

Catholicism

There are many Protestants who view Catholicism with favor and respect, believing that it's simply another type of Christianity. The reality is that Catholicism is an *entirely different religion*. Its view of Jesus, salvation, and the Bible are completely different from what Protestants believe. Catholicism is much more than simply a different way of doing things! Its teachings are as foreign to genuine Christianity as the teachings of Islam and Buddhism.

This document examines some of the heretical teachings of Catholicism. Since there's a great deal to cover I've divided this paper into several parts. The first two parts focus on what the Catholic Church teaches about salvation and doctrine. The final part focuses on the history of the Catholic Church.

It's my hope that after reading this document you'll have a much better understanding of Catholicism and will see how different it really is from what the Bible teaches.

Table of Contents

Catholicism.....	1
Part 1: Doctrines of Salvation.....	4
1. Salvation by Works.....	4
2. Salvation by Sacraments.....	7
3. Salvation by the Catholic Church.....	11
4. Purification by Purgatory.....	13
5. Forgiveness by Indulgences.....	15
6. Forgiveness by Penance.....	16
7. The Catholic Defense.....	18
8. Conclusion.....	22
Part 2: Claims of the Catholic Church.....	24
Catholic Claim #1: The church is intended to be one body, one mind, and one divine institution.....	24
Catholic Claim #2: There is one church, one standard of faith, one gospel.....	30
Catholic Claim #3: There is one standard of faith....	31
Catholic Claim #4: The church was given divine protection.....	38
Catholic Claim #5: The office of the pope.....	44
Catholic Claim #6: Apostolic Succession.....	47
Catholic Claim #7: Schism is a sin.....	49
Catholic Question #1: How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God?.....	50
Catholic Question #2: Does the Bible teach “sola scriptura”?.....	54
Catholic Question #3: Is God's revelation restricted to the written word?.....	55
Catholic Question #4: Does the Holy Spirit lead people to the correct interpretation?.....	61
Catholic Question #5: What are the non-essentials? 64	
Catholic Question #6: What is the canon of the Bible?	66

Catholic Question #7: Is the Bible supposed to be the principle means of transmitting the faith?.....	68
Catholic Question #8: Does God require people to be literate?.....	70
Catholic Question #9: Is there really an invisible church?.....	74
Catholic Question #10: Didn't the church fathers teach Catholicism?.....	75
Summary.....	76
Part 2: A History of Catholic Persecution.....	82
Persecutions During The First Millennium.....	82
Persecutions During 1000 - 1500.....	84
Persecutions During 1500 - 1900.....	95
Persecutions During the 20th Century.....	111
In Conclusion.....	115
Appendix A: The Spanish Inquisition.....	117

Part 1: Doctrines of Salvation

This section covers what the Catholic Church teaches about salvation. I do not claim that every single Catholic believes all of these points, but I *do* claim they represent the official position of Catholicism. There are many more points that I could have mentioned (mass, Mary, celibacy, statues, praying to the dead, etc.) but since space is limited I chose to focus on these core areas.

1. Salvation by Works

The Catholic Church firmly *rejects* the idea of salvation by grace alone and teaches salvation by works. I first discovered this while reading the Council of Trent, a document prepared by a council held from 1545-1563 and reaffirmed by Vatican II in the 1960's. It says the following:

SIXTH SESSION, CANONS CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION: "If anyone says that justifying faith is ***nothing else than confidence in divine mercy***, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, ***LET HIM BE ANATHEMA***" (Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 12).

SIXTH SESSION, CANONS CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION: "If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase,

LET HIM BE ANATHEMA" (Canons
Concerning Justification, Canon 24).

One could not ask for a clearer denial of salvation by grace alone¹. The Catholic Church condemns everyone who believes that salvation is “nothing else than confidence in divine mercy” and further condemns anyone who believes that good works are merely the *fruit* of salvation instead of their *cause*². Those who think that believing in Jesus is all that it takes to be saved – that no good deeds on our part can add to or take away from our salvation – are condemned by the Catholic Church as heretics who are bound for hell³.

This stands in stark contrast with the teachings of the Bible:

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ***Not of works***, lest any man should boast."

Titus 3:5: "***Not by works of righteousness*** which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

¹ Or salvation by faith alone, which is what “confidence in divine mercy” is.

² The book of James teaches that works are a sign of living faith. It does not teach that works are the cause of our faith or that the works are required to preserve our salvation.

³ Such people were burned at the stake by the thousands during the Middle Ages. (Part 2 of this document will discuss this in greater detail.)

Romans 3:28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith *without the deeds of the law.*"

There are many more Scriptures that I could quote, but the point is clear. Those who believe that "man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law", as it says in Romans 3:28, are condemned by the Catholic Church, which teaches that many good deeds are required in order to merit salvation⁴. However, this idea of "faith alone" is exactly what the Bible teaches!

This alone should be enough to make it clear that the Catholic Church isn't a Christian church because God strongly condemns the doctrine of salvation by works. Galatians 3:1-7 says this:

Galatians 3:1-7: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that

⁴ Deeds such as baptism, avoiding mortal sins, penance, the sacraments, and being a member of the Catholic Church.

they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."

Galatians 2:21: "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for ***if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.***"

God condemns the Catholic idea that we're made perfect by "good deeds" in the strongest possible terms. This is more than heresy; it's another gospel entirely. You can't be saved by a works gospel!

I've heard Catholics claim that they believe in salvation by grace and then define grace as the ability to keep the law *so they can perform all the good works that God requires them to do in order to be saved*⁵. This is a horrible perversion of the gospel. Anyone who believes that their good works are going to purchase them entrance into Heaven isn't a Christian! He's a lost sinner on the road to Hell. Believing that your good works are going to purchase your salvation is *completely different* from believing that Christ's life and atoning death on the cross has already purchased your salvation.

2. Salvation by Sacraments

The differences go even further. Catholicism teaches that baptism is required for salvation:

SEVENTH SESSION, CANONS ON BAPTISM: "If anyone says that baptism is

⁵ Catholicism teaches that salvation is a process, not a one-time event. The reason it's a process is because salvation requires an entire lifetime of good works to achieve, followed by time spent suffering in purgatory where you spend a very long time being tormented for your sins. Only after all of this is one finally saved and able to enter Heaven. The idea of "being saved" is a Protestant idea, and the Catholic Church condemns it.

optional, that is, *not necessary for salvation, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA*" (Council of Trent, Canons on Baptism, Canon 5).

"Baptism not only *purifies from all sins*⁶, but also makes the neophyte 'a new creature,' an adopted son of God, who has become a 'partaker of the divine nature,' member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 322, #1265)

"By Baptism *all sins are forgiven*, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 321, #1263. Also see pg. 257, #985)

The Catholic Church also teaches that the sacraments are required as well:

"The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 292, #1129)

"There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and

⁶ Thus flatly contradicting the Bible: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (*not the putting away of the filth of the flesh*, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is a "figure" (a symbol) – an act of obedience to God and a sign that we've been saved. The Bible denies that it "purifies us from all sins".

Matrimony." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 289, #1113)

These statements make it clear that the Catholic Church does *not* believe that Christ's death on the cross was sufficient to save anyone. In order to be saved you must add many things to Christ's death – things such as good works, baptism, sacraments, and so forth. Catholicism teaches that faith in Christ is not enough to be saved.

The Bible, however, has a very different view:

Romans 10:8-10: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, ***thou shalt be saved***. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Acts 16:31: "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ***thou shalt be saved***, and thy house."

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ***Not of works***, lest any man should boast."

The Bible teaches that if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you *will* be saved. There's no "might be saved" or "could be saved" or "will be saved as long as you don't commit any mortal sins". It's a plain and firm statement that's repeated over and over again in the Scriptures.

Yet Catholicism teaches that it's a *sin* to believe that you've already been saved⁷ – the sin of presumption! This is what the Catholic Encyclopedia says about it:

“Presumption is here considered as a vice opposed to the theological virtue of hope. It may also be regarded as a product of pride. It may be defined as the condition of a soul which, because of a badly regulated reliance on God's mercy and power, ***hopes for salvation without doing anything to deserve it***⁸, or for pardon of his sins without repenting of them.”

I can't imagine believing that you can possibly *deserve* to be saved! That, though, is what Catholicism is all about: building up enough credits with God in order to merit entrance to Heaven (in other words, “deserving it”). Yet the Bible is clear that you can *know* that you're saved. Salvation is a one-time event, not a process:

1 John 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may ***know that ye have eternal life***, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son ***hath everlasting life***: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

⁷ Catholicism teaches that salvation is a process, not a one-time event.

⁸ In other words, having not yet lived a life of “good works”.

John 5:24: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, ***hath everlasting life***, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

John 6:47: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me ***hath everlasting life***."

John 6:40: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and ***believeth on him***, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Notice how the Bible says that we *have* eternal life. Salvation isn't something that I'm looking forward to earning at some future date, if I do all the right things. It's something I *already have* because Christ purchased it for me on the cross with His own blood! The Bible contradicts the Catholic idea that salvation is a long process that requires good works. That teaching isn't Biblical and is an entirely different gospel.

3. Salvation by the Catholic Church

Despite what some people claim, Catholicism teaches that salvation can *only* be obtained through the Catholic Church:

"The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism explains: 'For it is through ***Christ's Catholic Church alone***, which is the universal help toward salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can

be obtained.'" (1994 Catholic Catechism, Pg. 215, #816)

"...all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the [Catholic] Church which is his Body: Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that ***the Church***, a pilgrim now on earth, is ***necessary for salvation...***" (1994 Catholic Catechism, Pg. 224, #846)

Nowhere in the Bible can one find the idea that membership in *any* church is required for salvation. Salvation is accomplished by faith in Jesus Christ, not through church membership:

Romans 10:13: "For whosoever shall ***call upon the name of the Lord*** shall be saved."

John 3:36: "He that ***believeth on the Son*** hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

This doctrine springs from the Catholic belief that the sacraments are required for salvation. Since only the Catholic Church has the sacraments which are necessary for salvation, it's impossible to be saved apart from the Catholic Church. In order to be saved you must be a member of the Catholic Church, participate in the sacraments, be baptized into the Catholic Church, avoid mortal sins, and suffer in purgatory. That's very different from "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved".

4. Purification by Purgatory

Catholicism denies that Christ suffered the full punishment for our sins on the cross. It teaches that we must still suffer for them in a place called purgatory:

"All who die in God's grace and friendship⁹, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to **achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.**" (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 2658, #1030)

"The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect..." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 268-269, #1031)

"The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent¹⁰." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 268-269, #1031)

The concept of purgatory can't be found in the Bible. It has no Scriptural support and yet it's taught as a doctrine by the Catholic Church.

Purgatory is based on the idea that Christ's death on the cross didn't purify me from my sins. I must still suffer for them myself before I am acceptable to God and holy enough to enter Heaven, and purgatory is where that suffering happens.

⁹ Note that it says "all who die in God's grace" – meaning, of course, all those who die having led a life of good works.

¹⁰ This idea is found nowhere in the Bible. The Catholic Encyclopedia even comes out and says that there's no Scriptural basis for this.

Catholicism teaches that Christ's death accomplished almost nothing. It doesn't save us (because without our good deeds we will still go to Hell), it doesn't guarantee us salvation (because one mortal sin causes us to lose our salvation), and it doesn't free us from the punishment of our sins (because we must still suffer for them in Purgatory).

What the Bible has to say about all this is very different:

Romans 5:9: "Much more then, being now *justified by his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

Romans 3:24: "Being *justified freely* by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"

1 Corinthians 6:11: "And such were some of you: but ye are *washed*, but ye are *sanctified*, but ye are *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus..."

Hebrews 9:26: "...but now once in the end of the world hath he (Jesus) appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself."

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

The Bible teaches that I *am* washed, sanctified, and justified. Not "will be" but "am"! Christ paid it all and there's nothing left for me to do. As the old hymn said,

“nothing in my hand I bring / simply to Thy cross I cling.” Purgatory is yet another attempt at a works gospel. Catholicism teaches that *I* must earn my way to Heaven, *I* must do things to deserve salvation, and *I* must take the punishment for my sins. However, Jesus Himself was clear that when we die we'll immediately go to be with Him – not suffer in a place called purgatory:

Luke 23:43: “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, *Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*”

Philippians 1:22: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and *to be with Christ*; which is far better:"

5. Forgiveness by Indulgences

Indulgences were one of the major causes of the Reformation. Martin Luther's attempt to rid the Catholic Church of indulgences failed because they're still part of official Catholic doctrine. The dictionary defines them as follows: “A partial remission of the temporal punishment, esp. purgatorial atonement, that is still due for a sin or sins after absolution.”

The Catholic Catechism explains them this way:

"Through indulgences the faithful can obtain the remission of temporal punishment resulting from sin for themselves and also for the souls in Purgatory." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 374, #1498)

"Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 371-372, #1479)

The Catholic Church teaches that you can help the dead escape purgatory by obtaining indulgences from the Church! This is more salvation-by-works. Not only can your good works help forgive your sins, but they can also help forgive the sins *of the dead*.

This is very different from the simplicity of the gospel:

Ephesians 2:8, 10: "*For by grace are ye saved through faith*; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

The Bible does *not* support the idea that you can purchase forgiveness for sins by giving money to the church. It also doesn't teach that you can purchase forgiveness *for people who've already died*. Both of those ideas are deeply heretical.

6. Forgiveness by Penance

The Catholic Church teaches that asking God to forgive our sins isn't enough. If we want to be forgiven then we must also perform penance:

"Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, ***the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends*** for the sin: he must 'make satisfaction for' or 'expiate' his sins. This satisfaction is also called 'penance.'" (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 366, #1459)

"The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken ***on behalf of the dead:***" (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 269, #1032)

The sinner must “make amends” through penance if they wish to return to “full spiritual health”. This is talking about restoring our relationship with *God*, not our relationship with other people. Simply asking God for forgiveness is *not enough!*

This is another attempt at salvation-by-works. If you *really* want to be forgiven then you’ve got to do something to *earn* God’s favor. You can even perform penance *for the dead* to earn God’s favor for them!

This stands in stark contrast to the Word of God:

Hebrews 10:17-18: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is ***no more offering for sin.***"

Psalm 86:5: "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."

Forgiveness is a free gift from God that's purchased by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, which He shed for us on the cross. It can't be earned or deserved! If you're trying to bribe God into forgiving your sins then you have lost your way. Trying to earn forgiveness and trying to earn salvation are the *same thing*. Both of those roads lead straight to Hell.

7. The Catholic Defense

I've heard Catholics claim that they don't need Scripture to support their doctrines¹¹ because there are sources of doctrine outside the Bible. Catholicism teaches that the Pope and church tradition can also provide truth, and Catholics often base their doctrines on sources of truth which are outside the Bible. (For instance, the sinlessness of Mary was made doctrine by a Papal decree).

However, God made it *very* clear that the Bible is all we need. There is *no room to add to it*:

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God *may be perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Proverbs 30:5-6: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put

¹¹ In other words, they admit that their doctrines have no Scriptural basis, which is my whole point!

their trust in him. ***Add thou not unto his words***, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

These verses sum it up well. The Bible is given to us so that we may be furnished unto *all* good works – not just some, but *all*. If the Bible is all-sufficient then we don’t need the Book of Mormon or the decrees of the Pope to tell us what Christianity really is!

There’s also no evidence in Scripture to support the office of the Pope or papal infallibility. Catholicism bases its entire church on a single passage in Matthew 16. They claim that Jesus made Peter the first Pope:

Matthew 16:18-19: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

The Catholic Church claims that the rock who Jesus was referring to was Peter, on the grounds that the word “Peter” means “rock”. That’s actually *not* the case. The word “Peter” refers to a small pebble, which is very different from the massive foundation stone that Jesus was referring to! Jesus was actually drawing a contrast here. He was telling Peter that although Peter was just a small stone, Jesus was going to build His church upon a solid Rock.

The Bible teaches that this rock is *Christ*:

1 Corinthians 10:4: "... for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and *that Rock was Christ.*"

Ephesians 2:20: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being *the chief corner stone;*"

Psalms 118:22: "The stone which the builders refused is become the *head stone of the corner.*"

Acts 4:10-11: "...by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become *the head of the corner.*"

1 Peter 2:7: "... the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made *the head of the corner,*"¹²

Psalms 118:22: "For who is God save the LORD? or *who is a rock save our God?*"

Deuteronomy 32:3-4: "... I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. *He is the Rock...*"

Jesus is the Rock – not Peter! Nowhere does the Bible mention a Pope. Nowhere does Peter act like a

¹² Note that not even Peter claims that Peter was the rock!

Pope¹³. Nowhere does the Bible give the Pope the authority to issue infallible decrees that overrule the Bible¹⁴.

It's also blasphemous to claim that the Pope is the head of *the* church¹⁵, because only Christ has that position:

Colossians 1:18: "And *he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church*: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he (Christ) might have the preeminence."

