

Catholic Concerns

Where Does the Road to Rome Lead?

Mary Ann Collins
A Former Roman Catholic Nun

CATHOLIC CONCERNS

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All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

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**“Prove all things;
hold fast that which is good.”**

(1 Thessalonians 5:21)
 (“Prove” means “test.”)

**“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.”**

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

**“Beware lest any man spoil you
through philosophy and vain deceit,
after the tradition of men,
after the rudiments of the world,
and not after Christ.”**

(Colossians 2:8)
 (“Spoil” means “rob” or “ruin.”)

Preface

Catholic Concerns is based on a lot of research. It deals with subjects that are often presented in a complex or academic fashion. I have tried to be simple and straightforward in my presentation, in order to be easily understood by people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

I have thoroughly documented the information in *Catholic Concerns*. You can study these issues yourself and come to your own conclusions. Much of my information comes from Catholic books and websites. I have also drawn from my personal experience with Catholicism.

This book confronts some touchy issues. I have tried to do so with compassion and objectivity, but sometimes I have had to be blunt in order to make my point clear. The Apostle Paul told us to speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15) I have tried to do that.

I want to make it clear that my problem is with the Catholic **system**—not the people. I love the people. The ones I knew were devout and sincere, and trying to live good lives.

There are Catholics who really love the Lord. I used to be one of them.

Communication

People think differently. Our minds work differently. We interpret what we read based on our knowledge and personal experience. If we aren't careful, we may make assumptions, or jump to conclusions.

Please don't read things into this book that I haven't said. For example, when I say that a person did something, all I am doing is describing actions that can be objectively verified. I am not attributing motives to people. I can't do that, because I don't know the people.

In *Catholic Concerns* I will sometimes tell about people who did destructive things. I am not judging those people. Only God knows their hearts. I am just giving you some historical facts.

For example, I discuss some popes who did bad things. What they **did** was bad. However, only God is qualified to judge the **men** who did it. There is a difference between people and their actions. Sometimes people who do bad things are looking for God, but we would never recognize it because of their behavior. The Apostle Paul is an example. Before his conversion, he persecuted Christians to the death.

I believe that there are two kinds of people in this world—those who know Jesus Christ, and those who have the potential to know Him. We should love people in the first group because they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. And we should love people in the second group because they need to see the love of God in us and through us. It is the goodness of God that leads people to repentance. (Romans 2:4) When Christians are loving, it demonstrates God's goodness.

An example of this is Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch woman whose family hid Jews during the Second World War. A man named Jan Vogel betrayed her family and reported

them to the Nazis. Corrie's father died in prison. Corrie and her sister Betsie were sent to a death camp. Betsie died there, but Corrie survived. She found out that Jan Vogel was in prison and was scheduled to be executed. Corrie wrote to him, telling him that she forgave him. She also told him about Jesus. He wrote back to her saying that if she could forgive him after what he had done, then he wanted to know her God. He was converted a week before he died.¹

Terminology

In this book, I often use the term “Evangelical.” There is some variation in how people understand the term, so I want to make my meaning clear. I use “Evangelical” to describe Christians who believe in: (1) salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ; (2) the importance of personal conversion; (3) the authority and credibility of Scripture; and (4) the importance of sharing their faith with non-Christians. In other words, Christians who have a Biblical worldview. That includes believing foundational Christian doctrines such as the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes I will talk about “false teachings.” What I mean by that term is teachings that are incompatible with—or contrary to—a Biblical Christian worldview. They are false from the perspective of Biblical Christianity. As a result, it is inconsistent for a person to claim to be a Christian and—at the same time—believe those teachings.

Am I saying that people who believe false teachings are bad people? Not at all. They may be charming, likeable, enthusiastic, and quite sincere. The Bible says that such people are “deceived.” I know a pastor who is a false teacher. I care about him and his family, and I pray for them. I also pray for the people who are influenced by him.

Let me give an illustration. A cat is not a dog, even though they have much in common. (They are furry, affectionate, four-footed creatures who make good pets. They are also meat-eaters who chase other animals.) Is a cat better than a dog, or a dog better than a cat? Pet owners have their opinions, but only God really knows the right answer to such questions.

My problem is not with cats versus dogs. It is with cats who claim to be dogs. And with dogs who claim to be cats. Dogs and cats are different kinds of animals, with clear and obvious differences.

Putting this in terms of religions, I can love and respect people of any religion or philosophy. Where I have a problem is when someone claims to be a Christian, but what they believe and teach is contrary to foundational Christian doctrines or the clear teachings of Scripture.

For example, if somebody wants to deny the Resurrection, they are free to do so. But to deny the Resurrection—and at the same time claim to be a Christian—is inconsistent. To do that is to demonstrate a lack of understanding of Christianity. The Apostle Paul said that if Jesus Christ is not risen from the dead, then our faith is “vain” (useless), we are still “in [our] sins” (unsaved), and “we are of all men most miserable.” But Christ is indeed “risen from the dead,” and therefore we will also rise from the dead. (See 1 Corinthians 15:12-26.)

Catholic Concerns is written from the perspective of a Biblical Christian worldview. It is written for people who either share that worldview or else are open to

learning about it. If you believe that the Bible is “just another book,” then I suggest that you do one of two things. You can stop reading this book and find something that is more appropriate for you. Or else you can read it with an open mind and ask God to show you His perspective about what I am saying. In addition, I encourage you to read *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell.

Some Practical Issues

You have my permission to quote from *Catholic Concerns* as long as you do it accurately and fairly. You may also distribute both electronic copies and printed copies of it. If you would like to post it on your website, I encourage you to do so.

I wanted to give you some good quotations from some papal encyclicals. However, I don't have permission to quote the material. So I paraphrased the information. You can read the encyclicals yourself, because they are online. (The Endnote referring to the encyclical will give its Latin name and the name of the pope who wrote it. Just do an Internet search for its Latin name.)

In referring to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, I used the classic 1914 edition. This edition has two advantages. First, it is online, so you can read the articles for yourself. Second, it was written before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Following the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church placed a strong emphasis on ecumenism. It made many changes in its outward appearance, in order to be more palatable to Protestants. The 1914 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* speaks openly and frankly about some things that more modern editions would probably avoid or water down.

My Testimony mentions that I left the convent when I was a novice. I never made vows. Some people have asked me why I refer to myself as a “former nun” when I never made vows. According to the 1914 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, if a novice has been accepted into a religious order (I was), and has been given a habit (I wore it), then he or she is a monk or a nun in the broad sense of the term.²

Contact Information

If you want to contact me, you can do so through my website, Catholic Concerns. (The website has the same name as the book. It has numerous articles and some eBooks.) You can also contact me by email. I welcome correspondence, but I don't do debating.

Website — **www.CatholicConcerns.com**

Email — **MaryAnnCollins@juno.com**

If you want to find information that I don't have, then go to Dr. Joe Mizzi's website, Just for Catholics. He has a search engine and you can find things using key words.

www.justforcatholics.org

Dr. Mizzi was a Catholic before he became an Evangelical Christian. Because of his training and experience, he is very knowledgeable about Catholicism. His website has numerous articles in eleven languages.

If you want someone else to be able to read this book, then you can give them a link to my website. (The book and the website have the same name: Catholic Concerns.) They can read it online or download a PDF file (an eBook). You can send people the eBook, or print it for them. And you can buy a published copy of the book at Amazon.com. (If you don't find it there, then go to the bookstore on my website.) If you don't have a computer, then you can order the book at Barnes & Noble. (They probably won't have a copy in the store, but they should have one in their warehouse.)

A Challenge

If you are disturbed by some of the things that I have written, I understand how you feel. I was a devout Catholic for many years, and strongly loyal to the Catholic Church. It grieves me to learn about some of these things.

If you disagree with what I have said, you are welcome to your opinion. We all have to do the best that we can to discern whether or not things are true. However, I do want to challenge you to do one thing. Please ask God what He thinks about it.

The Bible says that we need to test **everything** against Scripture. Therefore, as you read this book—or any other book—I encourage you to ask God to give you His perspective about the things that you are reading. We all need to habitually seek God for His guidance.

May the Lord bless you and speak to your heart as you read this book.

Mary Ann Collins
October 28, 2008

Testimony

I joined the Roman Catholic Church because I was looking for God. I entered the convent because I wanted to be close to God and to serve Him with radical devotion. But it wasn't until after I left Catholicism that I found the kind of relationship with God that I had been looking for all along. You can read about it in my poems (Appendix F).

My pastor and my father both advised me not to give out personal information. This testimony is an attempt to share my heart and my life within the framework of their advice.

I started out as a secular humanist who was prejudiced against Christianity. I had been taught that Christians were gullible people who were either stupid or uneducated. I looked to science, psychology, and politics to save mankind from its problems.

However, I did have some exposure to Christianity. There was a western movie on TV where a man was killed and the people went to his grave and read the 23rd Psalm. They read the entire psalm. I was deeply impressed by it. In addition, I was exposed to Christianity through Christmas carols and other music.¹

During my senior year in high school, I fell in love with a young man who was a devout Catholic. That was my first encounter with someone who strongly believed in God. I may have met Christians before that, but if so, I didn't know that they were Christians.

This young man prayed. He loved God. He was a man of principle and integrity. His life was guided by his religious beliefs. He had hope. He had a kind of compassion and respect for people that I had not seen before. There was something different about him. I didn't know what it was, but whatever it was, I wanted it. I figured that it had something to do with his religion, so I started taking instruction in Catholicism. The young man moved far away and I didn't see him again, but I continued studying Catholicism.

During my first year of college I majored in biology. I also studied French and Latin. I went to a local priest every week for instruction. Under his direction, I studied many books, including the *Baltimore Catechism*, C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* and *Miracles*, G.K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, and biographies of well known modern Catholics.

This was in the days of the Latin Mass, before there was a formal catechumen program. When I returned home for the summer, I found another priest to continue my instruction.

I was unable to return to college the following year. I found another priest to instruct me. For several years, I continued to study with that priest, while working to earn money for college. The priest gave me more books to study, including a series of booklets on Scripture. (There was a booklet for each book of the Bible. On each page, the top of the page contained Scripture and the bottom contained a Catholic commentary about those portions of Scripture.) I loved Scripture, and I read every word of those books, including all of the notes.

My job was close to a Catholic Church, and I went to Mass during lunch hour. I prayed for God to give me faith. I was praying, even though I wasn't sure that God existed. My very first prayer was, "God, if You're out there, show me." I didn't take communion because I wasn't a Catholic. I only said as much of the Apostles Creed as I actually believed. It was a long time before I could even say the opening phrase, "I believe in God."

After several years, I was baptized as a Roman Catholic. Soon afterwards, my brother also became a Catholic. His instruction was through group classes. I attended those classes with him because I was hungry to learn anything that I could about God.

I went to a Catholic college and majored in Religious Education. My classes on Scripture taught a lot of modern "higher criticism." Some of my other Religious Education classes taught things that seemed to be contrary to the official teachings of the Catholic Church. I found a priest at that college who was willing to help me, so when something that I was being taught in class seemed to be questionable, I asked him whether or not it was consistent with the official teaching of the Catholic Church.

I entered the convent for several reasons. I wanted to be closer to God and to serve Him more wholeheartedly. I wanted to learn more about God and to spend my life being more intensely focused on Him. And I believed that God wanted me to be a nun.

When I entered the convent, I was careful to choose a conservative one which followed the official teachings of the Catholic Church. My training for religious life included studying the documents of the Second Vatican Council, other books relating to Catholic doctrine, and biographies of well known saints.

I spent over two years as a postulant and a novice. This was a time of testing for the leaders of the convent—and for me—to decide whether or not I should make vows.

I was in religious life for a little over two years. I was a novice, but I never made vows. A novice is someone who has entered a religious order and has been given a habit. He or she undergoes training and "religious formation" in preparation for taking vows. (There are novice monks as well as novice nuns.)

My mother superior had some questions about my calling, and she and the leadership decided that I should not remain in the convent. I left the convent on good terms and have occasionally been in contact with the sisters since then. Those nuns were dedicated, self-sacrificing ladies who loved God and wanted to serve Him.

Years later, I realized that the convent was not a healthy place, either spiritually or emotionally. Our self-imposed penances, and our other attempts to make ourselves more holy, actually encouraged self-righteousness. We were not allowed to have friendships, or to be close to any human being. We were supposed to be emotionally detached. We were taught to love people in a detached, impersonal way.

This is not Biblical. When God said, "It is not good for man to be alone" He was referring to more than just marriage. The Bible encourages close relationships.

Our example of the perfect human being is Jesus. He was unmarried, but he was not at all emotionally detached. He wept publicly. His heart was "moved with compassion." He made many statements that showed strong emotions. He had special friends (Peter, James, and John) and a "best friend" (John).

Some people have asked me why I call myself a former nun when I never made vows. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, if a novice has been accepted by a religious order (which I was) and has been given a religious habit (which I wore), then he

or she is a monk or a nun in the broad sense of the term. So I refer to myself as a former nun.²

Our mother superior was careful about which priests she allowed to say Mass for us. We had priests who were loyal to the Catholic Church and its official teachings.

When I left the convent and went to live with my parents, I couldn't find priests like that. The local priests seemed to have little faith and little loyalty—either to God or to the Catholic Church. I remember one Mass where the homily (a short sermon) was so distressing that I left in tears. I stayed outside, weeping. But then I went back inside, in order to take communion. I tried every Catholic church in town, but I couldn't find a good priest.

I vividly remember a priest who spoke about Luke 7:38-50. This was the time when Jesus ate in the home of a Pharisee. A woman came and wept and washed Jesus' feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair, and anointed them with ointment. The Pharisee was critical of the woman. Jesus told him that he had not washed His feet, but the woman did. He had not greeted Him with a kiss, but the woman kissed his feet. The Catholic priest said that this event must not have really happened, because it would be rude for a guest to say something like that to his host, and Jesus would never have been rude. This illustrates an attitude towards Scripture which I encountered with a number of priests. It was very distressing.

Meanwhile, my parents had become Christians. They had joined a little Methodist church where the pastor believed the Bible and loved the people. Because the local Catholic churches were distressing, I started doing the splits. I went to early morning Mass (out of duty) and then I attended the Methodist church. When my parents joined another Scripturally based Protestant church, I followed them there, while still attending early morning Mass on Sundays. I did the splits for years.

I made myself go to Mass out of duty. But I went to my parents' church eagerly. I learned exciting things about the Bible there. I sang songs that stirred my soul. I took classes that made me more and more hungry for Scripture. I got to know people who were enthusiastic about God. I learned that Biblical principles really work, and that they make a significant practical difference in real-life situations.

As I learned more about the Bible, I began to realize that some Catholic teachings are contrary to Scripture. This was disturbing. At first, I pushed those contradictions to the back of my mind and didn't deal with them. They made me uneasy, but I wasn't emotionally able to handle the idea that there might be something wrong with the Catholic Church. I had strong faith in the Catholic Church, and was intensely loyal to it.

My brother was a devout Catholic. He assisted the priests at Mass for many years. We had a tradition that on Easter and Christmas, he and his wife would come visit and we would go to midnight Mass together. This was a Mass on Christmas Eve which ended shortly after midnight (very early Christmas morning), and a similar kind of Mass the evening before Easter.

One Christmas, at midnight Mass, the priest taught that the Christmas story as presented in the Bible is basically a pious myth to make people feel good, but it has nothing to do with history or reality. My brother got so angry that he wanted to jump up and shout, "Are we here to celebrate it or debate it?"

The next day, we went to church with our parents. The pastor there told us that Daniel had been in charge of the "wise men" of Babylon (the magi). Therefore, they

knew about Baalam's prophecy that the King of the Jews would be heralded by a star. Their religion included watching the stars for signs. So when they saw the special star, they realized that it signaled the coming of this special King of the Jews. Also, one of their functions was to decide who the valid king was if there was a controversy about it. So when they came to confirm that Jesus was truly the King of the Jews, they were fulfilling their official function.

Needless to say, the contrast was striking—and troubling. I did a lot of praying after that. By the following Easter, I had left the Catholic Church and joined my parents' church.

I didn't know what to tell my brother and his wife, because they were coming to visit at Easter, and I didn't want to go to midnight Mass with them. We had a long, awkward telephone conversation. Then I finally told them. They started laughing. They had also left the Catholic Church, and were in the process of visiting different churches, trying to find a church home. And they didn't know how to tell me about it.

I used to be all tied up in rules, regulations, and rituals. But now I have found a wonderful, vibrant, personal relationship with the Creator of the universe, who loves me. And with Jesus Christ, who loves me so much that He died for me. And He has put a new song in my heart:

*Your Word brings life to save my soul.
Your Truth brings light to make me whole.*

*Your perfect love casts out my fears,
Comforts me, and dries my tears.*

*I'm in the shadow of Your wings
Where you teach my heart to sing.*

*Safe and secure from all alarm,
Your faithful love keeps me from harm.*

*I will bless You all my days.
You fill my heart with songs of praise.*

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Chapter 1

Competing Worldviews

Catholicism teaches some things that are Scriptural (such as the Resurrection of Jesus Christ). However, it does not have a Biblical worldview. This is because, according to Catholic doctrine, the traditions of men are more important than Scripture. As a result, Catholicism is influenced by unscriptural philosophies, unbiblical practices, and non-Christian religions.

These will be discussed later. Right now, I want to deal with some principles that will help explain how the priests and nuns in the next chapter wound up mixing Catholicism with non-Christian religions, and how Catholic theologians wound up wandering so far from Biblical truth. These principles are also helpful in understanding how unscriptural beliefs and practices are getting into some Evangelical churches.

Today there are a number of unscriptural worldviews that have influenced churches and individual Christians. One result is that many Evangelicals are becoming interested in Catholic mysticism and other aspects of Catholicism.

In today's ecumenical world, it is becoming more and more important that people understand Catholicism. That is why I wrote *Catholic Concerns*.

If you are a Catholic, then please read Appendix A ("For Catholics") before reading any more of this book.

If you are a former Catholic, then please read Appendix B ("For Former Catholics") after you have read the rest of the book.

Whatever your religious background, please pray as you read *Catholic Concerns*. Please ask God to show you His perspective about the things that are discussed here. I have done my best to be fair and accurate, but only God has the full truth. Only He fully understands the big picture. That's why I want the Lord to speak to your heart as you read this book. (Or any other book about religion.)

The Importance of Worldviews

The worldview of Christians should be based on the Bible—and on their understanding of, and relationship with, the Lord Jesus Christ. However, we live in a world with many other beliefs, values, and ways of thinking. These beliefs and values are continually presented to us through secular education, newspapers, magazines, movies, books, television, and video games.

Some worldviews are: Christianity, Islam, secular humanism, Marxism-Leninism (communism), the New Age movement, and postmodernism. (The New Age Movement is also called "the new spirituality," the Age of Aquarius, and cosmic humanism.) Each of these worldviews has a different approach to theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics, and history.¹

These various worldviews can have a significant impact on our practical daily lives. For example, in the United States, humanism is a tax-exempt religion.² It has been actively promoted by the media, by Hollywood, and in the public school system.

Secular humanist John Dunphy wrote an article titled “A Religion for a New Age” which was published in *The Humanist* magazine.³ He said that public school teachers should be “ministers” who use their classrooms “to convey humanist values in whatever subject they teach, regardless of the educational level—preschool, daycare, or large state university.” Dunphy said that the teachers should replace Christianity with the “new faith of humanism.” In 1994, Dunphy wrote an article for the *Secular Humanist Bulletin* in which he repeated and reinforced his previous statements.⁴

John Dewey is the “Father of Modern Education.” He is also one of the signers of *The Humanist Manifesto*.⁵ The original *Humanist Manifesto* (1933) said, “the time has passed for theism [belief in God].” A second version of the *Humanist Manifesto* (1980) said, “As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.” It also said, “No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”⁶

Dewey openly admitted that secular humanism is a religion. In his book *A Common Faith* he said, “Here are all the elements for a religious faith...”⁷

Worldviews have practical consequences. John Dewey, the Father of Modern Education, was an atheist who wanted to replace belief in God with the religion of secular humanism. Therefore, it is not surprising that many children who were raised in Christian homes no longer practice their family’s faith when they become adults.

Competing worldviews can influence the beliefs and practices of Christians. For example, the New Age (“the new spirituality”) teaches moral relativism. This is directly opposed to the moral absolutes of Christianity. In spite of that, New Age beliefs and practices are getting into modern churches. You can read about it in *A Time of Departing* by Ray Yungen.⁸

Even postmodernism is getting into some churches. The emergent church is led by a group of influential men “who are incorporating elements of Postmodernism within their theology.” They deny the inerrancy of Scripture, and they are skeptical about some foundational Christian doctrines.⁹ You can read about the emerging church and its influence in *Faith Undone* by Roger Oakland.¹⁰

After some Christian authors showed that the New Age movement is contrary to Biblical Christianity, then New Age leaders stopped using that term to describe themselves. Now they use terms such as “the new spirituality.” The vocabulary changed, but the beliefs and practices remained the same. I would not be surprised if something similar happens with the emergent church movement.

There is another worldview that is influencing individual Christians and some churches. It is Neopaganism. This includes Wicca, modern Druids, and groups such as the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans.

Wicca is the largest Neopagan movement. It involves nature worship, goddess worship, and witchcraft.¹¹ I know some Christian parents whose children became involved in Wicca through the influence of students at their schools. Wicca is a rapidly growing religion that can be studied and practiced on the Internet. There are “virtual covens” where young people can practice the Wiccan religion online without the knowledge of their parents.¹²

Wiccan beliefs and practices are getting into mainline denominations. For example, two Methodist clergywomen participated in a “crowning ritual” (a witchcraft initiation ritual). They both wrote articles praising their experience in *Wellsprings*, a journal for Methodist clergywomen. When contacted by *Insight on the News*, both women confirmed their participation in the crowning ritual, and said that their bishop (a woman) had also participated. When the bishop was contacted, she said that she “witnessed many crowning rituals.”¹³

Some churches use a ten-session workshop called Cakes for the Queen of Heaven. It encourages goddess worship and endorses witchcraft. The movie *Goddess Remembered* is used in some church study groups.¹⁴

In November 1993, a Re-imagining Conference was held in Minneapolis. Most of the 2,000 participants were women. It was an ecumenical church conference attended by Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and members of almost a dozen other denominations. They invoked Sophia, the Goddess of Wisdom, calling her their Creator. Prayers and liturgies were addressed to this goddess. Communion consisted of milk and honey instead of bread and wine. They openly rejected the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement.¹⁵

It is interesting that two things are happening at the same time. Some Christians are losing their faith in the supernatural events described in the Bible. Meanwhile, other Christians are developing a faith in the supernatural teachings of Neopaganism and the New Age movement (the “new spirituality”). For example, I met a woman who claims to be Christian, but the soap opera *Charmed* seems to have more influence on her worldview than the Bible does.

Then and Now

Non-Christian worldviews (especially humanism) have influenced the beliefs, assumptions, and daily lives of Christians in America and other western nations. We have changed more than most people realize.

To get some idea of how much our thinking and behavior has changed, let’s compare some modern beliefs and behavior with those of times past.

Go back to 1950. That’s 58 years ago. If you weren’t alive then, you can get some idea of what things were like by watching movies from that period or reading books about it.

In 1950, the most common disciplinary problems in the schools were talking in class and chewing gum. The overwhelming majority of people were virgins when they got married. Divorce was highly unusual. When people got married, they expected to stay together, no matter what.

Back in 1950, watching sex was not an acceptable form of entertainment. In the movies, if there was a love scene, you saw the couple together and then the picture changed or faded out. You might see a kiss, but that was it. Parents back then would have been appalled if their children saw the kinds of things that have become commonplace in movies and television today.

Charles Spurgeon preached until his death in 1892. That was 116 years ago. When he preached, every seat in his church was filled, and people who couldn’t get seats

stood in the aisles. Some people walked for miles to get to his church, stood for a two-hour service, and then walked home again. And they were grateful to be able to do it. There was no fellowship hall, no coffee, no smiling greeters at the doors, and no opportunity to shake the pastor's hand or talk with him. Back then, people took God seriously. They prayed and read their Bibles at home, and when they went to church, they went there to do business with God—not to socialize.

All Worldviews Are Not Equal

We should love and respect people whose worldviews are different from ours. However, we should not compromise our own worldview in order to do it. We can love people and still disagree with them.

People are free to believe whatever they want to believe. However, there is only one correct worldview. And we will know what it is when we die.

- If the secular humanists are right, then we will just cease to exist. But if they are wrong, then we will keep on existing.
- If the New Agers and Hindus are right, then that continuing existence will be reincarnation. But if they are wrong, then we will be in either Heaven or Hell.
- If the Bible is true, then Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven.

The stakes are tremendous—and eternal.

A Biblical Worldview

Biblical Christianity is based on having a Biblical worldview. That means believing that the Bible is credible and authoritative, and that it is given by God through the Holy Spirit. The Apostles Paul and Peter said,

“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.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17, emphasis added)

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” (Romans 15:4)

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but **holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**” (2 Peter 1:21, emphasis added)

So Scripture comes from God. Therefore, whenever possible, we should use Scripture to understand Scripture. That way we will get God's perspective on it, rather than our own limited human perspective (or the limited perspective of someone else).

Jesus said that His words would last forever. The world that we know will pass away, but His words won't. In addition, there are times when the writers of the Bible clearly asserted that their words came directly from God. For example:

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."
(Matthew 24:35, emphasis added)

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;" (1 Timothy 4:1, emphasis added)

"And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Speak to the children of Israel and say unto them..." (Leviticus 1:1-2, emphasis added)

"Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying..." (Jeremiah 1:4, 13:8, 18:5, 28:12, 36:27; Ezekiel 33:23, emphasis added)

"...this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Take thee a roll of a book [a scroll], and **write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee...**" (Jeremiah 36:1-2, emphasis added)

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deuteronomy 18:18, emphasis added)

The Bible is the Word of God, and it is our greatest treasure. It is the key to knowing God and having a right relationship with Him, and it brings joy to those who love the Lord. Psalms 19 and 119 say,

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:7-11)

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts, and

have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.” (Psalm 119:11-16)

Jesus and the apostles warned us that persuasive people will try to deceive us. Here are a few examples:

“And Jesus answered and said to them, **Take heed that no man deceive you.**” (Matthew 24:4, emphasis added)

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as **there shall be false teachers among you**, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And **many shall follow their pernicious ways**; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” (2 Peter 2:1-2, emphasis added)

“Behold, I come quickly: **hold fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.**” (Revelation 3:11, emphasis added)

“For they that are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and **by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.**” (Romans 16:18, emphasis added)

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times **some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;**” (1 Timothy 4:1, emphasis added)

“**Let no man deceive you with vain words:** for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” (Ephesians 5:6-7, emphasis added)

“**Beware lest any man spoil you** through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (Colossians 2:8, emphasis added)

“Let no man **beguile you of your reward...**” (Colossians 2:18a, emphasis added)

According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, the word “spoil” means to “damage seriously,” to “rob,” to “ruin.” The word “beguile” means to “deceive,” to “hoodwink,” to “deprive by guile,” to “cheat.” So Paul says that Christians have something precious, and they need to be careful not to allow it to be taken away from them by deception. They need to be vigilant, and avoid being defrauded by smooth-talking, persuasive people.

We are strongly warned not to add to Scripture or take away from it. Unfortunately, both adding and taking away have been done by Catholics, liberal Protestants, emergent church leaders, and others. Please note the following warnings:

“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.” (Deuteronomy 4:2, emphasis added)

“What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” (Deuteronomy 12:32, emphasis added)

“Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” (Proverbs 30:5-6, emphasis added)

“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.” (Revelation 22:18b-19, emphasis added)

Thanks to the widespread influence of humanism, many people today have difficulty really believing the Bible. If you are one of them, then please read Josh McDowell’s book *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. It’s an in-depth study of evidence for the credibility and reliability of the Bible. In 1999 he published a revised and expanded edition titled *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict: Fully Updated to Answer the Questions Challenging Christians Today*. Both editions give historical and archeological evidence for the credibility, reliability, and accuracy of the Bible. They also show how some Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled.

Also, please read Josh McDowell’s book *More Than a Carpenter*. This is a short, easy-to-read book about the Resurrection, which is an absolutely essential Christian doctrine. The Apostle Paul said,

“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”
(1 Corinthians 15:17-22)

In addition, you can read the Internet article “Archeological and Historical Evidence for Biblical Accuracy.”

www.catholicconcerns.com/Archaeology.html

Please note that I am only recommending two particular books by Josh McDowell. I can't recommend the author himself because people can change. I don't know what conferences he may have attended, or what friends or authors may have influenced him. I don't know whether or not his worldview is still Scriptural.

Some well respected Evangelicals are being influenced by the emergent church. In one case, a man's son went to seminary and was influenced by an emergent professor. Then the son influenced his father, who is a pastor and an author. Then the father preached a series of sermons to take his congregation through a "paradigm shift" into emergent thinking.

People can change, and churches can change. Therefore, we have to be like the Bereans and test **everything** against Scripture. (See Acts 17:10-12)

In order to be able to do that, we have to have a good working knowledge of Scripture. That requires reading it regularly. It also requires reading large portions of it at a time, so that we can understand things in context.

During the Temptation in the Wilderness, the devil tempted Jesus to turn some stones into bread. Jesus answered, "It is written..." After that, the devil used Scripture to tempt Jesus—he told Jesus to throw Himself down from the top of the Temple, saying, "It is written..." And Jesus replied, "It is written again..."

Sometimes things in Scripture have to be kept in balance. "It is written" gives one aspect of it, and "It is written again" gives another aspect of it.

For example, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away." That's a good general principle. We should help the needy. However, there are so many poor people in the world that if word got around that we gave to everybody who asked, needy people would flock to us. And if we gave them everything that they asked for, we would wind up with nothing ourselves. We would become homeless beggars. Another Scripture verse gives balance to what Jesus said. The Apostle Paul tells us, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Timothy 5:8)

So there is a balance here. On the one hand, we should have hearts that are willing to give. But we also need to use good judgment when giving, so that we can provide adequately for our families. It is written, "Give to him that asketh thee..." But it is also written, "But if any provide not for his own, specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

In applying Scripture, we need to pray, use good judgment, and look for other Scripture passages that give further insight.

Common Sense and Scripture

We can't live according to Scripture unless we have confidence that it means what it says, that it is reliable, and that it is credible.

Many problems that people have with Scripture are caused by heeding Scripture "experts" who don't use common sense. For example, Jesus gave the "Sermon on the Mount" and the "Sermon on the Plain." Some "experts" consider that to be a

contradiction. Was it a mount or a plain? They have forgotten something. Jesus was a traveling preacher who taught for three years. Therefore, He taught from many mounts, and many plains, and from ships, and from seashores, and in houses, and from every kind of place that a person could preach from.

Similarly, some people raise questions because Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have different versions of a parable or a teaching. Again, they have forgotten that Jesus was a real live preacher. And in real life, traveling preachers use the same teachings and illustrations many times, with variations in how they present them.

Some people are troubled if Matthew, Mark, Luke or John have differences in how they relate something that happened. For example, with the beggar Blind Bartimaeus, one of the Gospels mentions two blind men but the others only mention one blind man. Well, in real life, if you had five people witness an event and write about it, you would have variations in the reports. Different people would focus on different things. And as far as the number of blind men goes, there were many beggars on the roadsides, and some of them were blind. It would not be unusual for a blind beggar like Bartimaeus to have friends who were also blind beggars, and to want to be with his friends. So one account mentions Bartimaeus' fellow beggar, and the other accounts don't. There is nothing unusual about that. It's the kind of thing that often happens in real life.

Another thing that causes problems for some people is differences of writing style in Paul's letters. In real life, writing style and vocabulary depends on who we are writing to and on the subject matter. We should expect Paul to write to Gentiles differently than he writes to Jews. We should expect him to write to mature Christians differently than he writes to immature Christians who are having a lot of problems. We should expect him to write to Timothy (a fellow minister who was close to him) differently than he would write to people he hasn't met.

Think about your own letters and emails. Would you write to your boss the same way that you write to your son or your daughter? Would you write to a nonbeliever the same way that you write to your pastor? Would you write about a football game the same way that you write about a research project you are doing at school?

Sometimes Greek verb tenses can cause confusion. For example, 1 John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." So John is saying that we all sin. But later, in 1 John 3:6 he says, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." Now that could be confusing. The problem is the Greek verb tense. 1 John 3:6 is saying that if we abide in Him we do not **keep on** sinning. It's not a one-time event. It's a lifestyle. Any Christian can sin and repent. That is very different from habitually sinning. (I don't know Greek, but I've heard that teaching from several preachers.)

Some scholars say that the Sermon on the Mount is a compilation of teachings, rather than one sermon. They have forgotten something. We live in a televised world where many people have short attention spans, and many preachers have short sermons. Back in 1858, when Abraham Lincoln debated Stephen Douglas (the famous Lincoln-Douglas Debates), each debate lasted for three hours.¹⁶ So people in those days were able to do serious listening for three hours straight.

I did an experiment. I read the entire Sermon on the Mount out loud, at a slow, conversational pace. (It's the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5 through 7.) It only took 15

minutes. Surely Jesus preached longer than that to people who went to all the trouble to find Him and listen to him. He was only going to be with those particular people one time. So He had to get as much truth to them as He could during that one time of preaching.

We know that Jesus and His followers did some lengthy preaching. On one occasion, the Apostle Paul preached all night long, until daybreak. (Acts 20:7-12)

Therefore, I would expect that what the Bible gives us from the Sermon on the Mount is only a selection out of many teachings that Jesus gave on that occasion. And the quotations from Jesus that we have may only be the conclusions that He gave following longer teachings about those issues.

Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount is the result of the Holy Spirit showing Matthew which of the many teachings that Jesus gave should be included in the report, and which statements Jesus made should be quoted. It is also the result of the Holy Spirit enabling Matthew to remember accurately. Jesus promised His disciples,

“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 14:26, emphasis added)

Matthew 5:38-42 is a good opportunity to use some common sense. Jesus basically told people to be loving and forgiving instead of quarreling and vengeful. For example, He said,

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Matthew 5:38-39)

First he said, don't try to get revenge. Then he said to allow someone to slap you on the cheek. Being slapped is unpleasant, but it is a relatively mild degree of pain and hardship. Jesus did **not** say that Christians should passively allow people to rape their wives and murder their children. He didn't even tell Christians to passively submit to persecution. He said,

“But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another...”
(Matthew 10:23a)

Similarly, Jesus said that if someone sues us for our tunic, we should let them have it, and even our cloak as well. (Matthew 5:40) That is just some clothing. Although clothing was more difficult to obtain back in those days than it is now, it was still just clothing. Jesus did **not** say that we should allow people to take our home and our farm or business, so that we and our family become homeless and destitute.

Here is another example of using Scripture to interpret Scripture. It also comes from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said,

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.” (Matthew 7:1)

Some people interpret that as meaning that we should never criticize anything that other people say or do. However, that cannot be the meaning of this passage because, later on in the same chapter, Jesus said,

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” (Matthew 7:15-17)

How can we beware of them if we can’t recognize them? How can we warn our friends and family to beware of them if we aren’t allowed to say anything negative about anybody? According to what Jesus said, He expects us to be able to recognize false teachers, and to discern the difference between good and bad fruit in a person’s life.

How do we reconcile that with not judging people? According to my study Bible, Jesus warned us against condemning the actions or motives of others, because only God knows their hearts and their motives. We cannot condemn people. However, we are expected to be “fruit inspectors” who can tell the difference between people who teach Christian truth, and false teachers. (Matthew 7:15-20) In addition, Jesus commanded us to “judge righteous judgment.” (John 7:24)

Here is a practical example from real life. If we have reasons to question someone’s morality and their level of responsible behavior, we cannot condemn them, because only God knows their heart. However, we should not let them babysit our children. And it would be foolish to become business partners with them.

If we come across a passage in Scripture that doesn’t make sense to us, we can ask God to help us understand it. If we pray, and consider that passage some more, and we still can’t understand it, then we can just set it aside and go on reading. There have been times when a Scripture passage that I didn’t understand before suddenly makes sense. It’s like a light goes on, and I can see it.

Reading Scripture is a lifetime adventure. What we do understand is more than enough to guide us and help us know the Lord better. Let’s use what we can understand, and trust God to take care of the rest of it in His own good timing.

Paradigm Shifts

Sometimes people radically change their thinking based on one sermon, or one book, or one movie, or attending one conference. This is known as a “paradigm shift.”

