- ! "No enlightened Catholic holds the pope's infallibility to be an article of faith. I do not; and none of my brethren, that I know of do." (This was said by Bishop John Purcell in the Campbell-Purcell Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion in 1837. The Debate was later printed in a book and Bishop's Purcell's statement is found on page 27. He made his remark before papal infallibility was decreed by the Vatican Council in 1870 to be an article of faith).
- ! "Therefore, to resume, I establish: (1) That Jesus has given to His apostles the same power that He gave to St. Peter. (2) That the apostles never recognized in St. Peter the vicar of Jesus Christ and the infallible doctor of the church. (3) That St. Peter never thought of being pope, and never acted as if he were pope...I conclude victoriously, with history, with reason, with logic, with good sense, and with a Christian conscience, that Jesus Christ did not confer any supremacy on St. Peter and that the bishops of Rome did not become sovereigns of the church, but only confiscating one by one all the rights of the episcopate." (This, along with many arguments against papal infallibility, was said by Bishop Joseph Strossmayer in his speech before the Vatican Council in 1870).
- ! "It has now become quite clear that the conception of continuity, authority, infallibility of the Church and the Church's teaching, on which there has not been sufficient reflection, has led the Catholic Church into a dangerous tight corner." (This, alone with other doubts regarding papal infallibility, was said by Hans Kung, a prominent Catholic theologian, in his book, "Infallibility, An Inquiry," 1971).

Was the Apostle Peter a Pope?

By David J. Riggs

In the books of men, the following titles are commonly used with reference to a man: "Pope," "Holy Father," "Vicar of Christ," "Sovereign Pontiff." All of these are titles that rightly belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God the Father. There is not a single instance in the Scriptures where any of the above titles are applied to a man. The term, "Holy Father" is used only once in the entire Bible, and it is used by Jesus in addressing God the Father. (John 17:11)

Among the above titles is the bold assertion that the Pope is the "Vicar of Christ." A "vicar" is "One serving as a substitute or agent; one authorized to perform the functions of another in higher office." (Webster). When one searches the Bible from cover to cover, he finds only one passage which gives an indication of a vicar of Christ or God. It is 2 Thess. 2:3-4; it is worded as follows:

- ! "Let no one deceive you in any way, for the day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and is exalted above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God and gives himself out as if he were God."

Some religionists today advocate that man is saved by faith only. However, there is only one passage in the entire Bible that has the words "faith" and "only" together and it says, "not by faith only" (James 2:24). The Catholics today speak of the Pope as vicar, taking the place of God (Christ Himself is God, Matt. 1:23; John 1:1), yet there is only one passage in the entire Bible which speaks of a man doing such and it calls him "the man of sin."

James Cardinal Gibbons, a Catholic Archbishop said, "Jesus our Lord, founded but one Church, which He was pleased to build on Peter. Therefore, any church that does not recognize Peter as its foundation stone is not the Church of Christ, and therefore cannot stand, for it is not the work of God." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 82). The apostle Paul said, "For other foundation no one can lay, but that which has been laid, which is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 3:11). There is no other foundation but Christ! Therefore, any church which does not recognize Christ alone as the foundation stone cannot be the church of Christ.

Catholic writers often speak of "the primacy of Peter" and "the primacy of the Pope." However, Col. 1:18, speaking of Christ, says, "And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he may hold the primacy..." Thus, with reference to the authority in the church, the Lord Jesus Christ holds the primacy in **all things**. This leaves nothing for the Pope!

Catholics claim that the Pope is the visible head of the church. Please notice the following from Catholic sources:

- ! "The pope, therefore, as vicar of Christ, is the visible head of Christ's kingdom on earth, the Church, of which Christ Himself is the invisible head." (**Answer Wisely**, by Martin J. Scott, p. 49).
- ! "According to the will of Christ, all its members profess the same faith, have the same worship

and Sacraments, and are united under the one and same visible head, the Pope." (**Father Smith Instructs Jackson**, by John F. Noll and Lester J. Fallon, p. 42)

Catholic officials always use the word "visible" no doubt thinking that it removes the thought of the Pope standing in opposition to the headship of Christ, and removes the apparent problem of having a church with two heads. Nonetheless, the Scriptures nowhere teach the idea of a visible and invisible head. Jesus said, "All authority **in heaven and on earth** has been given to me." (Matt. 28:18; Emp. mine D.R.).

Luke 17:20-21 says, "And on being asked by the Pharisees, 'When is the kingdom of God coming?' he answered and said to them, The kingdom of God comes unawares. Neither will they say, 'Behold, here it is,' or 'Behold, there it is.' For behold the kingdom of God is within you." The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom and therefore needs only a spiritual head or king.

Eph. 5:23-25 shows that Christ is the only head of the church. "Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord; because a husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church, being himself savior of the body. But just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things." Consequently, the wife is subject to her husband as the church is to Christ. Just as the wife is subject to only one head--her husband, the church is subject to only one head--Christ. Just as the husband does not send a substitute to rule over his wife, Christ does not authorize a substitute to rule over His bride, the church.

Catholics often use the expression, "One fold and one shepherd" to sustain the doctrine of the papacy. (See **Catholic Catechism For Adults**, p. 59, q. 3). They teach that the "one shepherd" is the Pope and the "one fold" represents the Catholic Church. Hear what Jesus said about it:

! "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep...I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." (John 10:11, 14-16).

Jesus is that one good shepherd. If one can understand that one and one equals two, he can understand this. If one is subject to Christ as the one shepherd--that's one. If one is subject to the Pope as the one Shepherd--that's two!

The church is often compared to the human body in the Scriptures. The members of the church are represented as the various parts of the body. Christ is always said to be the head. (See 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16). Our question is: "What part of the body is the Pope?" Also, "How does one get the idea of a sub-head into the body?"

One of the greatest arguments against the primacy of Peter is the fact that the apostles had an argument among themselves as to which of them should be the greatest. Notice the following:

! "Now there arose a dispute among them, which of them was reputed to be the greatest. But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they who exercise authority over them are called Benefactors. But not so with you. On the contrary, let him who is

greatest among you become as the youngest, and him who is chief as the servant.'" (Luke 22:24-26).

The very fact that the apostles had an argument among themselves shows they did not understand that Peter was to be prince. Also, the occasion of the argument was the night of the betrayal--the last night of the Lord's earthly ministry--and yet the apostles still did not understand that Christ had given Peter a position of primacy. The Lord settled the argument, not by stating that He had already made Peter head, but by declaring that the Gentiles have their heads, "But not so with you." Thus, Jesus very plainly taught that no one would occupy any such place as a Benefactor (or Pope) to exercise authority over the others.

All of the above Bible quotations are from Catholic Translations.

Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory

By Dudley Ross Spears

One of the first contacts I ever had with a Roman Catholic Priest was in Cookeville, Tennessee. It was my maiden voyage as a gospel preacher. The Roman "Pontiff", at that time, passed away and I received a letter from the local parish Priest asking me to pray for the departed soul of the "Pope." The reason: the Priest informed me the man was being detained in Purgatory and needed our prayers to be released.

Purgatory is a fictional concept of what happens at death and has been a hallmark of the Catholic Church. They practically own the exclusive claim to this doctrine. While they assert it has biblical connections, there is nothing in the Bible at all about either the designation or concept of Purgatory. I declined to pray for the Pope. His destiny was sealed when he died. Nothing I could say to the Lord would alter that.

This fantasy of the Catholic Church originated at the Council of Trent. "There is a Purgatory, and souls there detained, are helped by the prayers of the faithful, and especially by the acceptable Sacrifice of the Altar." (Sess. XXV.). James Cardinal Gibbons explained their position in this way. "The Catholic Church teaches that, besides a place of eternal torments for the wicked and of everlasting rest for the righteous, there exists in the next life a middle state of temporary punishment, allotted for those who have died in venial sin, or who have not satisfied the justice of God for sins already forgiven. She also teaches us that, although the souls consigned to this intermediate state, commonly called purgatory, cannot help themselves, they may be aided by the suffrages of the faithful on earth. The existence of purgatory naturally implies the correlative dogma - the utility of praying for the dead - for the souls consigned to this middle state have not reached the term of their journey. They are still exiles from heaven and fit subjects for Divine clemency." (Faith of Our Fathers, James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, P.J. Kenedy & Sons, page 173).