Ephesians 1:22: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him (*Christ*) *to be the head over all things* to the church,"

Ephesians 4:15: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is *the head, even Christ*:"

Catholicism teaches that the Pope is the *supreme* pastor and teacher of *all* Christians:

"The Roman Pontiff... as *supreme* pastor and teacher of *all the faithful*..." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 235, #891)

Yet the Bible says that the *Holy Spirit* is the "supreme pastor and teacher":

¹³ In fact, there's no Biblical evidence that Peter was ever in Rome at all. When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans he greeted many people who were in Rome, but Peter wasn't one of them.

¹⁴ This happened when the Pope declared Mary to have been born without the inherited sin of Adam and lived an entirely sinless life, thus contradicting the Biblical doctrine that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

¹⁵ As opposed to the head of "a church", for instance.

John 14:26: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, ***he shall teach you all things***, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, ***he will guide you into all truth...***"

The Catholic Church needs the Pope, apostolic authority, and tradition to support its many unbiblical doctrines. If you've based your entire faith on the office of the Papacy then what's left when the Bible claims *there is no such office* and the many new unbiblical doctrines issued by the Pope aren't worth the paper they're printed on?

8. Conclusion

By this point it should be clear that the Catholic church isn't a Christian church – and I haven't even touched on the subject of idolatry, the worship of Mary, or the many other pagan Catholic doctrines¹⁶. Catholicism doesn't teach salvation through faith alone; instead it teaches salvation by works. The gospel of salvation by works *isn't capable of saving anyone*. That gospel leads only to Hell.

I want to be very clear here. Anyone who believes in Catholicism's official teaches regarding the gospel is *not*

¹⁶ For instance, the Pope (who is said to be infallible on issues of morality and doctrine) has urged people to worship Mary as a co-redeemer with Christ and pray to her for forgiveness of sins. Worshiping anyone other than God can't be called anything other than paganism.

a Christian, is *not* saved, and is going to spend eternity in Hell unless they repent and believe in salvation by grace through faith (not of works). The Catholic Church is a pagan church that teaches “doctrines of devils”¹⁷. It shouldn't be considered another denomination of Christianity because it's as pagan and false as Islam or Buddhism.

¹⁷ For example, Catholicism forbids its priests from getting married, which is called a “doctrine of devils” in 1 Timothy 4:1-3.

Part 2: Claims of the Catholic Church

Catholic Claim #1: The church is intended to be one body, one mind, and one divine institution

Is there just one universal church? Not in the way that Catholicism teaches. What the Scriptures have to say about the nature of the church is very different from what Catholicism teaches.

The Bible uses the word “church” in two different ways. It can refer to either specific local congregations (such as the church of Ephesus) or the entire body of Christ. There are many specific local churches:

1 Corinthians 16:19: “The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.”

In this verse Paul talks about there being multiple “churches” in Asia. He also said that there was a church which met in their house. Although there's only one body of Christ, that body is divided into countless individual churches. 1 Corinthians 16:19 is a great example of this. Paul acknowledged that Asia was full of *individual churches*. He also acknowledged that the group which was meeting in Aquila's home was an *individual church*. The New Testament is clear on this point: although all genuine believers are part of the body of Christ, that body is composed of many individual churches. Paul didn't believe that this was a problem or something that should be stopped.

It's true that when the world persecutes the church it's persecuting Jesus (Acts 9:4-5). All those who are

genuinely saved are part of the body of Christ, and there's only one body (Romans 12:5).

It's also true that there's only one faith, one gospel, and one way to be saved. All Christians should be of the same mind (1 Corinthians 1:10) because *we must all believe the same gospel and hold to the same faith.*

That being said, Catholics interpret “on this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18) to mean that Jesus built His church upon Peter, who was the first pope. This is incorrect. The best way to understand this verse is to look at the way it was interpreted by the apostles themselves. If anyone understood it, they did.

None of the apostles interpreted this statement to mean that the rock upon which Jesus was going to build His church was Peter! For example, the apostle Paul identified the Rock upon which the church was built as Christ:

1 Corinthians 10:4: “and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.”

Romans 9:31-33: “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone, as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

Are either of these verses talking about Peter? No. Romans 9 is especially interesting because it tells us that

the Jews tried to be saved by their works but failed. For them Jesus became a rock of “offense”. They were offended at Christ because they rejected the teaching that salvation comes by faith alone, and not of works. The Catholic Church has exactly the same problem that the Jews did! It's also seeking salvation by works, and because of that Christ has become offensive – so Christ the Rock is replaced with Peter the rock.

Even *Peter* believed that Christ was the rock upon which the church was built:

1 Peter 2:6-8: “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”

When Paul addressed the subject of the “rock” he could easily have said that Peter was the rock upon which the church is built, but he didn't. Peter also had a perfect opportunity to teach that he was the rock upon which the church was built but he didn't do that either. Instead both of them pointed to Christ alone. They both taught that Christ is offensive to those who seek salvation by works and not by faith.

Did God use the apostles to build His church? Yes. In that way they could be considered stones in the building of the church (and the name Peter does indeed mean

“stone”). However, 1 Peter 2:5 says that *all* Christians are “lively stones” that are building up Christ's church:

1 Peter 2:4-5: “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

Peter could have easily taught that he was the chief stone upon which the church was built and everyone else was building upon him. However, he didn't do that! Instead he taught that Christ was the chief stone and everyone else in the church were “lively stones” who were building upon Him. Both Paul and Peter agree that the rock upon which the church was built was *Christ*. The apostles built upon the foundation of Christ, *not* the foundation of Peter.

The doctrine that Peter was the first pope and the head of the church is extremely critical to Catholicism because all of its teachings rest on that foundation. I find it impossible to believe that something that important wouldn't be mentioned by *any* of the apostles – not even by Peter himself! The fact that none of the apostles were aware of this teaching tells me they didn't believe it and therefore it can't be true. If Peter was the head of the church then that should have been mentioned all throughout the epistles, but instead it doesn't come up even once.

It's true that all genuine Christians are part of the body of Christ regardless of what denomination or local church they belong to. Romans 12:5 says “so we, being many, are one body in Christ”. However, those who preach another gospel aren't genuine Christians at all. Instead they're accursed:

Galatians 1:6-9: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

This passage tells us that the Galatian church had embraced a different gospel. Because they embraced a different gospel they were *removed from Christ*. They weren't a part of the body of Christ at all! Their acceptance of a different gospel excluded them from that body. Those who preach a different gospel are cursed (which is something Paul repeated).

What false gospel did the Galatian church embrace?
The gospel of salvation by works:

Galatians 3:1-3: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

That is *exactly* the same false gospel that the Catholic church teaches. Catholicism claims that the only way to preserve our salvation is through a life of good works. That's precisely what Paul is condemning in this passage! Paul is very clear that our works do nothing to save us, and *they also play no role in preserving our salvation*. He calls that whole idea “foolish” and says that believing it is an act of disobedience and a rejection of the truth. Those who believe such things are removed from Christ (Galatians 1:6).

Those who believe in a false gospel may appear to be part of the body of Christ, but they're not. Instead they're part of the leaven that Jesus spoke of, which makes the church appear to be much larger than it actually is:

Luke 13:20-21: “And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

In the Bible “leaven” (yeast) is *always* symbolic of sin. Christ taught that the kingdom of God appears to be much larger than it really is because it's filled with people who aren't saved at all. Just as yeast artificially inflates a piece of dough without adding more dough, so the unsaved have entered the true church and artificially inflated its size. If all of these “false brethren” (Galatians 2:4) were removed from the church, its true (smaller) size would be revealed.

In summary, the Catholic church teaches a false gospel and therefore isn't part of the body of Christ (the true church). However, the world believes that the Catholic church is part of Christianity, which has inflated the apparent size of the church and given people a false impression.

Catholic Claim #2: There is one church, one standard of faith, one gospel

It's true there's only one standard of faith and one gospel. However, what Catholicism teaches is a *departure* from that faith.

There is indeed only one body of Christ, which is composed of all genuine Christians. However, there are many people who claim to be Christians but aren't. This means the visible church is larger than the true body of Christ. Simply calling yourself a Christian doesn't make you a Christian, and simply joining a local church doesn't make you part of the body of Christ either. There's a difference between the visible church (which is composed of all those who have joined local churches) and the true church (which is composed only of those who are genuinely saved).

Those who refuse to repent of their wickedness but continue to live in sin should be cast out of the church. Christians must distance themselves from heretics and false teachers (Romans 16:17). We live in a time when people won't tolerate sound doctrine but instead have embraced dangerous heresies (2 Timothy 4:3, which you quoted).

There's only one faith and one gospel, which was "once delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). There aren't many ways to be saved! There's only one way, and it's through the Lord Jesus Christ:

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

Paul made it clear in Galatians 1:6-9 that those who preach a different gospel aren't part of the church at all, but are outside it. However, the Catholic church *does* preach a different gospel and therefore isn't part of the true church. Catholicism as a destructive heresy that's calling people

away from the true gospel and leading them to Hell. The book of Galatians teaches with amazing clarity that we're saved by grace alone, and our works play *absolutely no part* in either saving us or keeping us saved. The Catholic church rejects that teaching, which means they preach the very false gospel that Paul condemned in Galatians 1:6.

In summary, there's only one church, one standard of faith, and one gospel – but the Catholic church is outside of it and opposes it.

Catholic Claim #3: There is one standard of faith

There is indeed just one standard of faith – but it's not what the Catholic Church teaches. The standard of faith is the Bible alone – and nothing else!

Those who preach a different gospel are cursed (Galatians 1:7-8). It's also true that we must believe the teachings of the apostles (1 Thessalonians 2:13 and 2 Thessalonians 2:15, which you quoted). However, the standard of faith is solely *what's written in the Bible* and doesn't go beyond that.

The apostles traveled around the world and preached the gospel, and the things they taught were binding upon the churches. I don't have any problem accepting their teachings because *they were the apostles*. Every one of them (including Paul) knew Jesus, were taught by Jesus, and saw Jesus after He rose from the dead. They proved their apostleship by doing an enormous number of astonishing miracles (in public, in front of many witnesses). Some of them even raised the dead! Nearly all of them were martyred for their faith. (Only John wasn't martyred, and it wasn't for lack of trying on the part of the Roman government.)

However, all of the apostles are gone. It's impossible for anyone to meet the qualifications of being

an apostle today, which means there aren't going to be any more apostles. No one today can truthfully say that they walked with Jesus in person during His time in this world. The people who Jesus personally taught the Scriptures to are all gone. Those days are over. God used the apostles to lay the foundation of the church (building upon Jesus who is the chief cornerstone), and then the time of the apostles was over. There's no one like them today.

What we *do* have are the writings which the apostles left behind. It's not true that these writings weren't recognized and canonized until hundreds of years later (which is what some people claim). Instead they were recognized as authoritative and binding from the very first day they were written! We can see this in 2 Peter 3:16, where Peter refers to Paul's letters as *scripture*:

2 Peter 3:15-16: “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

Notice how Peter said that people twisted both the writings of Paul and “the other scriptures”. Peter clearly considered *all* of the epistles of Paul to be scripture.

The apostles could have written in one of their epistles that after all of them were dead, God would raise up more people and give more new divine revelation and that's how He would work with the church in the future. However, *there is no such verse!* The entire idea of

apostolic succession – that there are people after the apostles who inherited their unique abilities – can't be found anywhere in the Bible.

Why? Because *the apostles are no longer needed*. Once the foundation of the church was laid (which was the job of the apostles), there was no need to lay it again. We don't need new revelation from God because He has already given us everything we need to know in His Word! The Bible is fully and totally sufficient:

2 Timothy 3:15-17: “and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

It's not true that the Scriptures which are mentioned in this passage are only the Old Testament. Paul wrote 2 Timothy in 67 AD, right before he was martyred. Peter wrote 2 Peter in 64 AD, right before he was martyred. This means that Peter was already referring to Paul's epistles as scripture *before 2 Timothy was written*. Keep in mind that 1 Timothy was written around 64 AD, and in that letter Paul mentioned Timothy's youth (1 Timothy 4:12). The first book of the New Testament was the book of James, which was written around 47 AD. 2 Timothy was written 20 years later. Given how closely Paul worked with Timothy (and how young Timothy was), I have no doubt that Timothy was taught both the Old *and* the New Testament.

There are two other very important points that I want to bring out. Paul said that the Scriptures are able to

teach us how to be saved. Paul could have said that the Scriptures are *not* sufficient and we need additional material which isn't found in them, but that's not what he said! Paul taught that the material in the Bible is sufficient to save you. If you're seeking salvation you don't need anything else! If the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation then there's no need to seek something beyond them in order to be saved. They are enough.

Second, how many good works are we able to do with Scripture alone? *All of them!* This passage is telling us that the Bible is wholly sufficient and contains everything we need to live our lives in this world in a way that pleases God. The Scriptures aren't missing anything and aren't lacking in any way. The Bible, all by itself, is enough to both save us *and* furnish us with what we need to perform all good works!

That right there is *everything*. The Christian walk is composed of two things: getting saved and doing good works. If the Bible is sufficient for both (which is exactly what Paul wrote) then there's absolutely no need for anything beyond it! I can stick with the Bible alone and not miss out on anything at all.

Now, Paul could have written something very different. He could have said that the Bible was pretty good and will get us partway there, but in the future God will use apostolic succession to raise up more people who will give us more new revelation. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 could have said that we need more revelation to truly do all good works, and over time God will reveal this to the church through the successors to the apostles. However, that's not what Paul said! Paul didn't teach that we need more than just the Bible.

Either the Bible is enough to thoroughly furnish us for both salvation and *all* good works (in which case we need nothing else) or it isn't. If the Bible is all that we need then the Catholic Church is wrong. If the Catholic Church

is right and the Bible isn't enough then God lied to us. It's one or the other.

It's a very serious matter for the Catholic Church to claim that the Bible isn't sufficient and we need additional teachings that can only be found in the Catholic Church! It's a very terrible sin to add something to the Bible, take something away from it, or tamper with its text in any way. In fact, there's only one way to have your name removed from the Book of Life and that's to *tamper with the text of the Bible*:

Revelation 22:18-19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

The book of Revelation was the last book of the Bible which was written (in around 95 AD). This passage is the last new teaching in the last chapter of the last book, and it's terrifying. Anyone who tampers with its text will be cast into Hell for all of eternity. God *clearly* doesn't want anyone changing it! Messing with His words is a huge and extremely serious sin.

I realize Revelation 22 is focused on “the words of the prophecy of this book” but I don't think it's a stretch to say that God doesn't like it when people tamper with *any* of His words. Look at what the Old Testament had to say about it:

Proverbs 30:6: “Add thou not to his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

Just in case we were unsure about how God feels about liars, He clarified it for us:

Revelation 21:8: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

Those who add to what God has said are *liars*. All liars will be damned for eternity. This means it's incredibly serious to tamper with what God has said! *It must never be done.*

I'm very comfortable holding to Scripture alone. I trust the Bible, I believe it, and I'm convinced that it contains everything I need to be saved and perform all good works. There's no chance I'm going to venture beyond it and listen to those who would add to it. Since the Bible is sufficient I'm going to stop there and not go any further. I'm not going to risk joining those who add to what God has said.

The Catholic Church is guilty of this in several ways. I do believe that the Catholic Church has actually tampered with the text of the Bible itself. The two ancient Bible manuscripts that came from the Catholic Church (Vaticanus / Codex B, which came from the Vatican library, and Sinaiticus / Codex Aleph, which came from a Catholic monastery), are badly corrupted in a way

that proves someone deliberately tampered with the text¹⁸. What's worse, those manuscripts have been used to change many new Bible versions, which has spread their corruption even further. (That's why I use the KJV: it's free from the corruption of those two manuscripts.)

On top of that, the Catholic church has invented an enormous number of new doctrines during the course of its existence. What Catholics are required to believe today is very different from what they were required to believe a thousand years ago. The Catholic faith has *changed*. New things have been added that can't be found in the Bible because they didn't come from the Bible. I don't see any way someone could end up believing any of these Catholic doctrines with just the Bible alone:

- No one in the Bible ever prays for the dead.
- No one in the Bible ever prays to Mary.
- Mary is never called the Queen of Heaven.
- Mary is never called a co-redeemer with Christ.
- The Bible never says that Mary was born without sin.
- The Bible never says that Mary ascended into Heaven.
- No one ever hinted that Mary can free people from purgatory.
- Purgatory is never mentioned at all.
- There's no mention of the papacy at all.
- There's no mention that the head of the church is the pope, or that the pope can speak infallibly.

¹⁸For more information on this topic see <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Concerning-Bible-Translations.pdf>

- The entire concept of “holy water” can't be found in any epistle.
- The early church wasn't divided into “the laity” and “the priests”. The only priesthood that the New Testament speaks of is the priesthood of all believers (Revelation 1:6: “and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father”), and the High Priesthood of Christ.
- Jesus specifically forbade us from calling other people “Father” (Matthew 23:9: “And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven”).