It is possible to have this kind of radical change in thinking without being aware that it has happened. Here is an example from my life.

One day I was eating at a restaurant in the middle of the afternoon, when there were few customers and the waiter had time to talk with me. He was a nice young man, a college student who was raised in a Christian home. He said some strange things. I responded with Christian truth. Then he replied, “But the Alchemist said...”

My waiter had read a novel with a character called “the Alchemist” who was portrayed as being a wise man. He encountered people with problems, and spoke words of “wisdom” that helped them.

I told the waiter that the Alchemist’s statements were New Age teachings. Even though he had been raised in a Christian home, and went to church in his youth, that had no impact on him. When he said something reflecting New Age teaching, and I countered with a Christian perspective, he would reply, “But the Alchemist said...”

I finally told him that “alchemist” is an old-fashioned word for a sorcerer, and the “wisdom” of this sorcerer was New Age thinking, and it was contrary to the teachings of Christianity. But even that had no impact on him.

The “wise” sayings of a make-believe character in a novel had more impact on that young man’s thinking than all his previous years of Biblical instruction in a Christian home and a Christian church. Although he still called himself a Christian, he now had a New Age worldview instead of a Christian worldview. And he didn’t even realize that his thinking had changed.

The problem is that he accepted the new way of thinking without examining it.

If he had prayed while reading the book, and compared what he was reading with Scripture (like the Bereans), then that book would not have had such a profound impact on his thinking. He soon would have recognized that what it taught was contrary to Scripture. At that point, he would have been wise to stop reading it. If for some reason he felt that he had to keep on reading it, then he would have been cautious, and compared what it said even more carefully against Scripture. And hopefully he would have asked God to protect him and give him wisdom.

I went to Barnes & Noble to look for that book. On their “Required Reading” table, there was a book titled *The Alchemist*. So that young man had probably been required to read the book as an assignment in a class he was taking. It’s possible that the professor who gave the reading assignment did so precisely in order to create a paradigm shift. Remember John Dewey, the Father of Modern Education? Requiring students to read *The Alchemist* would fit right in with Dewey’s goal of using the schools to undermine the faith of Christian students.

When it comes to physical food, we are careful about what we eat. If something smells rotten, then we throw it away instead of eating it. We need to be even more careful when it comes to mental food and spiritual food.

Incremental Changes in Worldview

Another way that people can change their worldview is incrementally—gradually—one small step at a time. Little by little, so that they don't notice the change. It requires constant vigilance and prayer to avoid being incrementally moved away from a Christian worldview. The Bible warns us to be “sober” and “vigilant” (watchful, on guard).

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:” (1 Peter 5:8)

Drunks act impulsively, based on emotion. Sober people are capable of reflective thinking, discernment, self-control, and basing their actions on Scriptural principles rather than on fleeting feelings. Of course, it takes time and practice to learn to do that. But if we are sober and vigilant, then we are able to do it, even though we may not always be consistent about it.

The best way to learn to recognize counterfeit money is to study good money. And the best way to learn to recognize false teachings is to study Scripture. There have been times in my life when a teaching sounded reasonable, but I felt that there was something wrong with it, so I didn't take it in and apply it. And then later (perhaps many days later), all at once a Scripture passage jumped out at me, and suddenly I realized what was wrong with that teaching.

That illustrates a combination of the value of knowing Scripture, and the nudging of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to them (John 16:7-15). In this passage, Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as being “the Comforter” (verse 7) and “the Spirit of truth” (verse 13). And one of the things that He does for followers of Jesus Christ is to guide them into truth—in other words, to enable them to discern truth from error. Jesus said,

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, **he will guide you into all truth...**” (John 16:13a, emphasis added)

In the epistle of Jude, we are told that God is able to keep us from falling away from Him.

“**Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling**, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” (Jude 1:24-25, emphasis added)

Now this is not a reason to act as if vigilance is not needed. These two Scripture passages balance each other. The first tells us what we need to do. The second assures us that God will give us the grace to do it.

Here is an example of incremental change, from the world of popular music. In January 1971, George Harrison (of the Beatles) released the song “My Sweet Lord.”¹⁷ It was his first solo record, and it was immensely popular.

The music is beautiful. The melody and instrumentation, and the soothing quality of George Harrison's voice, draw you into the song. It sounds so devout, so full of loving worship. The words seem to epitomize the goal of contemplative prayer—to really know God, to be with Him, to see Him. As George Harrison sings about longing to know God, the background vocals sing “hallelujah.” It sounds so Christian.¹⁸

But then the song changes. At first the change isn't obvious, because it is in the words of the background vocals.

George Harrison keeps singing about the same longing to know God. In addition, the instrumentals are so beautiful that when the “halle” of “hallelujah” changes to “hare,” you barely notice it. After a while, you realize that the background vocals are singing “Hare Krishna” instead of “hallelujah.” But then you hear some more “hallelujahs,” so it seems as if it must have been “hallelujah” all along, a song honoring the God of the Bible.

Then the background lyrics become stronger and more noticeable, and it sounds as if they are singing in a foreign language. In reality, they are singing the names of the Hindu gods Krishna, Brahma, Vishnu and Sakshaat (Shiva). They are also singing phrases from the “Hare Krishna” mantra.¹⁹

The song has morphed from seemingly Christian devotion to Hindu devotion. But it still sounds so sweet and beautiful that it is difficult to believe that the change has occurred.

That is a picture of what can happen when Christians become involved in contemplative prayer, mysticism, and things that come from Eastern religions or modern New Age practices. People can start out longing to know the God of the Bible, and wind up being drawn to Hindus and Buddhists and New Agers, and to the gods and goddesses that they worship. (In the next chapter, you will read about some Roman Catholic priests and monks who did just that.)

Protestants are not immune to this kind of transformation. Evangelical Christians were introduced to contemplative prayer and mysticism by Catholic mystics such as Thomas Merton. Seeing the genuine devotion of such men, some Evangelicals assumed that they were Biblical Christians, and followed their example. Unfortunately, those Catholic mystics were not Biblical Christians at all. For example, near the end of his life, Thomas Merton practiced Buddhism and Sufism (Muslim mysticism), and he saw no conflict between what he was doing and Catholicism.²⁰

The Roman Catholic Church gives the traditions of men priority over the Bible. In addition, it promotes some beliefs and practices that are clearly contrary to Scripture. You will see some practical results of this in the next two chapters.

Experts

“Experts” have a natural appeal because most of us feel inadequate when it comes to understanding Scripture and knowing how to apply it to our daily lives. Our natural inclination is to look for some “expert” to do the job for us. However, there is a problem with that.

Jesus warned us that there would be tares among the wheat. (See Matthew 13:24-30) Tares are weeds that look like wheat. It is difficult to tell the difference until the

plants become mature. In other words, on the surface they look like Christians—but they aren't.

Jesus also warned us about wolves in sheep's clothing. (See Matthew 7:15-20) These are people who appear to be Christians, but they aren't. And they cause real damage to real Christians. (Think about what a wolf does to a sheep.)

The Apostles Peter and Paul also warned us. They said,

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” (2 Peter 2:1-2)

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” (2 Timothy 3:14)

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1)

So false teachers will have a widespread influence among Christians. They will be popular, because they will tell people what they want to hear. And they will teach things that result in having people go to hell. Some of these false teachers will be men who have been deceived, and who deceive others. In some cases, they may spread deception by sincerely passing on deceptive things that they were taught by people they trusted. In other cases, they may deliberately deceive people, knowing full well what they are doing.

One example of a false teacher is Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong. He wrote a book titled *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*. I skimmed through some portions of that book at Barnes & Noble. Basically, his idea seems to be that, in order to be relevant to the modern world, Christianity has to stop being Christian. Spong also wrote the book *Resurrection: Myth or Reality?* He spent 352 pages trying to convince people that the Resurrection never really happened. But the Resurrection is an absolutely foundational doctrine of Christianity.

Bishop Spong even questions whether it is necessary to believe in God in order to be a Christian. He wrote an article titled “Can One Be a Christian Without Being a Theist?” In it, he says that we live in a world that has made the “traditional theistic view of God inoperative.”²¹

You may say, “Well, Bishop Spong is a liberal Episcopalian.” That's true. But Evangelicals are also plagued with false teachers. For example, today there are some Evangelical authors who deny the existence of hell—which implies that there is no need for salvation. There are also some Evangelical pastors who deny the Atonement (that

Jesus Christ died to save us from our sins). Such teachings are not compatible with a Biblical Christian worldview.

So we cannot depend on “experts.” We need to do our own Scripture reading, and pray and ask God to help us understand the Bible, and get to know the Bible well. We can read books by Christian authors, but when we do, we need to be vigilant, and compare their teachings with Scripture. We cannot afford to passively accept something just because an “expert” wrote it. Not even if it is recommended by people with good reputations. (They may have only read a letter from the author or publisher, enclosing some carefully selected excerpts from the book.)

The same thing applies to sermons and Bible studies. We have to be vigilant there, also. Pastors can change. If they are not vigilant Bereans who test everything against Scripture, then one conference, or one friend, or one book, can cause a “paradigm shift” in their worldview. Or a series of books or teachings can cause a gradual, incremental shift. Either way, they can wind up losing a Biblical worldview. And if that happens, then they will start teaching things that will undermine the Biblical worldviews of their church members. If that happens, then it’s time to start looking for another church. (I’ve had to do that. It hurts. But our relationship with God is more important than our relationship with the people in our church.)

The Numbers Game

People tend to be impressed with size. “Bigger” and “better” often go together in advertising slogans. Can we assume that the Catholic Church must be right because it is so big? Among Protestants, can we assume that pastors, authors, or theologians must be right if they have large, financially prosperous churches, or they sell a lot of books, or they influence large numbers of people?

Goliath was huge, powerful, and a seasoned warrior. He was admired by the Philistines and feared by the Israelites. People were impressed with Goliath, but God wasn’t. God used a shepherd named David to kill the giant. (1 Samuel 17:1-54)

When Gideon fought the Midianites, he started out with 32,000 men. That sounds like an impressive number until you read that the Midianite soldiers were a multitude which filled the valley like a plague of locusts. But God told Gideon that he had too many men, and he was to send home every man who was afraid. Two-thirds of his men left (22,000 out of 32,000). Then God disqualified all but 300 of the 10,000 men who remained. That left Gideon with less than one percent of his original soldiers. (Judges 7:1-9)

In God’s eyes, which group were the true-hearted soldiers through whom He could do miracles? The 31,700? Or the 300 who defeated the Midianites? If you read what happened, you will see that God was with the one percent.

Jesus spoke about a large crowd of people who go the wrong way, to their destruction, and a small group of people who find the right way, which leads to life. He said,

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14)

If you look at the context in which Jesus said this, He was speaking to the multitudes in Israel. These were not pagans who served “foreign gods.” They were God’s chosen people, in covenant with Him—the people who had the Scriptures, the people to whom God had sent the prophets. And Jesus warned **them** that there was a broad, popular way, which most people would choose, that would lead to destruction.

Jesus spoke of Godly people who would be despised, and false people who would be widely accepted. He said,

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” (Matthew 5:11-12)

“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” (Luke 6:26)

Obviously, being part of a small minority that is spoken against does not necessarily make people right. David Koresh and Jim Jones were dead wrong.

My point is that we cannot use numbers to decide whether or not people are right. We need to measure their teachings against Scripture. Our plumb line is the Bible, not the calculator.

A Request

Some things in this book may be startling. When you read them, please do not say things to yourself such as, “How could those Catholics...”

The answer is quite simple. They are believing and doing things that they were taught by people they trust.

You and I do the same thing. The difference is that we were fortunate enough to have trusted people who have a Biblical Christian worldview.

Instead of pointing our fingers, how about counting our blessings.

Chapter 2

Mixing Catholicism with Non-Christian Religions

One of the documents produced by the Second Vatican Council was *Nostra Aetate*, “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.” It says that the Catholic Church appreciates “what is true and holy in these religions.” It “urges” Catholics to enter into “discussion and collaboration” with people from other religions.¹

The impact of this call to inter-faith dialog can be seen in the titles of some books written by Catholic priests and monks. Aloysius Pieris wrote *Love Meets Wisdom: A Christian Experience of Buddhism*. Anthony de Mello wrote *Sadhana, A Way to God: Christian Exercises in Eastern Form*. Bede Griffiths wrote *Cosmic Revelation: The Hindu Way to God*, and *The Other Half of My Soul: Bede Griffiths and the Hindu-Christian Dialogue*. Aelred Graham wrote *Zen Catholicism*, and *Conversations: Christian and Buddhist*. George Maloney wrote *Mysticism and the New Age*. Wayne Teasdale wrote *The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World’s Religions*. John J. Heaney wrote *The Sacred and the Psychic: Parapsychology & Christian Theology*.

Some members of non-Christian religions are responding in similar ways. For example, a Buddhist monk studied Catholic theology in order to become a better Buddhist.² A book about enlightened mystics and masters, with a Foreword by the Dalai Lama, includes St. Catherine of Siena and St. John of the Cross.³

Pope John Paul II

In October 1986, Pope John Paul II convened and led a multi-faith service at Assisi, Italy. Leaders of non-Christian religions participated and publicly prayed to their gods. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, animists, and Zoroastrians participated in this service. So did an Orthodox patriarch and some Protestant leaders.⁴

The video *Catholicism: Crisis of Faith* has film footage of this service. You can see and hear the Dalai Lama chanting, African shamans calling on their gods, and Muslims chanting from the Koran.⁵

The altar that was used for the service had a statue of Buddha on top of the Tabernacle (an ornate container for consecrated bread). Catholics believe that consecrated bread is literally the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. From a Catholic perspective, putting a statue of Buddha on top of the Tabernacle is, in effect, elevating Buddha above Jesus Christ.⁶

In 2002, John Paul II convened another multi-faith service in Assisi. Leaders of many non-Christian religions participated in the service.⁷

John Paul II visited Benin in Africa. He apologized for the fact that westerners have rejected African religions, including voodoo.⁸

Bede Griffiths

In India there is a monastery named *Shantivanam* (“Forest of Peace”). Although it is affiliated with a Benedictine community, it is patterned after a Hindu ashram. Bede Griffiths is their guru. Although he is a Catholic priest and a Benedictine monk, he wears saffron robes like those of Indian gurus. He says that Hindu philosophy is “the supreme achievement of the human mind” in seeking to understand God.⁹

Griffiths says that the Hindu temple is a “sacrament.” He admires the Hindus who go to the “innermost holy place” in the temple of Shiva (the god of destruction). This contains the *lingam* (phallus), which worshipers consider to be “the ultimate reality.”¹⁰

According to Griffiths, Hindus are our brothers in Christ. Therefore, there is no need to evangelize them. Rather, we should “discover” that Jesus Christ is “already present and active in the Hindu soul.”¹¹

Bede Griffiths practiced contemplative prayer and studied mysticism, including Buddhist and Hindu mysticism, the Catholic mystics, and Sufism (Muslim mysticism). He was one of the pioneers in interspirituality (combining the spiritualities of different religions). The interspiritual movement in India is committed to “a careful process of assimilation.” Bede Griffiths’s Catholic/Hindu ashram is “equally Christian and Hindu,” thus creating a new culture.¹²

Edward Hays

Having Catholic priests become gurus is not a phenomenon that is limited to the far east. There are some priest-gurus in the United States. One of them is Edward Hays, a priest in Kansas City. His bishop suggested that he travel and study non-Christian religions, with a view to founding a “house of prayer” when he returned to America. Hays founded a Catholic-Hindu “house of prayer.” It is financed by his archdiocese. He named it *Shantivanam*, the same name as Bede Griffiths’s Catholic/Hindu ashram in India.¹³

Edward Hays considers Jesus Christ to be like “Buddha and the other holy saviors.” His chapel contains a shrine to Shiva (the Hindu god of destruction), a statue of Buddha, a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and a crucifix. Hays encourages meditation, the use of mantras, and breathing techniques. Sometimes Celtic festivals are celebrated, including dancing around a fire pit or a may pole. The “house of prayer” is quite popular and is usually filled to capacity.¹⁴

Thomas Merton

Thomas Merton is a modern Catholic monk who is admired by some Evangelical leaders. He was a mystic who promoted contemplative prayer. Merton believed that all mystical experiences are valid, no matter what source they come from. He wanted to see all of the

religions of the world become united. Merton is widely admired among Buddhists, some of whom consider him to be a reincarnated Buddha. He is also admired by New Agers. One spirit medium believes that Merton has become an Ascended Master.¹⁵

In discussing one particular issue, Merton said that the Hindu god Ramakrishna has the answer to the problem. He considered himself to be a Hindu regarding that issue. He praised Sufism (Muslim mysticism) and talked to his religious community about it.¹⁶

Thomas Merton said that there is “no contradiction” between Catholicism and Buddhism. He went even further, saying “I intend to become as good a Buddhist as I can.”¹⁷

Interspirituality and Mysticism

Bede Griffiths, Edward Hays, and Thomas Merton are all mystics. They also practice “interspirituality,” which is the assimilation of the beliefs and practices of various religions.

Interspirituality is described in Wayne Teasdale’s book *The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World’s Religions*. Teasdale sees mysticism as being the key to a global spirituality. His book is divided into four parts. Part I is “Finding What Unites Us.” Part 4 is “Global Mysticism.” The first chapter in the book is “A Bridge Across the Religions and Beyond.” The last chapter is “Opening the Heart of the World: Toward a Universal Mysticism.”

Teasdale sees mysticism as being the key to some kind of global spirituality. According to the back cover of his book, he is both a Catholic mystic and an “interreligious monk.” He was strongly influenced by Bede Griffiths.

A Catholic/Muslim Nun

In Indonesia, there is a convent where one of the nuns is both a Roman Catholic and a devout Muslim. Five times a day, she goes to the mosque to pray. She keeps the Ramadan fast, and at the end of Ramadan, her convent has a party. The local imam (Muslim cleric who heads the mosque) was a guest at the post-Ramadan party. The Catholic/Muslim nun hopes to visit Mecca some day.¹⁸

Matthew Fox

As a Catholic priest, Matthew Fox promoted goddess worship, Wicca, and Neopaganism in the Catholic Church. He denies the existence of sin—with one exception. He says that it is sinful to fail to embrace the New Age. He encourages the use of drugs as “an aid to prayer.”¹⁹

Fox founded the Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality. It is located at Holy Names College (a Catholic college run by nuns). Staff members of the Institute included a practicing witch named Starhawk, a voodoo priestess, a shaman (an animist who worships nature spirits), and a Jungian psychologist. Starhawk is the high priestess

of a witches' coven. The Institute has developed a Catholic liturgy that is based on Wiccan sources.²⁰

Fox is the founder, president, and editor-in-chief of a magazine titled *Creation*. You can get some idea of what he believes by the art work in his magazine. The July/August 1991 issue of *Creation* featured a picture of Jesus Christ, naked, seated in a lotus position, with antlers on his head. The May/June 1992 issue featured a picture titled "The Qetzalcoatl Christ." It showed the Aztec snake god with the face of Jesus Christ.²¹

Matthew Fox is a popular speaker with great influence. He denies original sin and redemption. He says that we need to "embark on a quest for the Cosmic Christ" and in order to do this, we need to stop seeking the "historical Jesus." He teaches that people of all religions should be united at "a mystical level." He openly promotes witchcraft, shamanism, astrology, and Neopagan religions. He praises the writings of the witch Starhawk, and her vision of a revival of goddess worship. He says that Christianity that focuses on Jesus Christ as personal Savior is "antimystical" and opposed to a "Cosmic Christ" Christianity.²²

In 1991, Fox was ordered to leave his Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality (in Oakland, California) and return to Chicago, or else be dismissed by his religious order. He refused, left the Catholic Church, and became an Anglican priest. He founded the University of Creation Spirituality (also located in Oakland) and is its president. Fox, Starhawk, and the voodoo priestess left the Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality (at Holy Names College) in order to join the University of Creation Spirituality.²³

Although Fox has left, his Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality is still at Holy Names College. However, its name has been changed. It is now called the Sophia Center in Culture and Spirituality. It gives graduate degrees in Creation Spirituality. Judging by its courses, it appears to teach shamanism, African religions, and "eco-feminism." Several courses appear to be Wiccan.²⁴

Although he is no longer Catholic, Fox continues to have widespread influence among Catholics through priests and nuns who have been influenced by his teachings. His influence also continues through Catholics who are trained at the Sophia Center in Culture and Spirituality at Holy Names College.

Fox's books are sold in both Catholic and New Age book stores. His books are featured at some Catholic retreat houses. They are used by nuns. This not only influences the nuns, it also influences Catholics who come under the influence of those nuns. (For example, other nuns, or students, or Catholics who attend retreats.)

Some of Matthew Fox's books have unusual titles. One is *Whee! We, Wee All the Way Home: A Guide to a Sensual, Prophetic Spirituality*. Another is *On Becoming a Musical, Mystical Bear: Spirituality American Style*. His other books include *One River Many Walls: Wisdom Springing from Global Faiths*, and *Exploring the Cosmic Christ Archetype*.

Because of Fox's teachings, some nuns have incorporated Wiccan rituals into their worship. Some nuns are teaching Fox's "creation spirituality" to young children, and neglecting foundational doctrines such as sin and redemption. (Fox doesn't believe in those doctrines.)²⁵

The Goddess

Catholic theologian Richard Grigg believes that Americans should replace the God of the Bible with “the Goddess.” He wrote the book *When God Becomes Goddess: The Transformation of American Religion*.²⁶

At one seminary, the Catholic priest who taught philosophy began each class with a study of the Earth Goddess Gaia and a Buddhist meditation. The seminarians in his class were required to study “situation ethics,” and it was “taboo” for them to express orthodox ethical views.²⁷

Carmelite nuns are cloistered contemplatives. One Carmelite convent used to be “God oriented” but it changed its perspective. Now it focusses on mysticism and feminism. A nun from that convent said that the influence of Rosemary Ruether had a lot to do with their change in emphasis.²⁸

You can get some idea of Ruether’s beliefs from the titles of her books. She wrote *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, and *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization, and World Religions*, and *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*.

Mary Jo Weaver is a Catholic feminist theologian who writes about goddess feminism and mysticism.²⁹ She is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University, which puts her in a good position to influence many people who are serious about religion. She said that the Bible is patriarchal and must be radically transformed in order to make it conform to the beliefs of feminists. According to Dr. Weaver, some feminists have rejected Christianity and are trying to replace it with “new religious ‘symbol systems’.” However, other feminists believe that Christianity can be “corrected” by incorporating the Mother Goddess, and goddess rituals, within it.³⁰

Dr. Weaver says that Mary can be a good symbol for goddess feminism. However, rather than seeing Mary as “the handmaid of the Lord” (which is what she calls herself in Luke 1:38), Mary should be seen as revealing “the divine within oneself.” Weaver says that feminists can and should “rewrite” Scripture in order to enlarge the roles of women, or even invent female roles.³¹

Madonna Kolbenschlag is a Catholic nun. According to her, the idea of God as Father is a myth. She sees the Genesis account of the fall of Adam and Eve as showing the triumph of the patriarchal God Yahweh over fertility goddesses. She also sees it as condemning female sexuality and power. According to Kolbenschlag, feminist spirituality is “dissolving” the myth of a patriarchal God and reconstructing the “God-myth.” As a result, deity is “breaking through” human consciousness as “the Goddess.”³²

Mundelein is a Catholic women’s college which is run by nuns. It is affiliated with Loyola University, which is run by Jesuit priests. In March 1985, a conference called “The Goddesses and the Wild Women” was held at Mundelein. This conference was repeated there in 1986. Also in 1986, a program was given at Mundelein titled “Her Holiness: Maiden, Mother, Crone.” The program honored the “triple goddess” of witchcraft. It included a croning ritual, which is a witchcraft initiation ritual.³³

When parents send their daughters to a Catholic college that is run by nuns, they probably expect that their daughters will be taught the Catholic doctrines of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Who would ever think that, in such an environment, their daughters would be exposed to goddess worship and a witchcraft initiation ritual?

In the world of business, this would be called “bait and switch.” This is the practice of attracting customers by offering them what they want to get, and then switching them to what you want to sell them. When Catholic parents pay expensive tuition fees to have their daughters be taught Catholicism, then they should get what they paid for.

The Day of the Dead

The Day of the Dead is celebrated in Mexico, a country which is 89% Catholic. Mexicans represent about 8.6% of the world’s Catholics, so about one out of every twelve Catholics is Mexican.³⁴ As a result, a significant proportion of Catholics celebrate the Day of the Dead.

This festival was celebrated long before the Spanish came to Mexico. The Tarasco people of Michoacan believed that on one day each year, the dead could return to their homes. Preparations were made to help the spirits find their way home and to make them feel welcome. In each home, an arch made of flowers was put up, symbolizing a doorway from the underworld. Fruit, corn, tamales, salt, and containers of water were placed in front of the arch.³⁵

It was believed that the spirits of dead children came on the first night of the festival, and the spirits of dead adults came the following night. The spirits of the dead joined their living relatives to eat, drink, talk and sing. Children are given sugar skulls, chocolate coffins and toy skeletons. After Mexico became Catholic, the people celebrated the Day of the Dead during two Catholic holy days, plus the nights before those days. They are: November 1 (All Saints’ Day) and November 2 (All Souls’ Day). In some areas, families spend two whole nights at graveyards (the night of October 31 with the souls of dead children, and the night of November 1 with the souls of dead adults).³⁶

Altars are decorated with skulls and bones made out of bread, as offerings for the dead. People visit from house to house, sharing memories about their dead, in the belief that the dead gather to hear what is said about them. Therefore, people are careful not to neglect any dead person, or to say things that might make them angry. The visiting is not only to honor the dead, it is also to placate them. After honoring the dead all night, people go to Mass early the next morning. They believe that the dead then return to their graves. After getting some rest, people go to the cemeteries to share a meal with the dead, so that the dead can rest in peace until next year, when they again rise to mingle with the living.³⁷

Animal Sacrifices

In some parts of South Africa, animals are sacrificed during Roman Catholic Mass. Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Bloemfontein has actively promoted this practice. Archbishop George Daniel of Pretoria said that animal sacrifice is being done in parishes in his diocese. There is a video showing it. A Catholic priest blessed chickens and goats during Mass. The animals were slaughtered and their blood was poured into a hole outside of the church.³⁸

This practice implies that the blood of Jesus Christ was not sufficient, and therefore the blood of animals is also needed. However, the practice is also controversial for other reasons. Andrew Linzey is an Anglican priest. He is also the Oxford University Professor of Theology and Animal Welfare. Prof. Linzey is protesting against the practice of animal sacrifice in South African Catholic churches because he is an animal rights theologian.³⁹

Chapter 3

Mary Worship

Jesus said that the truth will set us free. (John 8:32) However, He did not say that the truth would necessarily be easy to accept. It was painful for me to learn the information that I am about to share with you, but it was also liberating and it led to a closer relationship with God.

As a faithful Catholic, and later as a nun, I was devoted to Mary. The prayers and practices were so familiar. They were taught to me by sincere people. I prayed the rosary, including rosary novenas. I wore a Brown Scapular and a Miraculous Medal. I visited shrines that honor Mary. I had beautiful statues of Mary. I attended special services where we prayed to Mary and recited a litany of titles honoring her. I read books about apparitions of Mary, and dreamed of visiting Lourdes and Fatima. I participated in processions honoring Mary. A statue of Mary was put on a platform that was decorated with flowers. There were poles on the platform, so that men could carry it on their shoulders. The men walked through the streets, carrying the statue on the platform. We walked behind the statue, singing songs in Mary's honor.

Was this worship? At the time, that question never occurred to me. Now, looking back on what I did, I believe that it was.

If modern Catholic teachings and doctrines about Mary are true, then they will not be contrary to Scripture, the writings of the Early Fathers, or the decrees of past popes. For a devout Catholic to question these issues and put them to the test can be painful. It certainly was for me. However, it would be far more painful to have God correct us when we face Him on Judgment Day.

Devotion to Mary

If you want to see what a person's real priorities are, then watch what they do when their life, or the life of a loved one, is in danger. When Pope John Paul II was shot, while the ambulance was rushing him to the hospital, the Pope was not praying to God or calling on the name of Jesus. He kept saying, over and over, "Mary, my mother!" Polish pilgrims placed a picture of Our Lady of Czestochowa on the throne where the Pope normally sat. People gathered around the picture. Vatican loudspeakers broadcasted the prayers of the rosary. When the Pope recovered, he gave Mary all the glory for saving his life, and he made a pilgrimage to Fatima to publicly thank her.¹

Jesus said, "[W]here your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12:34) Vast sums of money are spent on jeweled crowns and lavish clothing for some special statues of Mary. You can see pictures of them in the Catholic devotional book, *Miraculous Images of Our Lady*.²

In the Philippines, there is a statue of Our Lady of the Rosary that is nearly 5 feet high. It wears a crown of gold studded with diamonds, rubies, and other gems. There is a large halo like a sunburst behind its head, made of gold and diamonds.³

In Spain, a statue of Our Lady of the Forsaken has elegant gowns and mantles decorated with gold and jewels. It has a large collection of jewels, including \$50,000 worth of jewels that are a gift from Queen Isabella II.⁴

Our Lady of Guadalupe is best known for a painting in Mexico, but there is also a statue in Spain that wears gold and jewels. It has a sunburst headdress with 30,000 jewels.⁵

In Germany, a statue of Our Lady of Alötting has a gold crown covered with rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and diamonds. It wears a necklace of pearls and rubies, and a gown that is decorated with gold, pearls, diamonds, emeralds, and rubies. The statue is in a shrine with a silver altar and walls that are decorated with silver.⁶

In Spain, a statue of Our Lady of the Pillar wears clothing decorated with gold and jewels, and a large gold crown covered with jewels. There is a sunburst (halo) behind the statue with a diameter that is larger than the height of the statue. A full-color, close-up picture of the crown and sunburst shows that they are covered with diamonds, emeralds, and rubies. (There are so many jewels that I can't see the gold underneath them.) On the wall behind the statue are 148 gold stars; 80 of them are set with jewels.⁷

Even paintings of Mary can wear jewels. In Russia, there is a painting of Our Lady of Kazan that is covered with a rizza (a structure of gold that covers the entire painting except for the faces of Mary and baby Jesus). This rizza has more than 1,000 diamonds, rubies, pearls, and sapphires on it.⁸

In Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico, preparations are underway to construct a huge statue of Our Lady of the Rosary. Inside the base of the statue there will be chapels, conference rooms, apartments, a food court, and radio and TV stations. There will also be observation decks. This statue will be part of a 500-acre "Mystical City" complex. According to an article in *Caribbean Business*, this statue "will top at 1,500 feet." According to an article by the Associated Press, the statue will be 305 feet high.⁹

The discrepancy in numbers can be explained by looking at the Statue of Liberty, which is a 151 foot statue on top of a 154 foot base. Some sources say that the Statue of Liberty is 305 feet high (which includes the height of the base) and some say that it is 151 feet high (which is the height of the actual statue). What we probably have in Sabana Grande is a 305 foot statue with a 1,200 foot base.

I have personally participated in American processions which honored Mary. We walked through the streets following a statue of Mary which was carried on a platform, high up where it was clearly visible. We sang songs in Mary's honor. We prayed rosaries and other prayers to her. These were small processions. At Fatima, Portugal, crowds of over a million people gather on the anniversary of the apparition of Our Lady of Fatima. The celebration includes a procession of a million people following a statue of Mary and singing her praises.¹⁰

One popular prayer in Mary's honor is the "Hail Holy Queen," which is known in Latin as the *Salve Regina*. It is traditionally included as part of praying the rosary.

For Catholics who are reading this, please try to overcome your familiarity with this text and really look at the words. Doesn't this sound like worship?

“Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! Our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping, in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.”

Alfonsus de Liguori (1696-1787) was a principal proponent of the Marianist Movement, which glorifies Mary. He wrote a book titled *The Glories of Mary* which is famous, influential and widely read. In this book, de Liguori says that Mary was given rulership over one half of the kingdom of God—Mary rules over the kingdom of mercy and Jesus rules over the kingdom of justice. De Liguori said that people should pray to Mary as a mediator and look to her as an object of trust for answered prayer. The book even says that there is no salvation outside of Mary.¹¹

Some people suggest that these views are extreme and not representative of Catholic Church teaching. However, instead of silencing de Liguori as a heretic, the Catholic Church canonized him as a saint and declared him to be a “doctor of the Church” (a person whose teachings carry weight and authority). Furthermore, his book is openly and officially promoted by the Catholic Church, and his teachings have influenced popes.¹²

Pope Benedict XV said of Mary that “[O]ne can justly say that with Christ, she herself redeemed mankind.”¹³ Pope Pius IX said, “Our salvation is based upon the holy Virgin...”¹⁴

A lay movement called *Vox Populi* (“Voice of the People”) gathers signed petitions to send to the Pope, seeking to have him officially declare that Mary is Co-Redemptrix. As of the year 2000, over six million signatures had been sent to him, representing 138 countries and all seven continents. This doctrine is supported by over 40 cardinals and 600 bishops worldwide.¹⁵

The Catholic Church exalts Mary as an idealized, larger-than-life, perfect mother. However, the Bible shows that at one point Mary misunderstood Jesus’ calling to the point that she thought He was insane and she tried to prevent Him from doing what God wanted Him to do. Look at Mark 3:20-34.

“And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.” (Mark 3:20-21)

According to *Strong’s Greek/Hebrew Dictionary*, the Greek word translated “his friends” has a variety of meanings, including “kinsmen.” However, we don’t have to depend on the exact meaning of the word here because it will be made clear in verse 31. *Strong’s* defines “lay hold on” as “to use strength, i.e. seize or retain.” It defines “beside himself” as “become astounded, insane.”

Verses 22 through 30 describe a confrontation between Jesus and the scribes. Then we get back to what is happening with the people who thought that Jesus was out of His mind and were so concerned that they were coming to “lay hold on him” (seize him).

“There came then **his brethren and his mother**, and, standing without, sent unto him calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.” (Mark 3:31-35, emphasis added)

Catholic Doctrines about Mary Compared with What the Bible Says

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION—According to Catholic doctrine, Mary was preserved from all stain of original sin from the first instant of her conception.¹⁶

In Luke 1:46-47, Mary said: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” Mary knew that she needed a savior.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was first introduced by a heretic (a man whose teachings were officially declared to be contrary to Church doctrine). For centuries this doctrine was unanimously rejected by popes, Fathers and theologians of the Catholic Church.¹⁷

ALL-HOLY—According to Catholic doctrine, Mary, “the All-Holy,” lived a perfectly sinless life.¹⁸

Romans 3:23 says “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Revelation 15:4 says, “Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy.” Romans 3:10 says, “There is none righteous, no, not one.”

Jesus is the only person who is referred to in Scripture as sinless. Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 1 Peter 2:22 says, “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”

In contrast, Mary said that God is her Savior. (Luke 1:47) If God was her Savior, then Mary was not sinless. Sinless people do not need a Savior.

In the Book of Revelation, when they were searching for someone who was worthy to break the seals and open the scroll, the only person who was found to be worthy was Jesus. Nobody else in Heaven or on earth (including Mary) was worthy to open the scroll or even look inside it. (Revelation 5:1-5)

PERPETUAL VIRGINITY—According to Catholic doctrine, Mary was a virgin before, during and after the birth of Christ.¹⁹

Matthew 1:24-25 says, “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had

brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.” “Till” (until) means that after that point, Joseph did “know” (have sexual relations with) Mary. (See Genesis 4:1 where Adam “knew” Eve and she conceived and had a son.)

Jesus had brothers and sisters. The Bible even tells us their names. Matthew says,

“And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his **brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?** And his sisters, are they not all with us?” (Matthew 13:54-56, emphasis added)

Other Scripture verses which specifically refer to Jesus’ brothers are: Matthew 12:46; John 2:12; John 7:3; Acts 1:14; and Galatians 1:19.