Catholic doctrine makes an unwarranted distinction between what they call "venial sins" and "mortal sins." They define venial sins as: "An offense against God which does not deprive us of His friendship and which merits only temporal punishment. It is called venial because it is more easily pardoned than mortal sin. Venial sin, however slight it may be, is, nevertheless, an injury done to God. It diminishes the fervor of charity, and causes us to tend to God with less affection than He deserves. It dims the light of the intellect, weakens the will, and so disposes to mortal sin. It deprives man of many degrees of grace and glory. Unless expiated, it will merit the pains of purgatory in the world to come." (The Catholic Encyclopedic Dictionary, page 994).

They define mortal sin: "A grievous offense against the law of God. This sin is called mortal because it deprives us of supernatural life and brings damnation and death of the soul. Three conditions are necessary for a mortal sin: gravity of matter, sufficient reflection, and full consent of the will. The gravity of matter is determined by Holy Scripture, by the definitions of the (Catholic, drs) Church, by the testimony of the Fathers, Doctors, and theologians, by the universal belief of the faithful, and by reason enlightened by faith. Mortal sin is a revolt against God, supreme Lord, contempt of His adorable majesty, an act of monstrous ingratitude. It is an offense against Christ who redeemed us, and against the Holy Ghost who sanctifies us. It deprives one of sanctifying grace and thus prevents one from acquiring merit or sharing in the satisfying

merits of the Church. It tarnishes the soul, and causes remorse of conscience, an inclination to evil, darkening of the intellect, weakening of the will. It deprives one of the right to heaven, and entails penalties, some of which are incurred in this life, and the loss of God forever as well as eternal punishment." (Ibid. page 652). Those guilty of "mortal" sin go to hell - not to this illusion called Purgatory.

For a period of time the Catholic Church raised revenue by selling what they called "Indulgences." These indulgences were peddled among Catholics not only for "the living but also for the dead." One of the common priestly sayings was, "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from Purgatory springs." An indulgence, to a Catholic, was his assurance that he would escape punishment for sin and help the departed dead be released from Purgatory. Historians have noted that "Repentance fell by the wayside." Erasmus, partner to Martin Luther, is reported to have said, "Everywhere the remission of purgatorial torment is sold; nor is it sold only, but forced upon those who refuse it."

Catholics now argue that the money given for indulgences was all voluntary. It reminds me of those who see no difference in buying services and making donations. It is similar to those TV and Radio preachers who don't "sell" their wares, they just stipulate how much you have to donate to them to get their products.

John Tetzel was commissioned by Pope Leo X to sell these indulgences to raise money to complete the building of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. Catholics consider Tetzel's and Leo's actions as abuses. They cannot deny the practical effect of these indulgences. They may be correct on the abuses, but are wrong on the intent of selling indulgences. The intent of those indulgences provided the ordinary Catholic with the hope that not only he, but his departed dead, would find relief from punishment for sin. Thus it was tied to the false doctrine of purgatorial punishment and all its ramifications.

There is a very simple way to refute this false doctrine. Neither the term nor the concept is found in anything from God. The Bible is silent regarding any intermediate state of the dead where the dead suffer for sins and are held as exiles from heaven till some living person prays or pays to have them released. That is the simple way. Let some Catholic priest or theologian produce biblical evidence that the doctrine is from God. They cannot do it.

In the absence of scripture, Catholic defenders turn to the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees. Keep in mind this is not an inspired document and has absolutely no divine sanction. It is not even accurate history in some instances. Chapter 12, verses 43-46 read:

"And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection. For, if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead . . . It is therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins."

Scholarly linguists question the authenticity not only of the book, but particularly this selection. Many exaggerations are made in the book. But this passage is not what Catholics should use to support their doctrine that only those guilty of "venial" sins are in need of prayers and money from the living to obtain release.

The context in which the apocryphal statement is made deals with those guilty of idolatry. They died idolaters! This is surely not considered a "venial" sin by the Catholic Church. Idolatry is classed as a "mortal" sin by the Catholic Church. Remember their definition? "This (mortal sin) sin is called mortal because it deprives us of supernatural life and brings damnation and death of the soul." Remember again: "A venial sin is an offense against God which does not deprive us of his friendship and which merits only temporal punishment." The Catholic cannot have it both ways.

The doctrine of Purgatory offers a second chance to sinners, but the Bible does not. At the end, when the Lord returns to judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31) those who are in sin will go away into everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46). There is no reprieve from the final sentence pronounced upon those guilty of sin.

Jesus spoke of the deaths of a rich man who went to hell and of a poor beggar (Lazarus) who went to the bosom of Abraham. When the rich man asked that Lazarus come and give him relief from torment, Abraham said, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (Luke 16:25-26). At death eternal destinies are sealed and unchangeable.

Lazarus died, but was comforted, not being punished in some imagined purgatorial torment. The rich man suffered excruciating pain in torment. While the candle of life burns God gives all men the opportunity to prepare. Once that flame goes out, there is no altering the eternal destiny of anyone. The unrepentant wicked will never be released from punishment. Solomon tells us even now, "When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, and the hope of the unjust perishes" (Proverbs 11:7). It behooves any rational being to reject doctrines that promise a false hope and get right with God now.

(Also see the following article wherein a correction is made: "Purgatory, Response to a Correction".)

Purgatory, Response to a Correction

By Dudley Ross Spears

Mr. Jeff Childers offers several corrections he thinks should be made in the article I wrote regarding "Purgatory." I have no illusions of being fault free when it comes to writing. I appreciate his interest in joining discussion in an amicable manner and count myself happy to have the opportunity to respond to the corrections he suggests should be made. I concur with Mr. Childers wholeheartedly in the need to be accurate.

1. I am told that the Catholic Doctrine of "purgatory" does not offer a second chance at salvation.
2. I am also told that the doctrine did not originate with the Council of Trent in the 1500's.
3. Mr. Childers objected to my rejection of the Catholic distinction between "mortal" and "venial" sins.
4. Finally, he says I missed the mark on "indulgences." I will briefly address these points.

Second Chance?

I stand corrected on the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. I stated their view incorrectly when I wrote, "The doctrine of Purgatory offers a second chance to sinners, but the Bible does not." I should have said the doctrine offers, to the dead, a time for penitent sinners to be fully perfected and purified prior to entrance into heaven." I acknowledge the mistake. The fact that the Bible is silent about both the terms and the concept involved in the Roman Catholic doctrine of "purgatory" stands.

The Council of Trent

Mr. Childers says I was inaccurate when I wrote, "The fantasy (purgatory) of the Catholic Church originated at the Council of Trent." This, according to Mr. Childers is inaccurate because the doctrine was believed long before the 1500s. The fact that many prominent Catholic theologians believed and promoted the doctrine of purgatory long before the Council of Trent does not mean it was an official dogma of Catholicism. There were probably almost as many, if not more, and as prominent, Catholics who denied it.

Greg Litmer, a Christian and ex-Catholic, said the doctrine of "purgatory" was decreed as "an article of faith by the Council of Florence." He added, "Then 124 years later, due to the public outrage surrounding the sale of indulgences which is tied so closely to the idea of Purgatory, the Council of Trent confirmed the doctrine." (Tract on Purgatory, GVJ Publications, Louisville, KY.)

Here is a statement from the Council of Trent, Session VI, Cap. XVI, Can. 30:

"If any shall say, that after the grace of justification has been received, the offence is so remitted to the

penitent sinner, and the guilt of eternal punishment so effaced, that there remains no guilt of temporal punishment to be suffered, either in this world, or in the world to come in purgatory, before admission can be obtained to the kingdom of heaven; 'let him be accursed'."

The Council of Trent affirmed even truly penitent sinners do not have full remission of sins at death. The Council stated that penitents who die forgiven of sins still retain temporal guilt in "purgatory." In this imagined holding place, inhabitants of "purgatory" allegedly receive temporal punishment during their stay there. Several Catholics rejected this concept. For all practical purposes, the decree from Trent put an end to their objections, if they desired to be good Catholics. I stand corrected in that "purgatory" became an official Catholic dogma at the Council of Florence.

The false notion that God does not completely remit all of the temporal punishment due to forgiven sin gives rise to the arbitrary distinction Catholicism make in sin. They distinguish "mortal sins" from "venial sins." As a consequence, Catholics, who die guilty of venial sins, "or with the temporary punishment of their sins still unpaid, must atone for them in Purgatory." (See The Question Box, page 394, Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, C.S.P.).