This isn't “seeds” and “growth”; instead it's adding to what God has said. If the Bible is sufficient to save me (which it is), and it's sufficient for all good works (which it is), then *I don't need any of these other doctrines!*

It would have been very simple for one of the apostles to write “In the years to come God is going to make big changes to the faith, and He will tell you about them as time goes on”, but none of them ever did. The Catholic Church has changed the faith that was “once delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). That means it's departed from that faith and embraced a different gospel – and I can't think of anything more dangerous and terrifying than that.

Catholic Claim #4: The church was given divine protection

Did God give His church divine protection? Not in the way the Catholic Church claims.

It is true that God gave His apostles unique authority and a unique role. However, there aren't any apostles anymore and apostolic succession isn't taught in the Bible.

I agree that the gates of Hell will not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18). Do you know what the gate of Hell is? It's *death*. Stop and think about it: how do you get to Hell? By dying. The gate that leads to Hell is death, but death doesn't lead to Hell for all those who are saved by Christ!

I believe that passage has another meaning as well: even though Christians would be put to death for their faith that wouldn't destroy the church. Matthew 16:18 is a promise that no amount of martyrdom will ever be sufficient to wipe out the church.

However, that verse *isn't* a promise of divine protection against apostasy, which is what the Catholic Church claims. First of all, it's not true that individual Christians never fall into heresy! There are many Christians who believe things that contract the doctrines of the Bible. No Christian is immune from this, which is why we must study the Bible so carefully and diligently:

2 Timothy 2:15: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

This verse doesn't say “If you have a question about doctrine, go to the Catholic Church and believe whatever the priests and the pope tells you. They alone can interpret the Bible properly because God has given them divine protection.” Instead Paul commands us to study the Word of God. The reason we need to study it is so that we won't be ashamed, because it's a shameful thing to misinterpret the Bible. It takes effort to learn how to interpret it properly – and the way to do that is by carefully studying it.

This verse is a great example of that truth:

Acts 17:11: “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.”

The Bereans were comparing what the apostles themselves taught to what the Old Testament had to say. Did God condemn them for that? Absolutely not! Instead we're told that *this was a noble and right thing to do*. That tells me we should also be searching the Scriptures daily to see if the things we're being told are true. People who fail to study the Bible will fail to interpret it correctly and will therefore fall into error. Individual Christians can definitely fall into heresy if they're not careful!

Matthew 16:18 also isn't a promise that individual local churches will never fall into heresy either. The book of Galatians was written specifically to address a local church that had become apostate. Paul was rebuking them for their sin and commanding them to repent and turn back to the faith. Matthew 16:18 isn't a promise that there will never be false Christians (because there are many of them), or that there will never be false teachers within the church (because there are many of them as well), or that there will never be people who preach a false gospel (because those people are everywhere). In fact, 3 John 1:9 speaks of a time when a wicked man named Diotrephes threw the apostle John out of a local church! That church was *definitely* not faithful.

That verse isn't even a promise that the visible church as a whole will remain faithful (in the sense that it has divine protection which prevents it from falling into error). In Revelation 2 and 3 the Lord Jesus Christ dictated seven letters to seven churches. Those letters are prophetic and address each of the seven ages of the church, from the days of the apostle John until the moment the Lord returns.

Nearly every one of those letters has something awful to say about what the visible church of that age would be like:

- The church at Ephesus (which represents the Apostolic church, 30 AD to 100 AD) had left its first love (Revelation 2:4).
- The church at Pergamos (which represents the birth of the state church, 313 AD to 590 AD) was condemned for its idolatry and immorality (Revelation 2:14-15).
- The church of Thyatira (which represents the age when the Catholic Church reigned, 600 AD to 1517 AD) was also condemned for its idolatry and immorality (Revelation 2:20-23).
- The church at Sardis (which represents the period of the Reformation, 1517 AD to 1648 AD) was condemned because “thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead”, and because “I have not found thy works perfect before God” (Revelation 3:1-2).

The worst one was the church of Laodicea (the end times church, 1900 AD to present), which Christ said was so bad that it made Him want to vomit. That church was so bad that Jesus was actually *outside* that church, knocking on the door so someone would let Him in:

Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Keep in mind the context of this verse. Jesus was dictating letters *to individual local churches*. The door at which Jesus is knocking is not the “door to our heart” (as is

widely believed), but *the door of the church*. Jesus had just strongly rebuked the end times church and said it was so bad that He would vomit it out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16). He followed that up by saying He was knocking on the door of that church, hoping that someone inside would open the door so that He could have fellowship *with that one individual who opened the door for Him*. That's what God thinks of modern day churches: they're the worst that have ever existed in any era since the time of Christ.

If individuals can fall into error, and local churches can fall into error, and the entire visible church as a whole can fall into error, then there's no divine protection which prevents churches from falling into error. That's why the New Testament is filled with so many epistles (such as the book of Galatians) which rebuke churches for sin and command them to repent. If the church was truly protected from error then that wouldn't have been necessary!

Can the genuine body of Christ fall into apostasy? The problem is that the genuine body of Christ is defined as those who have *not* fallen into apostasy, but are true Christians:

Romans 8:9: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

Paul is very clear about this. If we have the Holy Spirit then we're part of the body of Christ. If we do *not* have the Holy Spirit then we're *not* part of the body of Christ. Even if we're a member of a local church and attend its services every week, and even if we're one of the leaders of that church, if we lack the Spirit then we aren't part of the body.

Since the true body of Christ is only composed of those who are genuinely saved and have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, it's not possible for the true church to

“go bad”. If members of the true church ever rejected the gospel then they would cease to be part of the true church! That means, by definition, the true church can't become apostate. If it was it wouldn't be the true church anymore.

Even if churches were given divine protection against falling into apostasy (which is not the case, as can be seen from the Galatian church), that wouldn't apply to Catholicism. This is because the Catholic Church teaches a false gospel and therefore isn't part of the body of Christ at all.

It's true that Jesus is always with us (Matthew 28:18-20), but that's *entirely* different from saying “there will be successors to the apostles”. Jesus is indeed with us but He's not giving us new revelation because He's already given us everything we need in His Word.

It's also true that the Holy Spirit teaches us all things (John 14:26). That's another great reason why there's no need for apostolic succession! All genuine Christians have the Holy Spirit within them, and the Holy Spirit teaches us all things. Keep in mind that Jesus could have said the *successors to the apostles* will teach you all things and guide you into all sorts of new truths. He could have told us that if we wanted to know the truth we should listen to the priest or the pope, but He didn't.

As it says in Ephesians 2:19-22, Christ is indeed the foundation of the church, the apostles and prophets did build upon that foundation, and all of us are stones in the church (1 Peter 2:5). Once the foundation is built you *move on to other things*. You don't need to keep rebuilding the foundation over and over again! The apostles did their job and are gone; they don't need successors. The only reason we would need successors to the apostles is if the Word of God was incomplete and missing vital information, but that's not the case.

Catholic Claim #5: The office of the pope

Are there offices within the church? Absolutely – but the pope isn't one of them.

We can set aside the Biblical offices of apostle and prophet because all of them are gone. In the modern era there are deacons and elders. However, both of those offices are within local churches. Neither of them have authority over more than a single individual church – and that's an extremely important point.

1 Timothy 3:1 speaks of an office called “bishop”. That office is also restricted to the oversight of a single local church because 1 Timothy 3:5 says “how shall he take care of the church of God?” – which is *singular*, not plural. In this context when Paul talks about the “church” he's talking about a local groups of Christians, not the universal body of Christ! The only people in the New Testament who had authority over multiple churches were the apostles, and *there aren't any apostles today*.

Since the office of apostle is gone, that means the only offices that God has given us are offices that only have authority over individual churches. God could easily have established an office which had authority over multiple churches (or over all of them!) *but He didn't*. Such an office cannot be found anywhere in the Bible. There's only one person that the Bible says is the head of the entire church, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ:

Ephesians 5:23: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body.”

This verse could have been very different. Paul could have written “even as the pope is the head of the church”. He also could have said “even as Peter is the head of the church”. However, he didn't say either of those

things! It would have been easy for the Bible to say that the bishop of Rome was the head of all of the individual local churches *but it doesn't say that*.

I find it impossible to believe that Peter was the first pope. Not only does he never make that claim, but no one in the Bible ever treats him as a pope or refers to him in that way! The Bible never claims that he was the bishop of Rome, and in fact it never even mentions him visiting Rome at all¹⁹.

The apostles did have a unique role in laying the foundation of the church. The problem is that the Bible never mentions the office of the pope (even though it mentions other churches offices), it never says that Peter was a pope, and no one treated Peter like the pope. The Bible could have said “Here's the office of the pope, here's how it works, here's its authority, and here's how the pope is chosen”, but it doesn't. The Bible explained the offices of deacons and elders in great detail and yet it says nothing about the office of the pope! I think that speaks volumes. If such an important office (the head of all the churches!) was real then I don't think God would have omitted mentioning it.

The best way to understand what these disputed verses mean is to look at the way they were interpreted by the apostles themselves. Did Peter elevate himself over the rest of the apostles? No. Did he claim to have power over them? No. Did the other apostles teach that Peter had the chiefest authority as pope? No. The apostles themselves didn't believe that Peter had a unique authority that the rest of them lacked. After all, look at this verse:

Galatians 2:9: “and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars,

¹⁹It's true that 1 Peter 5:13 says he visited the church at Babylon. However, the city of Babylon actually existed in those days and was home to a large population. I don't think that's a cryptic reference to Rome; I believe it means he went to the actual city of Babylon.

perceived the trace that was given unto me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”

Paul listed *three* men as the pillars of the early church: James, Peter, and John. He didn't list Peter first or say that Peter was preeminent above the rest! This would have been a great place to establish that Peter was the pope, but instead we see the three of them acting together as core leaders of the early church.

It's clear that Peter didn't interpret his conversation with Jesus to mean that he had authority over everyone else because he never mentioned such a thing, he never exercised that power, and none of the epistles ever mention him holding that type of position in the church. Likewise, there were other apostles there who heard that conversation with Jesus and yet none of them interpreted those words to mean that Peter was the pope either! This can be seen from the fact that none of them ever mentioned Peter as pope and none of them gave him that kind of deference and obedience. If the apostles themselves, who were there at the time and heard Jesus speak those words, didn't interpret them to mean that Peter was the head of all the churches then I don't think we should either.

Once again, it would have been easy for God to define the office of the pope the same way He did the office of deacons and elders – and yet He didn't. Those who argue for the papacy are arguing that although God took the time to define the offices of the *local* church, He neglected to define the most important office of all: the person who was responsible for overseeing all of the churches! I just can't believe that.

The fact that the office of the pope isn't found in the Bible should be a giant warning flag because *all of Catholicism rests on that office*. The office of the papacy is

more important than all the other offices. The pope claims to have the power to make infallible statements and introduce new divine doctrines. Yet, although lesser offices are spelled out in detail in the Bible, that one is not! To me that's incredibly unlikely. God would never tell us about lesser things but omit details like *who's in charge of the entire church as a whole*. The lack of a well-defined and operational papacy in the Bible is a big sign that Catholicism is wrong.

Catholic Claim #6: Apostolic Succession

The point of apostolic succession is that the “successors of the apostles” can introduce new divine revelation that isn't found in the Bible. Catholicism's argument is that the Bible isn't sufficient, and we need something more. This additional needed revelation supposedly comes from the successors of the apostles, who have the same divine powers that the apostles did to impart new revelation.

It makes no sense to claim that the Catholic Church hasn't introduced any new doctrines because that defeats their argument. If there are no new doctrines or teachings then that means the Bible really *is* sufficient and there's no need for apostolic succession! If there *is* a need for it then that means you're looking for information that isn't found in the Bible.

It's impossible to say that the Bible is insufficient and then also say all of the doctrines of Catholicism are in the Bible and none of them are new. It's either one or the other. If there are no new doctrines then you don't need anything more than the Bible! Since Catholicism's whole argument is that you *do* need more than the Bible, that means the Catholic Church is telling you things that aren't in the Bible.

The whole argument comes down to this: does God give us new divine revelation outside of the Bible or not? If He doesn't then the Bible is all you need and the entire conversation is over.

I haven't found any verses in the Bible that hint that the apostles were going to have successors who would impart new divine revelation. I also haven't seen a verse which teaches that God would continue to give the church new revelation as time went on. Acts 6:6 is talking about setting aside the first deacons. Acts 14:23 is about setting aside elders in every church. Romans 10:14 tells us that God works through preachers to save souls by the preaching of the gospel. 2 Timothy 1:6 mentions the fact that the apostles could lay their hands on people and impart miraculous spiritual gifts (which is fascinating, but since there are no apostles anymore who can go around imparting the gifts of healing and tongues, that isn't really relevant to the conversation). Titus 1:5 tells us that Paul expected Titus to appoint elders.

None of that is related to apostolic succession because the people who the apostles appointed were put in *entirely different offices* which don't have the same powers, authority, or privileges of the office of apostle. Deacons aren't apostles. Elders aren't apostles. Preachers aren't apostles. The people who were appointed by the apostles were given roles in the church that were *entirely different* from what the apostles did! God instructed the apostles to lay the foundation of the church, and that's what they did: they established local churches and appointed people to watch over them.

It is true that deacons, elders, and preachers are all charged with taking care of the church. However, that has nothing to do with apostolic succession. The apostles received new divine revelation from God Himself and had the ability to give entirely new teachings to the church which were then binding upon everyone. The people who were appointed by the apostles did *not* have that same

ability. It would have been easy for the Bible to say that church leaders *did* inherit that power from the apostles and *can* impart new revelation which is binding upon all believers, but it never says that! The only thing modern church leaders can do is teach the material that's found in the Bible. No modern church leader can add anything to the revelation of God.

It is true that Hebrews 13:17 says church leaders are to keep watch over people's souls. Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1-5 states that church leaders are to care for the church. None of those verses teach that modern church leaders have the ability to provide new divine revelation, which is what the apostles did. In this era, tending to the flock means teaching what the Scriptures have to say. It does *not* mean providing new revelations and doctrines!

The Bible never says that we should expect new revelation from church leaders. It could have told us that God would be giving us more revelation as time went on and new doctrines would be added to the faith, but it doesn't. Instead it says that the material which is found in the Bible is wholly sufficient and we need nothing else (2 Timothy 3:16-17). If the Bible is sufficient then apostolic succession isn't needed and serves no purpose.

Catholic Claim #7: Schism is a sin

I agree that division within the body of Christ is a sin. Everyone must believe the true gospel, which is salvation by grace through faith (and *not of works*). Anyone who disagrees with the teachings of the Bible is living in sin and needs to repent and seek forgiveness, lest they be condemned by God and cast into Hell. There should be no arguments in the church! Instead everyone should believe what the Bible has to say (1 Corinthians 1:10 and 12:25, which you quoted). The church must not tolerate those who teach heresy, but should remove them from their midst and

distance themselves from them (Titus 3:9-11). Those who have never repented of their sins and put their faith in Christ alone for salvation are on the road to Hell (Galatians 5:19-21).

The problem is that the book of Galatians teaches that the *Catholic Church* is the one who has left the true faith, caused division, lead people astray, and is causing schism! The Catholic Church preaches the gospel of salvation by works, which Paul repeatedly condemned throughout Galatians. Catholicism needs to repent and rejoin the true church, not the other way around.

There are only two religions in the entire world: salvation by grace through faith, and salvation by works. There's nothing else. All pagan religions are some variant of salvation by works: you must do something to save your soul, or to earn enough points to reach Heaven, or to gain enlightenment, or whatever. It's all the same basic idea with different window dressing. Only Christianity teaches that our salvation comes *entirely* from the actions of *someone else*. Either you're entirely saved by what Christ has done for you and are dressed in His utterly perfect righteousness, or your salvation comes from something you did. The Bible teaches that the true gospel is salvation by grace, not salvation by works. Catholicism is a terrible schism that has led a billion people astray.

Catholic Question #1: How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God?

We do not need the Catholic Church to authenticate the Bible. Authenticating the Bible isn't difficult!

I'll try to keep this brief. There are two sections to the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament. How do we know that the Old Testament is true and accurate? Because Jesus Himself testified to it. If He says I can trust it then I'll take His word for it.

Here are just some of the ways Jesus personally validated the teachings, content, history, and accuracy of the Old Testament:

- In Matthew 22:31-32 Jesus defended the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead based on the tense of a single word in Exodus (“I am the God of Abraham” instead of “I was the God of Abraham”). Jesus not only believed what Moses wrote, but He trusted even the tenses of each word!
- Jesus believed that Abel was a real person (Luke 11:50-51).
- Jesus believed in Noah and the Flood (Luke 17:26-27).
- Jesus believed in the story of Lot (Luke 17:28-29).
- Jesus believed that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all real people (Matthew 8:11).
- Jesus believed in the story of Jonah (Matthew 12:39-41).
- Jesus believed that the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon (Matthew 12:42).
- Jesus believed that Daniel wrote the entire book of Daniel, and accepted the prophecies in that book as true (Matthew 24:15-16).
- Jesus believed that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible (Mark 12:26, Matthew 19:7, Luke 5:14, John 1:17, etc.).
- Jesus believed that Isaiah wrote the entire book of Isaiah (Mark 7:6, John 12:37-41).
- Jesus condemned people for not knowing the Old Testament (Matthew 22:29).