I was always taught that “brothers” and “sisters” were general terms that really could refer to any kind of kinsman, including cousins. This is true in the Hebrew language. However, the New Testament is written in Greek, which is an extremely precise language. It makes a clear distinction between the words used to describe family relationships. There is a Greek word which refers to people who are relatives but not of the immediate family, such as aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces and cousins. There are other Greek words which refer specifically to a person’s brother or sister within a family.²⁰

MOTHER OF GOD—According to Catholic doctrine, because she is the mother of Jesus, and Jesus is God, therefore Mary is the Mother of God.²¹

The Incarnation means that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. Mary was only the mother of Jesus as man, and not the mother of Jesus as God. According to the Bible, the world was created through Jesus. The Bible says,

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, **by whom also he made the worlds.**” (Hebrews 1:1-2, emphasis added)

“**For by him [Jesus] were all things created,** that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things [including Mary] were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things [including Mary], and **by him all things consist.**” (Colossians 1:16-17, emphasis added)

“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58)

Jesus existed before Abraham was born. That means that He also existed before Mary was born. Jesus said,

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory **which I had with thee before the world was.**” (John 17:5, emphasis added)

So Jesus existed even before the world began. Jesus came first—not Mary.

MOTHER OF THE CHURCH—According to Catholic doctrine, Mary is the Mother of the Church.²²

The Book of Acts gives a picture of a group of people praying together. Mary is mentioned as one of them, but nothing indicates any special prominence.

“And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Phillip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” (Acts 1:13-14)

Mary was probably in the Upper Room when the tongues of fire fell upon the 120 disciples. However, she is never mentioned again in the Book of Acts, which is our only historical record of how the Church was born. She is also not specifically identified in the epistles. Paul did send greetings to “Mary,” but that was a common name. (In the Gospels and in the Book of Acts, she is referred to as “Mary the mother of Jesus” to distinguish her from other women named Mary.)

It is notable that John, who took Mary into his home after Jesus was crucified, does not mention her in his epistles, and he only mentions her on two occasions in his Gospel (the wedding at Cana and the crucifixion of Jesus). John mentions Mary Magdalene more than he mentions Jesus’ mother.

ASSUMPTION—According to Catholic doctrine, at the end of her life, Mary was taken up (“assumed”) body and soul into Heaven.²³

There is no biblical reference to the assumption of Mary. The Gospel of John was written around 90 A.D., which is more than 100 years after Mary was born. (Surely Mary was more than ten years old when Jesus was conceived.) If Mary had been supernaturally assumed into Heaven, wouldn’t John (the disciple that Mary lived with) have mentioned it? When Enoch and Elijah were taken up to Heaven, the Bible recorded it. With Elijah it was recorded in some detail. (See Genesis 6:24 and 2 Kings 2:1-18.)

The Assumption of Mary was officially declared to be a dogma of the Roman Catholic faith in 1950. This means that every Roman Catholic is required to believe this doctrine without questioning it. However, as we will see, the teaching of the Assumption originated with heretical writings which were officially condemned by the early Church.

In 495 A.D., Pope Gelasius issued a decree which rejected this teaching as heresy and its proponents as heretics. In the sixth century, Pope Hormisdas also condemned as heretics those authors who taught the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. The early Church clearly considered the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary to be a heresy worthy of condemnation. Here we have “infallible” popes declaring something to be a heresy.

Then in 1950, Pope Pius XII, another “infallible” pope, declared it to be official Roman Catholic doctrine.²⁴

CO-MEDIATOR—According to Catholic doctrine, Mary is the Co-Mediator to whom we can entrust all our cares and petitions.²⁵

There is only one mediator and that is Jesus. The Bible says,

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus: Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” 1 Timothy 2:5-6)

“Wherefore he [Jesus] is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25)

“In whom [Jesus] we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.” (Ephesians 3:12)

If Jesus is constantly interceding for us and He is able to save us “to the uttermost,” (utterly, completely) then He doesn’t need Mary’s help. If we can approach God with “boldness” and “confidence” because of our faith in Jesus, then we don’t need Mary’s help either.

QUEEN OF HEAVEN—According to Catholic doctrine, God has exalted Mary in heavenly glory as Queen of Heaven and earth.²⁶ She is to be praised with special devotion.²⁷

The Bible says,

“Let them praise the name of the LORD: **for his name alone is excellent;** his glory is above the earth and heaven.” (Psalm 148:13, emphasis added)

This makes it quite clear that only God’s name (not Mary’s) is to be exalted. (In Catholic Bibles the numbering of the chapters and verses of some of the Psalms is slightly different.)

When people tried to give Mary special honor and pre-eminence because she was His mother, Jesus corrected them.

“And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” (Luke 11:27-28)

In chapters four and five of the Book of Revelation, we are given a quite detailed picture of Heaven. God is seated on the throne, surrounded by 24 elders and four living creatures. The Lamb (Jesus) is standing in the center of the throne. Thousands upon

thousands of angels circle the throne, singing God's praises. And Mary is not in the picture at all.

How Did We Get Here?

How did modern Catholic doctrine about Mary wander so far away from the teachings of the Bible and the Early Fathers? Two reasons are the importance given to Church tradition, and the doctrine of papal infallibility.

The Catholic Church officially states that Church tradition is equal in authority to the Bible.²⁸ There are two problems with this.

First, Catholic tradition consists of various expressions of worship and belief of the Catholic people.²⁹ It is nebulous. It keeps changing. You cannot find it written in one place. You can't really put your hands on exactly what it is.

Second, what happens when Scripture and tradition contradict one another? Which one takes priority? In real life, you can't treat them as being equal. When there is a conflict in what they teach, then one of them has greater weight than the other.

The Early Fathers used Scripture as the standard against which they tested Church tradition. The modern Catholic doctrine that Church tradition is equal in authority with the Bible is contrary to the writings of the Early Fathers.³⁰

This is discussed more fully in Chapters 11 and 12 ("Tradition" and "Infallibility").

Apparitions of Mary

On May 13, 1981, a man shot Pope John Paul II. As the ambulance carried him to the hospital, the Pope kept praying, "Mary, my mother! Mary, my mother!" One year later, the Pope made a pilgrimage to Fatima to thank Our Lady of Fatima for saving his life and to consecrate the entire human race to her.³¹ The video *Catholicism: Crisis of Faith* shows the Pope kissing the feet of a statue of Mary.³²

Millions of pilgrims go to shrines which honor apparitions of Mary. Every year fifteen to twenty million pilgrims go to Guadalupe in Mexico, five and a half million go to Lourdes in France, five million go to Czestochowa (Jasna Gora) in Poland, and four and a half million go to Fatima in Portugal. Special dates draw huge crowds. On August 15, half a million pilgrims go to Czestochowa. On October 13, a million people go to Fatima. On December 12, 1999, five million pilgrims went to Mexico to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe.³³

Are these pilgrims worshiping Mary? You can observe them and see for yourself, thanks to a video titled *Messages from Heaven*. If you watch the video (which is available online) you will see the Pope bow in front of a painting of Mary and cover the area with incense. You will see a million pilgrims walking in a procession, following a statue of Our Lady of Fatima and singing songs in her honor. You will see several million people in a procession following a painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe. You will see people weeping and raising their arms towards Mary. You will see the largest assembly of bishops and cardinals since the Second Vatican Council, gathered together to join

Pope John Paul II in solemnly consecrating the entire world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.³⁴

Kinds of Worship

There are many traditional ways of expressing devotion to Mary. You can read about some of them online and decide for yourself whether or not these constitute worship.³⁵

Catholic theologians speak of three degrees of homage, which have Latin words. *Latria* is the kind of worship which is due to God alone. *Dulia* is appropriate for honoring the saints. *Hyperdulia* is appropriate for honoring Mary. It is higher than *dulia* but not *latria*. Therefore, Catholic theologians say that Catholics do not worship Mary.

However, in the practical, down-to-earth, real world, these theological distinctions don't work. Most Catholics have never heard of these words. Of those who have, how many know how to apply them in practical ways? Catholics are not told how to engage in *hyperdulia* without crossing a line that results in actually practicing *latria* towards Mary without realizing it.

When asked about praying to Mary and the saints, I always used to say that actually I was just asking them to pray for me, like I would ask a friend. Well, that is not really accurate, because when I talk to my friends I am not talking to people who have died. Also, I just ask them directly for what I want. I would never begin talking to my friends by saying something like: "Hail holy Queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve."

I personally participated in many kinds of Marian devotions. ("Marian" means something relating to the Virgin Mary.) I prayed the Rosary, which uses beads to keep track of the prayers. There are ten "Hail Mary's" for every "Our Father" (the Lord's Prayer). The words of the Hail Mary are: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

I wore the Brown Scapular (two pieces of cloth attached with strings, worn in honor of Mary). I also wore the Miraculous Medal. Both the Brown Scapular and the Miraculous Medal resulted from apparitions of Mary. There are special prayers associated with them. The apparitions of Mary promised to help people who were faithful to these devotions.

I went to special services where we recited litanies (a series of titles honoring Mary), prayed to her, and sang songs in her honor, or else recited the words of the songs. I participated in a procession where people carried a statue of Mary, and we all followed it, singing songs in her honor. I visited several Marian shrines. I read books about apparitions of Mary, and dreamed of some day going to Lourdes.

I did not realize that what I was doing was actually a form of worship. I thought that it was pleasing to God. I thought that Jesus wanted us to honor His mother in this way.

Our minds can be deceived, and so can the minds of bishops and popes. Only the Bible is totally trustworthy. When religious traditions conflict with the plain meaning of Scripture, then we need to discard those traditions. We cannot afford to do otherwise, because our eternal destiny is at stake.

The Apostles told the religious leaders of their day, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29b) As an old hymn says, “On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.”

Chapter 4

The Eucharist (Catholic Communion)

Some Catholics have asked me how I can have peace or joy without the Eucharist (Catholic communion). They see it as being essential to being in the presence of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Church teaches that when a priest consecrates bread, it literally turns into Jesus Christ—His body and His blood and His soul and His divinity. And so does consecrated wine. And as a result, the Host (consecrated communion wafer) actually is Jesus Christ. This doctrine is called Transubstantiation.

This was declared by the Council of Trent.¹ The decrees of the Council of Trent were confirmed by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The documents of the Second Vatican Council cite the Council of Trent as an authority for doctrinal statements, both in the text and in the notes. The “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” states that the Second Vatican Council “proposes again the decrees of” three previous councils, one of which is the Council of Trent.²

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also confirms this doctrine, and quotes the Council of Trent in doing so.³

Canon Law (the laws governing the Catholic Church) also confirms this doctrine. In addition, it says that in the Mass, Jesus Christ is sacrificed again.⁴ So the Catholic Church sees Jesus as being sacrificed over and over and over, every time there is a Mass. But on the Cross, Jesus said, “It is finished” just before He died. (John 19:30)

When I was a Catholic, I went to communion as often as possible. And I would go to Catholic churches and sit in front of the Tabernacle. (This is a large, ornate, metal box where consecrated communion wafers are kept locked up.) I believed that Jesus was in there. I wanted to be with Him.

When I was a Catholic, I sometimes attended special services called “Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.” A large consecrated Host (communion wafer) was put in a Monstrance. (This is a large, ornate, metal container, in the basic shape of a daisy with a stem, plus a base so that it can stand up.) The Monstrance looked like it was made of gold. It had a circular chamber in the middle which held a large, round Host. The front of the chamber was glass, so you could see the Host. Visually it looked like gold rays were coming out of the Host.

The priest put the Monstrance on the altar. We worshiped the Host, believing that it was Jesus Christ. There were special prayers and special songs in honor of the Eucharist. At the end of the service, we had Benediction. The priest held the Monstrance and made the sign of the cross with it. We believed that Jesus Himself was blessing us.

There are two problems with this. First, there are some Biblical reasons for not believing that the bread and wine are literally transformed into Jesus Christ. You can read about them in Jim Tetlow's article, "The Eucharist—A Biblical Review."

www.catholicconcerns.com/Eucharist.html

We often speak in metaphors (symbolic language). For example, we might call a clumsy person who inadvertently causes problems "a bull in a china shop." If a man is tenacious and just won't quit, we might say, "He's a bulldog." An old love song says, "You are my sunshine." Jesus also spoke in metaphors. For example, He said,

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."
(John 15:5)

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12b)

Second, even if consecrated bread really did turn into Jesus Christ, it would only bring His presence for a short time. This is what would happen when you took communion. You would eat the consecrated bread. Because of that, Jesus would be inside of you. But only until the bread was digested. Once the bread was gone, then Jesus would also be gone. If you only took communion at Mass on Sundays, then Jesus would be inside of you for a few hours on Sundays. The rest of the time, He would be gone.

This is not what we see in Scripture. Jesus promised to **stay** with us, to be with us **all the time**. He said,

"...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20b)

He said that a time would come when we would realize that He truly lives in us, and we truly live in Him.

"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John 14:20)

Jesus told us, "Abide in me, and I in you." (John 15:4) According to *Webster's Dictionary*, the word "abide" means "to stay; to continue in a place; to dwell; sojourn; to remain." This is a command. Jesus expects Christians to dwell in Him, and to have Him dwell in them. Jesus should be our home. We should be His home. This should be a normal part of Christian life.

The Bible tells us that God will be with His people, and that He will be in His people. And it does not depend on circumstances, or consecrated bread. It depends upon our personal relationship with God. Look at the following Scriptures.

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” (1 John 4:15)

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith...” (Ephesians 3:17a)

“He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 1:9b)

“God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” (1 John 4:16b)

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16)

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20)

There are countries where Christians are being persecuted. Some Christians have been killed because of their faith. Others have been put in prison. If Christian prisoners are unable to take communion, does that prevent Jesus from being in them? Would He make His presence depend on circumstances over which they have no control?

Christianity works everywhere, for all people, regardless of their circumstances. It works for Christians who are in solitary confinement and have no access to communion.

Having God’s presence in our lives does not depend on our circumstances. It depends on our relationship with God. If we truly love God, then He will be with us. He will abide in us, which means that He will take up permanent residence in us. That is why the Apostle Paul says that we are God’s Temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16) God actually dwells in us.

Some Practical Problems with Transubstantiation

Transubstantiation is the doctrine that if a validly ordained Catholic priest consecrates bread and wine, then Jesus Christ is literally present—body, blood, soul, and divinity—in every crumb of consecrated bread and every drop of consecrated wine. This is the official doctrine of the Catholic Church. It is clearly stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.⁵

Catholics call this “the Eucharist” or “holy communion.” They speak about the “real presence” of Christ in the bread and wine. Things relating to it are called “eucharistic.” A consecrated communion wafer is called a “Host.” Hosts that are left over after Mass are kept in a Tabernacle (a large, ornate container that can be locked). When hosts are in the Tabernacle, a candle is lit. This enables Catholics to know that consecrated hosts are inside, so they can kneel and pray in front of the Tabernacle as a form of eucharistic devotion. The Tabernacle also protects the hosts by making it difficult to steal them.

Belief in transubstantiation can cause problems for children. I have corresponded with “cradle Catholics” who, when they were children, were afraid that if they chewed the communion wafer they would hurt Jesus. I never personally had that problem because I was an adult convert to Catholicism. But it is easy to see why this could worry children.

Perhaps this is why communion wafers melt on your tongue, instead of being real bread, which has to be chewed. Jesus used unleavened bread during a Passover meal. In America, such bread is known as matzos, and modern Jews eat it during Passover. You have to chew it. And it makes crumbs. That’s a problem if you believe that every crumb contains the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. What happens if someone steps on that crumb, or if a church mouse eats it? You can avoid that problem by making communion wafers of something similar to library paste, so that they melt on your tongue and don’t make crumbs.

The Orthodox church also believes in transubstantiation. They believe that when validly ordained Orthodox priests consecrate bread and wine, Jesus Christ is literally present in them.

There is a third religious group that believes in transubstantiation. Satanists have a reputation for stealing hosts in order to desecrate them during satanic rituals. Like the Catholic children I mentioned above, Satanists believe that they can hurt Jesus by doing things to the consecrated bread. The difference is that the children want to avoid hurting Jesus, but the Satanists are trying to hurt Him.

According to *The New Encyclopedia of the Occult*, the Black Mass is “the central rite of some traditional forms of Satanism.” It is a mockery of the Catholic Mass. During the Black Mass, a Host (consecrated bread) “is defiled in various ways.”⁶

The Satanists participating in the ritual think that they can hurt Jesus Christ by doing disgraceful things to consecrated bread.

Would God set up a system that enables people to hurt Jesus by doing shameful things to bread and wine? Of course not!

When Jesus talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, he was using a metaphor (symbolic language). He often did that when He described our relationship with Him. For example, Jesus said,

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (John 10:7b-9)

But we don’t make special doors that represent Jesus. And we don’t walk through them in order to be saved. And we don’t go into pastures to eat grass like sheep do.

It’s good to take communion as a grateful memorial in honor of what Jesus did for us. But it doesn’t make any sense to take communion in order to be closer to God. If we are truly Christians, then the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all live in us. How can you get any closer than that?

For information about other Scriptural problems with the doctrine of transubstantiation, see Jim Tetlow’s article, “The Eucharist—A Biblical Review.”

www.catholicconcerns.com/Eucharist.html

Chapter 5

Wide Variety in Catholic Beliefs

The appearance of unity among Catholics is misleading. There is actually a wide variety in their beliefs and practices. A few examples follow.

Protestant denominations openly admit their differences. Their names and statements of faith make it obvious. In contrast, Catholic groups who have serious disagreements still call themselves by the same name (Roman Catholic), and they still say that the Pope is their leader. This gives a false impression of unity.

As we saw in Chapter 2, there are some Catholic priests and monks who combine the religious beliefs and practices of Catholicism with those of Hindus, Buddhists, and/or Muslim mystics (Sufis).

In spite of verbally saying that the Pope is their leader, there are some Catholic priests and theologians who openly defy the Pope's authority.¹ There are also some feminist nuns who openly deny Catholic doctrine and defy the Pope's authority.²

As we will see, some Catholic priests and nuns teach things which are clearly contrary to Catholic doctrine and foundational Christian beliefs, such as the Atonement. Yet they are still allowed to teach in the name of the Catholic Church, and to hold positions of influence and authority.

Traditionalists

There are some conservative Catholics who want to go back to the way that things were done before the Second Vatican Council. (1962-1965) This includes having Mass be said in Latin. Some traditionalists believe that the Council promoted heresies, and that Pope John XXIII and every Pope since him has been a heretic.³

Liberation Theology

There are some Catholic theologians who teach liberation theology. This equates salvation with armed revolution, calls Jesus Christ an armed revolutionary, and says that Mary is the mother of all revolutionary heroes.⁴

In Latin America, there were gun-toting Catholic priests who fought alongside communist guerillas, working for communist revolution. Jesuit and Maryknoll priests were members of the Sandinista leadership in Nicaragua.⁵

I first heard about revolutionary Catholic priests from a Latin American friend who personally witnessed the destruction and confusion which they caused. He had some Nicaraguan friends who came to the United States seeking refuge.

Bioethics

Catholic doctrine teaches the sanctity of human life. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, abortion and euthanasia are morally wrong.⁶

Georgetown University is run by Jesuit priests. It is the home of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, which is headed by a Jesuit priest, and has some faculty members who are also Jesuit priests.

The Kennedy Institute of Ethics actively promotes abortion and euthanasia. It is also working to have “death” be redefined to include people in “irreversible” comas, so that doctors can get better quality organs for transplants. This is documented in the book *Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America*.⁷

The Kennedy Institute of Ethics trains doctors, nurses, lawyers, legislators, teachers, and hospital administrators. It also has an annual summer “Intensive Bioethics Course” which is attended by people from around the world. It has branches in Asia and Europe. According to the woman I spoke with, it has the most comprehensive library of bioethics literature in the world.

Fire Insurance

Another area of diversity is the approach toward some old fashioned Catholic “devotions.” I will illustrate this with one example.

Can Catholics be sure of getting into Heaven if they wear a specific religious item showing devotion to Mary? Modern Catholic theologians and apologists will probably tell you, “Of course not!” However, as we will see, there are many Catholics who believe that Mary will give them “fire insurance” if they follow her directions.

According to tradition, on July 16, 1251, the Virgin Mary appeared to Saint Simon Stock, holding a Brown Scapular (two pieces of brown cloth attached by strings). She promised him, “Whoever dies clothed in this [the scapular] shall not suffer eternal fire.” This promise is for people who belong to the religious order of the Carmelites, or who are associated with them. Catholics can be “enrolled” into the “family of Carmel” by any Carmelite or authorized Catholic priest. In 1965, Pope Paul VI encouraged Catholics to wear the Brown Scapular and pray the Rosary.⁸

The Catholic priest who gave me my brown scapular warned me never to take it off—not even in the shower. He said that in order to be sure of going to Heaven, I had to wear it at all times. And he didn’t speak about anything other than physically wearing the scapular. He said nothing about required prayers, or good behavior, or lack of sin. I wore the brown scapular for years, just as I prayed the rosary for years. But one day, I felt that it just wasn’t right to do that. So I stopped praying the rosary and I got rid of my brown scapular.

There are other Catholic devotional practices which have promises attached to them. They often involve the use of medals, rosaries, pictures, different kinds of scapulars, and specific prayers. Some popular ones are the Miraculous Medal, the Saint Christopher Medal (for travelers), the Saint Benedict Medal (for protection), the Sacred

Heart of Jesus, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary (also called the Sacred Heart of Mary).⁹

There is a “five way medal” which consists of a cross with medals at the end of each of the four arms. This enables people to wear a cross and four different medals at the same time in a neat and orderly way. (Five items on five separate chains could become quite tangled.) There are also “four way medals” which have four medals in the general shape of a cross. Sometimes the medal is enclosed in a circle. Some of these medals are solid gold, and quite expensive.¹⁰

I have known Catholics with a wide range of approaches to these “devotions.” Some considered them to be old fashioned, or even superstitious. Others took them quite seriously. I knew one woman who was so devoted to praying the rosary that even when she was carrying on a conversation, her rosary beads were going through her fingers.

Catholic Seminaries

Roman Catholic seminaries have a wide diversity of teachings and practices. Some of them teach traditional Catholic doctrines, behavior, and piety. However, many do not.

Michael Rose is a devout Catholic and a professional investigative reporter. He wrote *Goodbye, Good Men: How Liberals Brought Corruption into the Catholic Church*.¹¹

Rose interviewed over 150 people. His book only shows the tip of the iceberg, because many people were afraid to let him write about their experiences. Others allowed him to write about them, but insisted that he change their name in order to protect them.

Chapter 5 (“The Heterodoxy Downer”) tells of seminary faculty members who deliberately undermined the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Some were openly disdainful of traditional Catholic doctrines, and mocked seminary students who believed them. Some seminary textbooks openly deny basic Catholic doctrines such as transubstantiation (the belief that Jesus Christ is literally present—body, blood, soul and divinity—in consecrated communion wafers and consecrated wine). This doctrine is the basis for the Mass, and for the Catholic priesthood. One seminarian threatened to sue his seminary for consumer fraud because it misrepresented itself as teaching Catholic doctrine.

But it goes much farther than this. Some seminary faculty members deny doctrines which are absolutely foundational to Christianity. And they teach things which are clearly opposed to Christianity. Following are some examples from Chapter 5 of *Goodbye, Good Men*.

- Some seminary professors taught that Jesus’ death was not a sacrifice for our sins, and that the Atonement never really happened.
- Some faculty members taught that the Bible should not be taken seriously.

- One seminary taught Matthew Fox’s “creation-centered spirituality,” which denies the existence of sin, the Atonement, and other foundational Christian doctrines. (Matthew Fox was discussed in Chapter 2, “Mixing Catholicism with Non-Christian Religions.”)
- At one seminary, the priest who taught philosophy began each class with a Buddhist meditation and a study of the “Gaia principle” (worship of “Mother Earth”).
- Some seminarians were required to engage in New Age practices, including using ouija boards, tarot cards, and crystals.
- One seminary required seminarians to study a book with graphic pictures of human sexual behavior. Years ago, this would have been considered hard-core pornography. This was a required course. They could not graduate without taking it.

Seminarians who reported problems to their superiors were often reprimanded or ignored. Even appeals to bishops were ignored. The lack of response by people in authority is a recurring theme throughout the book.

This kind of doctrine and behavior is clearly contrary to what is taught in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It demonstrates the wide variety of beliefs held by Roman Catholics.

Years ago, I had a friend who was a seminarian. He told me that he was going to leave because he was afraid that his seminary would destroy his faith and his morals.

Chapter 6

Who Gave Us the Bible?

The Catholic Church claims that it gave us the Bible. Is this supported by the historical evidence?

The Old Testament was written by God's inspired prophets, patriarchs, psalmists, judges, and kings. It was faithfully copied and preserved by Jewish scribes. The Old Testament of modern Protestant Bibles contains the same books as the Hebrew Bible.

The New Testament was written by Christian apostles. None of them were Roman Catholics, because there was no Roman Catholic Church at the time. This was more than two centuries before the Emperor Constantine and Bishop Silvester joined together to create the Roman Catholic Church. (See Chapter 10, "The Birth of the Roman Catholic Church.")

The early Church did not have the New Testament as we know it. Rather, individuals and local congregations had portions of it. They would have one or more of the Gospels, some of the letters which Apostles had written, and perhaps the Book of Acts or the Book of Revelation.

Why weren't all of these books collected in one place? Look at what the books themselves say. Individual apostles wrote them for specific audiences. For example, the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were written for Theophilus. (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1) Most of the Epistles were written to specific churches or to specific individuals. (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 1:1; 3 John 1:1)

The early Christians expected that Jesus would return for His Church at any moment. As a result, they didn't see the need for long-term planning for future generations. Furthermore, Christians were being persecuted by the Romans. When your life is in constant danger, it is difficult to collect writings which are scattered all over the Roman Empire. So it took time to collect all of these writings, decide which ones were authoritative Scripture, and make complete sets of them.

By the time of Origen (185-254 A.D.), there was general agreement about most of the New Testament. However, there was disagreement as to whether the following six epistles should be part of the New Testament canon: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. This was sixty years before the conversion of Emperor Constantine.¹

The canon of the New Testament was not formed by the decision of any Church council. Rather, the Council of Carthage (397 A.D.) listed as canonical "only those books that were generally regarded by the consensus of use as properly a canon."² In other words, it didn't create the canon. Rather, it confirmed the identity of the canon which already existed.

So the Catholic Church did not give us the Bible. However, Catholic monks helped preserve the Bible by copying it.

The Catholic Church changed the Bible. In 1548, at the Council of Trent, it added the Apocrypha to the Bible. The apocryphal books contain passages which are used to justify some Catholic doctrines, such as praying for the dead.

The Apocrypha

The Apocrypha are books that were never in the Hebrew Bible. The Israelites did not consider them to be canonical. They are not in modern Jewish Bibles (the Jewish Old Testament). Modern Jewish scholars don't consider them to be canonical either. The modern Jewish Old Testament and the modern Protestant Old Testament contain the same books.³

The Apocrypha showed up when some Jews, who lived in Egypt, translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek (the Septuagint). In addition to the books of the Old Testament, they included some contemporary Jewish literature. This literature was never considered to be canonical by the Jews. Because the Catholic Bible was translated from the Septuagint, it includes the Apocrypha. Jerome, who did the translation of the Latin Vulgate from Greek and Hebrew, considered the Apocrypha to be ecclesiastical books that were useful for edification—but **not** canonical books.⁴

The Early Fathers disagreed about their value. Many of the early Church fathers, and clergy throughout the middle ages (including the time of the Reformation), agreed with Jerome. They saw the Apocrypha as being useful for edification, but not authoritative for establishing doctrine.⁵

As far edification goes, there is a wide variety among the Apocryphal books. The Books of Maccabees tell about some Jewish leaders who led a revolt against a Greek tyrant. Their courage is inspiring, and that is edifying. However, the Book of Tobit is another matter. I've summarized it below so that you can draw your own conclusions about it.

Jesus and the Apostles quoted from the Old Testament hundreds of times, but they never quoted from any of the Apocrypha. The apocryphal books themselves never claim to be the Word of God. The books of Tobit and Judith contain some serious historical inaccuracies.⁶

One problem with the Apocrypha is that they contradict Scripture. For example, the Bible says that Jesus Christ atoned for our sins, and we can only be saved by faith in Him. But the Book of Sirach and the Book of Tobit both say that men can be saved from their sins by giving alms.⁷

In 1548, the Council of Trent declared that the Apocrypha are canonical (inspired Scripture), which means having the same authority and credibility as the New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament.⁸ Instead of being optional devotional books, they were made part of the official Catholic Bible.

The Book of Tobit

Following is a summary of the main events in the Book of Tobit. (You can read it online.)⁹

There is a wide variation in translations of Tobit, including differences in essential matters. In addition, there are some historical and geographical inaccuracies. For example, Sennecherib was not the son of Shalmaneser. (Tobit 1:15) He was the son of Sargon the Usurper.¹⁰

Summary of the Book of Tobit

One night Tobit slept outdoors, with his face uncovered. He slept by the courtyard wall. There were sparrows on the wall, and bird droppings fell into Tobit's open eyes. As a result, a white film formed over his eyes and he became blind. The physicians were unable to help him. (Tobit 2:9-10)

A maiden named Sarah was reproached by her maids, who accused her of strangling seven husbands before they consummated their marriage with her. This was attributed to a demon named Asmodeus. (Tobit 3:8)

The angel Raphael was sent to heal Tobit's eyes, and to bind the demon Asmodeus, and to give Sarah in marriage to Tobias, the son of Tobit. (Tobit 3:17)

Tobias (Tobit's son) was traveling with the angel Raphael (who appeared in the form of a Jewish man named Azarias). A fish leaped up from the river and tried to swallow Tobias. Then the angel told Tobias to catch this fish. He caught it and threw it on the land. Then the angel told Tobias to cut the fish open and to keep the heart and liver and gallbladder. He said that smoke from the heart and liver would drive demons and evil spirits away. He also said that if a man's eyes are covered with white films, then having them anointed with the fish gall would heal him. (Tobit 6:1-9)

Tobias was afraid to marry Sarah because seven husbands had died in her bridal chamber. The angel told him to take burning incense and put the heart and liver of the fish on it in order to make a smoke. He said that when the demon smelled the smoke he would flee and never return. (Tobit 6:11-17)

Tobias married Sarah. He put the heart and liver of the fish upon burning incense. When the demon smelled the odor he fled to the "remotest parts of Egypt" and the angel bound him. Tobias and Sarah went to sleep. Sarah's family was greatly relieved the next morning when both of them were still alive. (Tobit 7:1-8:14)

Tobias and his new wife went to Tobit's home. The angel Raphael told Tobias to take the fish gall with him and rub it on his father's eyes. He did, and Tobit's eyes were healed. (Tobit 11:2-16)

Some Questions

Does this sound like inspired Scripture to you? Does it reveal God's nature and character, and His ways of dealing with His people? Does it inspire you to want to know God better? Does it give you strength and courage to be a faithful Christian?

If this was considered to be part of the Bible, would that increase your confidence in Scripture?

Conclusion

The Catholic Church did not give us the Bible. However, monks preserved the Bible by hand copying it for hundreds of years. The Council of Trent added some devotional books to the Bible by declaring them to be canonical. These are known as the Apocrypha. These cause confusion by teaching false doctrines. (For example, Sirach and Tobit teach that we can be saved from our sins by giving alms to the poor.) By declaring books such as Tobit to be canonical—and therefore equal in credibility and authority to inspired Scripture—the Catholic Church undermined the credibility of the entire Bible.

Chapter 7

Was Peter a Pope?

Peter did not describe himself as being a high and mighty Pope, with authority over the entire Church. Rather, he called himself “a servant.” (2 Peter 1:1) According to *Strong’s Concordance*, the word means, “a slave.” Peter also referred to himself as a fellow “elder.” (1 Peter 5:1)

Rather than claiming special authority for himself, Peter said that **all** believers are a “royal priesthood.” He said,

“But ye are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9, emphasis added)

In the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John confirmed Peter’s statement that all true believers are priests. (Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 20:6) (Catholic Bibles refer to the Book of Revelation as “The Apocalypse.”)

Peter (supposedly the first Pope) prohibited the attitudes and practices that have been prevalent in the papacy. He said that leaders must not act like lords (people with rank, power, and special privileges) and they must not seek wealth (“filthy lucre”). Peter described himself as being an elder, like the other elders. He said,

“The elders which are among you I exhort, **who am also an elder**, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; **not for filthy lucre**, but of a ready mind; **Neither as being lords over God’s heritage**, but being ensamples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:1-3, emphasis added)

How does Peter, as portrayed in the Bible, compare with the Pope? Peter was a humble fisherman. The Pope is a monarch who sits on a throne. When he celebrates a Pontifical Mass, the Pope enters the sanctuary seated in a portable throne that is carried on the shoulders of uniformed men. As head of the Catholic Church, the Pope controls immense wealth, with widespread investments around the world. The wealth of the Vatican is amazing.

Catholic theologians claim that Jesus built the Roman Catholic Church on the Apostle Peter. They base this on Matthew 16:18, where Jesus told Peter: “And I say 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.”

Does the rock on which the church is built represent Peter? Or does it represent Jesus Christ? Peter himself called Jesus the rock. He said,

“If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a **living stone**, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.” (1 Peter 2:3-4, emphasis added)

The Apostle Paul also called Jesus the Rock. He said,

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and **that Rock was Christ.**” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4, emphasis added)

William Webster compiled quotations from the writings of fifty Church fathers and theologians (from the third century to the eighth century) about the Rock of Matthew 16:18. They all said that the Rock was Jesus Christ—not Peter. They also said that the Church was built upon Peter’s confession of faith—“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16). Not on Peter.¹

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus told Peter, “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.” Was this giving special power and authority to Peter? Not at all, because two chapters later, Jesus gave the same authority to **all** of the apostles. He told **all** of them,

“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 18:18)

He also gave **all** of the apostles the authority to remit sins. As we will see later, this remission of sins comes by “proclaiming forgiveness to those who believe in Christ.”

“Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. (John 20:23)

Dr. Joe Mizzi was a Roman Catholic before he converted and became an Evangelical Christian. He summarizes the situation as follows,

“While it is true that Christ did confer authority on Peter, it is also true that this authority was not unique to Peter, nor was it supreme over the other apostles and the entire church. The **power of the keys was granted to the whole church** to be exercised in the forgiveness of sins. The apostle Peter was the first to open the way of salvation by the preaching of the gospel, first to the Jews at Pentecost and later on to the Gentiles at

Cornelius' house. The church continues to exercise that authority through the gospel, proclaiming **forgiveness to those who believe in Christ**, and withholding forgiveness to unbelievers. The church is also duty bound to discipline obstinate sinful members; she also enjoys the happy privilege to restore penitents to full fellowship. **Such was the interpretation of the power of the keys by the Church Fathers.**"² (Emphasis added.)

According to Catholic doctrine, Peter was a Pope, which means that he had "supreme, full, immediate and universal" power and authority over the Church.³ But did Peter act like he was in charge of the early Church? And does the Book of Acts show Peter as having outstanding prominence?

The Book of Acts describes a controversy about whether or not gentile converts to Christianity should be required to be circumcised and to follow the Jewish dietary laws. Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles about it. (Acts 15:2-4) Peter and other people spoke. (Acts 15:7-13) Following a period of silence, James (not Peter) made the final decision in the matter. He called it a "sentence." According to *Strong's Concordance*, the word means a judicial sentence, a decree, or a judgment. The Bible says,

"And after they had held their peace, **James answered**, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me... **Wherefore my sentence is**, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." (Acts 15:13, 19-20, emphasis added)

This is the last mention of Peter in the Book of Acts, which is the history of the early Church up until a few years before Peter's death. If Peter was "the first Pope," and the officially recognized head of the Church, would we not expect that the Biblical history of the early Church would have said more about him?

The Book of Acts says nothing about Peter being in authority over the whole Church. In addition, it shows no connection between Peter and Rome.

Acts 28:14-15 tells how Paul met with the "brethren" in Rome, but it makes no mention of Peter. As we shall see, when Paul met with Peter in Jerusalem, Peter was identified by name.

Acts 2:14 and Acts 8:14 say that Peter was in Jerusalem. Acts 9:36-43 says that Peter went to Joppa, which is near Jerusalem. In chapter 10 of the Book of Acts, Peter is still in Joppa. Acts 11:2 says that Peter returned to Jerusalem.

Joppa is about 30 miles from Jerusalem. If the Book of Acts records this much detail about Peter's visit to a nearby town, wouldn't it tell us if Peter went all the way to Rome? Particularly since it does tell us that Paul went to Rome.