This is repugnant to the very concept of God, who is rich in mercy and grace (Ephesians 2:4). Catholicism's god would fail to remit the sins a true penitent who confesses sins and seeks pardon. We would know from our Catholic friends, what sins will the true and living God fail to forgive when a truly penitent believer confesses and prays for pardon? John said: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Mortal and Venial Sins

Next, Mr. Childers defends the Catholic concept of "venial" and "mortal" sins. To Catholics, a "mortal" sin is a sin such as deliberate murder or adultery. On the other hand, a sudden outburst of temper due to a nervous condition would be classified as venial, by Catholics. The penalty for an unforgiven mortal sin is eternity in hell. The penalty for a venial sin is temporal punishment here by the Catholic Church and in Purgatory by God. I repeat, this an arbitrary Catholic distinction with no biblical support.

Mr. Childers appeals to 1 John 5:16,17 to prove there are mortal and venial sins. This passages speaks of one committing a sin "unto death" and another committing a sin "not unto death." The difference is not that one sin is of less importance or consequence than the other. The difference is not in the sin, but the sinner.

The sinner who commits a sin unto death is the impenitent and hardened individual who will not seek pardon from the heavenly Father. The Hebrew epistle deals with the same idea (Hebrews 6:4-6). Those who turn away from the faith and reject the all-sufficiency of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, make it impossible to renew them to repentance. They find no place for repentance. Like Esau, they find no place for repentance, though seeking it carefully with tears (Hebrews 12:17).

There is the warning against "willful" sin (Hebrews 10:26) for which there remains no more sacrifice for sin.

(This Catholic misconception may explain their erroneous doctrine of the "mass" which allegedly puts Christ Jesus through the suffering on the cross every time a Catholic Priest conducts the mass. That really amounts to a rejection of the all-sufficient, one time for all time, sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. See Hebrews 9:25-26).

The sinner who does not sin "unto death" is the one who will be brought back to acceptance with the Lord by repentance. No matter what the sin, a truly penitent sinner will be fully forgiven. God so completely forgives he promises to never remember the sin again (Heb. 8:12; Psalm 103:12). How could this be true if God still holds the forgiven, who are not fully forgiven, in the punishing fires of purgatory?

We are admonished to convert such a sinner from the error of his ways and in so doing will "save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20). No matter how grievous the sin, the one who will repent can be converted and saved. The distinction made by the Catholics on mortal and venial sins is arbitrary and anti-biblical. All sin brings spiritual death, separation from God (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23). All sins of which true penitents confess and seek forgiveness are fully forgiven.

Indulgences

In 1515-1517, Pope Leo X promoted the practice of selling indulgences. Every intelligent reader of reformation history knows this was one of the immediate causes of the "Reformation." The original purpose of selling indulgences was to enrich the coffers of the "Papal See." Fluery's Ecclesiastical History mentions some who received indulgences on "such easy conditions, that men could hardly care at all for their salvation if they refused to gain them." (From "History of Apostasies," page 140).

Catholics have attempted to define indulgences so as to remove the opprobrium of selling permission to sin. They feel the need to mend fences, condemning Tetzel for doing what he was commissioned to do by their "Holy Father." The basic premise on which indulgences rest, remains about the same. The doctrine of indulgences is closely related to their doctrine of purgatory. Read the following definitions:

"Indulgences, the remission of temporal punishment due to sin after its guilt has been forgiven, which the Church grants from the treasury of the merits of Christ and His saints." (The Catholic Encyclopedia Dictionary, The Gilmary Society, page 478).

The Catholic Church offers a variety of indulgences:

1. For the living.
2. For the dead.
3. Plenary.
4. Partial.
5. A 40 day Indulgence.

Of what benefit are indulgences to the Catholics? The same article says, "The Church offers satisfaction to the souls in purgatory, from her treasury of the merits of Christ, and asks God to apply this satisfaction

to the souls of those in purgatory."

Catholics believe the dead need the prayers, suffrages, works of piety (which includes a donation of money), and the like, in order to have the merits of Christ doled out to them. The only way they can obtain these merits is by the behest of the Catholic Church and, in turn, their request to God that it be dispensed to the dead in "purgatory." Why? Because they are evil? No. Because they are guilty of "mortal sin"? No. Why? Because, even though forgiven, they are still not fully fit for heaven and must still suffer for a time in the fires of "purgatory." Nothing remotely resembling this is in your Bible.

When a rich man died and was in hell (Luke 16) he was tormented in the flame. (Will Catholics say this was "purgatory"?) This man saw a poor beggar, whom he had mistreated in life. The beggar was happily resting in the bosom of Abraham. The rich man wanted someone to go from the state of bliss to warn his brothers on earth not to come to that awful place. (Where else could they go, per the Catholic doctrine of "purgatory"?).

Abraham's response must present an enigma to Catholics wedded to their doctrine of "purgatory." Abraham told the rich man, "there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (verse 26). Dear friend, where you find yourself after death is where you will remain. Notice Abraham said "from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass (from you) to us." There is no passage way from the wicked or the righteous after death. It seems to me there would have to be such a passage way if those in "purgatory" ever get out of it.

. . .and John Tetzel

John Tetzel's actions, according to Mr. Childers, were "out of line." Not with all Catholics, they weren't, Mr. Childers. Pope Leo X never censured Tetzel. He was apparently delighted at the financial success of Tetzel. He was condemned by Cardinal Cajetan and others, but by no means, by all in the Catholic Hierarchy. The Catholic Church accepted the monies gained through Tetzel's sale of indulgences. Did they refund the money to all those who bought them? Those who purchased indulgences for themselves, and their dead, were under the conviction it was a way to have temporal punishment of their sins removed by buying them. Tetzel, though rebuked, was given a Church sanctioned burial at a convent in Leipzig, Germany.

Prayer for the Dead

Mr. Childers suggests several passages that allegedly prove prayers for the dead will alter their ultimate and eternal destiny. One he mentioned is from the Apocrypha. He cites II Maccabees 12:40ff. Mr. Childers says those of the dead were not "necessarily" guilty of idolatry. Notwithstanding the lack of authority in apocryphal writings, this passage clearly shows the dead, for whom prayers were to be offered, had been guilty of idolatry, a mortal (not venial) sin. The passage says it was the reason these idolatrous Jews were slain (vs. 40). It was not simply the possessing amulets and icons of idols, but the practice of idolatry for

which they were killed. It was the Lord who pronounced and executed this death sentence -- "they all blessed the just judgment of the Lord, who had discovered the things that were hidden."

The apocryphal record tells us Judas Maccabeus sent an offering to Jerusalem for the dead. That offering was to make prayers for the dead possible. The conclusion the author of 2 Maccabees comes to is, "It had been superfluous and vain to pray for the dead" (vs. 44). Maccabeus thought it was the right thing to do; God never approved of it.

Mr. Childers says John Tetzel was wrong in selling indulgences. Yet he, and all Catholic apologists, use the case of Judas Maccabeus who sent a huge sum of money to Jerusalem to pay for prayers for the dead. Was Tetzel, in Germany and Switzerland, doing anything different than Judas Maccabeus was in Jerusalem? If the Catholics don't like what John Tetzel did, they should equally condemn Maccabeus. But they justify their practice of praying for the dead in "purgatory" by a passage that says prayers for the dead were paid for with money.

I agree that the sale of indulgences in northern Europe was an abuse of the original Catholic concept. However, both the "Pope" and his advisors were intent on raising money. Therefore they commissioned Tetzel to raise money by offering indulgences. The reaction of the people in the countries where he offered indulgences for money were convinced it was more than abuse, it was outright error.

German Catholic princes adamantly opposed the practice. They met in the Diet at Nuremberg in 1523 and set forth a "Hundred Grievances of the German Nation." Among the grievances were:

- ! No. 5: "How license to sin with impunity is granted for money."
- ! No. 67: "How more money than penitence is extracted from sinners."
- ! No. 91: "How bishops extort money from the concubinage of priests."

Mind you, these were loyal Catholics making this list of grievances. Later, the grievances were more fully stated. In the enlarged edition they charged that those selling indulgences in their land "declare that by means of these purchasable pardons, not only are past and future sins of the living forgiven, but also those of such as have departed this life and are in purgatory of fire, provided only something be counted down. Every one, in proportion to the price he had expended in these wares, promised himself impunity in sinning."