- Jesus was subject to what was written in the Old Testament and obeyed it (Matthew 23:23, 27-29).
- Jesus never attacked anything in the Old Testament. He never said that it was wrong or contained any error of any kind. If anyone would know the truth it would be Him.

Jesus testified to the truth of the Old Testament. He believed it, taught it, and *obeyed it*. He also rebuked people for not knowing what it said. That tells me it can be trusted! If we can't take the word of the Lord Jesus Christ as true and faithful then all hope is lost and we're on the road to Hell.

How do we know that the copy of the Old Testament which we have today is the same as what existed at the time of Christ? Because of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some of which predate the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Those scrolls testify to the fact that the copy of the Old Testament which we have today is exactly the same as what existed in the time of Christ. That means I have the same Old Testament that Christ validated as being true!

So what about the New Testament? That's not a problem either. The New Testament was written by people who knew Christ and were eyewitnesses to what happened. Its authors were persecuted for their faith in Christ, and in many cases they were put to death for the testimony that they gave. The books of the New Testament were written shortly after the time of Christ, when many living eyewitnesses were still around who could give the true story of what really happened. It would be one thing if the New Testament was written 900 years later, but it wasn't. Instead it's a firsthand account by people who chose to be tortured to death instead of recanting their testimony. I don't have any problem trusting the apostles to tell me the truth.

How do we know that the New Testament hasn't been corrupted? It's true that there aren't any complete manuscripts of the New Testament which date back to the apostolic era. However, what we *do* have are lots of letters from the early church, and they quote the entire Bible extensively. The quotations in those letters prove that the New Testament which they had is the same one we have today.

The testimonies of various church councils doesn't make any difference. None of them walked with Christ in person or were eyewitnesses to His resurrection, so all they can do is give their own opinion.

Even though the evidence that supports the Bible is overwhelming²⁰, the truth is that apart from Christ we're all dead in our sins and unable to believe in God at all. I would be utterly faithless and unbelieving if God hadn't performed a miracle in my heart, raised me from spiritual death, and gave me the faith to believe in Jesus and in His Word:

Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”

We are saved by faith, and that faith *is not of ourselves*. The faith that saves us is a gift of God. We need faith in order to believe in Jesus, or the Bible, or the doctrines of Christianity. That faith comes from God alone! It can't be obtained anywhere else. God does want us to look at the evidence and “reason together” (Isaiah 1:18), but if God doesn't give us saving faith then we won't believe no matter what the evidence has to say.

²⁰For more information on this see: <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Session5TheCaseForChristianity.pdf>

Catholic Question #2: Does the Bible teach “sola scriptura”?

I've already addressed this topic quite extensively in regards to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and it doesn't make sense to restate those arguments here. Instead I'll quote from the GotQuestions article about “sola scriptura”:

“The primary Catholic argument against sola scriptura is that the Bible does not explicitly teach sola scriptura. Catholics argue that the Bible nowhere states that it is the only authoritative guide for faith and practice. However, this is only true in the shallowest sense. The principle is strongly indicated by verses such as Acts 17:11, which commends the Bereans for testing doctrine – taught by an apostle, no less – to the written Word. Sola scriptura is all-but-explicitly indicated in 1 Corinthians 4:6, where Paul warns not to 'go beyond what was written.' Jesus Himself criticized those who allowed traditions to override the explicit commands of God in Mark 7:6-9.

“Whether sola scriptura is overtly mentioned in the Bible or not, Catholicism fails to recognize a crucially important issue. We know that the Bible is the Word of God. The Bible declares itself to be God-breathed, inerrant, and authoritative. We also know that God does not change His mind or contradict Himself. So, while the Bible itself may not explicitly argue for sola scriptura, it most definitely does not allow for traditions that contradict its

message. Sola scriptura is not as much of an argument against tradition as it is an argument against unbiblical, extra-biblical and/or anti-biblical doctrines. The only way to know for sure what God expects of us is to stay true to what we know He has revealed – the Bible. We can know, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that Scripture is true, authoritative, and reliable. The same cannot be said of tradition.

“The Word of God is the ultimate and only infallible authority for the Christian faith.”

I believe that “sola scriptura” is taught by 2 Timothy 3:15-17. If the Bible is sufficient for all things then there's no need for anything else. At that point everything outside the Bible can be disregarded as unnecessary at best and dangerous at worst.

The reason I reject the teachings of the Catholic Church is not just because they add to the Bible, but because they also contradict it. A religion whose teachings directly contradicts the Bible is *not* one I'm going to trust to give me “new revelation”.

Catholic Question #3: Is God's revelation restricted to the written word?

I have no problem trusting the written Word because Jesus personally testified to its accuracy, it was written by incredibly faithful men who were eyewitnesses to Christ Himself, and because God has miraculously preserved His Word (just as He promised). It's easy to believe in the written Word of God because of the giant

mountain of evidence that testifies to its truthfulness and accuracy.

Am I willing to trust the traditions of the Catholic Church? Absolutely not. There's no reason to. Let's talk about why.

(1) The teachings of the Catholic church directly contradict the Bible. That alone is enough to tell me that Catholicism cannot be trusted. A great example is this verse:

Matthew 23:9: “And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in Heaven.”

Jesus specifically commanded those within the church of God to not refer to other leaders within the church of God as “father”. It's forbidden, and there are no exceptions to this. There are no instances of *anyone* breaking this commandment in any of the epistles to the churches – and yet the Catholic Church routinely ignores this command and treats it like it means nothing! Catholicism is a great example of what this verse is talking about:

Mark 7:13: “making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.”

The Catholic Church uses their tradition to make void an explicit commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is just one of *many* examples where the Word of God is ignored and directly violated by the teachings of the Catholic Church. I'm not going to trust a church which openly violates the Scriptures.

(2) The Catholic church is dishonest about the Ten Commandments. The Catholic list of the Ten commandments is very different from the list that everyone else uses. Catholicism has removed the second commandment from their list, which says this:

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

The Catholic Church tries to hide this by taking the final commandment (thou shalt not covet) and turning it into two separate commandments: don't covet your neighbor's wife and don't covet your neighbor's goods.

Why does Catholicism do this? Well, the commandment which was removed is the one that forbids making graven images – and Catholic churches are *filled* with graven images, which Catholics “venerate” (which is actually *worship*, despite what people try to claim). It's pretty easy to see why *that* commandment was removed! Once again, I'm not going to trust a church that openly violates the Scriptures.

(3) The popes are said to be Christ on Earth – divine and holy men who speak for God Himself. Yet there were many vile and wicked men who are called true popes and are on the official list of “papal succession” *to this very day*. This is a giant red flag that something is very wrong.

I'll just give one example, although I could give many more. One such wicked pope was John XII:

“In his relationship with the church, John seems to have been urged toward a course of deliberate sacrilege that went far beyond the casual enjoyment of sensual pleasures. It was as though the dark element in his nature goaded him on to test the utmost extents of his power, a Christian Caligula whose crimes were rendered particularly horrific by the office he held. Later, the charge was specifically made against him that he turned the Lateran into a brothel; that he and his gang violated female pilgrims in the very basilica of St. Peter; that the offerings of the humble laid upon the altar were snatched up as casual booty.

“He was inordinately fond of gambling, at which he invoked the names of those discredited gods now universally regarded as demons. His sexual hunger was insatiable – a minor crime in Roman eyes. What was far worse was that the casual occupants of his bed were rewarded not with casual gifts of gold but of land. One of his mistresses was able to establish herself as a feudal lord 'for he was so blindly in love with her that he

made her governor of cities – and even gave to her the golden crosses and cups of St. Peter himself.” (*The Bad Popes*, page 43-44)

The Bible has a very clear standard when it comes to leadership. It requires that the leaders of the church be completely above reproach:

1 Timothy 3:2-4: “A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;”

The pope is called the bishop of Rome. Bishops *must* be blameless! God requires church leaders to be blameless. If they aren't blameless then they're no longer qualified to hold office and must be removed. The Catholic Church claims to be infallible and errant and yet this infallible church didn't remove these incredibly vile men from the papacy, nor did it strike them from the list of papal succession. John XII is on the succession list. This is another case where the commandments of God are made of none effect by the traditions of Catholicism. God has an extremely high standard for church leaders *and bishops*, and the Catholic Church ignores that and doesn't apply it to popes.

I will gladly trust the apostles, who lived incredibly righteous lives and were martyred for their faith. I'm not going to trust a church that openly violates the Scriptures and allows vile and corrupt men like John XII to call themselves Christ on earth.

(4) The Bible teaches that we're saved by grace through faith, not of works (which we've already covered). It also teaches that *only believers* (not infants) should be baptized, and baptism should immediately follow conversion. All throughout history there have been people who believed this – and for more than a thousand years the Catholic church hunted them down and killed them by the *millions*. Nowhere does the Bible even hint that the church has the right to put other people to death (or have the government do it for them). Jesus never killed anyone during His time in this world, and none of His apostles did either! God commanded the church to cast out those who were living in sin, *not* burn them at the stake. There are no verses which give church leaders the right to hunt down those who disagree with them and execute them, and yet that's exactly what the Catholic Church did – right up until it lost political power and could no longer enforce its will.

The Catholic Church hunted down and executed the faithful Paulicians of the 7th century for the crime of believing “sola Scriptura”, and it slaughtered the Waldenses in the 17th century. That means the Catholic Church was murdering innocent people for *a thousand years*. Even in the 19th century, when the Catholic Church had lost nearly all of its political power, the popes were *still* opposing societies who were distributing the Bible across the world! I'm never going to trust a church that has so much innocent blood on its hands.

I realize that in the reformation era the Protestant churches were also bloodthirsty. Because the newly established Protestant churches were state churches they also hunted down the “rebaptizers” and executed them. That's why I believe that the “reformers” like Martin Luther and John Calvin were *not* godly men. Instead they were murderers, and according to 1 John 3:15 “no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him”. I believe that Jesus was addressing the reformation church in Revelation 3:1 when He said “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou

lives, and art dead.” The Protestant churches murdered innocent people, just like the Catholic Church before them. They weren't godly or righteous at all, which is why Jesus said they were dead to Him.

That's why I align myself with the “rebaptizers” and “baptists” who were condemned and executed by both Catholics *and* Protestants. (I'm not a fan of the Puritans either for the same reason.)

I trust the written Word of God because it makes a great deal of sense to do so. I see absolutely no reason to trust the Catholic Church. Now, I'm not asking anyone to trust the Protestant church. Given their bloody history and legacy of heresy I don't trust them either. What I *am* asking people to do is to trust the Bible alone.

Catholic Question #4: Does the Holy Spirit lead people to the correct interpretation?

In 2 Peter 3:16 the apostle Peter said that some of the things Paul wrote are “hard to be understood”. If even an *apostle* found Paul's letters difficult to understand then I think it's safe to say that some parts of the Bible are *not* easy to understand.

That being said, I haven't found the Bible as a whole to be difficult to comprehend. There are a few basic principles which can be used to interpret nearly all of it:

1. **If plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.**
In other words, if the passage *can* be taken literally then it *should* be taken literally. When Joshua 8:28 says that Joshua hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening, it means Joshua hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening.

2. **Interpret Scripture with Scripture.** This means the Bible interprets the symbols that it uses. Instead trying to figure out what its symbolism means, use the definition the Bible provides. For example, Revelation 1:12 mentions 7 golden candlesticks, and Revelation 1:20 tells us that those candlesticks represent the 7 churches.
3. **Use the clear passages to shed light on the difficult passages.** If there are ten passages that talk about a doctrine and one of them is hard to understand, use the other nine to figure out what's going on. The reason this is safe to do is because God doesn't contradict Himself.
4. **Keep the context in mind.** Instead of reading a verse in isolation, take the time to study its context. What do the verses around it say? What was the author talking about? Who was it written to? When was it written?

That being said, it's impossible to understand the Bible without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is because the Bible is a spiritual book and its material requires spiritual discernment. Those who aren't saved lack the Holy Spirit and therefore lack the ability to understand the Bible. After all:

Romans 3:11: “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.”

How many people outside of the body of Christ can understand the Bible? None of them.

Should all Christians share the same interpretation? Absolutely. Do they? No. That's why God gave teachers to the church:

Ephesians 4:11-13: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”

The reason that preachers and teachers and evangelists exist in the church today is because we haven't yet reached the unity of the faith. We aren't yet perfect; we still need instruction. However, the day is coming when the Lord Jesus Christ will return to this world and transform us into beings who are incorruptible and perfect:

1 Corinthians 15:50-53: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet of God shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

When that day comes there will be no further need for evangelists and preachers and teachers because we'll finally have perfect unity.

At this point in history there are divisions. However, the apostle Paul taught that they actually play an important role in the church and should be expected:

1 Corinthians 11:18-19: “For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.”

Paul wasn't under the impression that the local church was going to be a place which was free of division. Instead he said there *must* be divisions so that those who were approved of God could be recognized. If Paul expected there to be divisions in the church then I think we can safely expect that as well.

Catholic Question #5: What are the non-essentials?

I reject the entire concept that there are “essentials” and “non-essentials”. God doesn't consider *any* of His words to be “non-essential”! This is what Jesus had to say about it:

Matthew 4:4: “But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Luke 4:4: “And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”

What did Jesus say that we needed in order to live? We needed *every single word* that comes out of the mouth of God. The Lord was quoting the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 8:3: “And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.”

Jesus could have said that we only need the *essential* words and the rest can be ignored. He could have divided His teachings into “things that matter” and “things that are of little importance”. He could have said that only *some* of the words of God are needed to live, and the rest are just there in case you happen to be interested. However, *that's not what He said!* Jesus taught that we need every single one of His words. This means there's no such thing as “essentials” and “non-essentials”. *All of God's Words are essential!* The Bible says this no less than three times.

If a teacher within the church is teaching heresy and won't repent then they must be cast out the church until they do repent. God didn't say that some heresies were fine while others were dangerous and must be stopped. Instead *all* heresies must be treated as abominations:

Romans 16:17: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

If someone is teaching *anything* that's contrary to what the apostles taught they are to be avoided. The church wasn't commanded to figure out which heresies imperiled someone's salvation and only take action against those. God doesn't want *any* heresy taking root in His church:

1 Corinthians 5:6-7: “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.”

In the Bible leaven is always symbolic of sin. God doesn't permit any sin in His church! Those who are living in unrepentant sin must be removed from the church immediately:

1 Corinthians 5:13: “But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

Is truth subjective? Absolutely not. However, am I going to trust the Catholic Church to tell me what the truth is? Not a chance.

Catholic Question #6: What is the canon of the Bible?

I reject the idea that the New Testament was left undefined until various councils decreed it into existence. The Bible doesn't derive its authority from the church, nor does it need the testimony of any particular local church or council to be considered true!

When I read the New Testament I see that it claimed to be authoritative from the very day it was

written. People accepted it as Scripture from the moment it came into existence. This can be seen from the way that Peter refers to Paul's epistles as scripture (2 Peter 3:16, which I mentioned before). It can also be seen from the way that Paul taught that his epistles were binding upon the church (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Was there disagreement in the centuries after Christ about which books belonged in the New Testament? Absolutely. During that same time frame there was also disagreement on *every major doctrine of Christianity*, including topics like the divinity of Christ. I don't think there's any spiritual matter in that era that *wasn't* the subject of arguments! It was a time of intense heresies and false teachers.

That being said, there's still disagreement over the canon of Scripture *to this very day*. In fact, Protestants and Catholics still disagree about the canon! If we're still talking about this today then that tells me there's nothing particularly strange about the fact that the early church had similar discussions. Of course they did.

The major debate about the canon, both in the past and even today, has to do with the apocrypha. In my opinion they're obvious frauds and should never have been accepted by anyone:

- None of them were written in Hebrew.
- None of its writers claimed to be divinely inspired.
- Jesus never quoted from any of them. (I've seen the claims that He did; I disagree.)
- They contract the rest of the Old Testament.
- They contradict themselves.
- They contain immoral teachings.

Even the Catholic Church didn't officially canonize them until the Council of Trent in the 16th century. (Incidentally, if the claims of the Catholic Church are true then it's difficult to understand why an infallible and inerrant church would take more than a thousand years to figure out what books belong in the Bible! That seems like a pretty basic thing to me.)

This goes back to trust. Do I trust the books of the Bible which are accepted by Baptists? Yes I do. I've studied them and have found them to be solid and trustworthy. Do I trust the apocrypha? Absolutely not. They're full of heresy and errors and are clearly of a vastly lesser quality. I've looked into some of the "lost books" (such as the book of Enoch) and have found them to be filled with nonsense that contradicts the rest of the Bible.