Acts 15:1-20 tells how Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to meet with the "apostles and elders" of Jerusalem. Peter is identified as being one of the apostles of Jerusalem. The Bible says,

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, **they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.** And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. **And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders,** and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. **And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them,** Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.” (Acts 15:1-7, emphasis added)

In the Book of Galatians, the Apostle Paul identified Peter as being an apostle in Jerusalem. He said,

“Then after three years **I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter,** and abode with him fifteen days. But **other of the apostles** saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.” (Galatians 1:18-19, emphasis added)

The Book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul. He addressed it to “**all that be in Rome,** beloved of God, called to be saints...” (Romans 1:7, emphasis added) In Romans 16:1-15, Paul greeted 26 people by name. He never mentioned Peter. If Peter was the leader of the Church in Rome, then why didn’t Paul mention him?

Paul wrote five letters from a Roman prison (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Timothy, and Philemon). He never mentioned Peter. The man who stayed with Paul in Rome, to help him and encourage him, was Luke—not Peter. (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11)

Paul only mentioned Peter in one of his epistles. In Galatians 1:18-19, Paul said that he went to Jerusalem to see Peter and James. In Galatians 2:8, Paul said that he preached to the gentiles and Peter preached to the Jews (the “circumcision”).

If Peter preached to the Jews, then he belonged in Jerusalem, where the Jews were—not in Rome, where the gentiles were.

In Galatians 2:11-15, Paul recounted how he publicly rebuked Peter, because Peter had become so intimidated by the Judaizers that he “walked not uprightly.” Evidently, Paul’s public correction of Peter did not cause a problem between them. Peter loved and respected Paul as a brother. He exhorted the Church to heed Paul’s wisdom. Peter said:

“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...” (2 Peter 3:15-16a, emphasis added)

In the next chapter, you will read about some popes. Please compare their behavior, attitude, and demeanor with that of Peter. If you were Peter, would you want to say that these men represent you?

Legends and Traditions

When I was in school, I was taught that, as a boy, George Washington chopped down a cherry tree and confessed his transgression to his father saying, “I cannot tell a lie.”

Parson Weems’ biography of George Washington is the source of that story. According to modern historians, the cherry tree event never happened. I was quite surprised to hear that because I had never questioned the story.

Articles on the Internet say that Parson Weems created the cherry tree legend some time between 1800 and 1809. But perhaps Parson Weems wasn’t deliberately deceiving people. Perhaps he was simply passing on a story that he believed to be true. Either way, modern biographers of George Washington say that the cherry tree episode never really happened.⁴

If we hear a story repeated often enough, then we tend to believe it. The idea of questioning it becomes almost unthinkable because the story is so familiar and so widely accepted.

I believe that something similar has happened with the Catholic Church’s stories about Peter. These traditions have been repeated so often that many people never question them.

Chapter 8

Invalid Popes

The Roman Catholic Church paints a picture of an orderly chain of succession of popes who followed in the footsteps of the Apostle Peter. If even one of these men was not a valid Pope, then the chain is broken.

What does it take to be a valid Pope? What does the Bible say are the minimum requirements for Church leaders? A Pope is not only the head of the Catholic Church, he is also the Bishop of Rome. Therefore, he must at least meet the Biblical requirements for being a bishop.

The Apostle Paul gave Timothy and Titus instructions regarding the necessary qualifications for bishops. He said,

“A bishop then must be **blameless**, the husband of one wife, vigilant, **sober**, of **good behaviour**, given to hospitality, apt to teach; **Not given to wine, no striker [not violent], not greedy of filthy lucre [money]**; but patient, **not a brawler, not covetous**; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover **he must have a good report of them which are without**; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:2-7, emphasis added)

“For a bishop must be **blameless**, as the steward of God; **not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker [not violent], not given to filthy lucre [money]**; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, **sober, just, holy, temperate**; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” (Titus 1:7-9, emphasis added)

We are going to look at some popes and compare their lives with the Biblical qualifications for being a bishop. In the process, we will learn about some distressing things. However, we should not be surprised. Jesus told us that there would be tares among the wheat. (Matthew 13:24-30) He also warned us that there would be wolves among the sheep. (Matthew 7:15) So did the Apostle Paul. (Acts 20:29-30)

Every church has had its share of tares and wolves. However, the Catholic Church claims to have apostolic succession—an unbroken chain of valid popes that go all the way back to the Apostle Peter. My reason for telling you about these “wolf” popes is to demonstrate that some popes were not even valid bishops, let alone valid popes. And that breaks the chain of apostolic succession.

I apologize for putting you through this, but I can't adequately make my point without giving you this information. We will be looking at some demonstrations of the results of our fallen human nature.

The desire to do the kinds of things that you will read about is not limited to popes, or to Catholics. Many people, of various religious backgrounds, would like to be able to do what these men did—but they don't have enough power and wealth to get away with it. If a rat goes on a rampage, he can't do much damage. However, a rampaging elephant can do a lot of damage. We are about to look at some elephants.

Pope Honorius reigned from 625 to 638 A.D. He was condemned as a heretic by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681). He was also condemned as a heretic by Pope Leo II, as well as by every other pope until the eleventh century.¹

In 768, Pope Stephen IV came to power with the help of an army. Within one week, he went from being a layman to being a Pope. His papal rival was beaten, blinded, and probably murdered.²

Pope Leo V only reigned for one month (July 903). Cardinal Christopher put Leo in prison and became Pope. Then Christopher was put in prison by Cardinal Sergius. While in prison, Leo and Christopher were murdered.³

Pope John XII reigned from 955 to 963. He was a violent man. He was so lustful that people of his day said that he turned the Lateran Palace into a brothel. When gambling, he invoked pagan gods and goddesses. He was killed by a jealous husband while in the act of committing adultery with the man's wife.⁴

In the tenth century, a wealthy Italian noblewoman named Marozia put nine popes into office in eight years. In order to do that, she also had to get rid of reigning popes. Two of them were strangled, one was suffocated, and four disappeared under mysterious circumstances. One of the popes was Marozia's son; he was fathered by a Pope.⁵

In 1003, Pope Silvester II was murdered by his successor, Pope John XVII.⁶

Pope Benedict VIII reigned from 1012 to 1024. He became Pope by winning a military victory. When Benedict VIII died, his brother seized power by means of bribery and/or extortion, becoming Pope John XIX. He had himself ordained a priest, consecrated as a bishop, and crowned as pope, all in the same day.⁷

Pope Benedict IX reigned from 1032 to 1044, in 1045, and from 1047 to 1048. He became Pope through bribery. He squandered the wealth of the papacy on prostitutes and lavish banquets, and he had people murdered. The citizens of Rome hated Benedict so much that on two occasions, he had to flee from Rome. Benedict sold the papacy to Pope Gregory VI.⁸

Pope Boniface VIII reigned from 1294 to 1303. He came to power through bribery. He was suspected of having people murdered. Because of his hatred for two cardinals, he had the towns associated with them destroyed.⁹

Pope Clement VI reigned from 1342 to 1352. He ordered the slaughter of an entire Italian town. He lived a life of luxury and extravagance. He openly admitted that he sold church offices (i.e., men paid him a lot of money to become a bishop or a cardinal). He used threats and bribery to gain power. Clement purchased a French palace, which became famous for its prostitutes.¹⁰

Pope Alexander VI (the Borgia Pope) reigned from 1492 to 1503. He was known for murder, bribery, and selling cardinals' hats (i.e., men paid him a lot of money to become cardinals). He enjoyed luxurious living, and he worked to make the Borgia

family more powerful and more wealthy. The art book *Treasures of the Vatican* shows a portrait of him wearing gold vestments that are covered with jewels. They look like pearls, emeralds, large rubies, and other jewels. His tiara (the papal crown) is gold, with three rows of large jewels on it. Alexander VI had a number of children by several mistresses. His son Cesare was known for the kinds of murderous intrigues that make good opera plots. (Cesare and his papal father are included in a website about serial killers.) According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, Cesare and Pope Alexander VI killed people and seized their property. On two occasions, Alexander had to leave Rome, and he gave his daughter, Lucrezia Borgia, the authority to run the city. The Pope died after having dinner with a cardinal. (He accidentally drank some poisoned wine that was intended for the cardinal.)¹¹

Pope Julius II reigned from 1503 to 1513. He became Pope through bribery. He had a reputation for violence, drunkenness, and rages. The Roman people gave him the nickname “*il terribile*” (the terrible one).¹²

Pope Leo X was from the de Medici family which (like the Borgias) was known for ruthless and devious politics, including assassinations. As Pope, he worked to advance the wealth and power of the de Medici family. He reigned from 1513 to 1521. He lived luxuriously and paid for it by selling cardinals’ hats. He filled Rome with statues of Greek gods and goddesses. He also put a statue of himself in Rome’s Capitol, to be saluted by the public. Leo X sold indulgences in order to build St. Peter’s Cathedral. One of Pope Leo’s traveling preachers (indulgence salesmen) was John Tetzel, who sold indulgences in an area of Germany near Martin Luther. Tetzel’s claims of great power and efficacy of the indulgences he was selling angered Luther, and he responded by nailing his famous 95 theses of protest on the Wittenburg church door.¹³

Pope Gregory VII reigned from 1073 to 1085. He required kings and emperors to kiss his foot. Gregory and his successors used forged documents in order to expand the power of the papacy. Some Roman Catholics tried to expose these forgeries, but they were excommunicated for it. However, the Orthodox Church kept records and wrote detailed information about the forgeries.¹⁴

Simony was rampant among clerics. It was commonplace for priests to pay money in order to become bishops and abbots. Some popes took bribes to make men cardinals. Pope Gregory VII said that he knew of more than 40 men who became Pope by means of bribery.¹⁵

Pope Innocent III reigned from 1198 to 1216. He said that the Pope is the ruler of the world, and claimed power and authority over kings and emperors. Innocent said that he was above earthly moral laws and standards of ethics, and therefore, clergy and kings must obey him, even if he ordered them to do something that they considered to be evil.¹⁶

Would you want any of these men to be your pastor?

Sometimes two or more men would claim to be Pope at the same time. All of these claimants to the papacy had followers. Eventually one contender would be declared to be Pope, and the other would be declared to be an antipope. For centuries, Roman Catholic books differed as to which men they considered to be the genuine popes. However, today there is much more agreement about which men were popes and which men were antipopes. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, there were thirty antipopes.¹⁷

None of these men met the biblical requirements for being a bishop, let alone a Pope. Therefore, they were not valid popes. There are so many breaks in the chain of apostolic succession that it is not a chain at all.

Imperial Popes

There is another important Biblical requirement for being a bishop. The Apostle Peter said that all Church leaders were to serve the Christians under their care, and not “lord it” over people. In addition, they were not to seek riches (“filthy lucre”). Peter said,

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; **not for filthy lucre**, but of a ready mind; **Neither as being lords over God’s heritage**, but being ensamples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2-3, emphasis added)

In 314 A.D., Bishop Silvester was crowned by Emperor Constantine. The Roman Emperor wanted to have a state Church, with Christian clergy acting as civil servants. Bishop Silvester wanted to have the favor of the Emperor instead of being persecuted.

Constantine gave Silvester a beautiful palace with the finest furniture and art. Silvester wore silk brocade robes and he had servants to wait on him. Near his palace was a cathedral which had seven altars made of gold, a canopy of solid silver above the main altar, and 50 chandeliers. Silvester was given the use of the imperial mail system and transportation system.¹⁸

Under Bishop Silvester, high-ranking clergymen wore purple robes, imitating the purple of Constantine’s court. (Purple dye was so expensive that only royalty could afford it.) The Church also imitated the pomp and authority structure of Rome. Bishops dressed and acted like Roman emperors, and they had the same imperial attitude.¹⁹

The power of the Bishops of Rome increased, and they called themselves popes. They lived in luxury, and they wanted to rule over both church and state. Imperial papacy reached its peak during the Middle Ages. Popes were rich and powerful, and they ruled over kings and emperors.

Pope Gregory VII reigned from 1073 to 1085. He excommunicated the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV. In order to receive forgiveness from the Pope and to have the excommunication be removed, Emperor Henry had to spend three days repenting in front of the castle where the Pope was staying. It was bitter cold (January 1077). Henry spent most of his time kneeling in the ice and snow, weeping and pleading for forgiveness. When Gregory finally allowed Henry to come into the castle, the Pope publicly humiliated the Emperor.²⁰

Pope Gregory VII declared that the Pope has the right to depose kings and emperors, to make laws, and to require secular rulers to kiss his feet. Gregory wanted to make the countries of Europe become feudal estates of the Pope, with all of the kings meekly obeying him. He said that he (and the orders he gave) could not be judged by earthly moral and ethical standards, because no man has the right to judge the Pope. Gregory also declared that, because of the merits of Saint Peter, every duly elected Pope is a saint. Up until the time of Gregory VII, popes referred to themselves as the Vicar

(representative) of St. Peter. Gregory changed that, calling himself the Vicar of Christ, a term which has been used by popes since then.²¹

Pope Innocent III reigned from 1198 to 1216. He wore a gold crown covered with jewels and sat upon a purple throne. His clothes sparkled with gold and jewels, and his horse was covered with scarlet. Kings and clergy kissed his foot. Innocent became the most powerful man in the world. He said that he was “below God but above man.” He also said that God wanted him to govern the entire world.²²

Pope Boniface VIII reigned from 1294 to 1303. He said that he was Caesar, the Roman Emperor. He wore a crown which was covered with more than 200 costly jewels, including rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and large pearls.²³ Boniface sought to further increase the Pope’s power and authority. In his encyclical *Unam Sanctam*, he said that no person can be saved unless he or she is subject to the Pope.²⁴

Pope Paul II reigned from 1464 to 1471. He enjoyed luxurious living and had a tiara of gold that was covered with jewels. He had “Bacchanalian parades” that revived the pagan “carnival games” of ancient Rome. After the games, the people gathered in front of the Pope’s palace to eat, and then the Pope stood on his balcony and threw money to the crowd.²⁵

Pope Paul VI reigned from 1963 to 1978. He was the last Pope to wear the papal tiara. This is a triple crown, made of gold and covered with jewels. You can see pictures of the tiara online.²⁶

The Pope is an absolute monarch in the Vatican. He sits on an ornate throne. You can see pictures of the throne online.²⁷

Cardinals are called “princes of the Church.” They are citizens of the Vatican in addition to being citizens of their homelands.²⁸

Popes, cardinals and bishops wear gold and jewels. They wear rings and crosses.

The Pope has a special ring known as the “Ring of the Fisherman.” He also has magnificent pontifical rings which he wears on special occasions. Cardinals have rings of sapphire and gold. They often have additional rings of their own choosing.²⁹

For special occasions, popes, cardinals, and bishops wear vestments that are decorated with gold or made of gold cloth. (This is cloth that is actually made of real gold.) Some vestments are studded with jewels. Even the gloves of high-ranking churchmen are decorated with gold. Such imperial splendor was prevalent during the Middle Ages, but it still exists today. During the Middle Ages, gloves were sometimes studded with jewels. But even in recent times, they are decorated with gold. Pope Pius XII reigned from 1939 to 1958. He had gloves and shoes that were decorated with gold. Some of his shoes had jewels on them.³⁰

In Saint Peter’s Basilica, there is a life-sized statue of Saint Peter, sitting on a papal throne. On the Feast Day of St. Peter, this statue wears pontifical vestments and the papal crown (tiara). The art book *Treasures of the Vatican* has a photograph of this statue wearing vestments of gold and scarlet, and a gold triple crown that is studded with large jewels. The National Geographic’s art book *Inside the Vatican* has a picture of the statue with a nun kissing its feet. The right foot has been worn smooth because so many people have kissed it.³¹

Popes wear ermine (an expensive fur often worn by royalty). They have a special cape called a mozzetta which is trimmed with ermine.³²

For solemn occasions, popes use a portable throne called a “sedia gestatoria.” It is a richly adorned chair which is covered with silk. Long rods go through gold-covered rings. The throne is carried by twelve uniformed footmen. When the Pope celebrates solemn pontifical Mass in Saint Peter’s Basilica, he arrives in state, preceded by a procession of cardinals, bishops and prelates. The Pope is carried on the sedia gestatoria, with a canopy over him and special fans made of white feathers on either side of him.³³

Pope Pius XII reigned from 1939 to 1958. When Vatican officials came into his presence, they had to kneel while speaking with him, and leave the room walking backwards. When he telephoned Vatican officials, they had to drop to their knees with the phone in their hand and remain kneeling while they spoke to him. This was going on in 1958. That is only 50 years ago.³⁴

The Pope has a huge, luxurious palace. The Pontifical Palace, the Sistine Chapel, and Saint Peter’s Basilica are filled with priceless paintings and statues. The architecture is rich and ornate. The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was painted by Michaelangelo. In addition, there are 22 Vatican museums which are full of art treasures. Words are inadequate to convey the rich architectural complexity and the artistic elegance of the Pope’s palace, chapel, and church. Their opulence defies description.³⁵

Popes and Marriage

There is one Biblical qualification for being a bishop which most popes have not met since the first few centuries of the church. The Apostle Paul said,

A bishop then must be blameless, **the husband of one wife**, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker [not violent], not greedy of filthy lucre [money]; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; **One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)** (1 Timothy 3:2-5)

Even deacons were required to be married men whose home lives demonstrated their ability to rule the Church.

“Let the deacons be the **husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.**” (1 Timothy 3:12, emphasis added)

Pope Gregory VII wanted to increase the power of the papacy. For reasons of politics and power, he abolished clerical marriage. In 1074 he passed laws requiring that priests be celibate, and he got rid of married priests. Celibacy became mandatory.³⁶

Even before 1074, most popes were celibate. Only 39 popes have been married, out of a total of 265.³⁷

One of those 39 is the Apostle Peter. He is on the Catholic List of Popes. However, as we have seen in Chapter 7, he really wasn’t a pope. We know that Peter was married because Jesus healed his mother-in-law. (Luke 4:38-39) And I would not be

surprised if many of the other 38 married “popes” were just Bishops of Rome, in the years before they were called popes.

So a relatively few popes were married before 1074. And no pope has been married since then. As a result, the overwhelming majority of popes has not been able to meet Paul’s requirement of being a married man who rules his own household well.

They weren’t even qualified to be a deacon. Paul said that deacons should “be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.” (1 Timothy 3:4)

Now I realize that some individuals (such as the Apostle Paul) are called to be celibate. I could understand a few exceptions to the rule. But for nearly a thousand years, not one Pope or cardinal or bishop has ever been able to meet Paul’s qualifications for being a bishop (or even a deacon). And only a few of them met those qualifications before celibacy became mandatory.

Missing Links

As you can see, many popes did not even meet the Biblical qualifications for being a bishop, much less a pope. As a result, they were not valid popes. So the chain of apostolic succession is not a true chain at all. There are too many missing links. And if the chain is not intact, then apostolic succession doesn’t work. Dr. Joe Mizzi (a former Catholic) puts it well. He says,³⁸

“As evangelical Christians we identify and honour a pastor as a worthy minister of Christ if he faithfully preaches the apostolic message and if his life is consistent with his message. We do not hesitate to identify immoral and greedy ministers as false teachers no matter what they claim to be. They are false teachers!

“Take Peter and Judas as examples. Both were apostles of Jesus Christ. Both made very serious mistakes—Peter denied the Lord, and Judas betrayed him. Yet Peter repented and was restored to the ministry, while Judas did not, and was disowned by the church.

“But Catholics cannot follow the guidance of Scriptures to expose false teachers. They are not allowed by the magisterium. If a Pope had been lawfully elected, he must be considered a true Pope, the Vicar of Christ and head of the entire church, no matter how morally and spiritually decadent....

“Benedict XVI is the 265th Pope according to the current list of Popes—and these include the apostates mentioned above and others like them. They cannot take them out of the list, of course, even though they admit that they were grossly immoral; otherwise the Vatican would have nothing to hang its claim to apostolic authority. **The chain must be intact. But what good is a chain if even one of its links is corroded, let alone if there are a score of rusty links? It still breaks down at the weak links**

and the claimed apostolic authority of the papacy falls to the ground and breaks in pieces.” (emphasis added)

Problem Popes

Having mentioned some problem popes, I want to clarify something. I am not picking on the popes. There have also been Protestant pastors who, due to their behavior, were not Biblically qualified to be pastors. Catholics do not have a monopoly on corruption and abuse of power. Just look at Jim Jones, a minister who turned his church into a cult and was responsible for the deaths of over 900 people.³⁹

The difference is that with Protestants, you have a problem with some individual pastors and churches. With the popes, there is a claim of great authority due to a chain of apostolic succession. Therefore, in order to show that this claim isn't valid, I have had to introduce you to some of the “broken links” in the chain (men who weren't valid popes).

Lord Acton was a nineteenth century historian. He said, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

The popes that I described demonstrate that principle. The problem is our fallen human nature. None of us really knows how we would behave if we suddenly had tremendous wealth and power and authority. We all need to follow the example of David, who prayed,

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way
everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

Chapter 9

Reflections on Unpleasant History

I left the Catholic Church because I discovered that some of its doctrines and practices were contrary to Scripture. However, in spite of that, I still had a strong sense of loyalty to it. When people spoke against it, I was hurt. When I learned unpleasant things about the history of the Catholic Church, I was distressed. When I did the research for the articles on my website, I lost a lot of sleep, I ate a lot of Roloids, and I had some stress-related health problems. It was very hard on me emotionally, but I kept on doing the research because I wanted to know the truth. And as I learned, I wrote articles. Later, some of those articles became chapters in this book.

Since then, I have been learning some unpleasant things about current events. Things are happening in America and other parts of the world that I never dreamed could ever happen. And I have come to the conclusion that the bad things in Catholic history are not primarily due to Catholicism. Some unscriptural Catholic beliefs contributed to them, but the basic problem is our fallen human nature. As Lord Acton said, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Better understanding of Scripture does not necessarily solve the problem. The Anabaptists were persecuted and killed by both Catholics and Protestants.

I used to attend a small Evangelical church where the pastor taught good doctrine and led Scripturally sound Bible studies. He had a charismatic personality and he seemed to love the Lord. But eventually I learned that he was a controller and a manipulator. Some people in that church were emotionally abused by him. What would that pastor be like if he had the power and money and prestige of the popes? I doubt if his knowledge of Scripture and sound doctrine would have protected him from the temptations involved, because he wanted to control people.

Do you remember Jim Jones? When he started out, many people thought that he was a good preacher and a good pastor. But he wound up causing 900 of his devoted followers to commit suicide in their community in Guyana. What would a man like that have done if he had the power and money and influence that the popes had during the Middle Ages?

In politics, many individuals and news reporters have the attitude that “we” are the good guys and “they” are terrible people. Such harsh critics fail to recognize that people who strongly disagree with them, and do things they don’t approve of, may be sincerely doing the best that they can based on what they have been taught. They may have good intentions, even if their behavior results in destructive consequences. It is possible to be distressed by the consequences without demonizing the people.

The Bible describes a time when “every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6) Instead of studying Scripture and living according to God’s direction and standards, they followed their own opinions. And what is the result of that?

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 14:12)

We can see the results of such behavior in Catholic history, in world history, and in current events. Businesses can be plagued with greedy, dishonest people. Schools can be plagued by bullies. Families can be plagued by dissention and divorce. And Jesus warned us that in our churches there would be tares among the wheat. (Matthew 13:24-30)

When we read about popes who did bad things, we should be grateful that we have never had to face the temptations, and the level of responsibility, that come with having that kind of wealth and power and influence. We need to remember Paul’s warning, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12) We need to remember the old saying, “There, but for the grace of God, go I.”

When we learn about destructive things such as the Inquisition, we need to remember that Jesus warned us that such things would happen. He told His disciples,

“...yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service.” (John 16:2)

Please note the deception involved. People are doing a bad thing (killing faithful followers of Jesus Christ), but they sincerely believe that it is good (pleasing to God).

One example of this is the Apostle Paul before his conversion. When he hunted down Christians to have them killed, he thought that he was serving God. We need to be careful not to “monsterize” people who do such things. We can’t tell the difference between a persecuting Saul (who will later become a Godly Paul) and other persecutors. Only God can do that.

When we read about persecuted Christians (whether in the old days of the Inquisition, or the many Christians who are being persecuted in various countries today), we need to remember Romans 8:28. If those Christians love God, then He will make their trials and tribulations work out for their long-term spiritual good. True Christians who suffer for Christ and for the truth of the Gospel have a special kind of relationship with the Lord that can only come from having sacrificed everything in order to be faithful to Him. For all eternity, they will be grateful for how God’s grace got them through their trials, and how they came to know God’s love and faithfulness at a much deeper level because of it. Jesus told us,

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

That applies to persecuted Christians throughout history, including today. And it also applies to us. When we read the newspapers and it looks as if the world is going crazy, we need to remember that, no matter what happens, we can have peace and joy and confidence because of Jesus Christ. He told His disciples,

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)

He spoke that to His disciples shortly before going to the Cross. If we are also His disciples (believing in Him, loving Him, serving Him, and obeying Him), then it applies to us as well.

During World War II, Corrie ten Boom and her sister Betsy were sent to a Nazi death camp because they hid Jews in their home. At first, Corrie hated the Nazis. She saw them as monsters. But Betsy saw them as trapped, tormented men and women. She forgave them and she prayed for them, even when they were cruel to her. She told Corrie to forgive them, and eventually Corrie was able to, by the grace of God. (You can read about this in Corrie’s book *The Hiding Place*.)²

Betsy died in that camp. Corrie was released due to a “clerical error” (i.e., God’s intervention). After the war, Corrie established places for helping people who had been prisoners in the death camps. Then she traveled the world, evangelizing and preaching about the importance of forgiveness. During her travels, she encountered one of her former prison guards. Seeing him, at first the old feelings came back, but by God’s grace, she was able to shake his hand. When she did that, God’s love broke through, and she and her former tormenter embraced each other, weeping.

A Dutchman named Jan Vogel betrayed Corrie’s family and many other Dutch people. He was caught and sentenced to death. When Corrie found out about it, she wrote to him, telling him that she forgave him, and telling him about God’s love and forgiveness. Jan Vogel became a Christian a week before he was executed.²

Betsy ten Boom saw the Nazis from God’s perspective. Eventually, Corrie was able to do the same. With God’s grace, we can do the same for other people who do harmful things.

Jesus told us to love everybody, even our enemies. (Matthew 5:44) If bad things happen, then we can choose to respond like Corrie and Betsy ten Boom. And God will enable us to do it. His grace is always sufficient, and His strength is made perfect in our weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9) We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. (Philippians 4:13)

Chapter 10

The Birth of the Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church claims that the early Christians were all Roman Catholics, and that (aside from the Orthodox Church) all Christians were Roman Catholics until the Protestant Reformation. It claims that the Apostle Peter was the first Pope, ruling from Rome. It also claims that it gave us the Bible.

As we have seen in Chapters 6 and 7, Peter was not a Pope, and the Catholic Church did not give us the Bible. Now we will examine the origin and degree of antiquity of the Roman Catholic Church.

Some of the Early Fathers used the term “catholic,” but that just meant the entire body of believers in Jesus Christ. (Some Protestants use the term, with that meaning, today.) “Roman Catholic” is a very different matter. It refers to people who believe certain doctrines, participate in certain “sacraments,” and acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope.

Emperor Constantine

On October 28, 312 A.D., the Roman Emperor Constantine met with Bishop Miltiades. (Catholics would later refer to him as Pope Miltiades, but at the time he was known as the Bishop of Rome.) Miltiades was assisted by Silvester, a Roman who spoke educated Latin, and acted as interpreter. The previous day, Constantine had seen a sign in the heavens: a cross in front of the sun. He heard a voice say, “In this sign you will conquer.” He painted crosses on the shields of his soldiers. He won an important battle, and was convinced that it was because of the power of the sign that he had seen. He asked for two of the nails that were used to crucify Jesus. One nail was made into a bit for his horse. Another nail was made a part of his crown, signifying that Constantine ruled the Roman Empire in the name of Jesus. He allowed Miltiades to keep the third nail.¹

The fact that Constantine saw the cross and the sun together may explain why he worshiped the Roman sun god while at the same time professing to be a Christian. After his “conversion,” Constantine built a triumphal arch featuring the Roman sun god (the “unconquered sun”). His coins featured the sun. Constantine made a statue of the sun god, with his own face on it, for his new city of Constantinople. He made Sunday (the day of the sun god) into a day of rest when work was forbidden.²

Constantine declared that a mosaic of the Roman sun god (riding in a chariot) was a representation of Jesus. During Constantine’s reign, many Christians incorporated worship of the Roman sun god into their religion. They prayed kneeling towards the east (where the sun rises). They said that Jesus Christ drives his chariot across the sky (like

the Roman sun god). They had their worship services on Sunday, which honored the Roman sun god. (Days of the week were named to honor pagan gods. For example, Saturday is “Saturn’s day,” named for the Roman god Saturn.) They celebrated the birth of Jesus on December 25, the day when sun worshipers celebrated the birthday of the sun following the winter solstice.³

Historians disagree as to whether or not Constantine actually became a Christian. His character certainly did not reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ. Constantine was vain, violent, and superstitious. His combination of worshiping the Christian God and the old Roman sun god may have been an attempt to cover all the bases. (A similar spirit can be seen in Americans who financially support both opposing candidates during an election. No matter who wins, they expect to have the favor of the person in power.) Constantine had little (if any) respect for human life. He was known for wholesale slaughter during his military campaigns. He forced prisoners of war to fight for their lives against wild beasts. He had several family members (including his second wife) executed for doubtful reasons. Constantine waited until he was dying before he asked to be baptized. Historians disagree as to whether or not he actually was baptized.⁴

Constantine wanted to have a state Church, with Christian clergy acting as civil servants. He called himself a Bishop. He said that he was the interpreter of the Word of God, and the voice which declares what is true and godly. According to historian Paul Johnson, Constantine saw himself as being an important agent of salvation, on a par with the apostles. Bishop Eusebius (Constantine’s eulogist) relates that Constantine built the Church of the Apostles with the intention of having his body be kept there along with the bodies of the apostles. Constantine’s coffin was to be in the center (the place of honor), with six apostles on each side of him. He expected that devotions honoring the apostles would be performed in the church, and he expected to share the title and honor of the apostles.⁵

Constantine told Bishop Miltiades that he wanted to build two Christian basilicas, one dedicated to the Apostle Peter and one dedicated to the Apostle Paul. He offered a large, magnificent palace for the use of Miltiades and his successors. Miltiades refused. He could not accept the idea of having Christianity be promoted by the Roman Empire.⁶

Constantine rode off to war. By the time that he returned in 314 A.D., Miltiades had died. Bishop Silvester was Miltiades’ successor. Silvester was eager to have the Church be spread using Roman roads, Roman wealth, Roman law, Roman power, and Roman military might. Constantine officially approved of Silvester as the successor of Miltiades. Then he had a coronation ceremony for Silvester and crowned him like a worldly prince. No bishop had ever been crowned before.⁷ Constantine’s actions give the impression that he believed that he had authority over the Church.

Before Constantine’s “conversion,” Christians were persecuted. Now, instead of facing persecution, Bishop Silvester lived in the lap of luxury. He had a beautiful palace, with the finest furniture and art. He wore silk brocade robes. He had servants to wait on him. Near his palace was a basilica which was to serve as his cathedral. This luxurious building had seven altars made of gold, a canopy of solid silver above the main altar, and 50 chandeliers. The imperial mail system and transportation system were placed at Silvester’s disposal. It was now possible to have worldwide church councils.⁸

One result of this cathedral was a drastic change in how Christians worshiped together. In the Book of Acts, we see them “breaking bread from house to house.” (Acts

2:46) They met in one another's homes, and shared bread and wine in memory of Jesus Christ.

But now, all of a sudden, the Roman Emperor built an elaborate and expensive cathedral for them. You can't just sit around informally sharing bread and wine in that kind of atmosphere. You have to do something worthy of a cathedral. And you have to use the altars. So you have to have priests, and vestments, and a formal liturgy of some kind. To fail to do that would be to insult the Emperor, thereby risking persecution.

Read the Book of Acts and the Epistles, and compare the Church shown there to the Church of Bishop Silvester. Here is how the Apostle Paul described the kinds of things that he had to endure, as a leader in the early Church.

“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”
(2 Corinthians 11:24-27)

After Constantine's "conversion," the Church was radically changed. Suddenly, being Christian resulted in power, prestige, and promotion (whereas previously it had resulted in persecution). Suddenly, by the Emperor's decree, Christianity became "politically correct." So ambitious people joined the Church for worldly reasons. The Bishop of Rome was supported by the military might, political power, and wealth of the Roman Emperor. Worldwide church councils were convened.

This was the birth of the Roman Catholic Church. It was created in the year 314 A.D. by Emperor Constantine and Bishop Silvester.

A Tale of Two Bishops

The degree of change which Constantine caused in the Church can be illustrated by looking at the lives of two Bishops of Rome. So let's go back in history for about 100 years before Christianity became "politically correct," to look at the life of Bishop Pontian. Then we will compare Pontian's life with the life of Bishop Silvester, who lived during the time of Emperor Constantine. (The following information about Bishops Pontian and Silvester comes from several sources.)⁹

Pontian became the Bishop of Rome in the year 230 A.D. He was made bishop suddenly and unexpectedly when his predecessor was arrested and killed by Roman authorities.

On September 27, 235 A.D., Emperor Maximinus decreed that all Christian leaders were to be arrested. Christian buildings were burned, Christian cemeteries were closed, and the personal wealth of Christians was confiscated.

Bishop Pontian was arrested the same day. He was put in the Mamertine Prison, where he was tortured for ten days. Then he was sent to work in the lead mines of Sardinia.

The prisoners worked in the mines for 20 hours a day, with four one-hour breaks for sleep. They had one meal of bread and water per day. Most prisoners died within six to fourteen months from exhaustion, malnutrition, disease, beatings, infection, or violence.

Pontian only lasted four months. In January, 236 A.D., Pontian was killed and his body was thrown into the cesspool.

What happened to Pontian was not unusual. Many Christians were sent to the Sardinian lead mines, or persecuted in other ways. If a man accepted the position of being a Christian leader, he knew that his life from that time on was likely to be short and painful. There were 14 Bishops of Rome in the 79 years between the arrest of Pontian and the coronation of Silvester.

In 314 A.D., Emperor Constantine crowned Silvester as Bishop of Rome. Silvester lived in luxury, with servants waiting on him. Constantine confessed his sins to Silvester and asked for his advice. Silvester presided over worldwide Church councils. He had a splendid palace and a sumptuous cathedral. He had power, prestige, wealth, pomp, and the favor of the Emperor.

Churchmen wore purple robes, reflecting the purple of Constantine's court. That was an external change. The most important change was an internal one. The Church took on the mentality of Rome. Under Silvester, the internal structure of the Church took on the form and practice and pomp of Rome.

Silvester died in December, 336 A.D. He died peacefully, in a clean, comfortable bed, in the Roman Lateran Palace. He died surrounded by well dressed bishops and priests, and attended by Roman guards. His body was dressed in ceremonial robes, put in an elegant casket, and carried through the streets of Rome in a solemn procession. He was buried with honor and ceremony, attended by the cream of Roman society and by the Roman people.

It is understandable that many Christians would have preferred an officially approved status for the Church. But what was the result?

Before Constantine, the church was a band of heroic men and women who were so committed to serve the Lord Jesus Christ that they would endure any hardship. After 314 A.D., the Church became infiltrated by opportunists who were seeking power and political advancement. Church leaders were no longer in danger of persecution. Rather, they enjoyed all the trappings of power and luxury.

State Religion

In 380 A.D., Emperor Theodosius published an edict requiring that all Roman subjects profess the faith of the Bishop of Rome. Those who refused were considered to be "heretics." Jews, pagans, and "heretics" were subject to harsh punishments. In 390 A.D., Bishop Ambrose excommunicated Emperor Theodosius and required him to do penance for eight months in order to be restored to the Church. Theodosius complied.¹⁰

It is amazing how much power the Roman Catholic Church gained in 66 years. Constantine had promoted the Church by giving it special benefits, but Theodosius forced people to become Catholics by imposing harsh punishments on anybody who disagreed with the Bishop of Rome. Constantine had asked for advice from Bishop Silvester, but Emperor Theodosius obeyed orders given by Bishop Ambrose.

Roman Catholicism was now the state religion of the Roman Empire. The Roman Catholic Church—which was born under Emperor Constantine—had now become so powerful that a bishop could give orders to the Roman Emperor.

The “Early Fathers”

Catholic apologists often quote the “Early Fathers” in support of Catholic doctrines, the papacy, and the idea that the Roman Catholic Church goes back to Jesus and the Apostles. Who were these people?