Their grievances went largely unheeded and Tetzel continued selling them. It is undeniably true that Catholics in Germany, at the time of Tetzel's visit there, considered the sale of an indulgence as a guarantee against future sins they might commit.

Dr. D.R. Hagenbach wrote of Tetzel, "He drove into the cities in superb style, amidst the pealing of bells. The Papal indulgence bull was carried before him on a velvet cushion. Solemn processions, bearing crosses and banners, went to meet him and escorted him into the church. Then a red cross, upon which were the pontifical arms, was set up, and this, Tetzel affirmed to be as efficacious as the cross of Christ himself. One of his train even tried to make the multitude believe that he saw the blood of Christ flowing gently down over it. . . . Indulgences were offered upon every condition -- even for future sins. The little couplet of which the indulgence vendors made use is well known. 'When in the chest the coin doth ring, the soul direct in heaven doth spring.' ('Wenn nur das Gelt im Kasten ringt, die Seele gleich den Himmel

springt.')" -- (History of the Reformation in Germany and Switzerland, Volume I, pages 95, 96).

Mr. Childers alleges I urge Mr. Childers to consult another of the Books of the Apocrypha. Read the following from Wisdom of Solomon,

- ! "But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die: and their departure is taken for misery, And their going from us to be utter destruction: but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality" (vss 1-4).

That plainly contradicts the doctrine of "Purgatory." That also contradicts the understanding Catholics have of II Maccabees 12. This is one of many reasons why the Apocrypha have no authority. Which apocryphal book will Mr. Childers accept? Why take Maccabees and not Wisdom? It is my understanding that Jerome, a canonized saint of Catholicism, who was instrumental in producing the Latin Vulgate, rejected all Apocryphal books.

Mr Childers alleges that the Apocrypha "was included in the Bible used by Christ, the apostles, and all Christians without exception until Father Luther and John Calvin threw it out." Mr. Childers does not have his facts correct. The Jews have consistently rejected the apocryphal books as non-canonical. Let Mr. Childers show some reputable and authentic Jewish source that endorses the Apocrypha.

Mr. Childers uses the Jews to prove a belief in purgatory by the Jews. He said, "It is taught in the Scriptures, which will be discussed later. The Jews had a practice called the Qadish, which is a period of prayer for the repose of the souls of the deceased." The fallacy of this is evident. The Jews at one time believed in and practiced worship of Baal. Some of them denied the existence of angels, resurrection or spirits (Acts 23:9). They were wrong. And I believe Mr. Childers is wrong about Qadish.

Professor Israel Shahak, author of " Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years," wrote:

- ! "From the ethical point of view, classical Judaism represents a process of degeneration, which is still going on; and this degeneration into a tribal collection of empty rituals and magic superstitions has very important social and political consequences. For it must be remembered that it is precisely the superstitions of classical Judaism which have the greatest hold on the Jewish masses, rather than those parts of the Bible or even the Talmud which are of real religious and ethical value. (The same can be observed also in other religions which are now undergoing revival.) What is popularly regarded as the most 'holy' and solemn occasion of the Jewish liturgical year, attended even by very many Jews who are otherwise far from religion? It is the Kol Nidrey prayer on the eve of Yom Kippur - a chanting of a particularly absurd and deceptive dispensation by which all private vows made to God in the following year are declared in advance to be null and void. Or, in the area of personal religion, the Qadish prayer, said on days of mourning by sons for their parents in order to elevate their departed souls to paradise - a recitation of an Aramaic text, incomprehensible to the great majority. Quite obviously, the popular regard given to these, the most superstitious parts of the Jewish religion, is not given to its better parts."

Mr. Childers relies on Jewish superstition and a degenerate practice employed by classical Judaism today. I deny that the practice of Qadish indicates God approved of the Catholic concept of "purgatory." Why is it Mr. Childers is quick to cite the Jews as authority from a book all orthodox Jews reject, viz., II Maccabees? Why is it he is quick to cite Jewish superstition and degenerate beliefs to bolster the doctrine of this mythical farce called purgatory? My answer is, he has nothing in the inspired word of God to which he can appeal.

Scriptures Appealed to:

II Timothy 1:16-18. This is Paul's expression of concern for those who had stood with him during his ordeal in Rome. It is a simple prayer for eternal happiness and peace in heaven. There is nothing in this passage to suggest Paul was praying him out of "purgatory." Where is there a prayer for a dead person in this passage? It is not there.

I Corinthians 3. Here Mr. Childers alleges Paul is discussing the fires of "purgatory." Paul said those whose work is proven by fire will receive a reward. But lacking in the assertion is evidence the fires where those of the imaginary "purgatory." Fire is often used in the sense of an ordeal placed on Christians in this life (I Peter 4:12). That is Bible; the assertion it is "purgatory" is fantasy.

The context clearly shows that the point of this passage has to do with exposing a man's work; the passage does not discuss punishing a man or purging him of his sins.

The "workers" are the evangelists, men like Paul and Apollos (v. 6). The "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble" represent those who were converted as a result of the teacher's work and God's increase.

"All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12). Persecution is likened to a "fiery trial" in scripture (I Peter 1:7; 4:12). These "fiery trials" will come upon strong, committed Christians, as well as those whose character and conviction is weak. Those of strong character and conviction will only be purified and strengthened by persecution, but the weak are often "burned up" by these fires.

Paul is not discussing a punitive or purgative fire, he is discussing a fire of testing. In verse 14 he said, "If a man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward? The "man" is the preacher. The "work" refers to those whom this man influenced to become Christians (his converts). This verse teaches that the teacher gets some satisfaction out of knowing that his work was not in vain. I Thessalonians 2:19-20 and Philippians 2:14-16 show that one's converts will be a source of rejoicing to the evangelist in heaven.

Verse 15 and the works which will be "burned up" refers to converts who fell away as a result of temptations and trials. The faithful teacher himself will not lose his salvation, but he does lose his source of rejoicing. This is the same loss that Paul expressed concerns about in Galatians 4:11 and I Thessalonians 3:5. This passage is not dealing with "purgatory" unless one has defined purgatory as the fiery trials and

temptations which come upon the godly while they are still on this earth and in the flesh!

Mr. Childers appeals to Matthew 5:20, 22, and 23-26. The Lord doesn't tell us "lesser sins." There are no "big" and "little" sins. We may look at some sins as more grievous and serious than others, but no matter what the sin is, it pays off in the very same currency -- death (Rom. 6:23). The last passage he cites speaks of paying one's self out of prison, not "purgatory." It is the Lord's illustration of right conduct and reaction to truth, not a subtle way of telling us there is some lost cavern somewhere, filled with the mourning souls of those in torment, waiting for us to pray and pay them out of "purgatory."

In summary, every passage introduced by Mr. Childers, and every passage I have read from Catholic scholars deals with people who were alive. There is nothing in the Bible (Apocrypha excluded) indicating any prayer was ever offered in behalf of the dead.

I urge Mr. Childers to reexamine his faith and return to the Lord's fold. - 2081 Old Scottsville Rd., Alvaton, KY 42122-9717.

Transubstantiation

By Greg Litmer

As I think back to my years in a parochial elementary school, I remember well daily attendance at eight o'clock mass. Of all of the parts of the mass, the most exciting and spiritually uplifting was the canon, the most solemn time during which the consecration of the host took place. To the accompaniment of altar bells, the priest would take the wafer of bread and hold it between his thumb and the first two fingers of each hand, lift it above his head, and proclaim, "*This is my body.*" Then he took the chalice, the cup lined with gold and filled with sacramental wine, raised it above his head and said, "*This is my blood.*" Even before I knew what was actually supposed to be taking place, the canon proved to be a moving time.

I am certain that in the second grade, in preparation for my first communion, I was taught the basics concerning the consecration. However, it was in the later years of elementary school that I learned the specifics - what was taking place, the significance of it, and it's name. The specific belief that was the most intriguing and awe-inspiring was called Transubstantiation. That is what this article is about, Transubstantiation, and the results of my study concerning it away from the influence of devout Roman Catholic teachers.

What is it?