What really bothers me about this topic is how hard the Catholic Church worked to prevent people from owning Bibles at all. The popes are supposed to be Christ on earth and yet pope after pope condemned Bible ownership and executed people who dared to own a Bible. Given that history there's no chance I'm going to trust Catholicism to tell me what should be in the Bible and what shouldn't. If I had lived earlier in history the Catholic Church would have killed me for owning a Bible (and if they hadn't, the Protestant church would have killed me for getting baptized after conversion. That's why I have serious problems with both.)

Catholic Question #7: Is the Bible supposed to be the principle means of transmitting the faith?

Some Catholics claim that "Jesus didn't leave a Bible" – which is utter nonsense. Where do you think the Bible came from? Doesn't Revelation 1:1 start with the words "The Revelation of Jesus Christ"? Aren't the letters

to the 7 churches in Revelation 2 and 3 literally dictated by Jesus Himself? Of course Jesus left us a Bible! *That's the only reason it exists at all.* Denying that the Bible came from Jesus (whose name is literally “the Word” according to John 1:1) can only mean it came from men and isn't divine at all. Do I really need to defend the idea that the Bible is a divine book which was written by God and given to us by Him?

The Bible is the only source of divine revelation that we can trust. *There are no others.* I'm willing to believe the testimony of Jesus, who taught that the Old Testament was completely trustworthy. I'm willing to believe the testimony of the apostles, who knew Christ personally and were martyred for the faith. I'm *not* willing to believe the apocrypha or the “lost books” because they contract the Bible. I'm not willing to believe Catholicism because its teachings also contract the Bible.

There are many people in this world who claim to have new revelation from God. I reject all of them. None of them walked with Christ in person during His years on earth. None of them were eyewitnesses to His resurrection. None of them can raise the dead. None of them are apostles. For those reasons it doesn't make sense to trust them – especially when 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that the Bible is sufficient.

There's simply no other source that can be trusted.

Catholicism claims that the Bible couldn't have been God's plan for transmitting the faith because the first book wasn't written until 15 years after Jesus rose from the dead. I find this argument to be very strange. During the early days of the church the apostles were laying the foundation. They were establishing local churches throughout the world and appointing local church leadership. However, God didn't allow us to keep the apostles forever. Once the foundation of the church was laid He gave us the Bible, which is a perfect source of

divine revelation that contains everything we need. I don't find it strange that God waited until the church had been established to give us the Bible. By then the church was ready to receive it.

Catholic Question #8: Does God require people to be literate?

One argument which the Catholic Church uses is that God couldn't have intended for the Bible to be our primary source of divine revelation because throughout history most people couldn't read. For example, this is what one person said:

“For much of Christian history a large portion of the faithful were illiterate. Prior to the printing press scripture was not readily accessible.”

Of course very few people owned Bibles in the old days! That's because the Catholic Church did its very best to make sure that the common people *couldn't* own Bibles. The Catholic Church hunted down Bibles and burned them. It found people who owned Bibles and killed them. Popes issued decrees which heaped curses upon anyone who dared to own a Bible. The Catholic Church did everything in its power to wipe out Bible ownership all over the world. Catholicism worked *extremely* hard to ensure that the Bible remained inaccessible to the common people. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that the Catholic Church has put more people to death for owning Bibles than any other institution that's ever existed (including Communism), and has spent more years opposing Bible ownership than any other organization.

This quote from 1929 sums it up pretty well:

“The Western or Roman Catholic church has until recent times denied the Bible to the common people as far as possible. The Waldenses, a party of medieval dissenters from Rome which has maintained itself down to our own time, made the first vernacular translation of the Scriptures which was prohibited by ecclesiastical authority. Their translation, made from the Old Latin and Latin Vulgate, was known as the Romaunt version; and it was prohibited by the Council of Toulouse in 1229. This action was not taken because the translation was corrupt but because it was a vernacular translation. This policy of prohibition continued, being confirmed by the Council of Trent, in 1546, and by later papal decrees. Until quite recent times Roman Catholics could read the Bible in their own tongue only when they obtained special permission. This church dominated England in its early history, and naturally vernacular translations were slow in appearing.” (*The Bible from the Beginning*, p153 and 154, as quoted in *Rome and the Bible*, p46)

Here's an example from Pope Gregory VII (1073 to 1085). He prohibited making Bibles accessible to the common people in a language that they could understand:

“[He] forbade the use of the Scriptures in the Slavonic language... This pope stated, 'For it is clear to those who reflect often upon it, that not without reason has it pleased Almighty God that holy scripture

should be a secret in certain places lest, if it were plainly apparent to all men, perchance it would be little esteemed and be subject to disrespect; or it might be falsely understood by those of mediocre learning, and lead to error ... Wherefore we forbid what you have so imprudently demanded of the authority of S. Peter, and we command you to resist this vain rashness with all your might, to the Honor of Almighty God." (*Rome and the Bible*, p52)

The Catholic Church, which claims to be infallible and inerrant, didn't want the Bible to be translated into languages that everyone could understand. It enforced this rule *by killing people*, so it's not surprising that Bibles were hard to come by for a long time!

Popes were still condemning Bible ownership in the 19th century. Here's what Pope Leo XII had to say about the subject:

"Pope Leo XII (1823-1829), in taking the baton from Pius VII, did not miss a step in the papal march against the free circulation of Scripture. He issued a bull to the Irish Bishops, May 3, 1824, in which he affirmed the Council of Trent and condemned Bible distribution. 'It is no secret to you, venerable brethren, that a certain Society, vulgarly called The Bible Society, is audaciously spreading itself through the whole world. After despising the traditions of the holy Fathers, and in opposition to the well-known Decree of the Council of Trent, this Society has

collected all its forces, and directs every means to one object, - the translation, or rather the perversion, of the Bible into the vernacular languages." (*Rome and the Bible*, p255)

I could give many more examples. This wasn't something the Catholic Church did in secret!

The popes did a lot more than just issue decrees against Bible ownership. They enforced them as well, in bloody and horrific ways. Here's just one small example that illustrates what the Catholic Church did to people who dared to own a Bible. This took place under the reign of Pius IV (1559 to 1565):

"During these persecutions, in the city of Auinion, a bookseller was arrested for possessing Scriptures and Gospel books in French and Latin. The Catholic authorities had him arrested when they saw his books arranged for sale on the street. Just prior to his arrest, these same authorities, who were strolling through the city, had purchased an assortment of pornographic materials which they found nearby. Foxe describes these materials as 'bawdy images and pictures, with filthy rhymes and ballets annexed to the same, to move and stir up the people to whoredom'. When the bookseller was condemned, he testified, 'What greater blasphemy can there be, than to forbid God's most holy books which he ordained to instruct the ignorant, and to reduce and bring again into the way such as are gone astray? What cruelty is this, to take away from the

poor silly souls their nourishment and sustenance? But my Lords, you shall give an heavy account, which call sweet sour, and sour sweet, which maintain abominable and detestable books and pictures, and reject that which is holy'. The man was marched to his execution with two Bibles hanging around his neck, one before, and one behind him." (*Rome and the Bible*, p222)

These sort of scenes were commonplace for a *thousand years*. Of course Bibles were hard to come by! That was the official policy of the Catholic Church. It worked *very hard* to ensure that Bibles were impossible come by. It sounds to me like the Catholic Church is arguing that because they made Bibles rare by burning them and putting their owners to death, that proves God must not be interested in speaking to people through the Bible.

I think the real reason Catholicism opposed Bible ownership for as long as it possibly could is because the Bible is its enemy, not its friend. Since the Bible doesn't teach Catholicism, popes tried their best to keep people away from Bibles as long as they had the power to do so.

Catholic Question #9: Is there really an invisible church?

Jesus taught that the church seems to be larger than it truly is because it's full of false converts. The church which the world sees is the "visible church". It contains some people who are saved and some people who are not. The true body of Christ is a subset of the "visible church" and is only composed of those who are genuinely saved. The true church is only "invisible" in the sense that there

often isn't a good way to tell who is genuinely saved and who isn't.

It's true that local churches exist, their leaders have authority, and they can enact church discipline. I agree that churches must preach the gospel and minister to the poor. What I don't agree with is that there's a church office which has authority over more than one church.

The body of Christ is composed of all those who are genuinely saved. (I hope it's obvious that those who are unsaved are excluded!) That body of Christ is composed of a many local churches which are located all over the world. God has established offices within those local churches, but there are no offices which have authority over more than one church. Not only does this mean that offices like the papacy are unbiblical, but it also means that hierarchical denominations are unbiblical as well. God hasn't given anyone the right to claim authority over more than one church, and He hasn't authorized the creation of any organization that has such authority! Those who try to claim power over multiple churches are stealing from Christ, who is alone the head of the church.

Catholic Question #10: Didn't the church fathers teach Catholicism?

It's true that we have copies of writings from people who are called the "church fathers". It's also true that some of these writings support Catholicism. Does that mean we should accept Catholic doctrines? No, it absolutely doesn't.

The problem is that the Catholic Church only preserved the writings of the people *who agreed with it*, which isn't surprising. On top of that, the only teachings from those "church fathers" that the Catholic Church accepts are the ones it agrees with! There are a number of teachings from those men that Catholicism has chosen to ignore. For example, the early church believed in a literal

antichrist, a literal tribulation, and a literal millennium. Catholicism rejects all those things. Instead of believing what was taught in those areas they rejected it and believed Augustine, who taught amillennialism.

This means the Catholic Church has assembled a collection of writings that it agrees with, has selected from those writings only the portions that it agrees with, and has used that as evidence to support its claims. Of course those writings agree with the church! *That's why they were picked in the first place.*

When I read the writings of these “church fathers” I see heresy and errors. Since those people contract the Bible I reject them. I'm not interested in the teachings of people whose writings were preserved because they supported the teachings of the Catholic church.

Summary

Protestants and Catholics have completely different views of the gospel and the Bible. They disagree on how we become saved, how we remain saved, and what Christ accomplished on the cross. Those disagreements are large and serious, and it isn't possible for both to be correct. Either the Catholic Church is right and those who reject it are committing a serious sin, or Catholicism is from the devil and is leading people to Hell. There are no other options.

So let's talk about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation was given to us by Jesus Himself. Its purpose is to tell us about the future, and it contains information that's not found anywhere else:

Revelation 1:1: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and

signified it by his angel unto his servant John:”

This verse tells us that God gave a revelation to Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ then gave that revelation to an angel, who gave it to John, who wrote the book of Revelation. It turns out that Revelation contains one of the most important pieces of prophetic information in the Bible: it gives us the three signs which must be fulfilled before Jesus returns for His church.

You can read about the three signs in Revelation 12:1-5:

Revelation 12:1-5: “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”

As you can see, after these events take place the child (which is the church) is “caught up unto God, and to

his throne”. That means the church is taken out of this world after the events of the first 4 verses take place.

The three signs which are listed in this passage are:

1. A great wonder that's called the “sign of the woman”.
2. The woman experiences terrible pain
3. A wonder that's called the “sign of the dragon”.

The first sign (the sign of the woman) appeared on September 23, 2017. It's never appeared before and it will never appear again. The appearance of the first sign indicates that we're at the very end of the church age²¹.

The next two signs are still in the future. Sign #2 speaks of a time when Israel will be in terrible pain. I believe this is a reference to what the prophet Isaiah wrote. He said a day was coming when something very terrible would happen to that nation:

Isaiah 17:4-6: “And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim. Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel.”

²¹For more information on this topic see: <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SignsOfTheRapture.pdf>

Isaiah compared Israel to an olive tree that only had a couple olives left on it. Something is going to happen to Israel that will nearly wipe out the entire country. A few people will be left, but that's all. When that happens the second sign has come to pass.

The final sign speaks of a time when the devil himself will invade the earth in a highly visible way with his entire army of demons. This will happen immediately after the second sign. When the devil sees that sign come to pass he'll know that his time has come. When this happens and he invades, the world will be in a state of utter and total panic. People will probably think that aliens are invading – but it's not aliens.

Shortly after the devil appears, the Lord Jesus Christ will return and take His church (and *only* His church) out of this world (which is what Revelation 12:5 is talking about). That's when this famous passage will be fulfilled:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

The world noticed when the first sign came to pass; there were a lot of articles about it at the time. However, I don't think people understood what it meant or that it was the first of three. No one is going to miss the second sign; the destruction of Israel will surely make worldwide news (and it *is* going to happen, in spite of how hard Israel is trying to stop it). Likewise, no one is going to miss a

massive invasion of demons that are visible to everyone. That will cause unimaginable worldwide terror! When these things come to pass the Lord Jesus Christ will return. I think the gap between the second and third signs 3 will be very short; it wouldn't surprise me if they happened on the same day. I also believe the gap between the final sign and the return of Christ will also be quite short (perhaps just a matter of hours).

Revelation 12 doesn't tell us how long the gap will be between the first and second sign. All we can do for now is watch for the next sign, which is exactly what Jesus commanded us to do:

Matthew 24:42: “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

When the Lord returns He will remove from this world the entire body of Christ – the “invisible church”. I do *not* believe that the Catholic Church will be included. I also suspect that few Protestants will be taken because many Protestant churches are apostate. Based on the polling data that I've seen regarding what Protestants believe, I suspect that less than 10% of those who claim to be Christians actually are.

It will still be possible to be saved after the Lord Jesus returns and the church is gone²². All hope will not be lost! However, that's going to be a very dark time. It's far better to avoid what's coming by forsaking all false gospels and seeking salvation by faith alone, apart from works²³!

²²For more information on how to be saved, see: <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Romans-Road.pdf>

²³For more information on how salvation works, see: <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/How-Salvation-Works.pdf>

I realize that all of this may seem utterly crazy. It will probably continue to seem crazy until it happens. Once the second and third signs come to pass, the window to be saved is going to be incredibly brief. I've told you these things so that when they come to pass you'll recognize what's going on and can react. There won't be much time.

Part 2: A History of Catholic Persecution

Some people believe that the Catholic Church was the *only* church through the ages and this didn't change until the Reformation. However, that's *not* the case! As soon as Catholicism came into existence there were people who opposed it and believed in the gospel of salvation by faith alone. The Protestant church has always existed in one form or another, and the Catholic Church has always opposed it.

Persecutions During The First Millennium

Augustine (354 – 430) has been called the founder of Roman Catholicism because he was instrumental in establishing many key doctrines of the Catholic church. The Catholic Church has acknowledged him to be one of their major teachers and has canonized him as a saint. Augustine taught that the entire Bible should be interpreted allegorically, and that:

“the Catholic Church, in its empirical form, was the kingdom of Christ, that the millennial kingdom had commenced with the appearing of Christ, and was therefore an accomplished fact.” (Encyclopedia Britannica)

He is the father of amillennialism. He taught that the sacraments were an actual means of grace, that Mary was sinless, that infant baptism was necessary (and infants who weren't baptized were lost), that there was a purgatory, and that the church had authority *over* the Bible (as opposed to the church being *under* the authority of the Bible). The Catholic Church began its rise to power in the 4th century. It claimed that it was the only true church and

that it also had the power to *execute* those who disagreed with it.

Augustine laid the foundation for the persecution of Protestants by teaching that:

“It is, indeed, better that men should be brought to serve God by instruction than by fear of punishment, or pain. ***But because the former means are better, the latter must not therefore be neglected.*** Many must often be brought back to their Lord, like wicked servants, by the rod of temporal suffering, before they attain the highest grade of religious development.”

Leo the Great, the first Pope, drew upon this teaching from Augustine and declared that death was the appropriate penalty for heresy.

While this was going on a group called the **Donatists** formed and opposed Augustine's teachings. They taught that the church should only be comprised of those who showed evidence of repentance and faith. Because the Donatists (also called Puritans for their belief that the church should be pure) refused to join the centralized church system and rejected Augustine's teachings, the Catholic Church joined with the secular authorities of the day and *put many of the Donatist leaders to death* and forced the rest into exile. This pattern would be repeated many times during the next fifteen centuries.

Some people believe that the Bible didn't become available until the time of Gutenberg. That's actually not the case. There were a number of editions of the Bible which were available during the first millennium. A version in Old Latin was translated around 157 AD, and Coptic and Syriac versions were made around that same time. A

Gothic and Ethiopian translation was done in the fourth century. In the fifth century the Bible was translated into Roman, Indian, Persian, Armenian, Scythian, Samaritan, Egyptian, Georgian, and Armenian. In the sixth century the Gregorian translation was made. In the seventh century a German and Anglo-Saxon translation was made. The Persian translation was made in the eighth century, and the Bohemian and Slavonic versions were made in the ninth century. An Arabic translation was made in the tenth century.

In 660 AD a group called the **Paulicians** arose. This group had obtained a copy of the New Testament and sought to establish their faith strictly upon the teachings of the Bible. They rejected the teachings of Catholicism, and because of this they were hunted down by the Catholic church and executed (usually by being burned at the stake) *and their Bibles were burned*. This persecution caused them to flee their home of Greece and scatter all around the world. Wherever they went they were persecuted and executed by the Catholic Church. The Catholics took great care to burn their Bibles, because their Bibles had given rise to their faith in “Christ alone”.