There were many early Christian leaders, including priests, bishops, and scholars. There were a lot of these men, and they had a wide variety of opinions on religious matters. Their theological differences were as widely varied as those of theologians from different denominations are today.¹¹

So one person finds some “Early Fathers” to support one position, and another person finds other “Early Fathers” to support the opposite position.

But it’s not a level playing field. Among all of those early Christian leaders, who decided which ones qualified to be called “Early Fathers”? The Catholic Church. Who decided which works should be copied and passed on to posterity? Copying was a slow, tedious job before the invention of the printing press. Who decided which writings were important enough to copy? The Catholic Church.

Conclusion

The Roman Catholic Church was created by Emperor Constantine and Bishop Silvester in the year 314 A.D. It grew in power until, by 380 A.D., it was the state religion of the Roman Empire.

Christianity started out as a humble group of persecuted believers. Leaders (especially bishops) were self-sacrificing men who were willing to risk torture and death because they believed that God had called them to lead His flock. Believers shared a simple communion meal in one another’s homes.

Then suddenly, the Church became partners with the Roman Empire. Christianity became “politically correct,” thus inviting people to join the Church for the wrong reasons. The Church took on the pomp and prestige and power of Roman nobility. And instead of meeting in homes, Christians met in luxurious cathedrals, where priests in ornate vestments led elaborate rituals. Bishops had power, prestige, wealth, and the respect of the Roman Emperor, so ambitious men coveted Church leadership.

In 314 A.D., a bishop and an Emperor became colleagues. And suddenly the Church went through an “extreme makeover,” resulting in the Roman Catholic Church.

Chapter 11

Tradition

The Catholic Church officially states that Catholic tradition is equal in authority to the Bible.¹ There are two problems with this.

First, Catholic tradition consists of various expressions of worship and belief of the Catholic people.² It is nebulous. It keeps changing. You cannot find it written in one place. You can't really put your hands on exactly what it is.

Second, it has been said that a two-headed dog won't hunt. You can't have Scripture and tradition as equal sources of authority. When there is a conflict between the two, then one or the other has to take priority.

The Early Fathers used Scripture as the standard against which they tested Church tradition. The modern Catholic doctrine that Church tradition is equal in authority with the Bible is contrary to the writings of the Early Fathers.³

Jesus made it clear that Scripture takes priority over tradition. He rebuked the scribes and Pharisees because their traditions nullified the Word of God. He used Scripture to measure the validity of their religious traditions. He was distressed because the religious leaders of his time considered their traditions to be equal in authority to Scripture. He rebuked them saying,

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, **teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**” (Matthew 15:8-9, emphasis added)

“Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For **laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men...**” (Mark 7:7-8a, emphasis added)

The Bible clearly tells us that we are not to add to Scripture or take away from it. We need to stay with what has been written. The Bible says,

“What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; **thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.**” (Deuteronomy 12:32, emphasis added)

“**Ye shall not add unto the word** which I command you, **neither shall ye diminish ought from it**, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.” (Deuteronomy 4:2, emphasis added)

“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. **“Add thou not unto his words,** lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” (Proverbs 30:5-6, emphasis added)

In other words, adding to Scripture results in disobeying God. It also puts us in the position where God may wind up calling us liars.

If we say that Tradition is equal in authority to Scripture, then we can no longer use Scripture to test Tradition, like Jesus did. Instead, we are allowing Tradition to determine how we interpret Scripture. Either this is “adding to Scripture” or else it is perilously close to it.

Revelation 22:18-19 warns that adding to God’s words can cause a person to have their name be removed from the “book of life.”

“According to Tradition...”

We often hear the expression, “According to tradition...” But how reliable are these statements? The following illustrates that people’s confidence in these traditions can be disproportionate to the evidence supporting them.

According to tradition, around 40 A.D., the Apostle James (the Greater) was in Saragossa, Spain. He was discouraged because his mission had failed. Mary appeared to him. She gave him a pillar (column) of jasper wood, and a small wooden statue of herself. She also told him to build a church in her honor. This is considered to be the first apparition of Mary.⁴

There are some problems with this story. In the first place, in 40 A.D., Mary may well have been alive. (It was only a few years after Jesus was crucified.) If she was alive, then how could she “appear” to anybody?

In the second place, the early Christians didn’t have churches. They met in people’s homes. (See Acts 2:46; Acts 20:20; Romans 16:19; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2, which all refer to churches meeting in people’s homes.) The Book of Acts ends around 60 A.D., when Paul was in Rome. There is no record of any church buildings.

Furthermore, starting with the stoning of Stephen, Christians were killed for their faith. It is basic common sense that people who are being killed for their faith do not want to call attention to their religious gatherings. That is not a good time to build church buildings.

According to tradition, in the eighth century, a hermit “discovered” the body of the Apostle James in Saragossa.⁵ This discovery is questionable in view of the fact that (as we shall see) the Catholic Church has a history of fake discoveries of relics (bodies of saints, pieces of the “true” cross, the nails which were used to crucify Jesus, bread from the Feeding of the Five Thousand, etc.).

Relics were believed to have spiritual power to protect people from demons, give them victory in war, and bless them in other ways. People wore small relics on chains around their necks, as charms for protection. Churches were built over the bodies of saints. Important relics drew pilgrims, which could have a significant financial impact on a community. Bodies of saints were stolen and portions of them were sold for money.

Graveyards were robbed, and the bodies were passed off as relics of saints. Kings and bishops took great risks to steal the bodies of important saints. Towns that had relics prospered and expanded.⁶

Relics were important for raising money. Historian Paul Johnson says, “A cathedral without a well-known saint was missing an important source of revenue.”⁷

A great cathedral was built in Saragossa in honor of Our Lady of the Pillar. It is in an area of Saragossa known as Campostella (which means “starry field”). It is a major pilgrimage site. The wooden statue of Mary, and the pillar (the column of jasper wood) can be seen on special occasions.⁸

An acquaintance of mine visited this cathedral. There is a fountain with a statue of Mary, holding a star in her hand, and standing on James’ coffin. I have seen a photograph of it.

The Cathedral has a statue of Our Lady of the Pillar which wears clothing. It has a crown made of 25 pounds of gold and diamonds, with so many diamonds that you can hardly see the gold. In addition, it has six other crowns of gold, diamonds, and emeralds. It has 365 mantles, embroidered with gold and covered with roses of diamonds and other precious stones. It has 365 necklaces of pearls and diamonds, and six chains of gold set with diamonds. The cathedral has another statue of Mary which is five feet high, made of pure silver set with precious stones, with a diamond-studded crown of pure gold.⁹

According to tradition, the head of the Apostle James (the Greater) is buried in Jerusalem. It is in the Cathedral of St. James.¹⁰

What Is Our Source of Authority?

Jesus promised us that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church. That requires the supernatural intervention of God.

According to the Catholic Church, God has done this by making popes and Catholic Church councils infallible. (This will be discussed in the next chapter.) Therefore, Catholic teachings and traditions should be used to interpret Scripture.

According to the Bible, God has done this by giving us the Bible, and by sending us the Holy Spirit to teach us and to guide us. God has given us the Scriptures for instruction in doctrine and in how to live a Godly life. (2 Timothy 3:16) And He has sent the Holy Spirit to “guide us into all truth.” (John 16:13) Therefore, Scripture should be used to test **everything**—including doctrines, teachings, traditions, and religious practices.

Chapter 12

Infallibility

According to the official teaching of the Catholic Church, Catholic men and women are not allowed to believe what they read in the Bible without first checking it out with the Catholic Church. They are required to find out how Catholic bishops interpret a passage and they are to accept what the bishops teach “with docility,” as if it came from Jesus Christ Himself. They are not allowed to use their own judgment or follow their own conscience. They are required to believe whatever the bishops teach without questioning it.¹

The Catholic Church teaches that when the bishops officially teach doctrine relating to faith and morals, then God supernaturally prevents them from making any errors. This is called “infallibility.” It applies to official councils, such as the Second Vatican Council. It also applies to other teachings, as long as the bishops and the Pope are in agreement about them.²

The Pope is said to be infallible whenever he makes an official decree on matters of faith and morals. According to Catholic doctrine, it is impossible for the Pope to teach false doctrine. Catholics are expected to obey the Pope without question, even when he is not making an “infallible” statement about doctrine. They are expected to submit their wills and minds to the Pope without question.³

The Early Fathers, and the theologians and canon lawyers of the Middle Ages, never taught that the bishops or the Pope were infallible. This is demonstrated by the fact that in 680 A.D., the Sixth Ecumenical Council condemned a pope as a heretic. It was not until the fourteenth century that the theory of infallibility began to emerge. With the development of this theory came a change in the interpretation of some biblical passages.⁴

Historical Problems

The history of the early Church shows that the Bishop of Rome was considered to be just another bishop. For example, Pope Gregory (590-604 A.D.) explicitly stated that all of the bishops were equal. He specifically repudiated the idea that any one bishop could be the supreme ruler of the Church.

The claim for papal infallibility does not stand up to the test of history. For example, Pope Zosimus (417-418 A.D.) reversed the pronouncement of a previous pope. He also retracted a doctrinal pronouncement that he himself had previously made. Pope Honorius was condemned as a heretic by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681 A.D.). He was also condemned as a heretic by Pope Leo II, as well as by every other pope until the eleventh century. So here we have “infallible” popes condemning another “infallible”

pope as a heretic. In 1870, the First Vatican Council abolished “infallible” papal decrees and the decrees of two previous “infallible” councils.⁵

The doctrine of Assumption of Mary was officially declared to be a dogma of the Roman Catholic faith in 1950. This means that every Roman Catholic is required to believe this doctrine without questioning it. However, as we will see, the teaching of the Assumption originated with heretical writings which were officially condemned by the early Church.

In 495 A.D., Pope Gelasius issued a decree which rejected this teaching as heresy and its proponents as heretics. In the sixth century, Pope Hormisdas also condemned as heretics those authors who taught the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. The early Church clearly considered the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary to be a heresy worthy of condemnation. Here we have “infallible” popes declaring something to be a heresy. Then in 1950, Pope Pius XII, another “infallible” pope, declared it to be official Roman Catholic doctrine.⁶

Scriptural Problems

The doctrine of papal infallibility is based upon Matthew 16:18 in which Jesus tells Peter, “And I say 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.” A huge doctrine with immense historical consequences has been built upon one short verse, taken out of context. The question is, does the rock on which the church is built represent Peter, or does it represent Jesus?

Peter himself answers this question when he says that Jesus is a living stone (1 Peter 2:4). (This is a Messianic prophecy which Peter quotes from Isaiah 28:16.) The Apostle Paul says that Jesus Christ is our spiritual Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4). In Romans 9:31-33, Paul says that Jesus was a rock of offense for the Israelites, who were trying to be saved by works of the law instead of by faith.

In the New Testament, there are three words for “stone.” *Lithos* means a stone like a mill stone or a stumbling stone. The other two words are *petra* and *petros*. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* says that *petra* means “a mass of rock,” as opposed to *petros*, which is “a detached stone or boulder.” *Petros* is the kind of stone that “might be thrown or easily moved.”

In Matthew 16:18, the word for Peter is *petros*, a detached stone that can easily be moved. The word for the rock on which the church is built is *petra*, a mass of rock. Other examples of the use of *petra* show what a huge mass of rock is meant by the word. They include the man who built his house on rock, as opposed to sand (Matthew 7:24-27) and the tomb where Jesus’ body was put, which was carved out of a rock (Matthew 27:60).

Debating the fine points of a language that most of us don’t understand (Greek) is not the only way to approach this problem.

The Bible commends the people of Berea because they “searched the Scriptures daily” in order to “see whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:10-11) God wants His people to check everything against Scripture.

In the days of the Apostle Paul, the Scriptures consisted of the Old Testament. The New Testament was in the process of being written. (Paul and other apostles were

writing letters, and Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were writing the Gospels.) Paul's epistles constitute about one-fourth of the New Testament. These are Scriptures that we study, and that theologians analyze. Paul was one of the leading theologians of his time. In addition, he had been to Heaven, where he had seen mysteries that he was not allowed to tell us about. (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) But the Bible does not criticize the Bereans for questioning what the Apostle Paul taught them. Rather, it commends them for checking it out for themselves by comparing his teaching with Scripture.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (According to *Strong's Concordance*, the word "prove" means "to test.") God requires that every man and woman test all things for themselves.

However, the Catholic Church teaches that only the Magisterium of the Church (the Pope and the bishops in communion with him) has the right to interpret Scripture. People like you and I (and the Bereans) are not allowed to interpret Scripture for themselves.⁷

Where does the Catholic approach leave Christian prisoners in countries where there is persecution? All they have to go on is prayer and their memory of Scripture. They can't read a Bible. They can't consult with a priest or bishop. They are often doing well if they get to see any Christians at all. Would God set up a system that doesn't take care of His most faithful followers, those who are willing to pay the highest price for serving Him?

Catholicism teaches that Catholics are supposed to "receive with docility" any directives given to them by Catholic Church authorities.⁸ According to *Webster's Dictionary*, "docile" means "disposed to be taught; tractable; as, a docile child". The word "tractable" means "capable of being easily led, taught, or controlled; docile."

That doesn't sound like Berean men who are studying the Scriptures to see whether or not what the Apostle Paul taught them is Biblical. Rather, it sounds like a young child who accepts without question whatever his parents tell him. In fact, I believe that is precisely what Jesus warned us against when He told us to "Call no man father." (Matthew 23:9)

On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX declared the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The Pope said that if anybody "dares" to even think anything contrary to this dogma, then that disagreement will shipwreck their faith, cut them off from the Church, and make them become "condemned." And if anybody in any way outwardly expresses their disagreement, then they are subject to "penalties established by law."⁹

Did Jesus treat people like this for disagreeing in their hearts with something which He or the Apostles told them? With amazing patience, He kept on teaching the crowds of people, healing the sick and demonstrating the love and the power of God. When His disciples didn't understand His teachings, He explained them. (Luke 8:5-15) When the rich young man turned away from Jesus, He didn't rebuke him or threaten him. He let him go. (Matthew 19:16-22) In John 6:48-68, Jesus gave a teaching that was difficult for people. Many of His disciples left him and no longer followed Him. He asked the Twelve, "Will ye also go away?" (Verse 67) He didn't threaten them or rebuke them. He didn't try to force them to believe what He taught them. He left them free to believe or not believe, to stay or to leave.

Now if Jesus didn't demand that people believe His teachings about morals and doctrine, then how can anybody else validly do it? Nobody else has the purity of doctrine, or the purity of heart, that Jesus did.

There was one occasion when James and John wanted to call down fire on some Samaritans who wouldn't listen to them. Jesus rebuked them saying, "You know not what manner of spirit ye are of." (Luke 9:55-56; see Luke 9:51-56.)

Look at how Jesus responded to "doubting Thomas." All of the Apostles except Thomas had seen Jesus after the Resurrection. Jesus had repeatedly told his Disciples that He would be crucified and then resurrected on the third day. In spite of all that, Thomas said that he wouldn't believe unless he put his finger into the holes from the nails, and put his hand into the wound in Jesus' side. When Jesus appeared again, did He rebuke Thomas? No. Did Jesus call down curses and anathemas on Thomas for not believing what the Apostles had said? No. He invited Thomas to put his finger into the nail holes and to put his hand into the wound in Jesus' side. In other words, he invited Thomas to check it out for himself. (See John 20:24-29)

Look at a theological confrontation that occurs in Galatians 2:11-16. Peter made a decision that was theologically incorrect. Paul publicly scolded Peter "to his face" for it, and then he wrote to the Galatian church about it. We have no record that Paul was rebuked for this. He certainly wasn't embarrassed by it, because he used the incident as a teaching illustration in his Epistle to the Galatians.

According to the Catholic Church, Peter was the first Pope. How does Peter address people? Does he demand that they believe what he says? Read the two epistles of Peter. (They are short.) In 1 Peter, he identifies himself as "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:1). In 2 Peter, he identifies himself as "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). He does not set himself apart as being in a higher position of authority than the other apostles.

It is Peter who tells us that all Christians are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." (1 Peter 2:9) He tells us, "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." (1 Peter 2:5) Peter (supposedly the first pope) says that **every** Christian man and woman is a priest, and that **our** spiritual sacrifices can be acceptable to God.

Dangers of Infallibility

Deception

When the Disciples asked Jesus what the signs of the End Times would be, the first thing that He said was, "Take heed that no man deceive you." (Matthew 24:4) The main sign of the End Times is deception.

If every Christian reads the Bible and checks things out against Scripture (like the Bereans did), then the devil and his demon cohorts will have a tough job deceiving each of the Christians individually.

However, if Roman Catholics are required to accept whatever the Pope says "with docility" (like a trusting, unquestioning child), then the devil's job is much easier. If he

can just deceive the Pope to the point where he declares an error to be doctrine, then the devil has successfully deceived everybody who is under the Pope's authority.

The Apostle Peter was so deceived by the devil that Jesus rebuked him saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matthew 16:23, Mark 8:33, Luke 4:8) The devil successfully deceived Peter concerning an important matter of faith (the death and resurrection of Jesus, as prophesied by Jesus Himself). So how can the popes (who claim to be the successors of Peter) say that the devil is incapable of deceiving them?

Even without claims of infallibility, Christians become vulnerable if any one man has too widespread an influence. If that man is persuasive, and if the devil succeeds in deceiving him, then that man will pass his deception on to his followers.

Corruption

As Lord Acton said, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." When you give any one man (the Pope) or group of men (the Magisterium) the power to define what people are required to believe in order to be able to go to Heaven, then you invite abuses of power.

History is full of examples of this abuse of power. Paul Johnson is a devout Catholic and a historian. His book *A History of Christianity* shows many examples of abuses of power.¹⁰

I realize that there have been scandals in many Christian denominations throughout Church history. Jesus warned us about wolves in sheep's clothing. (Matthew 7:15) Therefore, we should not be shocked when we discover some of them.

In Matthew 7:15, Jesus is talking about false prophets. Prophets are people who claim to speak for God. That is precisely what the Pope does. He claims to be the vicar (representative) of Christ. The Magisterium also claims to speak for Christ. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that whoever listens to the Pope and the bishops (the Magisterium) is actually listening to Christ.¹¹

There have been tares among the wheat, and wolves among the sheep, throughout Church history. No denomination has been perfect. However, only the Catholic Church claims to be infallible. That claim makes wolves in sheep's clothing far more dangerous because of the power that it gives them over the minds (and therefore the lives) of other people.

Conclusion

Jesus promised us that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church. That requires the supernatural intervention of God. According to the Bible, God has done this by sending us the Holy Spirit to teach us and to guide us. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that Scripture is the key to sound doctrine and instruction in righteousness.

According to the Catholic Church, God has miraculously protected the popes from making errors when they make pronouncements about faith or morals. This idea has a natural appeal. We would all like to have magical protection from error. Also, it is nice to be able to be passive spectators, receiving "with docility" whatever our superiors give

us, without having to face the responsibility of checking it out for ourselves. But attractive or not, this idea is not supported by Scripture or by Church history.

What is our source of authority? God. He reveals Himself and His ways in the Bible, which He has given us for instruction in doctrine and in how to live a Godly life. (2 Timothy 3:16) And He has sent the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand Scripture, and to “guide us into all truth.” (John 16:13)

Chapter 13

Faith versus Works

The Bible makes it clear that we are only saved by faith. No amount of good works is able to save us. Scripture says,

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

“And **if by grace, then is it no more of works**: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” (Romans 11:6, emphasis added)

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, **not according to our works**, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” (2 Timothy 1:9, emphasis added)

Once we have become born-again Christians, our faith should result in a changed heart, which will express itself in good works. Genuine faith will influence our entire life—our thoughts, our desires, and our actions. It should result in love and gratitude towards God, love for our fellow Christians, having a desire to serve and obey the Lord, and wanting nonbelievers to know Jesus Christ. The Apostle James said,

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” (James 2:17-18)

Talk is cheap. It is easy to say a prayer or to say that we have faith. However, if faith does not result in obeying God, then it may not be genuine faith. Jesus said,

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21)

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46)

The Apostles Paul and John also said that genuine faith results in obeying God. They said,

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:1-2)

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Galatians 6:7)

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:3-6)

Salvation comes through faith. Genuine faith expresses itself in love, obeying God, and doing good works.

Good works do not save us. However, they can be evidence of a faith that saves us. Good works are the result of salvation—not the cause of it.

Judaizers

In the Epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul addressed the problem of the “Judaizers.” These were Christians who believed that, in addition to faith in Jesus Christ, Christians needed to be circumcised and follow the laws of Moses. Paul said:

“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.” (Galatians 1:6-7)

Paul said that if people rely on good works for their salvation, then the death of Jesus Christ does not benefit them. If we could be saved by following the law, then it would not have been necessary for Christ to die for us. Paul said,

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

The problem with trying to fulfill the law is that it is impossible. Nobody can fulfill all of it all of the time. The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that **no man is justified by**

the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, **The just shall live by faith**. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law**, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:” (Galatians 3:10-13, emphasis added)

According to the Bible, our righteousness can only come from Jesus Christ—not from our own efforts to make ourselves righteous. If we try to earn our salvation by means of our own good works, then we wind up rejecting the salvation that God wants to freely give us. The righteousness of Christians comes through Jesus Christ. We are not capable of establishing our own righteousness by fulfilling the law, or by doing good works. Paul said,

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. **But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness**. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” (Romans 4:3-8, emphasis added)

“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they **being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God**. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (Romans 10:2-4, emphasis added)

The Apostle Paul discussed the problem of “Judaizers.” These men said that circumcision was necessary for salvation, and that Christians should follow the Jewish law. Paul called that slavery. He said that the end result is that people fall from grace, and Christ’s death on the cross does not benefit them. Paul exhorted the Christians in Galatia, saying,

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and **be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage**. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. **Christ is become of no effect unto you**, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are **fallen from grace**.” (Galatians 5:1-4, emphasis added)

The Catholic Church has some things in common with the Judaizers. It says that, in order for people to be saved, in addition to having faith in Jesus Christ, they must also obey laws (official declarations of popes and church councils) and participate in religious rituals (the sacraments). It even says that if people fulfill certain requirements, they can “merit” a “reward.” In other words, they put God in their debt, and He is required to reward them for their good works.¹

Chapter 14

The Good Thief

Jesus was crucified between two thieves. Luke's Gospel gives some very interesting information about one of those thieves. (He is called a "malefactor," which is an old fashioned word for a criminal.)

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? **And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds:** but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, **Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.** And Jesus said unto him, **Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.**" (Luke 23:39-43, emphasis added)

Today. The same day that he died.

The thief had faith in Jesus. He recognized Jesus' Godly character. He believed in Him. And because of that, he believed what Jesus said about Himself. Even though, while they were both hanging on crosses, in agony, it sure didn't look like Jesus was a King. It sure didn't feel like it. But the thief's faith in Jesus was stronger than his feelings.

The thief repented by acknowledging his sin, and saying that he deserved to be crucified. He asked Jesus to have mercy on him, to help him. And Jesus responded by promising that the thief would go to Heaven with Him—that very day.

The thief wasn't baptized. He didn't receive the "last rites" or the "sacrament of reconciliation" ("confession"). He didn't do any good works to merit salvation. He didn't do any penances. He didn't go see a priest. He didn't obey a Pope.

All he did was acknowledge his sin, have faith in Jesus, and ask Him for mercy. And he loved Jesus. That is shown by how he rebuked the other thief for mocking Jesus and speaking against Him.

Faith and love, repentance and a plea for mercy. It was as simple as that.

Jesus once called a little child to him, and He used that child as a sermon illustration. He said,

"...Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3-4)

It takes humility to ask Jesus to save us, instead of trying to earn our own way into Heaven by doing good works. It takes the simplicity and humility of a child to just love Jesus and trust Him and ask Him to make it right for us.

In this passage, Jesus warns us about the danger of becoming “adults” who are so sophisticated and complicated that we are no longer able to receive salvation from Him with the simple faith and trust and love of a little child.

Catholicism is full of rules and rituals, and trying to be good enough to earn your way into Heaven by doing things—going to Mass, receiving the sacraments, doing good works, obeying the Catholic Church, being devoted to Mary, praying to saints, doing penances, saying special prayers. The list goes on and on and on.

But the Bible talks of simple faith, like a child. And like the thief on the cross. He just believed, and asked Jesus to help him, and he went straight to Heaven with Jesus.

Chapter 15

Ecumenism

There is a hidden agenda behind the ecumenical movement. Official Catholic documents from the Second Vatican Council show that the purpose behind ecumenism is to bring Protestants back into the Catholic Church.

The Second Vatican Council and Problems with Infallibility

Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council in 1962. It lasted until 1965. The Council wrote 16 official documents. It also gave some groups of experts the task of working out the details of how to apply the principles and directives of the Council. These groups of men wrote official “post conciliar” documents to more fully elaborate what had been written by the Council.¹

According to Catholic doctrine, popes are infallible, and so are Catholic church councils.² A number of the doctrinal statements of the “infallible” Second Vatican Council conflict with official doctrinal pronouncements of previous “infallible” popes. For example, according to Vatican II’s *Declaration on Religious Liberty*, every individual has the “right to religious freedom.”³ This directly contradicts the encyclical *Quanta Cura* by Pope Pius IX, as well as contradicting his *Syllabus of Errors*.⁴

One result of these inconsistencies has been protest from “traditionalist” conservative Catholics, and the formation of some groups that want to go back to pre-Vatican II Catholicism. One group is the Orthodox Roman Catholic Movement. Another is True Catholic, which has elected its own Pope because it considers John XXIII and every Pope after him to be heretics and therefore not valid popes.⁵ It has Internet articles about “heresies” of Vatican II and modern popes.⁶ There are also some groups that are working to reinstate the traditional Latin Mass.⁷

Vatican II and Ecumenism

The Second Vatican Council’s *Decree on Ecumenism* states that ecumenical activity cannot result in changing any aspect of the Catholic faith.⁸ This foundational principle is reflected in the post conciliar documents dealing with ecumenism.

For example, Post Conciliar Document No. 42 says that the purpose of ecumenism is to transform the thinking and behavior of non-Catholics so that eventually all Christians will be united in one Church. It states that unity means being “in the Catholic Church.”⁹

In other words, as far as Rome is concerned, “unity” means that all Christians will become Roman Catholics. So the purpose of ecumenism is to draw Protestants into the Catholic Church. Rome wants to reverse the Protestant Reformation.

Pope John Paul II made ecumenism a priority in his papacy. He signed “common declarations” with some Protestant and Orthodox groups.¹⁰ He also engaged in “interreligious relations” with various non-Christian religious groups.¹¹ Pope Benedict XVI is also emphasizing ecumenism, saying that it will be the “primacy task” of his reign.¹²

The Catholic Makeover

Ecumenism would be difficult if Protestants felt out of place in Catholic churches and when attending Mass. Therefore, a number of changes were made.

Mass was said in the language of the local people instead of being in Latin. There were not as many statues in the churches, and the ones that were there were not as prominent. The Tabernacle (an ornate container for consecrated communion wafers) was placed in a less noticeable location. Priests used to have their backs to the congregations during Mass. That was changed, so that priests now face the people, like Protestant ministers do.

Traditionalists believe that this was a “betrayal” of the Catholic Church, resulting in “world-wide apostasy.”¹³ They say that the men who made these changes were not adequately concerned about keeping the “Catholic character” of the Mass for the sake of faithful Catholics. Instead, their primary concern was making it become acceptable to Protestants.¹⁴

Obvious Mary worship became less frequent and less noticeable. For example, it became less common to have processions in the streets, with men carrying a statue of Mary on a litter covered with flowers. However, some churches still do this, especially in conjunction with a ceremony for putting a crown on the statue. (You can see pictures online.)¹⁵

Many nuns changed their habits (special clothing for nuns). Some orders of nuns modified their habits so that they look more like modern clothing. Others now wear regular clothing instead of habits, and no longer wear veils (a head covering for nuns). Some more traditional nuns still wear old fashioned habits with veils.

The Council of Trent

Reaching out in a friendly, respectful way to “separated brethren” seems inconsistent with the Council of Trent (a Catholic Church council that was held from 1545 to 1564).

The Council of Trent was the Roman Catholic Church’s response to the Protestant Reformation. It denounced every single doctrine which was proposed by the Protestant Reformers. It declared that any person who believes even one of these doctrines is “anathema” (cursed).

The Council of Trent also defined Catholic doctrines, detail by detail, and declared that anybody who denies even one of these details is anathema. These include

the authority of the Pope, the practice of indulgences, veneration of Mary and the saints, and the use of statues. So the Council of Trent anathematizes all Protestants.

The Catholic doctrine of infallibility applies not only to the Pope, but also to Church Councils (including the Council of Trent).¹⁶ As a result, the official statements of the Council of Trent are considered to be infallible. This means that they cannot be changed. Therefore, the anathemas of the Council of Trent cannot be revoked.

Declarations relating to doctrines that are especially important to Evangelicals are available online.¹⁷ The declarations of the Council of Trent were published as a book.¹⁸

The pronouncements of the Council of Trent are consistent with quotations from popes who said that there is no salvation outside of the Catholic Church. Some popes also said that there is no salvation apart from the Pope.¹⁹

Official Modern Endorsement of the Council of Trent

The declarations of the Council of Trent (with their accompanying anathemas) have never been revoked. On the contrary, the decrees of the Council of Trent are confirmed by both the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992).

The documents of the Second Vatican Council cite the Council of Trent as an authority for doctrinal statements, both in the text and in the notes. The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* states that the Second Vatican Council “proposes again the decrees of” three previous councils, one of which is the Council of Trent.²⁰ The *Decree on the Training of Priests* says that the Second Vatican Council continued the work of the Council of Trent.²¹

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was written for the purpose of summarizing the essential and basic teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. It was approved by Pope John Paul II in 1992, and the English translation was released in 1994. It has numbered paragraphs, and has been published in many languages.

The Council of Trent is mentioned in seventy-five paragraphs of the *Catechism*. It is always mentioned in a positive, authoritative way. Some paragraphs mention it two or three times. Paragraph 9 of the *Catechism* says that the Council of Trent was the origin of Catholic Catechisms. The other 74 paragraphs in the *Catechism* which mention it cite the Council of Trent as an authoritative source which supports their doctrinal statements.²²

Reversing the Reformation

The Catholic Church is engaging in ecumenical dialog with Protestants, calling them “separated brethren,” and speaking as if it respects their beliefs. But at the same time, it endorses the decrees of the Council of Trent, which anathematized all Protestants.

This is confusing. But if you recall the wide variety of Catholic beliefs described in Chapter 5, then perhaps it is not surprising. Although Rome claims to speak with one

voice, in reality, there are priests and theologians who hold beliefs that are polar opposites.

A clear example is abortion and euthanasia. Both of these are strictly prohibited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.²³ In spite of that, the Kennedy Institute of Ethics (which is headed by Jesuit priests at Georgetown University) actively promotes both abortion and euthanasia.²⁴

The Catholic Church wants to reverse the Protestant Reformation. And it is having some measure of success.

On March 29, 1994, some Catholic and Evangelical leaders signed a declaration titled “Evangelicals and Catholics Together.” An evangelist who used to be a Catholic says that the Evangelical leaders who signed this document “compromised the eternal truth of the Gospel for the sake of temporal social and political issues.”²⁵

On October 31, 1999, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation signed a “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.”²⁶ (October 31 is the anniversary of Martin Luther nailing his 95 theses on the door of the church in Wittenburg, which began the Protestant Reformation.)

Many Evangelicals are converting to Catholicism, including pastors. I’ve corresponded with some of them. One reason is Evangelical leaders who promote Catholic mysticism. (You can read about that in *A Time of Departing* by Ray Yungen.) Another is the emergent church movement. (This movement may be in the process of changing its name and vocabulary because its teachings have been exposed in books such as *Faith Undone* by Roger Oakland.)

I’ve corresponded with Evangelicals who are drawn to Catholicism because they cannot find an Evangelical church where there is a sense of reverence. Evangelicals who want to help the poor can become frustrated because they don’t find support from fellow Evangelicals, so they work closely with Catholics. Since it is Catholics who share their vision for helping the poor, they wind up wanting to learn about Catholicism.

One pastor converted to Catholicism and then, after several years, started really reading Scripture again. He eventually left the Catholic Church and came back to “living in the grace of God once again.” (You can read his testimony online.)²⁷

How has Rome been able to accomplish these things? I believe that one of the reasons is described in an article by a former Catholic. It is titled, “The Disappearing Doctrine of the Evangelical Church.”²⁸ The Apostle Paul warned Timothy,

“Take heed unto thyself, and **unto the doctrine; continue in them:** for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”
(1 Timothy 4:16, emphasis added)

Timothy worked closely with Paul and knew him well. He had received a lot of instruction from Paul, and had the experience of ministering with him. Paul considered Timothy to be like a son to him. And in spite of all that, Timothy still needed to be warned to be careful about his doctrine. Now if a man like Timothy needed to be careful about doctrine, then we certainly do.

The Power of Words

What happens if two people are talking, and they use the same vocabulary, but they have a different dictionary? What if the same word means quite different things to them?

They may think that they understand one another when, in reality, they have no idea of what the other person is thinking. They may think that they are in agreement about something when they actually disagree.

This can happen between Catholics and Protestants. For example, let's look at the word "grace." According to the Bible, salvation cannot be earned. The Apostle Paul said:

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

"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;" (Titus 3:5)

However, according to Catholic doctrine, if people do good works, and they fulfill certain specified requirements, then they can **merit** a "divine reward" from God.²⁹ This is a doctrine of earning spiritual things by doing good works.

The liturgical ritual for baptizing infants includes a prayer asking God to give grace to the water in the baptismal font (the water that will be used to sprinkle the infant).³⁰ So for Catholics, "grace" is something that can be given to inanimate objects, such as water.

When I was a Catholic, this made sense to me, because I was used to accepting whatever the priest said without question. Now that I am an Evangelical, and I have some understanding of Scripture, the idea is incomprehensible.

In the Bible, grace seems to be a simple thing. But somehow the Catholic Church makes it seem complicated and mystifying. The *Pocket Catholic Dictionary* has a complex, technical, three-paragraph definition of "grace" that ends by recommending that the reader also look at entries for actual grace, sacramental grace, efficacious grace, habitual grace, sufficient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace. It also has entries for "baptismal graces" and "state of grace."³¹

Here is an example of how Protestants can think that they understand Catholicism, when they really don't.

A Catholic priest wrote to me saying that the Catholic Church teaches that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. He failed to mention something. The Catholic Church teaches that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ—**PLUS** being baptized, going to Mass on Sundays, receiving communion at least once a year, going to confession at least once a year, believing all of the official doctrines of the Catholic Church, and dying in a state of grace. (In America, Mass on Saturdays can be substituted for Mass on Sundays.)

Until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), popes openly declared that there is no salvation apart from the Pope.³² That involves more than faith in Jesus Christ.

Modern popes taught that salvation comes through Mary.³³ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Mary has a “saving office” and her intercession brings us our salvation.³⁴ In 1993, Pope John Paul II said that Mary “obtains for us divine mercy.”³⁵ So Catholicism teaches that Mary is necessary for our salvation.

Some ways of using words can result in statements that are technically correct, but the result is misleading. Here is an example.

For centuries, the Catholic Church would not allow the Bible to be translated into English. It was only available in Latin. A Catholic told me that this made no difference, because the common people were illiterate. They were unable to read and write. Therefore, they would not have been able to read the Bible even if it had been available in English.

However, during Mass, the priests read passages from Scripture **out loud**. Even people who can't read are able to understand what they hear. If the Scripture passages had been read in English, then the people would have understood them. When the Bible was finally translated into English, it was kept in a church. All day long, men took turns reading the Bible out loud, while crowds of people listened.³⁶

Practical Consequences of Misleading Vocabulary

I have an Evangelical friend who has seriously studied Catholicism. He had an urgent, practical need for the information, because he married a Catholic woman. At the time that he married her, he believed that Catholicism was “just another valid form of Christianity.” He attended Mass with his wife on Sundays. After a while, he began to feel that something was wrong. Then he started investigating Catholicism. This is what he has to say:

“Today's ecumenical movement draws many Protestants and Roman Catholics together, because they believe that they share a common faith. The Protestants believe that there are outward differences, but the faith is the same. The Catholics believe that their faith is Biblical, and that Protestants are just separated brothers and sisters who need the Mother Church in order to experience the fullness of the faith. When you look into it, though, you'll find that the majority of Protestants and Catholics are unfamiliar with the history and official doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, and, indeed, unfamiliar with the Bible. They prefer to get along with one another in matters of faith, rather than to investigate, understand, and contend for the Gospel of Christ, as laid out in the Bible, and to compare it with official Catholic doctrine. As a result, many Roman Catholic teachings remain out of view for the average church-goer and mass-attende. Those who do earnestly investigate Catholicism, and compare it with the Bible, find that **some of the language appears to be the same, but the definitions, beliefs, applications, and perspectives behind this language are anything but the same.** They also find a

multitude of additional layers and dimensions to Roman Catholicism that they would never have imagined.” (Emphasis added.)³⁷

In my friend’s case, the situation worked out well. His wife became an Evangelical Christian. As a result, he and his wife are now in agreement about how to raise their children, where to go to church, and how to practice their religion in their home.