I learned about Transubstantiation from the **Baltimore Catechism**. While the Catechism is not as widely used today, the belief is the same. Thus, we will let the Catechism define it for us. An important point to be made is that Transubstantiation takes place in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. On page 273 of the **Baltimore Catechism** we find:

- ! "The Holy Eucharist is a sacrament and a sacrifice. In the Holy Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine, the Lord Jesus Christ is contained, offered, and received. (a) The whole Christ is really, truly, and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist. We use the words 'really, truly, and substantially' to describe Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist in order to distinguish Our Lord's teaching from that of mere men who falsely teach that the Holy Eucharist is only a sign or figure of Christ, or that He is present only by His power."

The Catechism teaches that our Lord instituted the sacrament of Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper. In answer to the question, "What happened when Our Lord said: 'This is my body...this is my blood?'" on page 276, the Catechism says:

- ! "When Our Lord said, 'This is My body,' the entire substance of the bread was changed into His body; and when He said, 'This is My blood,' the entire substance of the wine was changed into his blood. (a) Christ could not have used clearer, more explicit words than 'This is My body.' He did not say, 'This is a sign of My body,' or 'This represents My body,' but 'This is My body.' Catholics take Christ at His word because He is the omnipotent God. On His word they know that the Holy Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ."

In answer to the question, "Did anything of the bread and wine remain after their substance had been changed into our Lord's body and blood?" we find on page 277:

- ! "After the substance of the bread and wine had been changed into our Lord's body and blood, there remained only the appearances of bread and wine. (a) Because the appearances of bread and wine remain in the Holy Eucharist, we cannot see Christ with our bodily eyes in this sacrament. We do see Him, however, with the eyes of faith. Our bodily eyes, moreover, do not deceive us when they see the appearances of bread and wine, for these appearances really remain after the Consecration of the Mass."

The Catechism teaches that the change of the entire substance into the body and blood of Jesus is called Transubstantiation. One other statement from the Catechism that I want to notice in summarizing this section is found on page 279, where, in answer to the question, "How was our Lord able to change bread and wine into His body and blood?" the **Baltimore Catechism** says,

- ! "Our Lord was able to change bread and wine into His body and blood by His almighty power. (a) God, who created all things from nothing, who fed the five thousand with five loaves, who changed water into wine instantaneously, who raised the dead to life, can change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Although the Holy Eucharist is a great mystery, and consequently beyond human understanding, the principles of sound reason can show that this great gift is not impossible by the power of God."

So then, Transubstantiation is that process whereby the bread and wine of the mass are changed into the real body and blood of Christ. It takes place at the consecration with the words, "This is my body," and "This is my blood," being uttered by the celebrating priest. There is no physical evidence whatsoever that such a change has taken place, since the bread and wine retain their color, taste, weight, shape, and anything else that appears to be senses. It is a marvelous mystery beyond human understanding, and yet it is an integral part of Roman Catholic teaching. To be a Catholic one must believe in Transubstantiation. I, for one, most certainly did.

Unanswered Questions

Since it is a principle of Roman Catholicism that "No proposition can be declared an article of faith unless **perpetual belief** in the church can be affirmed of it" (**The Roman Catholic Church**, John L. McKenzie, S.J., p. 212) and since the **Baltimore Catechism** stated that the Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist (Transubstantiation) at the Last Supper, it stands to reason that the early church must have both believed and practiced it.

Now, with this being true, and it must be or Transubstantiation cannot be an article of faith, why is it that we do not find any inkling of this belief until the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem in the 4th century? Why is it that it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D. that Transubstantiation was declared as an article of faith? Why is it that the Council of Trent saw fit to restate it on Oct. 11, 1551? And why is it that in **The Book of Catholic Quotations**, bearing the Imprimatur of Francis Cardinal Spellman, we find under the heading of "**The Eucharist Sacrifice**" this quote from Justin Martyr's "**Dialogue With Trypho**,"

written in the second century:

- ! "It is quite evident that this prophecy (Isaiah 33, 13-19) also alludes to the bread which our Christ gave us to offer **in remembrance** of the Body which He assumed for the sake of those who believe in Him, for whom He also suffered, and also to the cup which he taught us to offer in the Eucharist, **in commemoration** of His blood"?

It is obvious that the early church, under the direction of the apostles and those who lived very near the time of the apostles, did not believe in nor practice Transubstantiation. It is clear from their own quotation that in the second century the bread was viewed as a remembrance of the body of Christ, and not the body itself. It is equally clear that the wine was viewed as commemorating the blood of Christ, and not as the blood itself. It was almost 1200 years after the establishment of the church before transubstantiation was definitely set forth. Doesn't it seem unlikely that all of those infallible popes over that 1200 year period did not see fit to declare Transubstantiation as an article of faith if they themselves believed and practiced it?

Another question that I believe must be answered arises from one of the quotes in the **Baltimore Catechism**, in which an attempt was made to prove the possibility of Transubstantiation. The Catechism said:

- ! "Our Lord was able to change bread and wine into His body and blood by His almighty power. (a) God, who created all things from nothing, who fed the five thousand with five loaves, who changed water into wine instantaneously, who raised the dead to life, can change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ."

I do not doubt the power of God, but I do doubt the logic of the reasoning of the Catholic authorities. The miracles that they used to prove their point prove far too much. In each case there was substantial evidence that a miracle had taken place. When God created all things from nothing, where there had been nothing there was then all things - real things that could be seen and touched. When five thousand were fed with five loaves, five thousand ate something that was real, that could be chewed and tasted. When they were filled, there was much evidence of the miracle left over. When the water was changed into wine, it did not retain the physical qualities of water, it became wine. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, Lazarus himself was evidence of the miracle. The point is that miracles were faith producing, not faith dependent. When our Lord performed a miracle there was ample evidence that a miracle had taken place. The evidence of Transubstantiation is that nothing has happened. An appeal to faith is not sufficient. God's miracles produced faith, they did not depend on it.

I am aware that many have vehemently opposed Transubstantiation, and some in their zealotry have even called it a form of cannibalism. But that is not the point. If our Lord has instructed us to do something, we are to do it. But our Lord did not teach us the doctrine of Transubstantiation, the early church did not believe or practice it, and it took the Roman Catholic authorities 1200 years to definitely state it. It is another instance of a gradual development of a doctrine in the minds of men which the Roman Catholic authorities presume to present as having been taught by the Lord. While it is tedious reading, allow me to present the theological argument used by Roman Catholic authorities to support **their doctrine**, and you can determine for yourselves if this is from the mind of God or from the wandering imaginations of man. It almost makes you wonder which came first - the doctrine or the reasoning that is supposed to support it.

Theological Gobbledegook

From the book, **The Roman Catholic Faith**, by John L. McKenzie, S.J., and bearing the Imprimatur of Joseph P. O'Brien, S.T.D., Vicar General of Archdiocese of New York, May 14, 1969, p. 148, we find:

- ! "Since the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215), the official word for the sacramental change is transubstantiation, a rather barbarous term both in Latin and English. As the Council defined it, it means that the entire substances of the bread is changed into the substances of the body of Christ, and the entire substance of the wine into the blood of Christ, with only the species of bread and wine remaining. The Latin word species here would normally be translated 'appearances,' but in the cautious language of Roman Catholic theology the Latin word usually goes into English as species, and thus becomes unintelligible to the untrained. **The Catholic assertion is based on the Aristotelian and medieval philosophy of substance and accident, defined in the schools respectively as that which exists in itself (substance) and that which exists in something else (accident).** The bread and wine become substantially something else, but accidentally they unchanged. Thus the body and blood of Christ are not seen, touched, or tasted; no substance is the object of the senses. But what is present is the substance, for only a substance can be present. The body and blood of Christ do not take on the sensible qualities of bread and wine. The body of Christ is neither expanded nor contracted nor moved from place to place; it simply becomes present where the transubstantiation has been effected by the sacramental formula. It is not present in the same manner (called in the schools local presence) as it was present in Galilee, however; it is present as a substance. **To illustrate, my own presence in this office is not due to my substantial reality, but to 'the commensuration of my extension with the extension of the place where I sit.'**"

If this came from the mind of God, why is it necessary for the Catholic assertion to be based on the Aristotelian and medieval philosophy of substance and accident? Truly, this is an example of theological gobbledegook. Since God's word does not teach Transubstantiation, Roman Catholic authorities must turn to theology to make their case.

My friend, if you are a Catholic, ask your priest to prove that Transubstantiation was always believed by the Church. He will not be able to do it.