Persecutions During 1000 - 1500

By the time the year 1000 rolled around the Catholic Church had become the dominant church of the day. The Pope had succeeded in controlling all of the churches in the Western world and imposed his dogmas on everyone, including the kings of the world. Yet through all this time there were groups opposed to Catholicism – groups like the Albigenses and Waldensians that the Catholic Church did its very best to hunt down and burn at the stake. These groups were hunted all over the world for a single reason: they wouldn't accept the authority of the

Catholic Church or its Pope, and they sought to live solely by the Word of God.

During the reign of **Pope Benedict VII (1012-1024)**, a synod was held at Toulouse “to consider the most effectual method to rid the province of Albigenses; and though the whole sect was in 1022 said to have been burnt, yet the emigrants from Bulgaria, coming in colonies into France, kept the seed sown, the churches recruited...” (Orchard, p. 178). The Catholic Church had done its best to burn alive every last member of this group of Christians and yet they still continued to grow.

What was this hated group like? A Catholic inquisitor wrote:

“They had the Old and New Testament in the vulgar tongue; and they teach and learn so well, that he had seen and heard a country clown **recount all Job, word for word**; and divers, who **could perfectly deliver all the New Testament**; and that men and women, little and great, **day and night, cease not to learn and teach**” (Orchard, p. 266).

An old manuscript outlining an 11th century Waldensian creed reads:

“In articles of faith, the authority of the Holy Scripture is the highest authority; and for that reason it is the standard of judging; so that whatever doth not agree with the word of God is deservedly to be rejected and avoided. The sacraments of the church of Christ are two, baptism and Lord's supper. That is the church of Christ which hears the pure doctrine of Christ,

and observes the ordinances instituted by Him, in whatever place it exists” (Jones, *History of the Christian Church*, II, p. 56).

For these beliefs the Catholic Church hunted them down, burned them alive, confiscated their goods, and burned their Bibles.

Pope Honorius II (1124 – 1130) stated this in his Decretals:

“And all heretics, of both sexes and of every name, we damn to perpetual infamy; we declare hostility against them; we account them accursed, and their goods confiscated; nor can they ever enjoy their property, or their children succeed to their inheritance; inasmuch as they grievously offend against the Eternal as well as the temporal king” (Wylie, *The Papacy*, 18988, p. 137).

What was their great heresy? It was rejecting the authority of the Catholic Church and refusing to bow down to the Pope. The persecution of the Albigenses began in the middle of the twelfth century, and a century later every one of them had been hunted down and executed. In 1146 a group of believers arose in the city of Cologne. They were labeled as heretics because they denied infant baptism, purgatory, the intercession of the saints, and other Catholic doctrines.

Around this time a group called the Waldensians arose. They translated the Bible into the common languages of the day (something the Catholic Church had strictly forbidden) and distributed it through the entire Western world. A 13th century Catholic Inquisitor by the name of Reinerius said this about the Waldensians:

“They can repeat by heart, in the vulgar tongue, *the whole text of the New Testament and great part of the Old*: and, *adhering to the text alone*, they reject decretals²⁴ and decrees with the sayings and expositions of the Saints” (Faber, p. 492).

For this the Catholic Church did its very best to burn them all alive. **Lucius III (1181 – 1185)** issued in decree in 1181 saying:

“We declare all Puritans, Paterines, Poor of Lyons [Waldensians], &c. &c., to lie under a perpetual curse for teaching baptism and the Lord's Supper *otherwise than the church of Rome*” (Orchard, p. 194).

These Christians didn't believe in transubstantiation, that the sacraments could save, or that baptism saved. Because of this they were labeled as heretics, hunted down, and burned at the stake.

Celestine III (1191 – 1198) ordered that those who believed in the Bible should be burned – *and their Bibles should be burned as well*:

“In 1193, the pope sent Guy and Reiner, two legates, into France, with instructions of the most saguinary description. Instead of making converts of the heretics, their orders were to *burn their leaders*, confiscate their goods, and disperse their flocks” (Orchard, p. 204).

²⁴Statements issued by the Pope, said to be binding on all Christians.

The **inquisition** formally began under **Pope Innocent III (1198 – 1216)**. By this point the persecution of those who rejected Catholicism had been going on for six hundred years, but Innocent III systematized it. He prohibited people from reading the Bible in their own language and ordered that heretics should be put to death. In the year 1215 Innocent III issued a statement that said this:

“that they shall be seized for trial and penalties, who engage in the translation of the sacred volumes, or who hold secret conventicles, or who assume the office of preaching without the authority of their superiors; against whom process shall be commenced, without any permission of appeal” (P. P. Callender, *Illustration of Popery*, 1838, p. 387).

Innocent III ordered that the Waldensians should be searched for diligently and executed *because they read the Bible in the language of the day*. According to a Catholic inquisitor, the Waldensians held that:

“They despise the decretals and the sayings and expositions of holy men and ***cleave only to the text of Scripture***. ... They contend that ***the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles is sufficient to salvation*** without any Church statutes and ordinances, and affirm that the traditions of the Church are no better than the traditions of the Pharisees, insisting, moreover, that greater stress is laid on the observation of human

tradition than on the keeping of the law of God.” (Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, I, p. 308).

The persecution of these people began in the 12th century and was still going on in the 17th century – 500 years later.

What did the Catholic Church do to these people for their rejection of its authority? One historian put it this way:

“Many of them were frozen to death, others were cast from high precipices and dashed to pieces. Some were driven into caverns, and by filling the mouths of their caves with fagots were suffocated. Others were hanged in cold blood, ripped open and disemboweled, pierced with prongs, drowned, racked limb from limb till death relieved them; were stabbed, worried by dogs, burned, or crucified with their heads downward. Fox relates one case in which four hundred mothers who had taken refuge in the Cave of Castelluzzo, some 2000 feet above the valley, entered by a projected crag, were smothered with their infants in their arms. And all the time that this gentle blood was flowing, that sanctified beauty known as Innocent III, drank it in like nectar from Paradise. Of the Wandensians and other murdered sheep of Christ, he said: 'They are like Samson's foxes. They appear to be different, but their tails are tied together.' The blood-thirst of the Dominicans earned for them the stigma of 'Comini

Canes,' or the 'Lord's Dogs'" (Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, I, pp. 311-2).

All of this was done by the command of the Pope – a man who the Catholic Church teaches is infallible in matters of doctrine and morality. This persecution continued unabated for *fifteen centuries*. Wherever Christianity went, the Catholic Church tried its very best to stamp it out.

It's not possible to do anything other than mention a small sampling of cases. Even a partial treatment of Catholicism's persecution of Christians would fill an entire book. Over its history the Catholic Church executed *millions* of people for rejecting Catholicism and believing in Christ alone. These heretics were sought in every nation on earth so that they might be killed *and their Bibles destroyed*. This isn't a matter of one or two isolated cases! This is a pattern that started with Augustine and continued for 1500 years.

To say that the Catholic Church executed millions of people isn't an exaggeration. One historian said this:

“In the year 1209, a formidable army of cross-bearers, of forty days' service, was put in motion, destined to destroy all heretics. ... The cruelties of these Crusaders appear to have had no parallel; in a few months there were sacrificed about ***two hundred thousand lives***, and barbarities practiced, before unheard of, all which met the approbation of Innocent the 3rd. Two large cities, Beizers and Carcassone, were reduced to ashes, and thousands of others, driven from their burning houses, were wandering in the woods and mountains, sinking daily

under the pressure of want" (Orchard, *Concise History of the Baptists*, p. 211).

The Spanish Inquisition alone, under the reign of Pope Paul IV (1555-59) is calculated to have claimed the lives of 150,000 people. Many of these died by unimaginable tortures. In the sixteenth century, as the Reformation began to get under way, it's estimated that 900,000 Protestants were martyred by the Catholic Church. In fact, the Catholic Church did its very best to completely wipe off the face of the earth entire groups of Christians: Waldensians, Albigenses, Lollards, and others – groups who had hundreds of thousands of followers – to the point of *sending out armies* to hunt them down and execute them. The Catholic Church did succeed in completely destroying some of these groups. In 1847 John Dowling, in his book *History of Romanism*, estimated that the Catholic Church slaughtered *50 million people* between 606 AD and 1850. Why were these people put to death? Because they refused to bow down to Rome and sought to live solely by the Word of God.

Catholicism's hatred of the Bible through the centuries is a historical fact. I've already talked about how the Church confiscated people's copies of the Bible and burned them; this is something they did for centuries. **Pope Gregory IX (1227 – 1241)** prohibited people from owning Bibles and prohibited Bible translations from being made. The **Council of Toulouse (1129)** and the **Council of Tarragona (1234)** forbade people to possess *or read* translations of the Bible that were made in the common languages (the only languages that people could actually understand). Those who were found to possess Bibles (or even portions of them) were *executed* and their Bibles were burned.

I don't have the time to mention every Pope that stood up to oppose anyone who dared to reject official Catholic doctrine. **Alexander IV (1254 – 1261)** issued 38

bulls against “heretics”. **Pope Urban IV (1261 – 1264)** issued an anathema against “heretics” and all who opposed the Inquisition as soon as he became a Pope. **Pope Clement IV (1265 – 1268)** enlarged the Inquisition and broadened its scope. **Pope Gregory X (1271 – 1276)** ordered that all copies of the Bible that were translated into the common tongues of the day to be brought to Bishops and burned. **Pope Nicholas IV (1288 – 1292)** ordered many punishments to be inflicted both on “heretics” and on those who helped them. **Pope Honorius IV (1285 – 1287)** enacted two laws against heretics and affirmed the prohibition on owning copies of the Bible. **Pope John XXI (1316 – 1334)** ordered the Inquisitors to hunt down and destroy the Waldensians, as did **Pope Clement VI (1342 – 1352)**. This went on, and on, and on, starting at the time of Augustine. Christians were already being persecuted when the Reformation broke out; after that the persecution only intensified.

For fifteen centuries the Catholic Church executed whoever rejected its authority, and burned any Bibles that were translated into the common languages of the day. All of this was ordered by men who claimed to be Christ's infallible and holy representative on earth (the Popes). For centuries before the Reformation the Catholic Church relentlessly persecuted those who rejected its authority and believed in Christ alone.

As the Reformation began to get under way, the **Council of Trent (1545 – 1564)** was held. That council was reaffirmed by the Pope during Vatican II in the 1960's, and it hasn't expired or been rescinded. I've already discussed some of the Council of Trent's teachings, but besides doctrinal matters *it also placed severe restrictions on owning Bibles:*

“Translations of the Old Testament may also be allowed, but only to learned and pious men, **at the discretion of the**

bishop, provided they use them merely as elucidations of the vulgate versions, in order to understand the Holy Scriptures, and not as the sacred text itself. But translations of the New Testament, made by authors of the first class of this index, are allowed to no one, since little advantage, but much danger, generally arises from reading them. If notes accompany the versions which are allowed to be read, or are joined to the vulgate edition, they may be permitted to be read by the same persons as the version, after the suspected places have been purged by the theological faculty of some Catholic university, or by the general inquisitor. ...”

“Inasmuch as it is manifest from experience, that **if the Holy Bible translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to any one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it**, it is, on that point, referred to the judgment of the bishops or inquisitors, who may, by the advice of the priest or confessor, permit the reading of the Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue by Catholic authors, to those persons whose faith and piety they apprehend will be augmented, and not injured by it; and this permission they must have in writing. But if any one shall have the presumption to read or possess it without such written permission, he shall not receive absolution until he have

first delivered up such Bible to the ordinary. Booksellers, however, who shall sell, or otherwise dispose of Bibles in the vulgar tongue, to any person not having such permission, shall forfeit the value of the books, to be applied by the bishop to some pious use, and be subjected to such other penalties as the bishop shall judge proper, according to the quality of the offence. **But regulars shall neither read nor purchase such Bibles without a special license from their superiors.**

“Finally, it is enjoined on all the faithful, that no one presume to keep or read any book contrary to these rules, or prohibited by this index. But if **any one keep or read any books composed by heretics, or the writings of any author suspected of heresy, or false doctrine, he shall instantly incur the sentence of excommunication;** and those who read or keep works interdicted on another account, besides the **mortal sin**²⁵ committed, shall be **severely punished** at the will of the bishops.”

These rules were affixed to the Index of Prohibited Books and were constantly reaffirmed by popes in the **16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.** These publications have never been rescinded. One person said this about it:

²⁵Remember, the Catholic church teaches that mortal sins will condemn you to Hell forever. Essentially this states that if you, a “common person”, dared to own a Bible then you were condemned to Hell forever. Let me repeat that: Catholicism actually taught that owning a Bible *would condemn you to Hell.* That's how much it hate the Word.

“It is true that the Council of Trent did not *absolutely* forbid the reading of the Scriptures. It did allow a few exceptions. The priests were allowed to read the Latin Bible. Bishops and inquisitors were allowed to grant license for certain faithful Catholics to read the Scriptures in Latin as long as these Scriptures were accompanied by Catholic notes and if it was believed that these people would not be “harmed” by such a reading. ***In practice, though, the proclamations of Trent forbade the reading of the Holy Scriptures to at least nine-tenths of the people.*** Rome's claim to possess authority to determine who can and cannot read the Bible is one of the most blasphemous claims ever made under this sun.” (David Cloud, *Rome and the Bible*, p. 214).

Persecutions During 1500 - 1900

The Catholic Church's attack on Christianity didn't stop at the Council of Trent. Its power to inflict harm was greatly weakened after the Reformation, but its attitude and edicts didn't change.

Pope Julius III (1550 – 1555) issued a series of bulls commanding the destruction of all heretical and Lutheran books. This included vernacular translations of the Bible. **Pope Paul IV (1555 – 1559)** prohibited the possession of Bible translations not permitted by the Inquisition. Those who were found to possess Bibles were executed. During his reign Inquisitors were dispatched from Rome to hunt down and destroy Waldensians. The Pope's Inquisitor-General, Cardinal Alexandrini, obtained a

small army of soldiers to pursue the inhabitants of San Sexto, who had fled to avoid their tormentors:

“Tracking them to their hiding-places, in the thickets and the caves of the mountains, they slaughtered many of them; others, who escaped, were pursued with bloodhounds, as if they had been wild beasts. A group of the fugitives climbed to the Apennines, which was an almost inaccessible retreat high in the mountains, and the army was unable to dislodge them. An edict was then issued by the viceroy, who was intent upon the destruction of these separatist Christians, promising a free pardon to all bandits, outlaws, and other criminals who might be willing to undertake the task of scaling the mountains and attacking the strongholds of the Waldenses. In obedience to this summons, there assembled a mob of desperadoes, who were but too familiar with the secret paths of the Apennines. Threading their way through the woods, and clambering over the great rocks, these assassins rushed from every side on the barricades on the summit, and butchering the poor Vaudois. Thus were the inhabitants of San Sexto exterminated, some dying by the sword ... while others were torn by bloodhounds or perished by famine” (Wylie, p. 116)

His persecution of Christians continued unabated:

“San Sisto was burnt; the women and children, subjected to every species of outrage, scattered through the mountains, where most of them were captured and sent to Cosenza ... Sentence of death was also pronounced against a hundred of the older women; the whole number of captives was reckoned at 1600, all of whom were condemned” (Lea, *The Inquisition in the Spanish Dependences*, 1908, p. 81-82).

“Some were thrown from the tops of towers, or precipitated over cliffs; others were torn with iron whips, and finally beaten to death with fiery brands; and others, smeared with pitch, were burned alive” (Wylie, *Histories of the Waldenses*, pp. 117-8).

“They were all shut up in one house as in a sheep-fold. The executioner went, and bringing out one of them, covered his face with a napkin, or *benda*, as we call it, led him out to a field near the house, and causing him to kneel down, cut his throat with a knife. Then, taking off the bloody napkin, he went and brought out another, whom he put to death after the same manner. In this way the whole number, amounting to eighty-eight men, were butchered” (Wylie, p. 117).

There are so many accounts of Christians being executed by the Catholic church during the Reformation that I can't include even a small portion of them. Many of

the means of execution were horrible beyond belief. All of this was done at the command of Popes.

Pope Pius V (1566 – 1572) ordered the complete extermination of the Huguenots (the French Protestants). Tens of thousands of Christians were executed on the bases of this command. The Pope wrote this in a papal bull dated March of 1568:

“If the crusaders die in the expedition their blood will serve them as a second baptism, washing out all their sins, and they will go with the other martyrs straight to Paradise”.