I have corresponded with many suffering Christians whose situation did not work out well. After they married a Catholic, they discovered that Catholicism is radically different from what they thought it was. Because of that, they are no longer able to attend Mass, or to instruct their children in the Catholic faith. They have discussed their problem with their Catholic spouse, but their spouse remains loyal to the Catholic Church. As a result, their home is full of conflict and confusion, and their children suffer because of it.

Because these people didn’t understand the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism back when they were courting, they and their children are suffering today. Verbal confusion can result in serious practical consequences.

Chapter 16

Faith Under Fire

Many Evangelical churches are being influenced by Catholicism. For example, a Sunday school class can study prayer techniques based on Catholic mysticism without knowing the origin of the practice, the beliefs behind it, or what it can lead to. (As we saw in Chapter 2, Thomas Merton wound up wanting to become a good Buddhist.)

I have written about Catholicism because that is what I personally understand, based on my life experiences (as a devout Catholic and as a nun), and my studies of Catholicism (both as a Catholic, and after I left the Catholic Church). However, my concern is much broader than the issue of Catholicism.

Many Evangelicals are becoming involved in teachings and practices of the New Age (the “new spirituality”), and the emergent church, and mysticism. Some Evangelicals are involved in practices that come from Hinduism, Buddhism, and other non-Christian religions.

In addition—thanks to television and computers—Christians are constantly confronted (even in their own homes) with numerous temptations to worldliness, covetousness, and lust. They are bombarded with entertainment and educational material that is based on (and therefore promotes) humanism, mysticism, and non-Christian spirituality. The Apostle Paul warned us,

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God: Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And **they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.**” (2 Timothy 4:3-4, emphasis added)

“Incontinent” means lacking self control. That has become widespread in our modern society, even among some Christians. “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” is a good description of “cultural Christianity”—people who go to church because that is what their family has always done, but they don’t make a serious attempt to live according to Biblical standards. They deny God’s power to enable them to live Godly lives.

According to *Webster's Dictionary*, a “fable” is a “legendary story of supernatural happenings.” When Christians read books like *The Shack*, they are literally reading fables about God—fables that contradict truth that is clearly presented in the Bible.

Jesus asked a haunting question. He said,

“Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8b)

I'm beginning to understand why He asked that question. Unthinkable things are happening in the Church. You can read about them in Roger Oakland's book *Faith Undone* and Ray Yungen's book *A Time of Departing*.

Please read those books if you can. It is important to be well informed about these issues. These unbiblical teachings and practices are spreading, and they are influencing many churches. We all need to be able to recognize the warning signs, because we cannot assume that any church is “safe.” Pastors change, and churches change. Sometimes all it takes is attending one conference, or reading one book—something that causes a “paradigm shift.”

Jesus warned us that there would be great deception before His return. He said,

“Take heed that no man deceive you.” (Matthew 24:4b)

“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” (Matthew 24:5)

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.” (Matthew 24:11)

There are a few people who literally claim to be Christ. But the warning in Matthew 24:5 means more than that. The Greek word translated “Christ” can also be translated “anointed.” Among charismatics (and especially among men who claim to have ministries of healing and/or miracles) there are a number of people who claim to be “anointed.”

The warning about false prophets can also be applied to false teachers. In addition, these days there are a number of people who claim to be modern prophets.

The apostle Paul also warned us about coming deception. He said,

“For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:29-31)

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (Colossians 2:8)

According to *Webster's Dictionary*, the word “spoil” means to plunder, rob, damage, harm. Paul is saying that the persuasive words of smooth talking men, who present a false gospel, can rob us of the most precious things we have—our faith and our relationship with God. False teachings can hinder salvation. Some people will never know the Lord because of unbiblical things they were taught by smooth talking “experts.”

It's easy to look at false teachings in Catholicism. How about looking at the false teachings that are getting into many Evangelical churches?

If we love God—and if eternity is important to us—and if Heaven and hell are real to us—then we cannot afford to passively accept something we hear just because a sincere, enthusiastic pastor or Sunday school teacher or author or conference speaker says it. Sincere people can be sincerely mistaken. And they can be enthusiastic about their false teaching because they don't realize their error. Good, well meaning people can be wrong.

Therefore, we need to be watchful and vigilant. And we need to have a good working knowledge of Scripture, so that we can test **everything** against it. We have to do it ourselves. We cannot afford to depend on “experts” to do it for us.

This is a lesson that I first learned as a result of discovering the unbiblical problems with Catholicism. But I have also found unbiblical teachings in some Evangelical churches that I attended. And I have corresponded with heartbroken people who have not been able to find a good church.

The basic problem is our fallen human nature—plus the humanist indoctrination that we received in public schools, and continue to receive through Hollywood and the media. In addition, television has taught us to passively accept whatever the “experts” tell us, instead of actively working to find out the truth for ourselves.

In addition to Scripture, there is something else that we can use when testing a teaching. The early Christians were willing to be tortured to death rather than renounce their faith. When we hear a description of what Christianity is, we can ask ourselves—“Is that worth dying for?” If the answer is “No,” then what we are hearing is probably either a false gospel, or else a gospel that has been watered down to the point that the early Christians would barely recognize it.

Here is a way that we can test what we have been taught about the Bible. In countries where there is severe persecution, Christians risk their lives to get Bibles. And some Christians risk prison and death in order to bring Bibles to their persecuted brothers and sisters. Judging by what we have been taught about the Bible, do we think that it is worth risking our life for? If the answer is “No,” then what we believe about the Bible is not the same thing that our persecuted brothers and sisters believe about it. Or the Christians who take terrible risks in order to get Bibles to them.

Here is another test. Would what we are being taught in church give us the strength and faith to endure hardships and persecution? If not, then either is it a false gospel, or else it is a gospel that has been watered down.

True Christianity will give us the strength, and the courage, and the love, and the trust in God, to enable us to get through tough times. And we all face such times. Right now, there is a financial crisis. Many people are losing their jobs, or losing money on their investments. And there are other kinds of difficulties. Most people have health problems sooner or later.

I am a widow. I know the shock of seeing a previously healthy man suddenly have severe health problems, and the pain of watching him die, and the grief of living without him. But he was a strong Christian, so I know that we will be together again. Right now, my husband is in a better place than I am. And God used his death to teach me to trust Him more and love Him more. And to love people more. And to have a stronger desire for other people to know the Lord.

If you want to see how Christian faith and Scripture can get Christians through severe trials and tribulations, then read Corrie ten Boom's book *The Hiding Place*. (That book has been a source of inspiration to me for many years.) You can also get a DVD based on the book.¹

The Apostle Paul wrote nearly a fourth of the New Testament. He had amazing revelations about God. Much of our theology is based on his writings. Yet he said,

“For **we know in part**, and we prophesy in part.” (1 Corinthians 13:9, emphasis added)

Paul includes himself among those who only know “in part.” If the Apostle Paul only knew **in part**, then no church, no denomination, and no individual has all the answers. All of us have areas where our understanding is limited.

What will we do if things don't make sense to us? Will we become offended with God and abandon our faith? There was a time when many of Jesus' followers became offended with Him and left Him. The twelve Apostles were troubled, but they were loyal and remained.

“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” (John 6:66-68)

There was a time when King Nebuchadnezzar commanded Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to bow down and worship a huge golden idol. If they refused, they would be thrown into a fiery furnace. They answered the king,

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” (Daniel 3:17-18)

What will we do if the unthinkable happens? Will we be faithful to God no matter what? Or will we only be faithful if things work out the way that we think they should?

The Apostle Paul said,

“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know **whom** I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12, emphasis added)

Notice that Paul said “whom” (a person), not “what” (theology, understanding, Scripture interpretation, etc.) Paul’s primary confidence was in God Himself. And that is where our primary confidence needs to be.

We should not be surprised when we face hard times. The Bible says,

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand **in the evil day**, and having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:13, emphasis added)

“Beloved, **think it not strange concerning the fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (1 Peter 4:12-13, emphasis added)

This says that we can expect to have to face “evil days” and “fiery trials.” You may know people who have had to face a number of them. But even though that time may be incredibly difficult, God will enable us to stand, if we cooperate with Him. Jesus said,

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

He also told us that if we follow Him faithfully, and live according to Biblical standards and principles, then we can expect persecution. Right now, in America, this is likely to mean things such as being mocked or teased, or not getting a job promotion. In some countries, it can mean prison, torture, and death. (You can read about it on the website of Voice of the Martyrs.)² Jesus said,

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.” (John 15:18-20)

According to Jesus, tribulation (and even persecution) is a normal part of Christian life. It is to be expected. The important thing is that we can trust God to get us through it. He loves us. He is faithful. And His grace is sufficient. When difficult things happen, it helps to remember that it is better to be in a furnace with the Lord (like Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego) than to be in a palace without Him.

We need to remember that God understands far more than we do. He has a much broader perspective, and sees things from the viewpoint of eternity. God told us,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-10)

Because of that, we should be able to trust God even when we don’t understand (or don’t like) what is happening. Proverbs tells us,

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil.” (Proverbs 3:5-7, emphasis added)

What if something happens to us which doesn’t make sense to us? What if it seems to be contrary to what we were taught by our teachers, or pastors, or our Study Bible notes? What will we do?

Will we call God a liar? Or will we say that evidently our teachers didn’t fully understand (or adequately explain) that issue? Will we become bitter against God? Or will we choose to trust Him? Will we turn away from God? Or will we turn **to** Him for strength and comfort and wisdom?

God promised to make everything work out for our long-term, eternal good **if we love Him.** (Romans 8:28) When the pain and the tears come, will we trust God to bring good out of our situation?

We can ask God to increase our trust in Him and our love for Him. We can ask Him to make us faithful. We can ask Him to enable us to stand with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, to be determined to be faithful to our God no matter what happens to us. As Jude 1:24-25 says,

***“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling,
and to present you faultless before
the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
To the only wise God our Saviour,
be glory and majesty, dominion and power,
both now and ever. Amen.”***

Appendix A

For Catholics

If you are from a Catholic background, what you were taught about Catholicism probably doesn't show the whole picture. This book will introduce you to another side of Rome that you need to be aware of in order to be well informed.

The truth can stand up to the test of history, Scripture, and being questioned. If what you were taught about Catholicism is true, then nothing in this book will shake it.

The truth can stand on its own. That is because Jesus Christ is Truth Incarnate. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6) And Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth. (John 16:13)

I started out as a secular humanist. (You can read about it in my Testimony.) My first prayer was, "God, if You're out there, show me." And He did. (It was a gradual process.) Because of that, I'm confident that God will reveal Himself, and His truth, to any person who really wants to understand.

I am asking God to show both you and me what is true and what is not true. We all need that—all the time.

God is powerful enough to open our eyes when they need to be opened. And He is loving enough to want to do it. The crucial question is, what is more important to us—the truth, or staying in our comfort zone? If we really want the truth, then God will show it to us.

I encourage you to check out my sources for yourself and come to your own conclusions. That is because you and I are responsible for our own lives. We need to base our decisions on our own personal convictions, and not on what somebody else tells us.

Some day, you and I will stand before God, and our works will be tested by fire. The Bible says:

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1 Corinthians 3:13-15)

When you and I stand before God, we will not be able to give excuses based on what somebody else told us. God expects **us** to test everything. The Bible says:

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

According to *Strong's Concordance*, the word “prove” means “to test.” We have to test everything ourselves. We cannot depend on “experts” to do it for us. And we cannot hide behind “experts” when we stand before God.

As you read this book—or any other book—I encourage you to ask God to give you His perspective about the things that you are reading. We all need to habitually seek God for His wisdom and guidance.

The Bible promises that if we really want wisdom, and we ask God for it, then He will give it to us. The Apostle James says:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5)

So as you read, please ask God to give you wisdom, and to reveal His truth to you. And ask Him to reveal Himself to you, to help you understand His nature and His character.

May the Lord lead us all into a greater understanding of His truth.

Appendix B

For Former Catholics

Leaving the Catholic Church involves more than just understanding doctrinal issues. There are often emotional issues as well. I have had to deal with them myself, and I correspond with former Catholics who are currently dealing with them.

The information in this appendix is not theoretical—I learned it in the trenches. I had to struggle with these things myself, and sometimes I needed help getting through them. (May the Lord bless the former Catholics who helped me.) There is one area where I did not have a problem. That is rejection from family members. (My immediate family is not Catholic.) But I have corresponded with many people who suffered because of rejection from their family, so I learned about that by helping people who were going through it.

I have corresponded with people who left other kinds of churches and had to deal issues that are similar to those faced by former Catholics. The main problem is our fallen human nature, and the desire to control other people's lives. This expresses itself in different ways, depending on individual personalities and beliefs.

I hope that this appendix will be helpful for some people who don't have a Catholic background. But since I'm a former Catholic myself, I am primarily addressing other former Catholics. (And people who want to have a better understanding of friends and family members who are former Catholics.)

Some Catholics see God's truth simply and suddenly, like a light being turned on inside them. They walk out of Catholicism and into Biblical Christianity without looking back, and without emotional turmoil. That is wonderful. It is a precious gift from God.

For many former Catholics, there are difficult emotional issues which we have to deal with. Often our new friends in our new church don't understand them.

Evangelicals often assume that once Catholics understand doctrinal issues and Biblical principles, then that is the end of the matter. But for many of us, it isn't. There can be a lot more involved than just intellectual understanding.

Catholics are used to having priests tell them how to think and what to do. As a result, it can be difficult for former Catholics to learn to pray for themselves, read the Bible for themselves, and take responsibility for their own life. We can overcome this difficulty, but it requires determination, persistence and prayer.

Controlling Leaders

Anybody in leadership—whether he is the Pope (who leads a billion Catholics) or the pastor of a small Evangelical church—is confronted with temptations to try to control and manipulate people. Good leaders humbly serve and obey God, and serve God's

people with love and self-sacrifice. But in order to do that, they have to overcome the temptation to want to be in charge themselves, instead of letting God be in charge. Every denomination has its share of leaders who fail that test.

Elephants can be tempted to destroy entire villages—smashing huts and killing any people they can catch. Mice and rabbits don't have such temptations because they are not capable of doing such things. As Lord Acton said, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

The New Testament epistles are full of warnings about false teachers (even giving the names of some of them). In addition, they say things in order to correct some false teachings that were being spread. The Church has been plagued with false teachers and false teachings ever since it began.

If a church leader becomes deceived and teaches things that are contrary to Scripture, the degree of impact varies widely. If he is the pastor of a small church, then only a few people are influenced by those false teachings. If he has a television show, then far more people will be influenced by them. If he is a Pope, then he can require all Catholics everywhere to believe those teachings—not only those alive when he makes the official pronouncement, but also those who have not yet been born.

So the power structure of the Catholic Church, combined with the belief in papal infallibility, makes the problem more serious. But even so, the root of the problem is our fallen human nature. No church—and no Christian—is immune. We all have to be vigilant.

If you are not a Catholic, as you read about the problems of former Catholics, please don't point your finger and say, "How could those Catholics..." Instead, please examine your own heart to see if anything comparable has developed there. And when you go to church, or listen to preachers on the radio, or watch them on television, please keep testing what they say against Scripture.

Jesus warned us that there would be great deception before His return. (Matthew 24:4; Mark 13:5; Luke 21:8) Therefore, Christians cannot afford to passively accept whatever they are told. The Apostle Paul warns us, "let him that thinketh he standeth **take heed lest he fall.**" (1 Corinthians 10:12, emphasis added)

Loyalty, Guilt, and Rejection

Some former Catholics are under emotional pressure to return to the Catholic Church because they don't want to hurt their family members. In addition, the Pope is called "Holy Father" and the Catholic Church is called "Holy Mother Church." As a result, people may feel as if they are betraying their father and their mother if they leave the Catholic Church. Jesus addressed these issues when He said,

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:37)

Some former Catholics have had to face control, manipulation, intimidation, rejection, and false accusations. If you are going through something like this, then remember that God is faithful and His grace really is sufficient. He will get you through it.

In addition, the experience will give you a new appreciation for the rejection and misunderstanding which Jesus endured for our sakes. He left the love and appreciation of Heaven to come here to earth and be falsely accused, misunderstood, rejected, and mocked, in order to save us. The Apostle Paul said,

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings,” (Philippians 3:10a)

You are sharing in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. This will give you greater love for Him, and more gratitude for what He has done for you. It will enable you to know His heart in a new way. It will also qualify you to receive the blessing of one of the Beatitudes. Jesus said,

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” (Matthew 5:11-12)

The process of qualifying for that blessing is no fun at all. But if we see the eternal perspective, then we will be able to endure it and to trust God while we are going through it. The Bible says,

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” (1 Peter 4:12-14)

Try to find an understanding friend or prayer partner to stand with you as you go through this. You can pray together. Your friend or prayer partner can help you keep a biblical perspective when you are under emotional pressure.

If your family is pressuring you to come back to the Catholic Church, then this is probably not a good time to try to share your new-found Biblical faith with them.

Being Told What to Think

The Catholic Church claims that it has the right to tell Catholics what to think. We were taught to believe whatever we were told and to obey the priests. During Mass, we were told when to stand, when to sit, when to reply to what the priest said, and what to say.

This attitude of passive compliance is constantly reinforced. This is more than just our personal experience. It is official Catholic doctrine. Following are some examples.

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the idea of freedom of religion is wrong. People are not supposed to use their own personal judgment to determine their religious beliefs.¹

According to Canon Law (the official laws governing the Roman Catholic Church), Catholics are required to submit their minds and wills to any declaration concerning faith or morals which is made by the Pope or by a church council. They are also required to avoid anything that disagrees with such declarations.²

The Catholic Church teaches that only the Magisterium of the Catholic Church (the Pope and the bishops in communion with him) has the right to interpret Scripture. People like us are not allowed to interpret Scripture for ourselves. We have to check it out with Catholic Church authorities.³

Catholicism teaches that Catholics are supposed to “receive with docility” any directives given to them by Catholic Church authorities.⁴

According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, “docile” means “disposed to be taught; tractable; as, a docile child.” “Tractable” means “capable of being easily led, taught, or controlled; docile.”

This sounds like young children who accept without question whatever their parents tell them. In fact, I believe that is precisely what Jesus warned us against when He told us to “Call no man father.” (Matthew 23:9)

In contrast, the Bible commends the people of Berea because they “searched the Scriptures daily” in order to “see whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:10-11) God wants His people to check things out for themselves, using Scripture as their yardstick.

(The Catholic Church does not have a monopoly on wanting docile compliance. For example, Kevin Reeves’ book *The Other Side of the River* describes some charismatic churches that became so controlling that people were afraid to question anything. And I have heard about people being emotionally wounded by controlling pastors in some Evangelical churches.)

So how do we overcome this? Psalm 23 gives us the answer:

“The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. **He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.**”
(Psalm 23:1-3, emphasis added)

(If you have a Catholic Bible, this is Psalm 22. Many of the Psalms are numbered differently. I suggest that you get a Protestant Bible. The King James Version is beautiful, and it was translated with great love, care, respect, and prayer. However, some people find the old fashioned language difficult to understand. The New King James keeps much of the beauty of the King James Version, but it is easier to understand.)

God is able to restore our soul. He can undo the damage which the Catholic Church did to our thinking and our emotions. God is able to change our minds and our emotions so that they will reflect His truth, and agree with His Word (the Bible). We need to agree with God instead of agreeing with the Catholic Church.

God tells all Christians to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. (Romans 12:2) And He always enables us to do what He tells us to do.

The Bible can correct our thinking and instruct us in how to live righteously. It can enable us to understand whether or not doctrines are biblical. It can equip us to live godly lives. The Apostle Paul said,

“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.”
(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

When reading the Bible, it is important to approach it with a spirit of humility, and to ask God to help us understand it. If we are faithful to do this, then our thoughts (and therefore our actions) will line up more and more with God’s thoughts and God’s ways of doing things. This is a process. It takes time. God is patient with us. We need to be patient with ourselves.

We not only need to read the Bible, we also need to study it. The Apostle Paul says,

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

It helps to have a good Study Bible. You can ask your pastor to recommend one. There are also some helpful computer programs.

Fear

Until the Second Vatican Council, Catholicism taught that there is no salvation apart from the Catholic Church, its sacramental system, the priesthood, and the Pope. (Since Vatican II, there have been a variety of teachings about salvation. These range from saying that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church, to saying that salvation can be found in non-Christian religions.) According to the Bible, our salvation depends on our relationship with Jesus Christ—not the Catholic Church.

There can be other forms of fear. One man told me that when he was a child in parochial school, the nuns terrorized him. For example, they said that the children would burn in Purgatory for every minute that they talked in class. What kind of picture does that give of God?

There are also official curses. When I was confirmed, the ritual (which was in Latin) included a curse which was supposed to come upon me if I ever left the Catholic Church. The anathemas of the Council of Trent still curse anybody who disagrees with any of the doctrinal statements of the Council of Trent.

God is more powerful than any curse. **God is able to protect us, and to bless us, whether or not the Catholic Church wants Him to. God is in control—not the Catholic Church.** The Bible says,

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

Anger

Many former Catholics go through a period of being angry. One reason is a feeling of betrayal. For some former Catholics, it has taken years before they were able to trust again.

In addition, anger is one way of handling fear, rejection, and the pressure to return to the Catholic Church. It can provide emotional strength, and it can help you stand your ground instead of allowing yourself to be controlled and manipulated. However, long-term anger is not spiritually or emotionally healthy. Jesus told us to forgive people. (Matthew 6:14-15)

No matter what has been done to us, we cannot afford to become bitter. Bitterness defiles people and it spreads like a spiritual cancer. The Bible says,

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; **lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;**” (Hebrews 12:14-15, emphasis added)

It can be difficult to forgive the people who taught us false doctrines and unbiblical religious practices. However, you don’t have to do it alone. God will help you. Jesus said,

“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” (Luke 18:27)

If you are willing to forgive, then God will enable you to do it. Ask God to increase your desire to forgive. Ask Him to change your heart and help you forgive.

Nobody Has All the Answers

When we were Catholics, we mistakenly believed that the Pope is infallible. It is easy to carry this mindset over to other things after we leave the Catholic Church.

Nobody is infallible. The Apostle Paul wrote about a fourth of the New Testament. Much of our theology is based on his writings. He was taken up to the Third Heaven, where he learned things which he was not allowed to tell other people about. (See 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.) But Paul made a point of telling us that even he does not have all the answers, and some things about God are beyond our comprehension. He said,

“For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now **I know in part**; but then I shall know even as also I am known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12, emphasis added)

Paul said that he only knew “in part” and that his understanding was like looking in a mirror (“glass”) which doesn’t give a clear reflection. If the Apostle Paul didn’t have all the answers, then nobody does. Not Luther, not Calvin, not Tyndale, not Zwingli, not other great men of the Reformation. They loved God and they did the best that they could, but they were not infallible and they did not have all the answers. We should love them and be grateful for them, but we need to be careful not to wind up treating them like infallible popes.

The same thing is true of our pastors, our church leaders, preachers on radio or TV, Christian authors, theologians, and seminary professors. We need to be careful not to give them the kind of unconditional trust that we used to give to the Pope.

The Bible commends the men of Berea because they checked out everything against Scripture. (Acts 17:10-11) We need to do the same thing. The Bible says,

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

According to *Strong’s Concordance*, the word “prove” means to test or examine. We need to test **everything** against Scripture. This is especially true today, because there is so much deception and false teaching in the world. We need to develop the habit of automatically checking **everything** out against Scripture.

God Is For Us—Not Against Us

Some Catholic traditions give the impression that God enjoys making us suffer. For example, Teresa of Avila told of a time when she was sick, in pain, with a fever, and she fell out of her carriage and into the snow. According to Teresa, God told her, “This is how I treat my friends” and Teresa replied, “No wonder you have so few.” (I’m quoting this from memory, so it may not be completely accurate.)

Another example is some apparitions of “Mary” which portray Mary as a loving mother who is trying to protect us from the wrath of Jesus. The picture is that of a loving mother trying to protect her children from a child abuser.

Another example is the teachings of some nuns in parochial schools. One man wrote to me saying that when he was in a Catholic school, the nuns told the children, “For every minute that you talk in class, you will burn in Purgatory.” The children were terrified of God.

These things are totally contrary to the picture of God which is given in the Bible. God the Father **loves** us so much that He sent Jesus to save us from our sins. Jesus loves us so much that He was willing to die a horribly painful and humiliating death in order to enable us to become children of God.

Ephesians 3:19 speaks of “the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” Many Scripture verses speak about the love of God. Here are a few of them:

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:6-8)

“We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

If your Catholic training gave you reasons to be afraid of God, instead of loving Him and trusting Him, then you need to saturate yourself in Scripture and get to know who God really is. When the negative thoughts and feelings come, you can combat them with the truth of Scripture. The Bible says,

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds:) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

The distorted picture of God which many Catholics were taught is a “high thing” that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. It raises itself up in our minds and our emotions, and blocks us from seeing who God really is. It hinders us from understanding God. We can pull these things down by taking our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. Ask God to show you how to do this.

One way of doing this is to become more aware of the chatter that goes on inside your head, and notice when it is talking about God. Then compare what it says with what the Bible says.

There was a time in my life when I became aware of a number of false teachings, false impressions of God. As I read the Bible, I found Scripture verses which told the truth which was the antidote to those false teachings. I memorized those verses. When the false teachings raised their head, I quoted those Scripture verses to myself. I kept doing that until the false teachings lost their power in my mind and my emotions.

Condemnation from Other People

It is not unusual for people who leave the Catholic Church to have Catholic clergy, family members, or friends say that they are apostate, that their new church is a cult, and that they are headed for hell. Sometimes family members will say things like, “You were born Catholic and you will die Catholic.” In other words, because you were baptized as a baby (without your consent) you have no right to leave. This denies the free will which God gave to us.

In the face of such condemnation, some former Catholics are afraid because they were taught that they cannot get to Heaven without the Catholic Church. The Bible has the antidote to such fears. It says,

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

That includes the Catholic Church. Nothing—including the Catholic Church—is able to separate us from the love of God.

Self-Condensation

Some of the Catholic saints seemed to think that self-condemnation is a virtue. For example, Catherine of Sienna saw a vision of Christ. She looked away for a second, and when she looked back, the vision was gone. She tormented herself with self-condemnation because she had looked away from the vision. Another example is Francis of Assisi. He was full of self-condemnation, and his biographers interpreted that as a sign of holiness. As Catholics, we were taught to study the lives of the saints and to follow their example. That can easily result in imitating their self-condemnation.

Self-condemnation may not be as much of a problem for younger Catholics who were raised in a generation which promotes positive self esteem. But it is a problem for many of us. It used to be a problem for me, until the Bible gave me some understanding of what it really is.

Jesus called the Holy Spirit “the Comforter.” (John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 6:7) According to *Strong’s Concordance*, the word “comforter” means intercessor, consoler, advocate, comforter. According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, the word “comfort” means “to impart strength and hope to; to relieve of mental distress; console.”

The Bible calls the devil “the accuser of our brethren” (Revelation 12:10) It’s the devil’s job to accuse us. Why should we do his job for him?

The Holy Spirit comforts, encourages, and strengthens. The devil accuses. We need to follow the example of the Holy Spirit—not the example of the devil. We need to comfort, encourage, and strengthen ourselves and others.

Self-condemnation is a “high thing” that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. It blocks us from realizing that God loves us. It hinders us from recognizing God’s love.

According to the Bible, Christians are not under condemnation. The Bible says,

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

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather,

that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Romans 8:33-34)

Acts 10:9-16 tells of a vision that Peter had. A sheet came down from Heaven. It was full of all kinds of animals (ones which Jewish law calls clean, and ones which Jewish law calls unclean). A voice told Peter to kill them and eat them. Peter protested, saying that he had never eaten anything unclean. The voice replied, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” (Acts 10:15) According to *Strong’s Concordance*, the word means common, defiled, polluted, or unclean.

When self-condemnation hits us, we can remind ourselves that what God has called clean, we must not call unclean. Jesus Christ took away our sins. He paid a horrible price to be able to do that. If God calls us clean, then who are we to disagree with Him?

When we sin, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. This is very different from self-condemnation. It is life-giving, rather than destructive. The Bible puts it this way,

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” (2 Corinthians 7:10)

Emotional Isolation

If you studied and emulated the mystics, or if you were in a convent or a monastery, then you may have a problem with emotional isolation.

When I was in the convent, we were told that we should be emotionally detached, that we should only express love in a detached way. We were taught that human attachments interfere with closeness to God.

This is contrary to Scripture. Adam was very close to God. He walked and talked with God every evening. But God said that wasn’t enough. God said that Adam needed human companionship. (“It is not good that man should be alone.” Genesis 2:18) God designed us for human fellowship.

Emotional detachment is praised by stoic philosophy and Buddhism. But it is contrary to Scripture. The Bible encourages fervent prayer.

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (James 5:16b)

You can’t do that without feelings. According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, the word “fervor” means “intensity of feeling or expression,” and synonyms for “fervent” are “fiery, vehement, impassioned, passionate, eager, keen.” If you are emotionally detached, then how can you pray fervently for someone?

Jesus wasn’t emotionally detached, and nobody has ever been closer to God the Father than Jesus was. When Jesus saw that Lazarus was dead, and Mary and Martha were grieving for him, Jesus “groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,” and he wept. The people saw this as showing the intensity of Jesus’ love for Lazarus. (John 11:33-36)

The Apostle Paul wasn't emotionally detached. He had a father's affection for Timothy, whom he called his "dearly beloved son." (2 Timothy 1:2; also see 1 Timothy 1:2 and 1:18)

Jesus told us that in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, we need to become like little children. (Mark 10:15). Children are emotional. They have strong feelings and they express them. Their love is personal, emotional, and affectionate.

Idolatry

When we think about idolatry, it is easy to focus on things like Mary worship. But there is far more to idolatry than that. For many Catholics, the Catholic Church itself is their greatest idol. They care about Jesus, but they look to the sacraments of the Catholic Church for salvation. As a result, their primary trust and loyalty and gratitude goes to the Catholic Church, rather than to Jesus Christ.

Catholics do not have a monopoly on this kind of thing. For example, the Bible tells us not to associate with false teachers. But in spite of that, some Evangelicals remain in a church where the pastor teaches things that are clearly contrary to Scripture. They may stay because their family has always gone to that church, or because the pastor has a charismatic personality and entertaining sermons, or because they have friends in that church. But according to the Bible, they should stay away from false teachers. (The epistles are full of warnings about false teachers, some of whom are mentioned by name.)

Once people leave the Catholic Church, it is easy to assume that we are now free of idolatry. However, idolatry can take many forms, and it can be subtle. Therefore, we need to continually guard against it.

If anything is more important to us than God, then it is an idol. It could be our job, or the approval of our family, or the desire for money, or wanting pleasure so much that we are willing to rebel against God's moral standards in order to get it.

Another form that idolatry can take is worshiping a false perception of God that is contrary to Scripture. This is an idol that is built with words, rather than carved in wood or stone. But it is still a false god. For example, some people see Jesus as being a good buddy, instead of the Lord of their lives. Yes, Jesus does love us, and He wants us to be His friends. But He is also King over all kings, and Lord over all other lords. And some day He will come in glory to judge all mankind. (2 Timothy 4:1; Acts 10:42; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16; 1 Peter 4:5)

Here is a way to test whether or not God comes first in our lives. If we were put in a situation where we could only hold on to one thing, what would it be? Our life? Our health? Our career? Money? Our relationship with someone who is important to us? Or our relationship with God? What is the one thing that we will not give up under any circumstances?

If the answer is not God, then we can ask Him to change our hearts, and help us know Him better and love Him more. And we can read Scripture so that we can get to know Him better. And as we read the Bible, and see areas where we fall short of what God wants us to be, then we can pray and ask Him to change us.

The Catholic Undertow

There is something which I call the “Catholic undertow.” Have you ever been swimming in the ocean, and tried to swim back to shore, but the undertow kept pulling you back out to sea? Well, something similar can happen to people who have left the Catholic Church.

Several things contribute to this, including fear, rejection, inappropriate guilt, and the practical consequences of being told what to think. Some Catholics encounter “culture shock” when attending another church. Also, no church is perfect. No matter where you go to church, sooner or later somebody will disappoint you or hurt you (and they may not even realize it).

Sometimes people who want you to go back to the Catholic Church will add to the difficulty by putting pressure on you or trying to indoctrinate you with Catholic teachings.

One way to deal with the undertow is to just refuse to give in to it. Stand your ground. Be a bulldog and keep holding on. Pray for God to give you strength and wisdom. Realize that what you are going through is not unusual. There is nothing wrong with you. Many former Catholics go through this kind of thing.

It is not wise to make important decisions when you are under emotional pressure. Applying this principle will give you strength if you are feeling the pressure of the Catholic undertow. Just refuse to make a decision until the emotional pressure passes.

When people get married, sooner or later they will have bad emotions and their level of commitment will be tested. The same kind of thing happens when somebody leaves the Catholic Church and joins a Biblical church.

Our emotions change with the weather, with our health, and with our circumstances. But God’s truth doesn’t change, and our commitment to Him shouldn’t change, either.

You didn’t leave the Catholic Church because of feelings. You left because it had practices and doctrines which are contrary to Scripture. You left because you wanted the truth. Well, don’t let emotions pull you back. The truth hasn’t changed just because your emotions have changed. Hang on. In time your emotions will come around again.

Reinforcing Our Foundations

We former Catholics need to reinforce our Biblical foundations. It is important to read the Bible and to have it become a part of us.

I recommend reading *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God* by James G. McCarthy. It shows that many Catholic practices and doctrines are contrary to Scripture. McCarthy is a former Catholic. His book is easy to read, thoroughly documented from Catholic sources, and compassionate in its presentation.

James McCarthy’s video, *Catholicism: Crisis of Faith*, was life changing for me. It ministers on far more than just the intellectual level. This film comes as a DVD with several language versions on it. You can order the DVD from D&K Press (800-777-8839) or get it at Amazon.com.

Finding a Good Church

Do you have a good church? If not, then you need to find one. The first thing to do is to pray for God to lead you to the right church. Keep on praying until you find it.

A good church is a place where people believe the Bible, have sound doctrine, and love God and one another.

Sound doctrine is important. There are some doctrines which are non-negotiable. If a person doesn't believe them, then he or she is not a Christian. These include the Incarnation (Jesus is both God and man), the Atonement (Jesus died for our sins), and the Resurrection of Jesus.

People have different personalities. So do denominations and pastors and congregations. As a result, individual churches have different personalities. You can find out about a church's doctrine with a phone call to their office, but to get a feel for a church's personality, you will have to visit it a few times.

If you are not comfortable with a church that you try, pray about it. The lack of comfort might indicate that there is a problem. However, it could just be culture shock. Any Protestant church will be different from what we were used to as Catholics.

The primary reason for going to church is to worship God and to learn about His ways and His character through preaching and Bible studies. Hopefully you will also make friends who will enrich your life and encourage you to become a more mature Christian. In order to do that, you will probably need to make the effort to get to know people.

You may not be able to find a church which meets all of your needs and desires. Perhaps you want to have activities with other single Christians, or you have children who need good programs for youth, or you find that the pastor isn't as available as you would like him to be. Perhaps the music is not well done, or it is different from what you are used to. Don't let such things discourage you. Be grateful for what you have.

One way to get things into perspective is to remember our persecuted brothers and sisters in other countries. There are a number of countries where Christians have to meet secretly and quietly. They don't dare worship out loud for fear of being heard by hostile people.

All of us have strengths and weaknesses. So do pastors. So do churches. There are no perfect churches. It's probably a good thing that there aren't, because knowing human nature, if we found one, we would probably make an idol out of it. Not being able to find a perfect church makes us depend on God. And that's good.