Transubstantiation - Eating the Lord's Flesh and Drinking His Blood

By Benjamin Franklin

John 6:48, we find the words of the Lord, "I am the bread of life." The lord adds the remark to the Jews, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead." It had power to perpetuate life only for a short time; but he continues, verse 50, "This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die."

It will be noticed that **his flesh did** not come down from heaven, and that bread which came down from heaven is that of which if a man shall eat, he shall not die. Then he follows with the remark, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread" (which came down from heaven) "he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Here he uses the **flesh**, as that which they saw and dealt with in crucifying him, metonymically, or a part for the whole. The Jews, however, understood him to mean his flesh literally, and so does the Romish church, and the Jews inquired, "How can this man give us flesh to eat?" The Lord did not explain the matter to them, but added, verse 53, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you."

They were looking at it in the literal sense, and did not see how they could eat his flesh, or how the eating of it could give life. The doctrine of transubstantiation had not yet been born, and the idea of the bread and wine being changed, in the ceremony of consecration, into the **real flesh** and **blood**, so that they could eat the flesh and drink his blood in the communion, had not yet entered into the minds of men. Nor did our Lord mean any such thing, but **he himself**, who came down from heaven, is that bread of life which if a man shall eat, he shall never die. But the **eating** is not literal any more than the **bread** is literal or the **flesh**. We partake of that bread, or of him who came down from heaven, by hearing of him, believing on him, and being united with him. In becoming his disciples, learning of him and following him in all things, we eat or partake of that bread, or of him who is the way, and the truth and the life.

He proceeds: "He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." See verse 54. He who believes on him, receives him, follows him, loves him and obeys him, in the sense he intended, eats his flesh and drinks his blood; but not in the communion any more than in the other part of his teaching, or other appointments. In coming to Christ, and becoming his disciples, we are made partakers of him, of "the divine nature" and our salvation is in him.

"My flesh is food indeed," says he, "and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him." Following him a little further on, verse 57, he says, "As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eats me, even he shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he who eats this bread shall live forever." See verse 58. The eating is partaking of Christ, the bread that came down from heaven; this is done by faith, in receiving, following and obeying him; doing his commandments, that we may enter by the gates into the city and have a right to the tree of life.

Which Group is the Great Apostasy Predicted in the Bible?

By David J. Riggs

1 Timothy 4:1-3 says, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."

Please notice from the above Scripture that those departing from the faith would forbid marriage and command abstinence from foods. I pose a simple but important question, "Which religious group among us today has in the past forbidden, and at the present time forbids marriage to certain of its clergy?" Similarly, "Which group among us today has in the past commanded (e.g., no meat on Friday), and presently commands its people on various occasions (e.g., the Lenten fast, confessional penitence) to abstain from certain foods?"

Acts 20:28-31 says, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."

Please notice from the above passage that the departure from the faith would arise from the bishops of the church. Paul said to the bishops, "...From among yourselves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves." Thus, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul revealed that the early departure from the faith would have its beginning among the bishops of the church.

God ordained that several bishops were to oversee one local congregation. (See Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Phil. 1:1). The bishops (or elders) were commanded, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind..." (1 Pet. 5:2). Thus, the extent of the oversight of the bishops was "the flock of God which is among you." Anyone who has knowledge of early church history knows that the simple arrangement ordained by God was soon corrupted when evil bishops began their struggle for power.

The bishops of Rome were very aggressive, but it took them several hundred years to reach the zenith of their power. First, there was a departure from a plurality of co-equal elders or bishops in every congregation, to one bishop for each congregation. Then came the diocesan bishop, and later, the five Patriarchs, who were located at Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome. Rome, the old capital, and Constantinople, the new capital, had the advantage over the other Patriarchs, and toward the close of the fourth century, they gained supremacy. About sixty years after "Christianity" was made the state religion by Constantine (then Emperor of Rome), the capital of the Roman Empire was moved from Rome to Constantinople. The bishop of Rome then had opportunity to exercise self-reliance because the Emperor was no longer near, and since the bishop of Constantinople was still being made subservient to the political rulers, it was only natural that Rome would finally triumph.

Please consider these quotes from Catholic sources.

The Council of Chalcedon (415, A.D.) made the following declaration in Canon 28: "The Bishop of New Rome (Constantinople) shall enjoy the same honor as the Bishop of Old Rome, for the former possesses the same privileges." (Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils, Schroeder, p. 125). "During the same century (fourth DJR) Roman supremacy began to be emphasized as a factor of unity." (Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIII, p. 531). Damacus (bishop of Rome, 366-384, A.D.) was the "first to call himself pope." (Lives and Time of the Roman Pontiffs, Vol. I, p. 89-90). Damacus was the first to call himself "pope," and was also the first to appeal to Matthew 16:18 to bolster his claim of ascendancy over all churches. (Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, p. 614). Gregory I, the Great (bishop of Rome 590-604) rejected the title "universal bishop." (Question Box, 1913 Edition, p. 292). Boniface III (bishop of Rome, 607-608) advocated what Gregory I rejected. He said, "The See of Blessed Peter, the Apostle, should be the head of all the churches, and that the title of Universal Bishop belonged exclusive to the Bishop of Rome." (Emperor Phocas for Boniface III, Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. II, p. 606). "He (Theodore I, bishop of Rome, 642-649 DJR) was the first Pope officially styled 'Sovereign Pontiff,' and the last whom the bishops called 'brother.' The pre-eminence of the first See and the extension of the Pontifical authority were becoming more necessary in proportion as the Church spread further her conquests." (Darras, Vol. II, p. 232).

The second chapter of the book of 2 Thessalonians gives another great prediction regarding the "falling away." 2 Thess. 2:3-12 says, "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

The Papacy has already fulfilled the prophecy, for it agrees in all the following points:

1. It has one official man as its head, and the arrogance of its claims are centered in him.
2. That man came with and out of an apostasy, the very kind the apostles describe elsewhere (1 Tim. 4:1-3; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).
3. He exalts himself against all that is called God; e.g., he is addressed by terms (Pope, Supreme Pontiff, Holy Father, etc.) which belong only to God.
4. He sits in the temple of God, e.g., his sphere of dominion is in the church or temple of God.
5. His appearance was hindered by some force in Paul's time (2 Thess. 2:6-7); e.g., when the bishops of Rome began to assert power, they were in conflict with the Roman civil government; however, when the Roman empire collapsed, they quickly gained supremacy.

6. The mystery of iniquity was already working in Paul's day (2 Thess. 2:7) and would continue until the Lord's coming (2 Thess. 2:8).
7. The Lord shall destroy him with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). Only by a continual succession of the men of sin could this be possible.
8. The apostasy would produce fraudulent miracles, signs and wonders; e.g., supposed cures brought about by relics and shrines.
9. The whole system is perfected through people's lack of love for truth (2 Thess. 2:10); e.g., Catholics do not love and respect the Holy Scriptures as the only authority in religion, but along with the Scriptures rely on the Pope and human traditions.

Have we not answered the question, "Which group is the great apostasy predicted in the Bible?" All of the identifying characteristics of the great apostasy perfectly fit the Roman Catholic Church. There is no other group existing today which conforms to all the identifying marks as does the Catholic Church. As shown from 2 Thess. 2:7-9, the falling away would have its beginning in Paul's day and would last until the Lord's second coming. The old Catholic Rheims translation in its footnote on 2 Thess. 2 suggests that Martin Luther is the "man of sin." To the contrary, it cannot be Martin Luther because Luther's teaching did not begin in Paul's day.

In closing, I beg of you, Catholic friends, to please ask yourself, "Am I a member of the great falling away predicted in the Bible; or am I a member of the New Testament church revealed therein?" Also, please ask, "Am I following the man of sin of the great apostasy; or am I following Christ?" We hope and pray that all people everywhere will turn from the apostasy and become simple New Testament Christians, followers of Christ and none other, members of Christ's church, and nothing else.

Why I Left the Catholic Church

By David J. Riggs

Following are my notes on a sermon that I preached shortly after I was converted from the Catholic Church back in 1962. It was the first sermon that I preached.

Introduction:

In this lesson I want to state some of the reasons I left the Catholic Church. I do not wish to state any of the personal experiences I had as result of leaving. I will mention, though, that I came from a large, devout Catholic family of twelve children. I attended Trinity High School in Louisville, Kentucky. At the time of my intense Scriptural study, I had two brothers who were enrolled in Catholic seminaries studying to be priests. I also want to state I did not leave the Catholic Church because of some evil that I had done or that was done to me. I left the Catholic Church because I came to believe that it was contrary to the Bible. This I will endeavor to show in this study.