Under **Pope Gregory XIII (1572 – 1585)** the Massacre of St. Bartholomew (1572) was carried out, in which tens of thousands of Huguenots were murdered. The news of this massacre was met with celebration by the Pope, who decided to issue a commemorative medal to mark the occasion:

“The pope and his Cardinals proceeded at once to the High Altar, after the dispatches from Paris had been read in Conclae, to offer thanks for 'the great blessing which Heaven vouchsafed to the Roman See and to all Christendom. Salvoes of artillery thundered at nightfall from the ramparts of St. Angelo; the streets were illuminated; and no victory ever achieved by the arms of the Pontificate elicited more tokens of festivity. The pope also, as if resolved that an indestructible edifice of the perversion of mortal feeling which Fanaticism necessarily generates should be

transmitted to posterity, gave orders for the execution of a commemorative medal” (Smedley, II, p. 35)

By 1582 the Bible had been spread so far and wide by the Reformation that all efforts to stamp it out had failed. At this point the Catholic Church issued its own English Bible – the **Rheims-Douay**. Even though the translation was very poor, no Catholic was allowed to read it without a license. Between 1582 and 1750 (a span of 168 years) the New Testament was reprinted only three times and the Old Testament was only printed once. The Catholic Church didn't approve of an Italian version until 1778, a German version until 1830, or a French version until the 19th century.

The Council of Trent prohibited *anyone* from reading the Bible without a license. **Pope Clement VII (1592 – 1605)** forbade anyone from granting these licenses, thus prohibiting the common people from reading the Bible under any circumstances. He then sent “missionaries” to the valley of Piedmont *for the express purpose of destroying all Bibles in that area* and those who owned them. The Foxe's book of Martyrs records the activities of these Catholic “missionaries”:

This was followed by a most cruel order, published on January 25, 1655, which decreed that every family of the reformed religion, of whatever rank, residing in Lucerne, St. Giovanni, Bibiana, Campiglione, St. Secondo, Lucernetta, La Torre, Fenile, or Bricheraiisso, should, within three days after the publication thereof, depart from their habitations to such places as were appointed by the duke, on pain of death and confiscation.

This order produced the greatest distress among the unhappy objects of it, as it was enforced with the greatest severity, in the depth of a very severe winter, and the people were driven from their habitations at the time appointed, without even sufficient clothes to cover them: by which many perished in the mountains through the severity of the weather, or want of food. Those who remained behind after the publication of the decree, were murdered by the popish inhabitants, or shot by the troops, and the most horrible barbarities were perpetrated by these ruffians, encouraged by the Roman Catholic priests and monks... (Foxye, abridged, p. 163)

Nicholas Walsh was murdered while in the act of translating the first Irish New Testament. Others finished his work, and his translation was published in 1602. **Pope Paul V (1605 – 1621)** made it clear how he felt about all this in a papal bull:

“We excommunicate and anathematize, in the name of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and by the authority of his blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, and by our own, all Wickliffites, Hussites, Lutherans, Calvinists, Hugonots, Anabaptists, and all other Heretics, by whatsoever name they are called, and of whatsoever sect they be; and also, all Schismatics, and those who withdraw themselves, or recede obstinately from

the obedience of the Bishop of Rome; as also their Adherents, Receivers, Favourers, and generally any defenders of them: together with all, who, without the authority of the apostolic see, shall knowingly read, keep, or print, any of their books which treat on religion, or by or for any cause whatever, publicly or privately, on any pretense or color defend them” (Ouseley, *A Short Defense of the Old Religion*, 1821, p. 257)

The Pope made good on his word. During the next fifty years the Catholic church persuaded the governments of Europe to send out armies after groups such as the Waldensians and kill them. In 1655 the Marquis de Pianez led an army of 15,000 men out to hunt down and murder (in horrific ways) all the Waldensians in his land. A priest and a monk accompanied each party of soldiers to make sure that any copies of the Scriptures which were found were destroyed. One historian wrote this about the event:

“From the awful narration of Leger, we select only a few instances; but even these few, however mildly stated, grow, without our intending it, into a group of horrors. Little children were torn from the arms of their mothers, clasped by their tiny feet, and their heads dashed against the rocks; or were held between two soldiers and their quivering limbs torn up by main force. Their mangled bodies were then thrown on the highways or fields, to be devoured by beasts. The sick and the aged were burned alive in their dwellings. Some had their hands and arms and legs

lopped off, and fire applied to the severed parts to staunch the bleeding and prolong their suffering. Some were flayed alive, some were roasted alive, some disemboweled; or tied to trees in their own orchards, and their hearts cut out. Some were horribly mutilated, and of others the brains were boiled and eaten by these cannibals. Some were fastened down into the furrows of their own fields, and plowed into the soil as men plow manure into it. Others were buried alive. Fathers were marched to death with the heads of their sons suspended round their necks. Parents were compelled to look on while their children were first outraged, then massacred, before being themselves permitted to die" (Wylie, *History of the Waldenses*, pp. 143,44).

Why was all this done? Why were these people hunted down and murdered? *Because they believed that they were saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and refused to become Catholics.* Since they wouldn't join the Catholic Church, it did everything in its power to execute and torment these believers in the most horrible ways imaginable. All of these things were done by a church that claims *to this day* to be the only true church of Jesus Christ! These weren't wild rampages or isolated events; this was a systematic effort to execute every last Protestant on the planet, and it lasted from 400 AD to the 19th century. It only stopped when the Catholic Church, by the mercy of God, lost its temporal power and became unable to continue killing every last non-Catholic they could find. They weren't stopped because they had a change of heart; they were stopped because power was taken from them.

All of this is well-documented, and some of it was documented with *great pride* by the Catholic authorities who carried it out. For example, during the reign of **Pope Innocent IX (1676 – 1689)** the entire nation of the Waldensians was forced from their dwellings in the mountains by an army of around 15,000 men. More than 10,000 of them were murdered.

In 1693 a Catholic cardinal named Pasquier Quesnel issued a document suggesting that, in his words, “the reading of Holy Scripture is for all”. He suggested that it might be a good thing for the common people to read the Bible. **Pope Clement XI (1700 – 1721)** disagreed with this in the strongest possible terms in a papal bull:

“The suffrages of the aforesaid cardinals ... *we declare, condemn,* and reprobate respectively, by this our constitution, *perpetually in force for ever,* all and singular, the propositions before inserted, as false, captious, ill-sounding, offensive to pious ears, scandalous, pernicious, rash, injurious to the church and its practice... whosoever shall teach, defend, publish, or treat, even in disputation, publicly or privately... shall be subject, 'ipso facto,' and without any other declaration, to ecclesiastical censures, and the other punishments decreed by law against the perpetrators of similar things.” (Blakeney, *Popery and its Social Aspects*, pp. 76, 77)

Pope Benedict XIV (1740 – 1758) confirmed the Council of Trent's prohibitions against Bible translations. **Pope Pius VII (1800 – 1823)** *condemned* the Bible

societies of the 19th century – organizations that sought to give copies of the Scriptures to the common people:

“We have been truly shocked at this most crafty device, **by which the very foundations of religion are undermined**...we have, with the utmost care and attention, deliberated upon the measures proper to be adopted by our pontifical authority, in order to remedy and abolish this pestilence as far as possible...” (Elliott, *Delineation of Roman Catholicism*, p. 20)

The Catholic Church did *not* want people to own Bibles! The Pope was certain that Bible ownership would lead people away from Catholicism – *and he was right*. The teachings of the Catholic Church are blatantly unbiblical, and many Catholics who have studied the Bible have seen this and left Catholicism altogether. The Bible really *does* undermine the teachings of the Catholic religion because that religion isn't Biblical at all.

One Catholic bishop wrote this in 1813. He perfectly illustrated what the Catholic Church thought about the Bible:

“The promiscuous reading of the Bible is not calculated, nor intended, by God, as the means of conveying religious instruction to the bulk of mankind: for the bulk of mankind cannot read at all; and we do not find any divine commandment as to their being obliged to study letters. ... In conclusion, then, by dearly beloved brethren, I am confident you will **not encourage or countenance the**

distribution of Bibles or Testaments, among the very illiterate persons of your respective congregations, as proper initiatory books of instruction for them (Bishop Milner of Castabala, 1813: M'Gavin, *The Protestant*, p. 166)

Pope Leo XII (1823 – 1829) issued a bull in 1824 reaffirming the Council of Trent's prohibitions on Bible ownership and condemned the distribution of Bibles. As of the 19th century the Catholic Church hadn't changed its mind on Bible ownership in the least. By this point they had lost much of their power to execute those who held Bibles, but they still condemned it as strongly as they ever had. The Catholic Church condemned Bible ownership with perfect, unwavering consistency for 1,200 years. Romans 10:17 states that "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God", but the Roman Catholic Church did its very best to destroy every copy of the Word of God that they could find.

Pope Pius VII (1829 – 1830) condemned the Bible societies of his day that distributed Bibles to people (much like the Gideons do today). **Pope Gregory XVI (1831 – 1846)** ratified the Council of Trent's prohibitions on Bible ownership. The Catholic Church's attitude toward those who possessed Bibles hadn't changed: in 1843 on the Portuguese island of Madeira, a woman was imprisoned and condemned to death for being a Protestant and rejecting various Catholic doctrines (idol worship and transubstantiation). She only escaped execution when Protestants from other countries intervened on her behalf. Episodes like this were common in the 19th century; there are many instances of people being imprisoned for merely owning a Bible or not being Catholic.

Pope Pius IX (1846 – 1878) issued a letter condemning "those insidious Bible Societies". Even at this

late date, historians say that Bibles were so rare that many Catholics didn't even know what a New Testament was. Students who went to papal seminaries didn't even see Bibles during their stay. The **Vatican I Council in 1870** reaffirmed the Council of Trent's decrees and prohibitions on Bible ownership – and its teachings on salvation. At the time of the American Civil War the Catholic Church was *still* condemning ownership of the Bible and doing all that it could to stop those in its power from owning a copy of the Scriptures.

The Vatican I Council declared that all Popes were infallible and *could not be wrong*. The council issued this statement:

“We teach and declare that by the appointment of our Lord the Roman Church possesses a **superiority of ordinary power over all other churches**, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate; to which all, of whatever rite and dignity, **both pastors and faithful, both individually and collectively, are bound**, by their duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, to submit not only in matters which belong to faith and morals, but also in those that appertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world, so that the church of Christ may be one flock under **one supreme pastor** through the preservation of unity both of communion and of profession of the same faith with the Roman pontiff. **This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which no one**

can deviate without loss of faith and salvation.

“And since by divine right of apostolic primacy the Roman pontiff is placed over the universal church, we further teach and declare that he is the supreme judge of the faithful²⁶, and that in all causes the decision of which belongs to the Church recourse may be had to his tribunal, and that none may reopen the judgment of the apostolic see, that whose authority there is no greater, nor can any lawfully review its judgment.

“If then, any shall say that the Roman pontiff has the office merely of inspection or direction, and not **full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal church, not only in things which belong to faith and morals, but also in those which relate to the disciple and government of the Church spread throughout the world;** or assert that he possesses merely the principal part, and not the fullness of this supreme power; or that this power which he enjoys is not ordinary or immediate both over each and all the church and over

²⁶Notice that it doesn't say that *God* is the supreme judge of the faithful! Instead it claims that the Pope is. God isn't the head of the church; the Pope is. All Christians aren't bound to God; they're bound to the Pope. It's not God who's said to have the greatest authority of anyone; no, it's the Pope. This is blatant paganism and is very far removed from genuine Christianity.

each and all the pastors and the faithful;
let him be anathema²⁷.

“We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed; that the Roman pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, **is possessed of that infallibility** with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church. But if any one – which may God avert – presume to contradict this our definition: **let him be anathema**²⁸.”

²⁷In other words, if you don't believe that the Pope is God Himself, or if you disagree with what the Catholic Church teaches about the Pope, then you're condemned to spend eternity in Hell *no matter what your relationship with Jesus Christ is*. The Pope is said to have “supreme power”, “whose authority there is none greater”, and is “the supreme judge of the faithful”. According to the Catholic Church, believing in Jesus Christ won't save you. The Pope is God, and if you don't believe that you're lost forever. In Rome, near the Vatican, is the church of 'Our Lady, the mother of grace.' In its porch is the inscription 'Let us come boldly unto the throne of Mary, that we may obtain mercy.' Not the throne of Christ but the throne of *Mary*. Christ has been dethroned and Mary has been given his place.

²⁸In other words, if you disagree with this doctrine then you're condemned to spend an eternity in Hell. It doesn't matter if you believe in Jesus or not; that one act of disagreement condemns you to Hell

Interestingly enough, while the Vatican I Council was going on, someone in the council wanted to refer to a Bible but no one could find one. No one at the Council had a Bible – not the Pope, not any of the Cardinals, and not even the local Catholic Church. In order to get a Bible they had to borrow one from a Protestant Chaplain at the Prussian Embassy.

Why did this happen? Because in 1870, when Rome was made the capitol city of Italy, the Pope decided to make sure that no Bibles were found in the city:

“a papal law required that copies of the Bible found in the possession of visitors be confiscated” (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, VI, p. 727).

The Roman Catholic F. Curci stated this in 1879:

“The New Testament is of all books that which is least studied and read amongst us, insomuch that the greater part of the laity, even such as are instructed and practicing believers, do not so much as know that such a book exists in the world, and the majority of the clergy themselves scarcely know more of it than they are obliged to read in the Missal and Breviary” (Curci, *Avvert. Prelim. In N.T.*, cited in Littledale, *Plain Reasons*, p. 94).

forever. It's not enough to have faith in Christ and believe on His name! If you don't believe that the Pope is God then you're lost. The Catholic Church gives the Pope powers and titles which only God possesses. It has overthrown God and put the Pope in His place.

In 1897 **Pope Leo XIII** issued a policy that said this:

“All versions of the vernacular, even by Catholics, are ***altogether prohibited***, unless approved by the Holy See, or published under the vigilant care of the Bishops, with annotations taken from the Fathers of the Church and learned Catholic writers” (Jacobus, *Roman Catholic and Protestant Bibles*, p. 237)

What was life like in Catholic countries at this time? This incident is said to have happened in Catholic-controlled Brazil:

“A traveler across Brazil in 1902, who inquired carefully into the subject, found in a thousand miles bishops and priests in plenty, ***but not a single copy of the Scriptures in any lay home***; nor had most of the residents ***ever heard*** of the Bible, though they were able, willing, and anxious to buy a copy when it was shown to them” (Jacobus, p. 235).

During 1902 public bonfires were made of Bibles in Austria, Fiji, Pernambuco, and Peru. The Archbishop of Sucre in Bolivia suggested that a man who was circulating copies of the Scriptures should be executed for it. Even though the 20th century had arrived the Catholic Church hadn't changed its attitude toward the Word of God. The only thing that stopped it from burning Bibles and executing Protestants was that it had lost its temporal power.

Persecutions During the 20th Century

As can be seen, from 400 AD to 1900 AD the Catholic Church was unwavering in its opposition to the Bible and to those who believed that they were saved “by faith alone”. Pope Leo, the very first pope, declared that heretics should be executed, and in 1902 the Catholic church was still stating that those who distributed Bibles should be killed. In all those years nothing had changed. They had lost much of their power to murder Protestants and burn Bibles but, as can be seen by the statement of the Archbishop of Sucre in 1902 they hadn't lost their will – a satanic will that led to brutal and horrible deaths²⁹ for tens of millions of people. **No organization in the history of the world has persecuted Christians as long as the Roman Catholic Church.**³⁰ All of this stems from their belief that the Pope is God, that they alone are the only true church and the only way of salvation, and that all those who disagree with them should be converted by force – or executed.

The Catholic Church has changed her tactics **but she has changed none of her beliefs**³¹. Today the Catholic church allows Bible ownership but it supports the Critical

²⁹The Catholic Church bragged during the Spanish Inquisition that people actually died of fright just at being asked to appear before the Inquisition.

³⁰Has the Catholic Church apologized for the 50 million people that it brutally murdered? Not as far as I've been able to find. Instead the Catholic Church stated that the Inquisition wasn't actually that bad. You can read about it at the end of this document and decide for yourself.

³¹The Vatican II council, which was held in the 1960's, reaffirmed the Council of Trent and various other Catholic doctrines. What Catholicism believed during the 15 centuries when it slaughtered Christians by the millions is still held as truth today. Catholicism still claims to be the one true church of Christ. It still claims to have authority to add its traditions and dogmas to the Word of God. It still claims to have the sole authority to interpret the Word of God. It still claims to have an infallible Pope, who is the head of all churches. It still teaches that there's no salvation apart from the Catholic Church.

Text – a corrupted version, based on forged manuscripts taken from the Vatican Library, which is full of errors and doesn't deserve to be called the Word of God.³² Catholicism still teaches that the Pope can overrule the Bible by his decrees. If the Pope rules that Mary was sinless then that's the end of the matter, no matter what the Bible has to say about it. Catholicism teaches that the Bible is subjected to the whims of the Pope.

The Catholic Church teaches that only it can interpret the Bible (a stance it's held since it was founded) and believes that the Bible can only be interpreted in light of what Catholicism teaches. If the Bible says that all have sinned but the Pope says that Mary never sinned, then the Bible must mean that all have sinned except for Mary. This isn't letting the Bible speak for itself, nor is it comparing all doctrines to the Word of God! This is forcing the Bible to support whatever the Pope wants.