Some Prayers

Some people have found the following prayers to be helpful in breaking any remaining spiritual or emotional attachments to the Roman Catholic Church. (They helped me. I prayed them because I needed them, and then wrote them down in case they might help other people.) Before you read them, I'd like to say a few words about written prayers.

When we were Catholics, we were used to "canned" prayers. We said them during Mass. Many of us prayed rosaries. Some of us recited written prayers, such as novenas, litanies, and prayers which were given to visionaries by apparitions of "Mary."

Some written prayers were “indulgenced.” If you said them, you were supposed to earn indulgences.

I remember being told that certain prayers always “worked”—if you said them, you would get what you wanted. This was treating prayers as if they were magic formulas.

However, there is nothing wrong with using written prayers, if it is done in the right spirit. We pray the Lord’s prayer. Some hymns are prayers.

The following prayers are just examples. You may want to use them as prayers, or you may prefer to look at their content, and then share your heart with God in whatever way is appropriate for you.

LOYALTY: Heavenly Father, I renounce every form of false loyalty. My primary loyalty belongs to You alone. I used to give the Catholic Church a degree of love, trust, loyalty, and gratitude that should only have been given to You. Please forgive me for that. I repent for every way in which I have put other things ahead of You. Please help me put You first all of the time. Please help me see things from Your perspective. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

THE BIBLE: Heavenly Father, please help me understand the Bible, trust it, and apply it to my life in practical ways. Please help me think biblically and have biblical responses to practical situations. Please remove every hindrance to having my thoughts and my emotions agree with Scripture. Please make me hungry for Your truth. Please help me know You, love You, and trust You. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

FALSE DOCTRINES: Heavenly Father, I renounce every false doctrine which I have believed. I repent of having believed them. Please uproot them from my heart and from my mind. Please open my eyes to the truth of the Bible and set me free from every false teaching. Please give me a renewed mind and a renewed heart. Please enable me to recognize whether or not teachings are consistent with the Bible and with Your nature and character. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

UNBIBLICAL PRAYERS: Heavenly Father, I renounce the repetition of special verbal formulas. I repent for using them. Please teach me how to trust Your love for me. Please teach me how to share my heart with You like a trusting child. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

IDOLATRY: Heavenly Father, I renounce every form of idolatry. I repent for every way in which I have participated in idolatry. Only You are holy. Only You can save me. Only You are worthy of worship. Please remove all idolatry from my heart, my mind and my life. If I start to do anything idolatrous, please show me and help me repent. Please help me worship You with all of my heart, with all of my mind, with all of my strength, with all of my soul, and with all of my loyalty. Please teach me to worship You in spirit and in truth. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

AUTHORITY: Heavenly Father, I used to give priests and popes a kind of trust that should only be given to You. I put my conscience in their hands, instead of looking to the Bible to show me what is right. I accepted what they taught me, without

questioning it, instead of testing it against Scripture. Please forgive me for these things. Please help me trust You directly. Please help me find the moral guidance I need in the Bible. Please help me become a mature Christian who takes responsibility for my own beliefs and my own decisions. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

RITUALS: Heavenly Father, I repent of trusting in rituals and objects instead of trusting directly in Your love for me. I repent of attributing power to rituals and objects instead of believing in Your power, Your love, and Your faithfulness. I repent of praying to dead people (Mary and the saints). Please get these things out of my heart and out of my life. Please increase my faith in You and help me trust you more. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

OBJECTS: Heavenly Father, I am willing to get rid of any object which is associated with idolatry or other false religious practices. Please make me aware of these objects and help me get rid of them. Please set me free from any form of spiritual or emotional bondage. Please set me free from any influence of false religion. Lord God, You are my protector and my deliverer. Please increase my confidence in Your love for me and Your ability to take good care of me. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

MARY: Heavenly Father, the Bible says that Mary was an ordinary woman who needed a savior just like the rest of us do. The Bible tells us not to try to communicate with dead people. I repent of praying to Mary, venerating Mary, and singing songs in her honor. I renounce every special title that the Catholic Church has given to Mary. I repent of anything I have said or done because of apparitions of "Mary." I repent of any way in which I have consecrated myself to Mary. Please forgive me for believing Catholic doctrines that exalt Mary above other people. Please get these things out of my heart, out of my mind, and out of my life. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

FORGIVING: Heavenly Father, I choose to forgive every person who taught me false doctrines or unbiblical religious practices. Please work in my heart so that I will completely forgive these people. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

GIVING THANKS: Heavenly Father, thank You for setting me free from every form of bondage to the Catholic Church. Please help me live according to the freedom which You have given me. Please help me grow into a strong, mature Christian. Please increase my faith in you, my trust in You, and my loyalty to You. Help me trust Your goodness, Your faithfulness, Your love, and Your mercy. I want my life to glorify You. I want to demonstrate Your love and Your character. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Praying Scripture

Many Catholics spend their lives praying written prayers. They have not learned how to pray naturally and spontaneously from their heart.

I have found it helpful to use the Bible as a springboard for personal prayers. That isn't the only way that I pray, but it is something which I often do when reading Scripture. If you are not used to praying spontaneously, Scriptural praying can help you get started.

There are many prayers in the Bible. Have you ever prayed through them, like they were your own? It is one way of having Scripture become a part of us.

It is also a way of knowing that we are praying according to God's will. For example, if God showed the Apostle Paul that Christians need wisdom and revelation, then we know that praying for those things is according to God's will. We can use Paul's prayer as a springboard for our own prayers.

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are praying according to Scripture. But there are many other Biblical prayers that we can pray. We can appropriate them and make them our own. For example, here is one of Paul's prayers for the Christians in Ephesus:

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:14-21)

At first, this may look intimidating. Most of this is one long, complicated sentence. However, we can break it down into bite-sized pieces. There are many ways that this passage could be approached. I will just give an example. As you pray, you will find something that is more appropriate for you. Also, every time you come to this passage, you may find new treasures in it, and new ways to pray it. Please take the following as just one possible working example of how this Scripture passage could be prayed.

Father God, thank You for being my Father in Heaven. Thank you for the riches of your glory. Please give me a revelation of Your goodness and Your glory, and the wonderful treasures that are to be found in You. Lord God, please strengthen me with Your might, by Your Holy Spirit, in my inner man. May Jesus Christ dwell in my heart by faith. Lord, I want to be rooted and grounded in Your love. And I can't do that. I can't make it happen. Please make me like a plant whose roots go down deep into Your

love. Make Your love my source of strength and protection and nourishment. Make the revelation of Your love be a source of vision and motivation for my life. Use me to minister Your love to other people. Lord God, give me a revelation of Your love. Help me comprehend it. Show me how great and how deep Your love is. Enable me to know the love of Christ which is so great and so pure and so beautiful that it is beyond my understanding. Holy God, thank You that you are able to do far more than anything I can ask or imagine. Thank you for Your great power that is working in me. Lord, may You be glorified. Change my heart and make me someone whose life glorifies You.

As you read the Bible, you will find many prayers. You will also find many other things that are clearly God's will for us, and which can be the basis for prayers.

Some passages can be prayed directly, word for word. One of my favorites is from the psalms.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

What about our Families?

For former Catholics, there are two concerns relating to families. The first is how to deal with misunderstanding, condemnation, and pressure to return to the Catholic Church. I have already discussed these issues.

The second is family members who don't know Jesus. And we long to have them know Him and love Him the way we do. We have found a treasure which is so beautiful, so wonderful, so priceless, that we want to share it.

How do we share Jesus with family members who don't know Him?

The first thing to do is to pray. The Bible says that “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (2 Corinthians 4:4). We can pray for God to open their eyes and give them the grace to desire and understand the truth.

If you are hesitant to share your new faith with your family, the cause is not necessarily fear. It may be a matter of timing. Perhaps they aren't ready to hear about it yet. Or perhaps you need to become more solidly grounded in your faith before you share it with other people.

Sharing your new faith with family members can result in rejection and other forms of emotional pressure. You need to be solidly grounded in your faith first. And you should have a support system—fellow Christians who can give you wise counsel, practical advice, and moral support.

Remember that there is much more involved than intellectual understanding of doctrines. We are dealing with living people, not with intellectual abstracts. This is ministry, not a debating club. You can win an argument and lose a relationship.

The Apostle Paul told us to speak the truth **in love**. (Ephesians 4:15) There is more involved than an accurate explanation of doctrinal issues. We need to show love and respect for the people we are talking to. And we need to avoid saying or doing things which might make people feel that we are nagging them or pressuring them.

Jesus left people free to make their own decisions. When the rich young man turned away from Him, Jesus looked on him with love, but he let him go. He did not try to pressure him or manipulate him. (Mark 10:17-22) We need to follow Jesus' example.

Remember that we are dealing with people, not just issues. And having them be open to the Gospel is impacted by the kind of relationship which we have with them. We need to show love for them. We can look for opportunities to show them love and consideration and understanding.

It is important to remember that the goal is to bring them **to Jesus**—not out of the Catholic Church. I have read about some churches that used to be good, but now they have become less Scriptural than Catholicism. You can't always judge a church by its denominational affiliation, or even by its written statement of faith. There are some very unbiblical teachings and practices getting into some churches these days. (You can read about them in *Faith Undone* by Roger Oakland, and *A Time of Departing* by Ray Yungen.)

So do what you can to help your family members know Jesus better and love Him more. And pray for them. And trust God to get them to the church that He wants them to be in.

Of course, you can invite them to attend your church with you. But if you do, be careful not to put any pressure on them. It needs to be their decision—not yours. Jesus never pressured people to follow Him. For example, when the rich young man went away, Jesus didn't run after him and try to persuade him to stay. (See Matthew 19:16-22.)

When we do speak with our family members and friends, we can ask God to show us what to say and how to say it. And how much to say. In our zeal, it is easy to overload people with more than they can handle at one time. There are two prayers from the Psalms which I find helpful:

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14)

“Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” (Psalm 141:3)

A “watch” is a watchman, a soldier on guard duty. In this prayer, David asks God to be a sentry on guard duty, a sentry who will not allow the wrong words to come out of David's mouth. We can ask God to do the same thing for us.

This is an area where balance is needed. It is good to pray for God's guidance and protection when sharing our faith, but we should not allow ourselves to be hampered by fear of making mistakes. God promised to make everything work out for good for those who love Him. (Romans 8:28). That includes our mistakes.

If we love God, then our mistakes will work out for our good. If the people we are talking to love God, then God can make our mistakes work out for their good. So we can

be spontaneous and natural when sharing our faith. And we can trust God to reach people in spite of our failings.

We need to be careful not to develop false expectations because they can lead to discouragement or intimidation. It took many years for me to realize that some foundational teachings of Catholicism were unscriptural. For me, the light came on slowly and gradually, over a long period of time. In contrast, I have a friend who came to salvation within a few hours. Some Christians came to his door and shared the Gospel with him, and he left Catholicism and became a born-again Christian, and he never looked back. For him, it was a very quick process, almost instantaneous.

So don't assume that it will be slow and difficult (like it was for me) or that it will be quick and easy (like it was for my friend). Just love the people, and pray for them, and ask God to guide you. And be grateful for any progress you see, even if it seems to be small.

It would be good to give them the *Jesus* video. This will help increase their love for Jesus and their desire to know Him better. There is also a version for children titled *The Story of Jesus for Children*. You can order them by phone (1-800-432-1997) or online (www.JesusFilm.org).

Both videos end with a salvation message and a prayer. Someone says the prayer and the words are on the screen, so it is easy for viewers to participate in it. Please pray about whether or not to tell people about the salvation message and the prayer ahead of time. On the one hand, you don't want them to feel that you are trying to sneak something up on them. But on the other hand, you don't want to make them feel self-conscious. Every person, and every situation, is different. Only God knows what is best. So ask Him to give you wisdom. The Apostle James says,

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5)

Encourage them to read the Bible and get to know Jesus better. (Encourage them gently. Don't nag them. In our zeal we can become pushy without realizing it.)

If you feel that they are ready to learn that there are some problems with Catholicism, I recommend getting the video *Catholicism: Crisis of Faith*. Watch it yourself several times and get to know it. Pray for them to be receptive. Then offer to watch it with them. If you can afford it, you may want to give copies of the video to family members.

This video deals with unscriptural doctrines and practices in a gentle, respectful way. And it reaches people on many levels—not just intellectually. It is available as a multi-language DVD. You can order it by phone at D&K Press (1-800-777-8839).

There are two books that might be helpful: (1) *Preparing Catholics for Eternity* by Mike Gendron, and (2) *Talking with Catholic Friends and Family: Understanding How They Think and Feel, Why They Trust in Tradition, What the Bible Teaches* by James G. McCarthy.

Where do we go from here? Pray. Love them. Ask God to guide us. Share about how much Jesus means to us. There are no cookbook formulas or magic fixes. We have to depend on God every step of the way.

We need to share our faith with the people we love, but at the same time we need to remember that we are not responsible for their salvation. We should do the best that we can, but if they fail to respond, we should not allow ourselves to become discouraged or depressed because of it. Ultimately, it is between them and God.

God doesn't have any grandchildren. Every man and woman has to decide whether or not to become a child of God. We can't do it for them. But we can pray. And we can be encouraged because God loves them even more than we do.

Conclusion

We former Catholics have habitual ways of thinking which are contrary to Scripture. We also have emotional responses which are rooted in false teachings. With God's help, we can overcome these things. God has enabled His people to overcome everything which exalts itself against the true knowledge of God. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

We may have struggles from time to time. Trials and tribulation are a normal part of life. (John 16:33) However, God is able to keep us from falling. (Jude 1:24) We can overcome every obstacle, because God is faithful and He loves us.

May the Lord bless you, comfort you, strengthen you, and encourage you. May He make the Bible come alive to you and give you greater understanding of it. And may He give you an ever increasing revelation of how much He loves you.

Appendix C

Resources (Books, Videos and Websites)

In addition to four books about Catholicism, I have included two books about the credibility and authority of Scripture. I also recommend the article “Archeological and Historical Evidence of Biblical Accuracy” by Andy and Berit Kjos.

www.catholicconcerns.com/Archaeology.html

Books

James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God*—This book was life-changing for me. It deals with foundational issues in a clear and compassionate manner, comparing Catholic teachings with Scripture. It is easy to read and thoroughly documented from official Catholic sources.

William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*—This book has information about Church history, showing that some Catholic doctrines are contrary to the beliefs of early Christians. I found it to be quite helpful.

James G. McCarthy, *Talking with Catholic Friends and Family: Understanding How They Think and Feel, Why They Trust in Tradition, What the Bible Teaches*—If you have Catholic friends or family members, this should help you understand them better.

Mike Gendron, *Preparing Catholics for Eternity*—If you want to share the Gospel with Catholic friends and family members, it would be good to get this book along with James G. McCarthy’s book *Talking with Catholic Friends and Family*. Mike Gendron is an evangelist and a former Catholic.

Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*—This book helped me recover from the way that my Catholic training undermined my confidence in Scripture.

Josh McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter*—This is a short book that thoroughly establishes the credibility of the Biblical account of the Resurrection. In the process, it increases the reader’s confidence in all of Scripture. It helped me recover from the “higher criticism” teachings that I received at a Catholic college. Amazon.com carries it, but I couldn’t find it by searching for the title. (There are some other books with similar names, including a different book by Josh McDowell.) The best way to find it is to search

for the ISBN number (978-0842345521). Do a regular Book search at Amazon, and type in the number instead of the title.

Videos (DVD's)

Jesus—The *Jesus* video is beautifully done. It has been translated into over 700 languages and has been used overseas as an effective evangelizing tool. It is well acted, in a spirit of making the Bible come alive and helping people relate to Jesus more directly. The text of the dialogue comes from the Gospel of Luke. At the end of the video, there is a presentation of the salvation message, with a prayer. You can order it by phone from the Jesus Film Project (1-800-432-1997).

The Story of Jesus for Children—This video was also produced by the Jesus Film Project (1-800-432-1997).

Catholicism: Crisis of Faith—This video was life changing for me. It ministers on far more than just the intellectual level. There are interviews with former Catholic priests and former nuns. You can watch Pope John Paul II lead an inter-faith prayer meeting that he convened. With him are chanting Buddhists, Muslims singing passages from the Koran, African snake worshipers, a Native American shaman, and members of various other religions—all calling on their gods. A friend of mine, who is a missionary in Guatemala, said this video gave him a better understanding of Catholicism than a college course that he had taken on the subject. The producer is James G. McCarthy, a former Catholic. You can order it by phone from D&K Press (800-777-8839) or get it at Amazon.com.

Messages from Heaven—This video deals primarily with apparitions of “Mary.” The producer is Jim Tetlow, a former Catholic. He and his partner have read hundreds of Catholic books about apparitions of Mary, and they visited a number of apparition sites. The video comes as a multi-language DVD. You can order it from D&K Press (1-800-777-8839). You can also watch the video online.

www.creationists.org/MessagesFromHeaven/english.html

Websites

Catholic Concerns (my website)—This website has numerous articles. You can read my book *Catholic Concerns* online and also download it as a PDF file (an eBook). You can also download an eBook by Dr. Joe Mizzi titled *Test All Things: An Invitation to Examine your Catholic Faith in the Light of Scripture*. Once you download an eBook, you can keep it on your computer. You can also send it to friends as an email attachment.

www.CatholicConcerns.com

Just For Catholics (Dr. Joe Mizzi, a former Catholic)—This website has articles in eight languages. It also has some eBooks. It has a search engine, so you can search for information using key words.

www.JustForCatholics.org

Christians Evangelizing Catholics (Dr. Bill Jackson)—This website has a “Glossary of Catholic Doctrine and Biblical Rebuttal.” There is a search engine. In addition, you can look up subjects alphabetically. There are a number of testimonies of former Catholics. Dr. Jackson does public speaking. You can contact him through his website. For many years he was a missionary in Ireland.

www.DoDone.org
www.angelfire.com/ky/DoDone

Proclaiming the Gospel (Mike Gendron, a former Catholic)—This website has articles, testimonies, online audio tapes, and a store with books and tapes. It also has a chat room. Mike Gendron does public speaking. So does Rich Kris, who is associated with him. You can contact them through the website.

www.pro-gospel.org

Good News for Catholics (James McCarthy, a former Catholic)—This website has articles, booklets, and excerpts from books. It also tells where to get some good resource materials. If you go to “Resources” and click on “Catholicism: Crisis of Faith,” it will give you a link to a transcript of the video, including numerous footnotes.

www.gnfc.org

Reaching Catholics for Christ—This website has articles and audio tapes.

www.ReachingCatholics.org

Berean Beacon (Richard Bennett, a former Catholic priest)—This website has articles in eleven languages. It has online videos and audio tapes. Richard Bennett does public speaking. You can contact him through his website.

www.BereanBeacon.org

Appendix D

A Change in Perspective

I left the Catholic Church because I learned that some of its doctrines and practices were contrary to Scripture. However, in spite of that, I still had strong feelings of loyalty to it. When I did the research for the articles on my website, I was surprised at how painful it was to learn about the things I was studying. (I lost a lot of sleep and ate a lot of Roloids.)

I put some of the articles together to make a book online (*The Spirit of Roman Catholicism*). There were so many requests for a published book that I published one. (I changed the title to *Unmasking Catholicism*.) Then I made variations of that book for different audiences. (*Catholicism Unveiled* for Protestants, *The Catholic Undertow* for former Catholics, and *Another Side of Catholicism* for Catholics.)

After that, I started learning about problems with other kinds of churches. I attended a nondenominational church that had a strong emphasis on Scripture when I first started going there. But over the years, we heard less and less about Scripture, and more and more about the pastor's personal experiences. Some things were troubling, but I didn't know why. Eventually the problem became clear. The pastor had become heavily involved in New Age mysticism. As soon as I recognized what was going on, I left. Immediately.

I had also been attending Wednesday evening services at a Methodist church where the preaching seemed to be Scriptural. (Many Methodist churches have become quite liberal, but this one wasn't.) After a while, I began to feel uneasy there. Something seemed wrong, but I couldn't figure out what the problem was. One evening the service felt Catholic. I was in a Methodist church, and the same pastor was preaching, but it strongly reminded me of being in a Catholic church. After making some inquiries, I learned that the pastor had become strongly influenced by Catholic mysticism, so I stopped going to those services.

Next, I found a Baptist church where the preaching and the Bible studies were solidly based on Scripture. Unfortunately, the pastor turned out to be a shepherd who wounded his sheep instead of protecting them. A number of trusting, loyal people wound up hurt and confused because of things he did to them. I left with a heavy heart, worried about people I love.

After that, I found a conservative Presbyterian church. At first the preaching and Bible studies were good, but then the pastors attended some conferences, and the church began to change. One of the pastors started teaching *lectio divina*. This is a Catholic method of meditating on Scripture that can wind up being similar to Hindu meditation techniques, complete with mantras.¹ In the Bible, meditating on Scripture means thinking about what it means—not blanking out your mind in order to get impressions and pursue “union with God.”

The Bible tells us that God will be **with** His people, and that He will be **in** His people. God does this for us. It is not something that we can cause to happen by using meditation techniques. The Apostle John said,

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, **God dwelleth in him, and he in God.**” (1 John 4:15, emphasis added)

“He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, **he hath both the Father and the Son.**” (2 John 1:9b, emphasis added)

“God is love; and he that dwelleth in love **dwelleth in God, and God in him.**” (1 John 4:16b, emphasis added)

You can’t have any more “union” with God than that. *Lectio divina* is an attempt to manufacture something that God already gave us. If you want to see where it can lead, read about Thomas Merton and Bede Griffiths in Chapter 2 (“Mixing Catholicism with Non-Christian Religions”). You can also read the book *A Time of Departing* by Ray Yungen.

At the Presbyterian church, another pastor started showing movie clips during his sermons. As a result, you saw the words of a hymn on the screen while you were singing, and a few minutes later—on the same screen—you saw sexy women, and people doing worldly things that don’t belong in church.

Lectio divina and movies during sermons were too much for me, so I left that church. But I learned something valuable while I was there. In sermons and in Sunday school, I heard about the depravity of mankind. That was quite helpful. Before going to that Presbyterian church, I hadn’t heard much about how depraved our fallen human nature is. And I needed to get that perspective. It’s a good antidote to the humanism that we have been bombarded with in our modern American culture.

(Humanism says that people are basically good, and when they do bad things, it’s because of their circumstances. Biblical Christianity says that people are fallen sinners who need to be saved, and they are personally responsible for their behavior.)

I’m now attending another church. It has a good statement of faith, and the senior pastor is a kind man who calls himself a conservative. But the Sunday school classes are based on books or on a standard curriculum that is used in a number of classes. That curriculum includes some liberal approaches to Scripture that undermine people’s confidence in the Bible. One class is based on a book written by an Evangelical who promotes mysticism. So I’m wary. I can’t afford to accept anything without testing it against Scripture.

I’ve corresponded with people who have similar problems. It seems that Bible-believing churches are difficult to find these days.

As a result of all this, my thinking about the problems with Catholicism has changed. I now see the basic problem as being our fallen human nature.

The epistles in the New Testament are full of warnings about false teachers. They also correct some false teachings. So the Church has been plagued with false teachers and false teachings ever since it began.

With Catholicism, the problem of our human susceptibility to false teaching has been compounded by an emphasis on tradition, and belief in papal infallibility. The Catholic Church is huge, wealthy, and politically influential. As a result, false teachings from Catholic authority figures impact multitudes. If they are taught by popes, then all Catholics are **required** to believe them.

One advantage of Protestant churches is that if you discover that there are false teachings in the church that you attend, you can leave and go to another church, or even another denomination. In some cases, so many people leave that there is a church split. Believing false teachings is optional, rather than mandatory. You can look for other pastors whose teaching is Biblical.

There have been some historical abuses of power by the Catholic Church. As a result of my new degree of awareness of human depravity, I now see those problems as being due primarily to our fallen human nature, rather than to Catholicism. As Lord Acton said, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

The Catholic Church is huge, with over a billion members. Because of the resulting wealth and power, popes are faced with kinds of temptations that Protestant pastors don’t have to deal with.

Kevin Reeves’ book, *The Other Side of the River*, tells about some charismatic pastors who told their church members that if they questioned strange things that were going on during church services—such as people barking like dogs—then they were in danger of having God strike them dead like Ananias and Sapphira. A “faith teacher” told about a pastor who criticized his teachings, and died not long afterwards. He said that God killed that pastor because he criticized those “faith teachings.”

What would men like that do if they had the power and wealth and political influence of the medieval popes?

What would Jim Jones have done? He ordered his followers in Jonestown to commit suicide by drinking poisoned Kool-Aid. (Those who refused were forced to drink it at gunpoint.) Over 900 people died, including many children who were given the poisoned drink by their parents. In one day, Jim Jones wiped out his entire church.²

As you can see from these examples, the Catholic Church doesn’t have a monopoly on abusing power. (Because of that, I’ve removed articles about historical abuses of power from my website, and I’ve replaced my previous books with this one.)

The Catholic Church has some teachings that are contrary to Scripture. In addition, it gives the traditions of men greater authority than the Bible. In spite of that, some Catholics become born-again Christians. For example, John Wycliffe, John Hus, and William Tyndale were Catholic priests. And they were Evangelical Christians. They are heroes of the faith, and two of them are martyrs.

I corresponded with a woman who was raised Catholic and went to Catholic schools. She told me that, even as a child, she was an Evangelical. When the nuns told the children to kneel in front of a statue of Mary and pray, she was an obedient child and did what she was told. But instead of praying to Mary, she prayed to Jesus. She never prayed to anybody but Jesus. When she grew up and went to college, she met some Evangelical Christians. Then she realized that she had been an Evangelical all along, so she left the Catholic Church and joined an Evangelical church.

I’m not sure at what point I became a born-again Christian. When I was a Catholic, I watched a Billy Graham crusade on television. When he led people in a prayer

for salvation, I knelt in front of the TV and prayed along with him. I was weeping, and didn't know why. Now because of some unscriptural Catholic beliefs, my intellectual understanding of salvation was limited. However, my loyalty and allegiance belonged to Jesus Christ. He became more and more central. Mary and the saints and Catholic devotional practices became more and more peripheral.

One day, when I was starting to pray the rosary, I felt that I shouldn't do it, that there was something wrong with it. So I stopped, and I never prayed the rosary again. I had pictures of the "Sacred Heart of Jesus" and the "Immaculate Heart of Mary." Something about those pictures bothered me, so I got rid of them. Gradually I got rid of other religious objects, and stopped participating in other devotional practices.

Was I saved back when I was a Catholic? Or did it happen later, after I left the Catholic Church? I really don't know. I made altar calls and prayed a sinner's prayer on several occasions.

It could be that God changed my heart when I prayed with Billy Graham, and then the Holy Spirit showed me problems with Catholicism—gradually, as I could handle them—rather than overwhelming me by showing me everything all at once.

Here's another question. Remember that Baptist pastor who did harmful things to members of his church? He had good doctrine, and he prayed a "sinner's prayer." But is he a born-again Christian? I doubt it. I don't see how a true Christian could treat God's people the way that he does. Salvation involves more than intellectual understanding. Saving faith results in a changed heart, a desire to serve and obey the Lord, and a love for God's people. The Apostle John said,

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But **whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.**"
(1 John 2:4-5, emphasis added)

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: **for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?** And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John 4:20-21, emphasis added)

According to Jesus, it is possible for people to think that they are Christians, but be sadly mistaken about it. He said,

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)

Now we cannot merit Heaven by doing good works. But saving faith should result in wanting to obey God, and doing good works in order to please Him, because we love Him. (See Chapter 13, "Faith versus Works.")

I believe that some churches help people become born-again Christians because they teach good doctrine and have a Biblical worldview. And other churches make it difficult for people to become born-again Christians because they have false teachings,

and their approach to Scripture undermines confidence in the credibility and authority of the Bible. But in spite of that, God can have a faithful Remnant in those churches.

We can see examples of faithful Remnants in two of the churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation (chapters 2 and 3). The letters to these seven churches show us things that can happen to churches and to individual Christians. They remind us to be vigilant, to persevere in spite of hardship, to use discernment about which teachers we listen to, and to do whatever we can to grow stronger in our love for God and for our brothers and sisters in Christ. They also demonstrate that, even in churches with a lot of false teaching, God can have a faithful Remnant.

The church of Ephesus had sound doctrine, refused to listen to false teachers, did many good works, and endured hardship. However, they lost their “first love.” Their zeal and devotion to God faded. Jesus told them that if they didn’t repent and return to their “first love,” He would remove their “candlestick.” In Revelation 1:20 we learn that the candlesticks represent the churches. So Jesus was saying that if those Christians didn’t have enough love for God, the church would not survive. And it almost didn’t. Not much of it is left. Ephesus used to be an important center for early Christianity. It is located in modern Turkey, which has become predominantly Muslim. But God has a faithful Remnant there—a “tiny” community of persecuted Christians.³

The church of Smyrna did good works. They endured tribulation and poverty. They were about to suffer severe persecution, because Jesus told them, “be thou faithful unto death.” He did not say that He would prevent them from being persecuted. Rather, he urged them to remain faithful in spite of the persecution.

The church of Pergamos did good works. They did not deny their faith, even under great pressure. But they tolerated false teachers. Jesus told them to repent. False teaching endangers the spiritual health of the sheep. The Apostle Paul warned us,

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” (Galatians 5:9)

If you have ever baked bread, then you know that it doesn’t take much yeast to work its way throughout all of the dough and change it.

The church of Thyatira did good works and had “patience” (which means they endured hardship). But they tolerated a false prophetess whose teachings led church members into idolatry. However, some of the people in that church were not seduced by those false teachings. God had a faithful Remnant there, in spite of false teachings and idolatry.

This should encourage us if we have family members or friends who are in churches with false teachings. If people really want to know God, then He has ways of reaching them, in spite of those false teachings. The Prophet Jeremiah said,

“Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:12-13)

Jeremiah was prophesying to the people of Judah, who had fallen into serious idolatry. They worshiped pagan gods, but they also went through the motions of worshiping the one true God of the Bible. These verses are a promise that—even in the

midst of widespread false teaching and idolatry—if people are serious about wanting to know God, they will find Him, because He will hear their prayers and make Himself known to them.

The church of Sardis had a reputation of being alive, but it was spiritually dead. Jesus told them to wake up and repent. However, even in Sardis, there was a faithful Remnant. Jesus said,

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”
(Revelation 3:4, emphasis added)

So a faithful Remnant was true to God, in spite of being in a dead church. That should give us hope for friends and family members who are in dead churches. We can pray for them to be faithful to God. We can also ask God to lead them to a better church.

The church of Philadelphia was faithful, but it was under pressure to compromise its faith. Jesus told them, “hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” (Revelation 3:11)

Christians in postmodern America are also under pressure to compromise their faith. We need to hold on to Biblical truth and be faithful to God, no matter what happens. We need to be spiritual bulldogs.

The church of Laodicea was lukewarm—neither hot nor cold. It falsely believed that it was self-sufficient and in good shape spiritually, saying, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing...” But in reality it was “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” (Revelation 3:17) Jesus told this church,

“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.” (Revelation 3:20)

This is a well known Scripture verse that is often used in evangelism. But it was spoken to a Christian church—not to unbelievers. Jesus asked people who claimed to be Christians to let him come in.

Jesus also said, “to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne...” (Revelation 3:21) And what did they have to overcome? The presumption and false sense of security of that church. They had to recognize that they were needy. They had to repent, and ask God for mercy.

It is notable that this was a financially prosperous church. Unfortunately, prosperity can result in apathy.

I live in the United States. Christians here have been safe and secure and prosperous for a long time. Therefore, we need to guard against apathy and worldliness. It is easy to trust in our banks, our possessions, our health care system, and our nation’s military might, instead of trusting in God. If we are not careful, we could wind up becoming like the Laodiceans.

May the Lord help all of us know Him better, love Him more, and serve Him more faithfully.

Appendix E

Trusting the Lord

Proverbs 3:5-8 gives some keys to having a right relationship with God. It also shows us how God will bless us if we do things His way.

Frank Sinatra used to sing a song called “My Way.” The theme of the song is, “I did it my way.” It is a good example of leaning on your own understanding and being wise in your own eyes. That is a recipe for disaster.

Here is what God tells us in Proverbs 3:5-8. (I give each verse separately so that we can look at them individually.)

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart: and lean not unto thine own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5)

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:6)

“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.” (Proverbs 3:7)

“It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.” (Proverbs 3:8)

Verse 5 gives a contrast between two opposing things. Trusting in the Lord with all your heart is comparable to a child who is walking with his father, and they have their arms around each other. That child is not going to go in the wrong direction, or the wrong way. And he is not going to fall. He is safe and secure. If the ground is uneven or unstable, the father will support the child, and he will guide him into safe paths.

According to *Strong’s Concordance*, the word translated “lean” means to lean on or rely on. Leaning on our own understanding means to rely on our own intellect, training, and experience more than we rely on God. We need to use these things, but our **primary** reliance should be on God. Our human understanding is limited. Our experience is small and incomplete, compared to that of the Creator of the universe. We only “see through a glass, darkly.” (1 Corinthians 13:12) Our vision is clouded. Our perspective is inadequate. God tells us,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Even if things happen that we don’t understand, we can trust God’s nature, character, power, and love. The Apostle Paul said,

“For the which cause I suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for **I know whom I have believed**, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12, emphasis added)

Notice that Paul said **whom** (a person) rather than **what** (a thing). Paul’s confidence was in God, rather than in his own understanding.

Leaning on our own understanding is comparable to walking with a cane, and putting most of our weight on it. If the cane lands on uneven ground (such as a rocky place) or it lands at an awkward angle (as it could in a hole, or in a crack between some rocks) we can stumble. If it lands on unstable ground (such as stones that move, or a slippery surface) we can fall. The cane doesn’t know which way is safe and which way is dangerous. It just goes where we put it. And it can only provide stability to the degree that we have chosen solid footing for it.

In verse 6, according to *Strong’s Concordance*, the word “acknowledge” includes comprehending, considering, being diligent, instruction, being aware, having respect, understanding, being acquainted with, and being related to (as a kinsman). It involves the kind of understanding that comes from personal relationship, in addition to the kind of understanding that comes from diligently paying attention to (and comprehending) instruction. When we have a close personal relationship with the Lord, and pay close attention to what He tells us and shows us, then He will direct our paths.

Our primary means of “hearing” from God is reading the Bible. Another way is having Biblical principles come to mind when we need them, or remembering Scripture verses that are appropriate for our situation.

Verse 7 gives a contrast between two things. The first is being wise in our own eyes. The second is fearing the Lord and departing from evil. If we are wise in our own eyes, then it is difficult to have a Biblical fear of the Lord. In addition, being wise in our eyes can lead to sins such as presumption, doubt, unbelief, and hardness of heart. These sins are shown in the following Scripture passages:

“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.” (Psalm 19:13)

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” (Hebrews 3:12)

“Afterward he [Jesus] appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.” (Mark 16:14)

Verse 8 says that if we do these things, it will be marrow to our bones. The Bible says that the life of our flesh is in our blood. (Leviticus 17:11) Doctors say that blood is made by our bone marrow. If we follow the instructions of Proverbs 3:5-8, it will literally

lead to life. There will be no anxiety or stress-related illnesses. (But I realize that this is easier said than done.)

Verse 8 also says that it will be health to our navel. According to *Strong's Concordance*, the word translated “navel” actually means the umbilical cord. How do babies in the womb get everything that they need for life? Through the umbilical cord. If the umbilical cord doesn't function properly, then the baby won't get adequate food and oxygen.

Babies in the womb are totally dependent upon their mothers for everything that they need for life. They are connected to their mothers by their umbilical cords, and they receive what they need through those umbilical cords. Similarly, Christians are totally dependent upon God for everything. Receiving what God wants to give us depends on having us be rightly connected to Him.

Whatever we need—whether it is strength or courage or healing or wisdom or protection or provision—in order to receive it, we need to be rightly connected with God. And Proverbs 3:5-8 gives us some keys to being rightly connected with God.

How can we use these keys in practical ways? How can we develop the child-like faith of trusting in the Lord with all of our heart instead of leaning on our own understanding?

Building Trust

There are some practical things that we can do to build our trust in God.

Strengthen Our Relationship

When you know a good person intimately—when you really know their heart—then you have more trust in them. So how do we get to know God better? By reading the Bible (and asking God to help us understand it). The Bible shows us God's nature, His character, and His ways.