The first reason I left is because the Catholics do not have the right attitude toward the truth.

To illustrate what I mean by this, I will explain the difference in the two sides. Those with the right attitude toward the truth are always willing to test what they teach with others. They invite those of opposite views to work together for truth and unity. They appreciate when those who differ with them point out where they think they are wrong. They have everything thoroughly tested, studying arguments both for and against, looking at both sides of the question.

Those with the wrong attitude toward the truth are not willing to test what they teach in fair and open discussion, privately or publicly. They do not invite others to point out where they think they are wrong, and do not appreciate when others try to do so. They won't allow their members to hear both sides of an issue, and especially they don't want them to examine opposing arguments.

Hopefully, one can now understand what I mean when I said the Catholics do not have the right attitude toward the truth. Catholics are not allowed, and especially are not encouraged to hear both sides regarding truth and error. They are not to read books which differ from their doctrine. Thus, they are encouraged by the clergy to be closed minded to anything which differs from Catholicism. We ask, "Why don't Catholic officials encourage their members to examine opposing Scriptural teaching?" False teachers have learned that when truth and error are examined side by side, some begin to see the truth. False teachers are afraid of being exposed and of losing their members.

The next reason I left is because the Bible only is the all sufficient guide to salvation, but the Catholic Church teaches that it is not.

The Catholic **Catechism For Adults** on page 52 says, "Can you learn to save your soul just by reading the Bible? No, because certain things in the Bible can be misunderstood, and because the Bible does not have everything God taught." Notice that the first part of their answer to "Can you learn to save your soul just by reading the Bible?" is, "No..." However, their own translations of the Bible teaches the opposite. All Scriptural quotations that I will be giving are from Catholic translations. 2 Tim. 3:15-17 says, "And because from thy infancy thou hast known the holy scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation, by faith which is Christ Jesus. All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." Thus, the apostle Paul by the inspiration of God, says to Timothy "thou hast known the holy scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation" and make you "perfect, furnished to every good work."

Rom. 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and to the Greek. James 1:21 says, "...With meekness receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save you souls." Consequently, the word contained in the Bible is able to save our souls.

The next part of the answer in the Catechism to the question, "Can you learn to save your soul just by the Bible?" is, "No, because certain things in the Bible can be misunderstood..." They are implying that the Bible cannot be understood. John A. O'Brien, the Catholic author of the book, "**The Faith of Millions**," is much more expressive when he says on page 152, "The Bible is not a clear and intelligible guide to all..." The book, "**The Faith of Millions**" was given to me before my conversion by my older brother Norman who was at the time a student at St. Meinrad Seminary, St. Meinrad, Indiana.

The apostle Paul said we can understand what he wrote. "If yet, you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me towards you: how that, according to revelation, the mystery has been made known to me, as I have written above in few words; as you reading, may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:2-4). Paul said the mystery had been made know to him by the revelation of God. He then showed that he was writing it e.g., "as I have written above in few words" (in the chapters prior to this) and "as you reading, may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." In other words, when we read what he wrote, we can understand what he understood. Paul also said, "For we write nothing to you that you do not read and understand" (2 Cor. 1:13) and "Therefore do not become foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Thus, the inspired writers taught that we most certainly can understand the Scriptures.

The last part of the answer given in the Catechism to the question, "Can you learn to save your soul just by reading the Bible?" was "No...because the Bible does not have everything God taught." **The Faith of Millions**, on pages 153-154 says, "The Bible does not contain all the teaching of the Christian religion, nor does it formulate all the duties of its members." The Scriptures contain everything that is necessary to equip the man of God for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). There is not a solitary good work that the Christian can do which is not provided in the Scriptures. The Scriptural proof they give for the Bible not containing everything God taught, is John 20:30. It says, "Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of his disciples,

which are not written in this book." (See **Catechism For Adults**, p. 10).

In John 20:30, John simply said that Jesus did many other signs (miracles) which he did record. Notice, though, what John says in the next verse, "...But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." Thus, the apostle clearly shows that he wrote sufficient things to produce the faith which brings life in the name of Jesus. Life in the name of Jesus refers to eternal life and it is obtained by belief in the things written by the inspired writers.

We freely admit that the Scriptures do not contain everything Jesus did. John said, "There are, however, many other things that Jesus did; but if every one of these would be written, not even the world itself, I think, could hold the books that would have to be written." (John 21:25). Although we do not have everything Jesus did, we do have every **necessary** thing. We have enough to give us life in His name.

Catholic officials follow up their claim (that we cannot understand the Bible) by stating that one can get the true meaning only from the Catholic Church. The **Catechism For Adults** on page 10 says, "How can you get the true meaning of the Bible? You can get it only from God's official interpreter, the Catholic Church." The Catholics have no passages which mention an official interpreter and, thus, they try to support their claim through human logic and reasoning. Anytime men do such, it amounts to nothing more than human philosophy rather than Scriptural proof. The Bible says, "Let God be true, but every man a liar..." (Rom. 3:4). It also warns, "See to it that no one deceives you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to human traditions, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ." (Col. 2:8).

The doctrine of the "infallible interpreter" implies that God did not make Himself clear. It implies that God gave us a revelation that still needs revealing. Did God fail in His attempt to give man a revelation? Do the Catholic officials want us to believe they can express God's will more clearly than God Himself? We believe that God made the mind of man and is fully capable of addressing man in words which man can understand.

The third reason I left is because Christ did not make his church infallible as the Catholic Church teaches.

The Catholic writers try to teach that the church could never go into error and is preserved from error. The **Catechism For Adults** on page 56 says, "Why can't the Catholic Church ever teach error? Because Jesus promised to be always with His Church to protect it from error." The book, "**My Catholic Faith**" which is based heavily on materials from the Baltimore Catechism, was given to me by my father not long after I was converted. I think his intentions were that somehow it would cause me to return to the Catholic Church. It says on page 144, "Jesus Christ promised to preserve the Church from error." On page 145, it says, "Jesus Christ commanded all men to listen to and obey the Church, under pain of damnation. If His Church can teach error then He is responsible for the error, by commanding all to obey." On page 54 the **Catechism For Adults** says, "Does everyone have to obey the Catholic Church? Yes, because she alone has the authority of Jesus to rule and to teach." It is easy to see that Catholics have the authority in the

wrong place. The authority is not in the body, but in the Head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The ruling is not in the kingdom, but in the King (Heb. 7:1-2; Rev. 1:5-6). The authority is not in the church, but in Christ (Matt. 28:18; 1 Pet. 3:22). The church is not the Savior, but simply the body of the saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:22-24).

There are many passages in the New Testament which reveal that the church would not be preserved from error. Acts 20:17, 28-30; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:3-11. We see from these passages that there was to come a great falling away from the truth. In Acts chapter twenty we learn that perverse things would come from the bishops of the church. Peter said (2 Pet. 2) that false teachers would arise among you (working from within) and there would be **many** who would follow them. Paul tell us (2 Thess. 2) that the apostasy was already underway, "for the mystery of iniquity is already at work..." (Verse 7). It started in Paul's day and was to continue until the second coming of Christ. He added, "...Whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth and will destroy with the brightness of his coming." (Verse 8).

We cannot harmonize that which the inspired apostles said (there shall arise false teachers among you) with that which the Catholic writers say (shall be preserved from error). Furthermore, we call your attention to the fact that the characteristics of the departing group are identical with those of the Catholic Church. Everyone knows that the Catholic Church has forbidden its people to eat meat on Friday and at the present it forbids some from marriage. Also, the only way for the wicked one to last from Paul's day to the second coming of Christ is to have a continual succession. It could not be some wicked person of the past because he will not be here for the Lord to slay when He comes. Furthermore, it could not be ones in the future because their iniquity would not have started in Paul's day. It must, therefore, be a continual succession from the beginning until now. The Catholic Church is the only group which perfectly fits the apostles' description of the great apostasy.