In 1929 Pope Pius IX and Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty. This made the Roman Catholic Church the “sole religion” of Italy. The Italian government also paid to Rome 750 million lire in cash and 1 billion lire in state bonds. **The Roman Catholic Church, in return, used its authority to put Mussolini in power.** It required all Catholics to withdraw from participation in politics (many Catholics opposed the fascist Mussolini) and the Pope commanded Catholics to support Mussolini. Italian Catholics did so, which allowed Mussolini to be voted into power. The Cardinals in Rome hailed Mussolini as “that

³²The Critical Text doesn't teach that the Bible is the Word of God. Instead it teaches that the Bible has been lost and all we can do is make guesses about what it really said. It doesn't teach “Thus saith the Lord”. Instead it teaches “Some manuscripts say this, but we may change our minds if we discover another manuscript” - thus reducing the Bible to a pile of guesswork which can't be trusted. For more information on this topic see:

<http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Concerning-Bible-Translations.pdf>

eminent statesmen [who rules Italy] by a decree of the Divine Providence.” Both parties benefited: the Catholic Church became the official religion of Italy, and Mussolini's Fascist party assumed political power. With this newfound power, criticism of the Catholic Church became a crime and religious education became mandatory.

In 1933 the Catholic church signed a concordant with Hitler. As a result of this concordant the Catholic Church received hundreds of millions of dollars. In return Pope Pius IX never excommunicated Hitler, who was a Catholic³³, and never once protested the ongoing slaughter of 6 million Jews. The Catholic Church persuaded German Catholics to back Hitler. Without their support it's unlikely he would have been voted into power. Catholic leaders of the day spoke glowingly of Hitler and the Nazi movement. When Hitler came to power Cardinal Michael Faulhaber sent him this note of congratulations:

“What the old parliaments and parties failed to achieve in sixty years your broad statesman's vision has made a reality of world history in six months. This handclasp with the papacy, the greatest moral force in the history of the world, signifies a mighty deed full of immense blessing and an increase in German prestige East and West, in the sight of the entire world.” (Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, p. 257)

³³It has been said that Hitler was a Christian. That is *not* the case! Hitler was a Catholic. He was raised in a traditional Catholic family, regularly attended Mass, served as an altar boy, and attended school as a Benedictine monastery. Even after Hitler came to power he continued to attend Catholic worship services from time to time. Hitler himself insisted that he was a Catholic, and the Pope never disagreed with him.

Pulitzer-prize-winning journalist John Toland said this:

“The Vatican was so appreciative of being recognized as a full partner that it asked God to bless the Reich. On a more practical level, it ordered German bishops to swear allegiance to the National Socialist regime. The new oath concluded with these significant words: 'In the performance of my spiritual office and in my solicitude for the welfare and the interest of the German Reich, I will endeavor to avoid all detrimental acts which might endanger it.'" (Toland, *Adolf Hitler*, pp. 431-32).

The Catholic Church encouraged its members to vote for Hitler (even though they knew who he was and his evil programs had already begun), and Catholics did so overwhelmingly. On Hitler's 50th birthday the Catholic Church celebrated and asked for God's blessing upon him. The Pope even personally congratulated him. When Hitler narrowly escaped assassination in 1939 the Catholic press in Germany almost unanimously declared it to be an act of special protection by God. Cardinal Faulhaber instructed that a special song be sang in Hitler's honor to thank God for his narrow escape. By this time Hitler had already invaded Poland, but rather than condemn him (something that never happened at any point while the Holocaust was going on) the Catholic Church congratulated him on his narrow brush with death. The Pope even encouraged all German Catholics to fight with Hitler!

Besides Hitler, Himmler was also a Catholic. He attended church regularly, took communion, confessed, and prayed. So was SS Colonel Rudolf Hoess, the commandant

of Auschwitz. It's important to realize that, far from condemning the horrible atrocities that were going on in Nazi Germany, **the Catholic Church actually helped bring them about.** The Pope didn't condemn Hitler; instead he **encouraged** him and helped him rise to power. The Pope refused to command the Catholics that were serving in the German army (a quarter of the SS officers were Catholics) to stop helping Hitler, stating that he didn't want to give them a crisis of conscience. In fact, after the war **the Catholic Church helped Nazi war criminals to escape** from Germany to South America. Instead of trying to bring these monsters to justice the Vatican issued them passports and helped them escape from the Allied forces which were trying to hunt them down. All of this is well-documented.

Why did the Roman Catholic Church side with the Fascists? The Catholic Church sees itself as the kingdom of God on Earth. It believes that it alone has the authority to rule over the nations, and it seeks the exercise political power – something that it's only recently lost. At the time it was clear that Communism was no friend of the Catholic church. Its ruthless atheism was viewed as a severe threat. Yet the capitalistic countries of the west weren't an ally either. The Catholic Church opposed the freedoms of conscience, religion, and of the press, and the Western democracies (all largely Protestant) held those freedoms dear. The only ally it saw was in Fascism – a group which was seemingly unstoppable at the time, and one that was more willing to align with the Catholic Church in exchange for support.

In Conclusion

There's a great deal more I could say about Catholic doctrine, Catholic history, and the modern Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is an evil organization which has

relentlessly persecuted Christians and spread a false gospel that is leading a billion people to Hell. Its power to inflict damage has waned over the years, but it's just as evil as it's ever been and its intentions haven't wavered.

Appendix A: The Spanish Inquisition

[The following description of the tortures of the Catholic inquisition in Germany in the 16th century is from J. Wylie's *History of Protestantism*, Book 15, Chapter 11.]

Turn we now to the town of Nuremberg, in Bavaria. The zeal with which Duke Albert, the sovereign of Bavaria, entered into the restoration of Roman Catholicism, we have already narrated. To further the movement, he provided every one of the chief towns of his dominions with a Holy Office, and the Inquisition of Nuremberg still remains an anomalous and horrible monument in the midst of a city where the memorials of an exquisite art, and the creations of an unrivalled genius, meet one at every step. We shall first describe the Chamber of Torture.

The house so called immediately adjoins the Imperial Castle, which from its lofty site looks down on the city, whose Gothic towers, sculptured fronts, and curiously ornamented gables are seen covering both banks of the Pegnitz, which rolls below. The house may have been the guard-room of the castle. It derives its name, the Torture-chamber, not from the fact that the torture was here inflicted, but because into this one chamber has been collected a complete set of the instruments of torture gleaned from the various Inquisitions that formerly existed in Bavaria. A glance suffices to show the whole dreadful apparatus by which the adherents of Rome sought to maintain her dogmas. Placed next to the door, and greeting the sight as one enters, is a collection of hideous masks. These represent creatures monstrous of shape, and malignant and fiendish of nature, It is in beholding them that we begin to perceive how subtle was the genius that devised this system of coercion, and that it took the mind as

well as the body of the victim into account. In gazing on them, one feels as if he had suddenly come into polluting and debasing society, and had sunk to the same moral level with the creatures here figured before him. He suffers a conscious abatement of dignity and fortitude. The persecutor had calculated, doubtless, that the effect produced upon the mind of his victim by these dreadful apparitions, would be that he would become morally relaxed, and less able to sustain his cause. Unless of strong mind, indeed, the unfortunate prisoner, on entering such a place, and seeing himself encompassed with such unearthly and hideous shapes, must have felt as if he were the vile heretic which the persecutor styled him, and as if already the infernal den had opened its portals, and sent forth its venomous swarms to bid him welcome. Yourself accursed, with accursed beings are you henceforth to dwell—such was the silent language of these abhorred images.

We pass on into the chamber, where more dreadful sights meet our gaze. It is hung round and round with instruments of torture, so numerous that it would take a long while even to name them, and so diverse that it would take a much longer time to describe them. We must take them in groups, for it were hopeless to think of going over them one by one, and particularising the mode in which each operated, and the ingenuity and art with which all of them have been adapted to their horrible end. There were instruments for compressing the fingers till the bones should be squeezed to splinters. There were instruments for probing below the finger-nails till an exquisite pain, like a burning fire, would run along the nerves. There were instruments for tearing out the tongue, for scooping out the eyes, for grubbing-up the ears. There were bunches of iron cords, with a spiked circle at the end of every whip, for tearing the flesh from the back till bone and sinew were laid bare. There were iron cases for the legs, which were tightened upon the limb placed in them by means of a screw, till flesh and bone were reduced to a jelly. There

were cradles set full of sharp spikes, in which victims were laid and rolled from side to side, the wretched occupant being pierced at each movement of the machine with innumerable sharp points. There were iron ladles with long handles, for holding molten lead or boiling pitch, to be poured down the throat of the victim, and convert his body into a burning cauldron. There were frames with holes to admit the hands and feet, so contrived that the person put into them had his body bent into unnatural and painful positions, and the agony grew greater and greater by moments, and yet the man did not die. There were chestfuls of small but most ingeniously constructed instruments for pinching, probing, or tearing the more sensitive parts of the body, and continuing the pain up to the very verge where reason or life gives way. On the floor and walls of the apartment were other and larger instruments for the same fearful end—lacerating, mangling, and agonizing living men; but these we shall meet in other dungeons we are yet to visit.

The first impression on entering the chamber was one of bewildering horror; a confused procession of mangled, mutilated, agonising men, speechless in their great woe, the flesh peeled from off their livid sinews, the sockets where eyes had been, hollow and empty, seemed to pass before one. The most dreadful scenes which the great genius of Dante has imagined, appeared tame in comparison with the spectral groups which this chamber summoned up. The first impulse was to escape, lest images of pain, memories of tormented men, who were made to die a hundred deaths in one, should take hold of one's mind, never again to be effaced from it.

The things we have been surveying are not the mere models of the instruments made use of in the Holy Office; they are the veritable instruments themselves. We see before us the actual implements by which hundreds and thousands of men and women, many of them saints and confessors of the Lord Jesus, were torn, and mangled, and

slain. These terrible realities the men of the sixteenth century had to face and endure, or renounce the hope of the life eternal. Painful they were to flesh and blood – nay, not even endurable by flesh and blood unless sustained by the Spirit of the mighty God.

We leave the Torture-chamber to visit the Inquisition proper. We go eastward, about half a mile, keeping close to the northern wall of the city, till we come to an old tower, styled in the common parlance of Nuremberg the Max Tower. We pull the bell, the iron handle and chain of which are seen suspended beside the door-post. The cicerone appears, carrying a bunch of keys, a lantern, and some half-dozen candles. The lantern is to show us our way, and the candles are for the purpose of being lighted and stuck up at the turnings in the dark underground passages which we are about to traverse. Should mischance befall our lantern, these tapers, like beacon-lights in a narrow creek, will pilot us safely back into the day. The cicerone, selecting the largest from the bunch of keys, inserts it in the lock of the mossy portal before which we stand, bolt after bolt is turned, and the door, with hoarse heavy groan as it turns on its hinge, opens slowly to us. We begin to descend. We go down one flight of steps; we go down a second flight; we descend yet a third. And now we pause a moment. The darkness is intense, for here never came the faintest glimmer of day; but a gleam thrown forward from the lantern showed us that we were arrived at the entrance of a horizontal, narrow passage. We could see, by the flickering of the light upon its sides and roof, that the corridor we were traversing was hewn out of the rock. We had gone only a few paces when we were brought up before a mossy door. As far as the dim light served us, we could see the door, old, powdery with dust, and partly worm-eaten.

Passing in, the corridor continued, and we went forward other three paces or so, when we found ourselves before a second door. We opened and shut it behind us as

we did the first. Again we began to thread our way: a third door stopped us. We opened and closed it in like manner. Every step was carrying us deeper into the heart of the rock, and multiplying the barriers between us and the upper world. We were shut in with the thick darkness and the awful silence. We began to realize what must have been the feelings of some unhappy disciple of the Gospel, surprised by the familiars of the Holy Office, led through the midnight streets of Nuremberg, conducted to Max Tower, led down flight after flight of stairs, and along this horizontal shaft in the rock, and at every few paces a mossy door, with its locks and bolts, closing behind him! He must have felt how utterly he was beyond the reach of human pity and human aid. No cry, however piercing, could reach the ear of man through these roofs of rock.

He was entirely in the power of those who had brought him thither. At last we came to a side-door in the narrow passage. We halted, applied the key, and the door, with its ancient mold, creaking harshly as if moving on a hinge long disused, opened to let us in. We found ourselves in a rather roomy chamber, it might be about twelve feet square. This was the Chamber of Question. Along one side of the apartment ran a low platform. There sat of old the inquisitors, three in number—the first a divine, the second a casuist, and the third a civilian. The only occupant of that platform was the crucifix, or image of the Savior on the cross, which still remained. The six candles that usually burned before the "holy Fathers" were, of course, extinguished, but our lantern supplied their place, and showed us the grim furnishings of the apartment. In the middle was the horizontal rack or bed of torture, on which the victim was stretched till bone started from bone, and his dislocated frame became the seat of agony, which was suspended only when it had reached a pitch that threatened death.

Leaning against the wall of the chamber was the upright rack, which is simpler, but as an instrument of

torture not less effectual, than the horizontal one. There was the iron chain which wound over a pulley, and hauled up the victim to the vaulted roof; and there were the two great stone weights which, tied to his feet, and the iron cord let go, brought him down with a jerk that dislocated his limbs, while the spiky rollers, which he grazed in his descent, cut into and excoriated his back, leaving his body a bloody, dislocated mass.

Here, too, was the cradle of which we have made mention above, amply garnished within with cruel knobs, on which the sufferer, tied hand and foot, was thrown at every movement of the machine, to be bruised all over, and brought forth discolored, swollen, bleeding, but still living. All round, ready to hand, were hung the minor instruments of torture. There were screws and thumbkins for the fingers, spiked collars for the neck, iron boots for the legs, gags for the mouth, cloths to cover the face, and permit the slow percolation of water, drop by drop, down the throat of the person undergoing this form of torture. There were rollers set round with spikes, for bruising the arms and back; there were iron scourges, pincers, and tongs for tearing out the tongue, slitting the nose and ears, and otherwise disfiguring and mangling the body till it was horrible and horrifying to look upon it. There were other things of which an expert only could tell the name and the use. Had these instruments a tongue, and could the history of this chamber be written, how awful the tale!

We shall suppose that all this has been gone through; that the confessor has been stretched on the bed of torture; has been gashed, broken, mangled, and yet, by power given him from above, has not denied his Savior: he has been "tortured not accepting deliverance:" what further punishment has the Holy Office in reserve for those from whom its torments have failed to extort a recantation? These dreadful dungeons furnish us with the means of answering this question.

We return to the narrow passage, and go forward a little way. Every few paces there comes a door, originally strong and mossy, and garnished with great iron knobs but now old and moldy, and creaking when opened with a noise painfully loud in the deep stillness. The windings are numerous, but at every turning of the passage a lighted candle is placed, lest peradventure the way should be missed, and the road back to the living world be lost for ever. A few steps are taken downwards, very cautiously, for a lantern can barely show the ground. Here there is a vaulted chamber, entirely dug out of the living rock, except the roof, which is formed of hewn stone. It contains an iron image of the Virgin; and on the opposite wall, suspended by an iron hook, is a lamp, which when lighted shows the goodly proportions of "Our Lady." On the instant of touching a spring the image flings open its arms, which resemble the doors of a cupboard, and which are seen to be stuck full on the inside with poignards, each about a foot in length. Some of these knives are so placed as to enter the eyes of those whom the image enfolded in its embrace, others are set so as to penetrate the ears and brain, others to pierce the breast, and others again to gore the abdomen.

The person who had passed through the terrible ordeal of the Question-chamber, but had made no recantation, would be led along the tortuous passage by which we had come, and ushered into this vault, where the first object that would greet his eye, the pale light of the lamp falling on it, would be the iron Virgin. He would be bidden to stand right in front of the image. The spring would be touched by the executioner ÷ the Virgin would fling open her arms, and the wretched victim would straightway be forced within them. Another spring was then touched ÷ the Virgin closed upon her victim; a strong wooden beam, fastened at one end to the wall by a movable joint, the other placed against the doors of the iron image, was worked by a screw, and as the beam was pushed out, the spiky arms of the Virgin slowly but irresistibly closed

upon the man, cruelly goring him. When the dreadful business was ended, it needed not that the executioner should put himself to the trouble of making the Virgin unclasp the mangled carcass of her victim; provision had been made for its quick and secret disposal. At the touching of a third spring, the floor of the image would slide aside, and the body of the victim drop down the mouth of a perpendicular shaft in the rock. We look down this pit, and can see, at a great depth, the shimmer of water. A canal had been made to flow underneath the vault where stood the iron Virgin, and when she had done her work upon those who were delivered over to her tender mercies, she let them fall, with quick descent and sullen plunge, into the canal underneath, where they were floated to the Pegnitz, and from the Pegnitz to the Rhine, and by the Rhine to the ocean, there to sleep beside the dust of Huss and Jerome.