The seven short epistles to seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation reveal the relationship the church sustains to Christ (See Rev. chapters 2 and 3; see especially 2:1-5, 12-14, 18-20; 3:1-3, 14-15). Those verses plainly reveal that when a church continues in Christ's word, it keeps its identity as His church, but when it fails to abide in His word, it is not longer regarded as His church. Also, they reveal that Christ did not establish His church as one that could never fall into error, because some of those churches went into error. Someone might say that the passages in Revelation referred to the various parishes or congregations rather than the whole church. It is true that the verses were speaking of local churches; nevertheless, the same principle that applied to them relates to the whole church. The Lord does not have a rule for one congregation which is not equally applicable to all. If one church is rejected for embracing error, all others who likewise embrace error are rejected. The early churches had to earnestly contend for the faith, and to continually be on guard against error arising from within. The doctrine of an "infallible church" causes the Catholic Church to fail in this. The Catholic Church is a church which neither recognizes nor corrects its errors.

A fourth reason I left was because Christ did not make Peter a Pope.

In the books of men, the following titles are commonly used with reference to a man: "Pope," "Holy Father,"

"Vicar of Christ," "Sovereign Pontiff." All of these are titles that rightly belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God the Father. There is not a single instance in the Scriptures where any of the above titles are applied to a man. The term, "Holy Father" is used only once in the entire Bible, and it is used by Jesus in addressing God the Father. (John 17:11). Among the above titles is the bold assertion that the Pope is the "Vicar of Christ." A "vicar" is "One serving as a substitute or agent; one authorized to perform the functions of another in higher office." (Webster). When one searches the Bible from cover to cover, he finds only one passage which gives an indication of a vicar of Christ or God. It is 2 Thess. 2:3-4 and is worded as follows: "Let no one deceive you in any way, for the day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and is exalted above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God and gives himself out as if he were God."

Some religionists today advocate that man is saved by faith only. However, there is only one passage in the entire Bible that has the words "faith" and "only" together and it says, "not by faith only" (James 2:24). The Catholics today speak of the Pope as vicar, taking the place of God (Christ Himself is God, Matt. 1:23; John 1:1), yet there is only one passage in the entire Bible which speaks of a man doing such and it calls him "the man of sin."

James Cardinal Gibbons, a Catholic Archbishop said, "Jesus our Lord, founded but one Church, which He was pleased to build on Peter. Therefore, any church that does not recognize Peter as its foundation stone is not the Church of Christ, and therefore cannot stand, for it is not the work of God." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 82). The apostle Paul said, "For other foundation no one can lay, but that which has been laid, which is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 3:11). There is no other foundation but Christ! Therefore, any church which does not recognize Christ alone as the foundation stone cannot be the church of Christ.

Catholic writers often speak of "the primacy of Peter" and "the primacy of the Pope." However, Col. 1:18, speaking of Christ, says, "And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he may hold the primacy..." Thus, with reference to the authority in the church, the Lord Jesus Christ holds the primacy in **all things**. This leaves nothing for the Pope!

Catholics claim that the Pope is the visible head of the church. The Catholic book **Answer Wisely**, by Martin J. Scott says on p. 49, "The pope, therefore, as vicar of Christ, is the visible head of Christ's kingdom on earth, the Church, of which Christ Himself is the invisible head." The book **Father Smith Instructs Jackson**, by John F. Noll and Lester J. Fallon, on page 42 says, "According to the will of Christ, all its members profess the same faith, have the same worship and Sacraments, and are united under the one and same visible head, the Pope." Catholic officials always use the word "visible" no doubt thinking that it removes the thought of the Pope standing in opposition to the headship of Christ, and removes the apparent problem of having a church with two heads. Nonetheless, the Scriptures nowhere teach the idea of a visible and invisible head. Jesus said, "All authority **in heaven and on earth** has been given to me." (Matt. 28:18; Emp. mine D.R.). Luke 17:20-21 says, "And on being asked by the Pharisees, 'When is the kingdom of God coming?' he answered and said to them, The kingdom of God comes unawares. Neither will they say, 'Behold, here it is,' or 'Behold, there it is.' For behold the kingdom of God is within you." The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom and therefore needs only a spiritual head or king.

Eph. 5:23-25 shows that Christ is the only head of the church. "Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord; because a husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church, being himself savior of the body. But just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things." Consequently, the wife is subject to her husband as the church is to Christ. Just as the wife is subject to only one head--her husband, the church is subject to only one head--Christ. Just as the husband does not send a substitute to rule over his wife, Christ does not authorize a substitute to rule over His bride, the church.

Catholics often use the expression, "One fold and one shepherd" to sustain the doctrine of the papacy. (See **Catechism For Adults**, p. 59). They teach that the "one shepherd" is the Pope and the "one fold" represents the Catholic Church. Hear what Jesus said about it: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep...I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." (John 10:11, 14-16). Jesus is that one good shepherd. If one can understand that one and one equals two, he can understand this. If one is subject to Christ as the one shepherd--that's one. If one is subject to the Pope as the one Shepherd--that's two!

The church is often compared to the human body in the Scriptures. The members of the church are represented as the various parts of the body. Christ is always said to be the head. (See 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16). Our question is: "What part of the body is the Pope?" Also, "How does one get the idea of a sub-head into the body?"

One of the greatest arguments against the primacy of Peter is the fact that the apostles had an argument among themselves as to which of them should be the greatest. Luke 22:24-26 says, "Now there arose a dispute among them, which of them was reputed to be the greatest. But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they who exercise authority over them are called Benefactors. But not so with you. On the contrary, let him who is greatest among you become as the youngest, and him who is chief as the servant.'" The very fact that the apostles had an argument among themselves shows they did not understand that Peter was to be prince. Also, the occasion of the argument was the night of the betrayal--the last night of the Lord's earthly ministry--and yet the apostles still did not understand that Christ had given Peter a position of primacy. The Lord settled the argument, not by stating that He had already made Peter head, but by declaring that the Gentiles have their heads, "But not so with you." Thus, Jesus very plainly taught that no one would occupy any such place as a Benefactor (or Pope) to exercise authority over the others.

Conclusion:

There are other reasons why I left the Catholic Church. I have simply tried to list some of the ones that made the greatest impression on me at the time of my conversion. I hope and pray that these things will be of some benefit to those who are making an honest inquiry regarding truth. I beseech and invite all my Catholic friends and relatives to examine these things in the light of God's holy Word. May God be with you in your endeavors to serve Him.

Why Oppose the Bible?

By David J. Riggs

The reason Catholics oppose the Bible is because it opposes them. Following is a list of twenty-two passages which condemn various teaching and practices of the Catholic Church.

1. Exodus 20:4-5 (Images).
2. Ezekiel 18:20 (Original sin).
3. Matthew 20:20-28 (Hierarchy).
4. Matthew 23:5-6 (Clerical dress).
5. Matthew 23:9 ("Father").
6. Matthew 28:19 (Infant baptism).
7. John 17:11 (Addresses only God as "Holy Father").
8. Mark 7:8,13 (Tradition).
9. Luke 11:27-28 (Adoration of Mary).
10. Luke 16:26 (Purgatory).
11. Luke 22:24-27 (Primacy of Peter).
12. Romans 6:4 (Pouring).
13. 1 Corinthians 1:2 ("Saints").
14. Galatians 4:9-11 (Special days).
15. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 (Pope has place of God).
16. 1 Timothy 2:5 (Many Mediators).
17. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (Unmarried bishops).
18. 1 Timothy 4:3 (Forbid marriage).
19. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (Many authorities).
20. Hebrews 8:12 (Indulgences).
21. James 5:16 (Confess to priest).
22. 1 Pet. 2:5,9 ("Priesthood").

No religious institution on earth has as much to fear about its members reading the Bible as the Catholic Church. When Catholics study the Bible they learn that in order to please God, they must discard the many false doctrines which their church has accumulated over the centuries. Following is an excerpt from an address given by the Cardinals to Pope Pius III, and is preserved in the National Library in Paris, Folio No. 1068, Vol. 2, pp. 650-651:

- ! "Of all the advice that we can offer your holiness we must open your eyes well and use all possible force in the matter, namely to permit the reading of the gospel as little as possible in all the countries under your jurisdiction. Let the very little part of the gospel suffice which is usually read in mass, and let no one be permitted to read more. So long as people will be content with the small amount, your interest will prosper; but as soon as the people want to read more, your interest will fail. The Bible is a book, which more than any other, has raised against us the tumults and tempests by which we have almost perished. In fact, if one compares the teaching of the Bible with what takes place in our churches, he will soon find discord, and will realize that our teachings are often different from the Bible, and oftener still, contrary to it."