We can also get to know God better by spending time in prayer and worship. The Bible says,

“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

Notice that the peace comes when we give things to God in prayer. It does not wait for how He answers our prayers. It does not depend on the outcome. The peace comes when we put the situation into God's hands. The Bible says that we should cast all our cares (concerns) on God because he cares (loves and takes care of) us. (1 Peter 5:7)

Gratitude

We need to develop the habit of being grateful for who God is and what He has already done for us. It is easy to take things for granted. For example, you are reading this article. Have you thanked God for the fact that you are able to see, and you know how to read?

If we look for things to thank God for, we will find more and more reasons to be grateful. And if we look for things to complain about, we will find more and more reasons to complain.

Look at the Israelites when they came out of Egypt and went to the Promised Land. They kept complaining. They complained because they got bored with eating manna every day. They wanted something to spice it up (garlic and leeks, which are a kind of onion). They complained when they had no water, but when God miraculously supplied water for them, we have no record that they thanked Him for it. Look at what they said to Moses, when they saw the Egyptian army coming after them,

“And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.” (Exodus 14: 11-12)

And what was the end of the matter? That generation died in the wilderness because they refused to enter the Promised Land. They didn't trust God to deal with the giants there. Compare this with the attitude of King Jehoshaphat. When he and his people were faced with an overwhelming army, Jehoshaphat prayed,

“O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.” (2 Chronicles 20:12)

And God came through for them. He miraculously delivered them from their enemies.

We can choose to develop the habit of thanking God. We can look for things to thank Him for. We can thank God and praise Him even when we don't feel like it. We can deliberately choose to be grateful. We can ask God to give us a grateful heart.

Dealing with Hindrances to Trust

It is helpful is to identify some of the hindrances to trust. That enables us deal with them. We can ask God to: (1) make us aware when we fall into these ways of thinking or reacting; (2) deal with things in our hearts that are fertile ground for these hindrances; and (3) give us grace and practical strategies to overcome these things.

Independence and Self-Reliance

I live in the United States. Our American culture fosters an attitude of independence and self-reliance. It values self-confidence, rather than confidence in God. It promotes self-esteem, rather than high esteem for God. (We do have great value, but it is not because of any merits of our own. It is because Jesus Christ loves us so much that He gave His life in order to save us.)

The American ideal is the self-made man who can say, “I did it.” This promotes the attitude that God warned the Israelites against in Deuteronomy 8:10-18. He warned them not to be deceived into thinking that it was their power (or education, or brilliance, or expertise, or hard work) that caused them to succeed.

Sometimes we may have a crisis, or danger, or an accident, or health problems. The result is a “reality check.” All at once, we suddenly remember that we have to depend on God. That’s good. When it happens, we need to keep reminding ourselves of the truth that we have learned, instead of allowing ourselves to slip back into our independent, self-reliant, American mindset.

Our school system indoctrinates us with humanist philosophy and assumptions. Even though we know better as Christians, these things can sneak into our thinking, our assumptions, and our responses. We need to become alert to recognize them, and to resist them. The Bible tells us to refuse to allow thoughts to remain if they make it difficult for us to know (and therefore trust) God. The Bible says,

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

The image is a military one, that of a soldier on guard duty who sees someone and says, “Halt! Who goes there?” Then the soldier makes a decision whether to allow the person to stay, or to require the person to leave, or to arrest the person.

Humanism exalts itself against the knowledge of God. It tries to make man the center of the universe, and the source of salvation, instead of God.

Self-Pity

We live in a culture that encourages people to have a victim mentality, and to feel sorry for themselves. An example of this is a recent statement that I read in a newspaper. It said that Aristide (the ruler of Haiti) is a victim of an addiction to power. A news reporter with that kind of attitude could have said the same thing about Hitler. Back in Hitler’s day, the public would not have stood for that kind of nonsense. They knew that Hitler did evil things, and they knew that he was responsible for his actions.

Some people really have been victimized. I personally know two people who were raped when they were young children. They both decided that Jesus is more important to them than what happened to them. And because Jesus told us to forgive,

they forgave their rapists. That turned out to be the key to a process of emotional healing. These people were healed through prayer, Scripture reading, and obedience to God. They never needed counseling. God's Word showed them what they needed to know.

Self-pity is related to humanism. It puts our suffering on center stage, instead of God. It says that what happened **to** us is more important than what Jesus Christ did **for** us. It says that, because of what happened to us, we don't have to obey Jesus when He tells us to forgive people and to love our enemies. It puts our focus on ourselves, instead of on God. This is a form of idolatry.

How can we truly trust God when we are focussed on ourselves? When we look at ourselves, our problems look huge. When we look at God—and how great and powerful and loving He is—then we can see that, compared to God, our problems are small.

The key to overcoming self-pity is to repent, and to make a decision to focus on who God is, and how much He loves us, instead of focussing on how we feel. It is also helpful to get our suffering in perspective. Jesus said,

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.” (John 15:19-21)

The Apostle Paul said,

“...we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Romans 5:3b-5)

“Thou therefore endure hardness [hardship], as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (2 Timothy 2:3)

“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

The Book of Acts says that Paul and his companions were

“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that **we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.**” (Acts 14:22, emphasis added)

The Apostle Peter said,

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings: that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (1 Peter 4:12-13)

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:5-7)

The Apostle James said,

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” (James 1:2-4)

We need to learn to see suffering through the perspective of the Bible, instead of the perspective of our humanist, “I have a right to feel good” culture. Then, no matter what we have been through, we will be able to get over it and go on with God. We need be like the Apostle Paul, who said,

“...this one thing I do, **forgetting those things which are behind**, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13b-14, emphasis added)

Circumstances

Another hindrance to trusting God is believing (or feeling) that our circumstances are so overwhelming that even God can’t deal with them in a way that will work out for our good. This is actually a form of idolatry. It is saying that our circumstances are more powerful than God is.

In America, our culture is saturated with the assumptions of behavioral psychology. This is a humanistic teaching that denies personal responsibility for our own behavior. It says that we are at the mercy of our circumstances. It says that what we do is determined by our present circumstances, or by what has happened to us in the past (our past circumstances). This attitude is shown by a gang in the movie “West Side Story.” One gang member says, “I’m depraved on account of I’m deprived.”

The fatal error of behavioral psychology is thinking that circumstances force people to do things. But circumstances don’t have that kind of power. All that they can do is to pressure people into making personal decisions. If people take the path of least resistance, then they will go in the direction that the behavioral psychologists predict. But people are capable of making Godly decisions, no matter what the circumstances. We can be swimmers, who go where we decide to go—instead of driftwood, that is carried away by any current that happens to come along.

I knew a young man who was raised in a home where the family was violent and morally reprobate. He had no decent role models, he couldn’t read, and he didn’t know anything about God. But he used to watch a TV program called “Father Knows Best.” As a child, he decided that he wanted to be like the people on that TV show, instead of being like the people in his family. When he grew up, he met some Christians, heard the Gospel, and became a Christian.

The martyrs demonstrate that people can make Godly decisions in spite of great adversity. The early Christians in Rome, who were sent to the coliseums to be eaten by lions, sang praise to God instead of cowering in fear. The God who gave strength and courage to them will do the same for us if we need it. We can trust God no matter what happens. If we are faced with grief, or tragedy, or sickness, or injustice, or war, or persecution—we can trust God to be with us and to get us through it. Jesus said,

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

“...lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:20b)

The Epistle to the Hebrews says,

“...he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (Hebrews 13:5b-6)

The Apostle Paul said,

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it

is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. **Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.** For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39, emphasis added)

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

God’s Power and Faithfulness

We live in a world that is morally sliding downhill. But we can be reassured because, where sin abounds, God’s grace abounds even more. (Romans 5:20) If we feel weak or inadequate, we can be strengthened and comforted by the fact that God told Paul,

“...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness...” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

God doesn’t play favorites. What He did for Paul, He will do for all of His children. We can rest assured that God’s grace really is sufficient for us. When we are weak, then He will give us His strength to go on. We can see this same promise in the Epistle of Jude.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” (Jude 1:24-25)

Appendix F

Poems

God's Love

The God who made the earth has always loved us.
Before we drew a breath, our heart was known.
God created us to live with Him forever,
To sing and dance with joy before His throne.

Our time on earth is hard, but it is fleeting.
No matter how things seem, God's always there.
He'll guide us and protect us and watch over us,
And take away each tear and fear and care.

And when the toil and pain and fear have ended,
When sorrow's gone, and all we know is love,
Then we and God will celebrate forever,
Rejoicing with the saints in Heaven above.

Faithful Friend

Jesus, You're the friend who'll never leave me.
You're the friend who'll always understand.
You will not forsake me or deceive me.
You'll stay by my side until the end.

When I'm afraid, You'll put Your arm around me.
You're the faithful friend who's tried and true.
No matter what the troubles that surround me
You will find a way to get me through.

Your love is strong, it's deeper than the ocean.
It's higher than the moon and stars above.
When earth and stars are gone and time has ended,
I'll still live, rejoicing in Your love.

Jesus, Son of David

Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

Light my path and guide my way.
Make me faithful, so I'll stay
Close to You throughout the day,
Devoted to You in every way.

Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

Open my eyes that I may see
The precious truth that You have for me.
Open my heart to love as You do.
Enable me to be faithful and true.

Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

Choose Life

God sets before you life and death.
Choose life.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.
The devil is a liar and a thief.
He wants to kill your hope and steal your joy
And fill your days with endless grief.

Jesus came to give unshakeable peace
And the only freedom that's real.
He wants to fill your heart with everlasting joy.
He wants to love and bless and heal.

God sets before you life and death.
Choose life.

Your Word

Your Word brings life to save my soul.
Your Truth brings light to make me whole.

Your perfect love casts out my fears,
Comforts me, and dries my tears.

I'm in the shadow of Your wings
Where you teach my heart to sing.

Safe and secure from all alarm,
Your faithful love keeps me from harm.

I will bless You all my days.
You fill my heart with songs of praise.

Leaving the Past Behind

Following Jesus, my Lord and my Savior
Leaving the past behind

I press on to the mark of God's high calling
Leaving the past behind

Forgiving, forgetting, and giving to Jesus
Leaving the past behind

Replacing old voices with the truth of the Bible
Leaving the past behind

Appendix G

What I Believe

In describing my beliefs, I'm going to avoid technical terms. I'm also going to avoid the issues about which different Protestant churches disagree, such as church government, form of worship, details about the Second Coming of Christ, and the relationship between predestination and free will.

I believe many things which are not in this summary. If I tried to go into them all, this would become too long and cumbersome. I'm only going to mention some key areas. If I fail to mention something which you consider to be a foundational Christian doctrine, that does not necessarily mean that I don't believe it. It just means that I didn't mention it.

I believe in the "solas" of the Protestant Reformation. We are saved by faith alone (not faith plus works). We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone (not Jesus plus something else). Our rule of faith is the Bible alone (not the Bible plus tradition or other writings).

Saving faith is demonstrated by loving and obeying God, by loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, by loving nonbelievers and sharing our faith with them, and by doing good works. These are the results of salvation—not the cause of it.

Christianity works for all Christians under all circumstances. There are some countries where Christians are severely persecuted. In these countries, Bibles are scarce, and Christians are not able to meet publicly. Some Christians have been put in prison for their faith, without Bibles, and often without being able to see fellow Christians. If Christians do not have Bibles to guide them and encourage them, then God has other ways of guiding them and strengthening them. God is not limited by our circumstances.

It is valuable to have Bibles and pastors and teachers and church meetings. If they are available, then we should benefit from them as much as possible. But if those things are not available, then God is powerful enough to enable us to live Godly lives without them. Jesus promised us that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth (John 16:13) and teach us "all things" (John 14:26). God is able to keep us from falling. (Jude 1:24)

I believe in the authority, credibility, and accuracy of the Bible. I believe that it is the inspired Word of God. Jesus said that the Father showed Him what to say. (John 12:49) Surely our God is capable of doing the same thing for the men who wrote the books of the Bible.

Through the Bible, God shows us His nature and His character. He shows us what we should believe and how we should live. We need to test everything against Scripture. We also need to ask God to help us understand Scripture, to reveal Himself to us through the Bible, and to help us live according to His Word.

Ordinary people can understand the Bible. We don't have to rely on experts or church officials. The basic principles are simple enough for a child to understand. But the

Bible is so rich that a brilliant scholar can spend a lifetime studying it and still have much to learn about it.

I believe that every Christian can have a personal relationship with God. We all have direct access to Him. We don't have to rely on professionals, church officials, and other special people.

I believe in the Atonement. Jesus died to save us from our sins. I believe in the Resurrection. Jesus literally rose from the dead and He now has a glorified body. He is in Heaven with the Father, and He is interceding for us. I believe in the Second Coming. Jesus Christ will come back again in glory.

I believe that at the end of all things, we will all stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:10; John 5:22; Romans 14:10) Talking about judgment is not popular these days, but it's in the Bible. When Judgment Day comes, we will want to be numbered with the Redeemed, the Saved, those whose sins have been forgiven. Even then, our works will be tested by fire. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

I believe in the Trinity. There is only one God. But there is the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Incarnation. Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. Jesus was miraculously conceived by God. Mary was still a virgin when Jesus was growing in her womb.

I don't understand how this works. But even the Apostle Paul had things that he didn't understand. Paul often spoke about mysteries that are beyond our understanding.

Even in the physical world, there are many things which we can't understand. According to the laws of aerodynamics, hummingbirds and bumble bees shouldn't be able to fly. But they do. Scientists are studying them in hopes of gaining new understanding about aerodynamics, and developing new forms of aircraft. There is an animal called a platypus which is warm blooded, lays eggs, and nurses its babies. It looks and acts like a cross between a mammal and a lizard. Everything is made of atoms, which have a nucleus composed of protons and neutrons. Protons are magnetically positive. Have you ever tried to take two magnets and hold the positive sides of them together? They push each other away. Yet here we have these protons all together in the nucleus of the atom. What holds them together?

Life is full of mysteries. The Trinity and the Incarnation are two of them.

The Atonement is another mystery. I believe that Jesus did it. The Bible gives me some understanding of why we desperately needed to have Him do it for us. But I cannot understand how He could love us enough to do it. How could Jesus love us so much that He was willing to be tortured to death for us? Especially when He knew that most people would not respond to Him and would not appropriate the salvation that He paid such a high price for. How could God the Father love us so much that He was willing to have His Son be crucified in order to save us? God's love is beyond my comprehension.

I believe that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way that we can be saved. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father, begging His Father to spare Him from having to drink the cup of suffering. (Matthew 26:39; 26:42) If there was some other way to save us, don't you think that the Father would have told Jesus? Don't you think that Jesus and the Father both intensely wanted to find some other way to save us? But there was no other way. Jesus had to go through the indescribable agony of mocking, shame, abandonment, physical torture, and death in order to save us. And He was willing to do it for us.

If there was some other way, then why did Jesus suffer for us? If good works, or being nice, or sacraments, or devotion to Mary, or good intentions, or wearing the brown scapular, or non-Christian religions, or anything else would do the job—then Jesus didn't need to suffer for us. Nobody in their right mind would go through that kind of suffering if it wasn't absolutely necessary. And no loving father would allow his son to go through it if it could be avoided. There is no other way. That's why Jesus died for us.

I have a Biblical worldview. I believe in a literal Heaven and hell. I believe that the devil is real. I believe that angels and demons are real. And I believe that God intervenes in the lives of individuals and of nations in response to prayer. I believe that the healings and miracles and supernatural events of the Bible are real. They really happened. God did it then, and if He wants to, He can do it now. (I have read accounts of God supernaturally protecting modern Christians who were being severely persecuted.)

I live in America. Many people here no longer have a Biblical worldview.

Many modern Christians are abandoning their belief in the supernatural things which are described in the Bible. At the same time, belief in Neopagan supernatural things is growing rapidly. Books, movies, and TV shows are full of it. Some colleges have courses in goddess worship.¹ Regular bookstores have books about magic, fairies, and spell casting. Fairies used to be considered mythical creatures, but these days some people believe in them. A New Age encyclopedia describes them as “non-human, immortal earth spirits with supernatural powers.”²

God can use all things for our good and His glory. I know a man who read the book *The Exorcist*. It persuaded him that the devil is real. He decided that if the devil is real, then God must also be real. So he started reading the Bible to find out about God. This man eventually became a strong Christian.

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Endnotes

GENERAL NOTE: Sometimes Internet addresses stop working because articles get moved, websites get reorganized, or for other reasons. If an Internet address doesn't work, then try to find the article online yourself. For example, for articles from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, search for the title of the article plus "Catholic Encyclopedia." For papal encyclicals, search for the title of the encyclical. Sometimes you might also have to include the name of the Pope in your search. For other articles, search for the title plus the author.

PREFACE

1. Corrie ten Boom's story is told in her autobiography, *The Hiding Place*. I read the information about Jan Vogel, the man who betrayed her family, in one of Corrie's books, but I don't remember which one. She also tells about it in her video *Jesus Is Victor*.
2. "Novice," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, 1913. The term "novice" refers to both monks and nuns who go through a period of training and preparation. (Accessed 9/25/08)
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TESTIMONY

1. I played piano, and we had a music book titled *The Fireside Book of Folk Songs*. In that book there were many different kinds of songs, including Christmas carols, spirituals, and a few hymns. I used to play and sing those Christian songs because I loved the music. In the process, I was exposed to the words of those carols, spirituals, and hymns. I didn't understand what the words meant, but I loved those songs, so I kept playing them and singing them. Sometimes God can reach people through music. Those songs got me longing for something, but I didn't know what it was. Looking back, I now realize that I was longing for the Lord.
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3. John J. Dunphy, "A Religion for a New Age," *The Humanist* (January/February 1983), p. 26. Cited in David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Collision of Today's Competing Worldviews*, p. 262, op. cit.
4. John Dunphy, "Dunphy Strikes Again," *Secular Humanist Bulletin* (Summer 1994). Cited and quoted in "Secular Humanists Give Dunphy Another Platform" on the website of the Eagle Forum. (Accessed 9/23/08)
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8. Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing: How Ancient Mystical Practices Are Uniting Christians with the World's Religions* (Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails Publishing Company, 2006).
9. David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Collision of Today's Competing Worldviews*, pp. 82-83, op. cit.
10. Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone: The Emerging Church...A New Reformation or an End-Time Deception* (Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails Publishing Company, 2007).
11. You can read about the influence of Wicca and goddess worship on society and the Church in Philip G. Davis, *Goddess Unmasked: The Rise of Neopagan Feminist Spirituality* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing Company, 1998). Davis is a Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island in Canada. He wrote the book because he saw that goddess worship was being taken seriously in religious institutions, and that myths about the goddess were being taught as factual history on campus.

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13. Catherine Edwards, "Wicca Infiltrates the Churches," *Insight on the News*, December 6, 1999. (Accessed 9/23/08)
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14. Philip G. Davis, *Goddess Unmasked: The Rise of Neopagan Feminist Spirituality*, pp. 24-27, op. cit.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4, 28-29.
16. "Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858," *Wikipedia*. (Accessed 10/6/08)
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5. You can see Pope John Paul II lead the multi-faith service at Assisi in the video *Catholicism: Crisis of Faith*. You can also see and hear Muslims, shamans, Hindus, and the Dalai Lama call on their gods. You can get the DVD at D&K Press (800-777-8839) and at Amazon.com.
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26. Peter Jones, *Pagans in the Pews: How the New Spirituality Is Invading Your Home, Church and Community* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001), p. 127.
27. Michael S. Rose, *Goodbye, Good Men: How Liberals Brought Corruption into the Catholic Church* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2002), p. 113.
28. Donna Steichen, *Ungodly Rage: The Hidden Face of Catholic Feminism* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1992), pp. 182-183.
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32. *Ibid.*, pp. 148-150.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-91.
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36. *Ibid.*
37. Theresa Cheung, *The Element Encyclopedia of the Psychic World: The Ultimate A-Z of Spirits, Mysteries and the Paranormal* (London: Harper Element, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), p. 148.
38. Noel Bruyns, "Let Africans Honor Ancestors with Blood Libations in Mass, Says Bishop," *Christianity Today*, April 10, 2000. (Accessed 9/28/08)
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2. Joan Carrol Cruz, *Miraculous Images of Our Lady: 100 Famous Catholic Portraits and Statues* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1994). This Catholic devotional book has 125 pictures, 32 of which are full color. Following page 238 there are 32 pages with full color pictures. They are numbered page 238-1, 238-2, 238-3, etc.

3. Ibid. Statue of Our Lady of the Rosary, color picture on page 238-18, text and 2 black-and-white pictures on pages 367-372.
4. Ibid. Statue of Our Lady of the Forsaken, color picture on page 238-22, text and 1 black-and-white picture on pages 419-421.
5. Ibid. Statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe, color picture on page 238-16, text and 1 black-and-white picture on pages 407-409.
6. Ibid. Statue of Our Lady of Alötting, color picture on page 238-10, text and 3 black-and-white pictures on pages 115-119.
7. Ibid. Statue of Our Lady of the Pillar, color pictures on pages 238-2 and 238-7. (The picture on 238-7 is a close-up of the crown and sunburst, showing the jewels clearly.) Text and 4 black-and-white pictures are on pages 401-406.
8. Ibid. Painting of Our Lady of Kazan, color picture on page 238-15, text and 1 black-and-white picture on pages 297-400.
9. Jim Tetlow, *Messages from Heaven* (Fairport, NY: Eternal Productions, 2002), p. 7. The author is a former Catholic.
10. Ibid.
11. William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), p. 87. The author is a former Catholic.
12. Ibid.
13. In the Encyclical *Intersodalicia* (1918). Quoted in Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 196, op. cit.
14. In the Encyclical of February 2, 1849. Quoted in Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 196, op. cit.
15. Queenship Jubilee Year 2000 Catalog, p. 92. This is a catalog of the Queenship Marian Center for World Peace, which promotes the doctrine of Mary as Advocate, Mediator, and Co-Redemptrix. It also promotes the petition. The catalog gives information about the petition's progress, and about church leaders who support the doctrine.
16. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday Image, 1995), paragraphs 490-492. The *Catechism* comes in numerous editions and languages. Because it has numbered paragraphs, statements can be accurately located in spite of the variety of editions.

17. William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 72-77, op. cit.
18. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 411, 493, op. cit.
19. Ibid., paragraphs 496-511.
20. William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp.79-80, op. cit.
21. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 963, 971, 2677, op. cit.
22. Ibid, paragraphs 963, 975.
23. Ibid., paragraphs 966, 974.
24. William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 81-85, op. cit.
25. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 968-970, 2677.
26. Ibid., paragraph 966.
27. Ibid., paragraphs 971, 2675.
28. Ibid., paragraphs 80, 84, 86, 97.
29. Ibid., paragraphs 78, 98, 113, 2650, 2661.
30. William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 22-33, op. cit. For a description of how pious practices can become official Catholic doctrine, and how this conflicts with both Scripture and the writings of the Early Fathers, see James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God*, pp. 281-309, op. cit.
31. James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God*, pp. 181-184; 199-200, op. cit.
32. *Catholicism: Crisis of Faith* (video and DVD). The producer is James G. McCarthy, a former Catholic. You can order it from D&K Press (800-777-8839) or Amazon.com.
33. Jim Tetlow, *Messages from Heaven*, pp. 3-7, op. cit. Jim Tetlow also produced a video with the same title. If you can afford to get both, I recommend it. The book gives more information and it is thoroughly documented. The author is a former Catholic.
34. *Messages from Heaven* (video), produced by James Tetlow. You can watch it online. (Accessed 9/30/08)

www.creationists.org/MessagesFromHeaven/english.html

35. Quotations from popes who exalted Mary. (Accessed 9/30/08)
www.angelfire.com/ky/dodone/IMARY.html

Mary's Names and Titles. (Accessed 9/30/08)
www.angelfire.com/ky/dodone/MNames.html

The Rosary. (Accessed 9/30/08)
www.angelfire.com/ky/dodone/Rosary.html

The Litany. (Accessed 9/30/08)
www.angelfire.com/ky/dodone/Litany.html

Dr. Ken Lawson, "Mary Around the World." (A series of articles about cultural devotion to Mary.) (Accessed 9/30/08)
www.angelfire.com/ky/dodone/MaryLawson.html

Chapter 4—THE EUCHARIST (CATHOLIC COMMUNION)

1. This was declared by the Council of Trent in Session 13, Chapter VIII, Canon 1. *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, English Translation (H.J. Schroeder, translator) (Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc.: 1978), p. 79.
2. "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (*Lumen Gentium*), paragraph 51. In Austin Flannery (Editor), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. 1, New Revised Edition, p. 412, op. cit.
3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 1106, 1374-1377, op. cit.
4. *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-English Edition, New English Translation (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983), Canons 897, 898. The individual laws are identified by Canon numbers. As a result, they can easily be located in a variety of editions and languages.
5. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 1106, 1374-1377, op. cit.

6. John Michael Greer, *The New Encyclopedia of the Occult* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Worldwide, Ltd., 2003), p. 67. (I found this book at Barnes & Noble when I did some research there. I only looked at what was necessary for writing this article. The Bible warns us not to study the occult.)

Chapter 5—WIDE VARIETY IN CATHOLIC BELIEFS

1. This theme runs throughout the following two books (both authors are Catholics): Michael S. Rose, *Goodbye, Good Men: How Liberals Brought Corruption into the Catholic Church*, op. cit. [2] Malachi Martin, *The Jesuits: The Society of Jesus and the Betrayal of the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988). The author was a Jesuit priest.

2. This theme runs throughout Donna Steichen's book *Ungodly Rage: The Hidden Face of Catholic Feminism*, op. cit.

3. Catholic Traditionalist Movement. (Accessed 10/6/08)
www.latinmass-ctm.org/index_main.htm

"Orthodox Roman Catholic Movement," *Wikipedia*. (Accessed 10/22/08)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Roman_Catholic_Movement

The website of True Catholic. (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.truecatholic.us/

The Latin Mass Society of England and Wales. If you do an Internet search for "Latin Mass Society" you will find some branches in the United States. (Accessed 10/6/08)
www.latin-mass-society.org/

4. Malachi Martin, *The Jesuits: The Society of Jesus and the Betrayal of the Roman Catholic Church*, pp. 56-62, op. cit.

Edmund W. Robb and Julia Robb, *The Betrayal of the Church: Apostasy & Renewal in the Mainline Denominations* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, a division of Good News Publishers, 1986). The book is online. Chapter 6 is titled "Liberation Theology: What It Is and What It Does." (Accessed 10/6/08)
www.cmpage.org/betrayal/chapt6.html

5. Ibid.

6. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 2270-2279, op. cit.

7. Wesley J. Smith, *Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America* (New York: Encounter Books, 2000).

8. Joan Carroll Cruz, *Prayers and Heavenly Promises: Compiled from Approved Sources* (Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books and Publishers, 1990), pp. 127-128.

Dr. Bill Jackson, "Scapulars." (Accessed 10/6/08)
www.angelfire.com/ky/dodone/Scapulars.html

"The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel," on the website of The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima. (Accessed 10/6/08)
<http://members.aol.com/ccmail/scapular.html>

"Brown Scapular," on the website of the Catholic Information Network. (Accessed 10/6/08)
www.cin.org/saints/brownsca.html

"Scapular," *Catholic Encyclopedia*. (Accessed 10/6/08)
www.newadvent.org/cathen/13508b.htm

9. You can see pictures of the **Miraculous Medal**, the **Saint Christopher Medal** (for travelers), the **Saint Benedict Medal**, the **Sacred Heart of Jesus**, and the **Immaculate Heart of Mary** online. Do a Google Image search for the item you want to see. (Go to www.google.com. In the upper left corner there are some words that are links. Click on "Images." Type the name of the item you want to see in the bar. Then you click the "Search Images" button.)
10. You can see four-way and five-way medals online. Do Google Image searches for **four way medal** and for **five way medal**. (See Note 9 for instructions.)
11. Michael S. Rose, *Goodbye, Good Men: How Liberals Brought Corruption into the Catholic Church*, op. cit.

Chapter 6—WHO GAVE US THE BIBLE?

1. William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, p. 8, op. cit.

"The Canon of the New Testament: A Brief Introduction." (Accessed 10/2/08)
www.tmch.net/ntcanon.htm
2. Walter A. Elwell (editor), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 141.
3. Joe Mizzi, "The Apocrypha Are Not Canonical." The author is a former Catholic seminarian. (Accessed 10/2/08)
www.justforcatholics.org/a48.htm

4. Joe Mizzi, "Jerome and the Apocrypha." (Accessed 10/4/08)
www.justforcatholics.org/a108.htm
5. William Webster, "The Old Testament Canon and the Apocrypha." This article is in six parts. The link below gives an overview and links to the other parts. The author is a former Catholic. (Accessed 10/4/08)
www.christiantruth.com/apocryphainroduction.html
6. Joe Mizzi, "Are the Apocrypha Quoted in the New Testament?" (Accessed 10/2/08)
www.justforcatholics.org/a63.htm
7. Joe Mizzi, "The Apocrypha Contradicts Scripture." (Accessed 10/2/08)
www.justforcatholics.org/a109.htm
8. Walter A. Elwell (editor), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 66-67, op. cit.
9. The Book of Tobit is available on-line. (Accessed 10/2/08)
www.piney.com/ApocTobit.html
www.ebible.org/kjv/Tobit.htm
www.eskimo.com/~lhowell/bcp1662/apocrypha/tobit.html
10. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database, 1996, by Biblesoft (a Bible study program).

Chapter 7—WAS PETER A POPE?

1. William Webster, "The Patristic Exegesis of the Rock of Matthew 16:18." (A compilation of quotations from Church fathers and theologians, spanning the third to the eighth centuries.) (This has a lot of information. My print-out is 43 pages long.) (Accessed 10/7/08)
www.christiantruth.com/fathersmt16.html
2. Joe Mizzi, "The Power of the Keys." (Accessed 10/7/08)
www.justforcatholics.org/a46.htm
3. *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 331, op. cit.
4. "The Moral Washington: Construction of a Legend (1800-1920s)." (Accessed 10/7/08)
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/gw/gwmoral.html>

"Parson Weems," *Wikipedia*. (Accessed 10/7/08)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parson_Weems

Chapter 8—INVALID POPES

1. William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 67-68, op. cit. The author is Catholic.
2. Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets* (Santa Ana, CA: Seven Locks Press, 2002), pp. 153-157. There is some confusion as to whether this Pope was Stephen III or Stephen IV. This is because an earlier Stephen (who would have been Stephen II) was elected Pope but he died before he was consecrated.
3. J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 118-120.
4. Russell Chamberlin, *The Bad Popes* (Phoenix Mill, England: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2003), pp. 42-45, 60-61.
5. Ibid., pp. 25-39.
6. Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets*, pp. 243-247, op. cit.
7. Ibid., pp. 248-251.
8. J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, pp. 142-144, op. cit.
9. Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets*, pp. 357-364, op. cit.
10. Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes: The Pontiffs from St. Peter to John Paul II* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 2000), pp. 240-242. The author is a Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame.
11. Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets*, pp. 431-436, op. cit. [2] Russell Chamberlin, *The Bad Popes*, pp. 161-208, op. cit.

In the Vatican, there is a portrait of Pope Alexander VI wearing gold vestments that are covered with jewels. There is a large, full-color picture in Albert Skira, *Treasures of the Vatican* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 1991), p. 86.

“The Borgias,” *Serial Killers: Killers from History*. (Accessed 10/13/08)
www.trutv.com/library/crime/serial_killers/history/borgias/6.html

12. J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, pp. 255-256, op. cit.
13. Russell Chamberlin, *The Bad Popes*, pp. 209-252, op. cit. [2] Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets*, pp. 441-446, op. cit. [3] J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, pp. 256-258, op. cit.

14. Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 1995), pp. 161, 194-198. [2] Hans Küng, *The Catholic Church: A Short History* (translated by John Bowden) (New York: Modern Library, 2001, 2003), pp. 85-92.

William Webster, "Forgeries and the Papacy: The Historical Influence and Use of Forgeries in Promotion of the Doctrine of the Papacy." The author is a former Catholic. (Accessed 10/12/08)
www.christiantruth.com/forgeries.html

15. Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets*, pp. 309-316, op. cit.

"Simony," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XIV, 1912. (Accessed 10/13/08)
www.newadvent.org/cathen/14001a.htm

16. Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 199-201, op. cit.

17. Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, pp. 466-468, op. cit.

"Antipope," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, 1907. (Accessed 10/13/08)
www.newadvent.org/cathen/01582a.htm

18. James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God*, pp. 231-232, op. cit. The author is a former Catholic.

19. Hans Küng, *The Catholic Church: A Short History*, pp. 33-44, op. cit. [2] Malachi Martin, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981), pp. 19-38. The author was a Catholic priest.

20. Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 194-197, op. cit. [2] Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy* (Dublin, Ireland: Poolbeg Press, 1988), pp. 62-66. [3] Malachi Martin, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*, pp. 137-146, op. cit.

21. Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 196-197, op. cit. [2] Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets*, pp. 268-274, op. cit. [3] J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, pp. 154-156, op. cit. [4] Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, pp. 185-188, op. cit. [5] Malachi Martin, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*, p. 140, op. cit.

22. Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy*, pp. 66-69, op. cit. [2] Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, p. 199, op. cit. [3] Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets*, pp. 309-316, op. cit. [4] J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford*

Dictionary of Popes, pp. 186-188, op. cit. [5] Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, pp. 209-211, op. cit.

“Innocent III,” *Christian History: Rulers*. (Accessed 10/13/08)
www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/rulers/innocentiii.html

23. Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982, 1995), p. 215. [2] Russell Chamberlin, *The Bad Popes*, pp. 87-93, op. cit. [3] J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, p. 209, op. cit. [4] Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, p. 435, op. cit.
24. Russell Chamberlin, *The Bad Popes*, pp. 93-123, op. cit. [2] Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets*, pp. 357-364, op. cit. [3] J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, pp. 208-210, op. cit. [4] Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, pp. 229-232, op. cit.

Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, November 18, 1302. The quotation is near the end. (Accessed 10/13/08)
www.newadvent.org/library/docs_bo08us.htm

25. Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets*, pp. 420-423, op. cit. [2] Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, pp. 263-264, op. cit.
26. Herbert Norris, *Church Vestments: Their Origin & Development* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), pp. 108-115. This discussion of the papal tiara includes several pictures of popes wearing tiaras.

Albert Skira, *Treasures of the Vatican* (Created by Albert Skira for *Horizon Magazine*, 1962), p. 86. This shows a portrait of Pope Alexander VI kneeling, with his tiara on the ground in front of him.

Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, op. cit. Following page 392, there is a series of numbered pictures. Pictures 2, 3, 9 and 13 show popes wearing the papal crown (tiara).

You can see pictures of the papal tiara online. Google has a search engine just for pictures (images). Go to Google's home page (www.Google.com). You will see some words that are underlined. Click on “Images.” Then type in what you are looking for and hit the “Image Search” key. For example, you can search for **tiara** or for **pope + tiara** or for **papal tiara**.

27. Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, op. cit. Following page 392, there is a series of 40 pictures that have numbers. Pictures 13, 19, 20, 23, and 27 show popes seated on thrones.

National Geographic, *Inside the Vatican* pp. 92-93, op. cit. This photograph shows a life-sized statue of Saint Peter sitting on a papal throne inside Saint Peter's Basilica. Pages 48-49 show the Pope being carried on a portable throne (the *sedia gestatoria*).

Six pictures of popes with the papal crown (tiara). Two of them show Popes Pius XII and John XXIII seated on an ornate papal throne. (Accessed 10/13/08)
www.geocities.com/rexstupormundi/papalcrown.html

28. Eric Convey and Tom Mashberg, "Law Grilled in Deposition" *The Boston Herald*, May 8, 2002. The third and fourth paragraphs discuss Cardinal Law's dual citizenship.

29. Herbert Norris, *Church Vestments: Their Origin & Development*, pp. 8, 183-185, op. cit.

National Geographic, *Inside the Vatican*, p. 58, op. cit. This shows a ring of Pope Pius IX. It has so many diamonds on it that you can barely see the gold.

"Rings," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XIII, 1912. (Accessed 10/13/08)
www.newadvent.org/cathen/13059a.htm

"Pectorale," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, 1911. This is the pectoral cross which is worn by popes, cardinals, bishops, and abbots. It is made of precious metal (gold, silver, and/or platinum) and ornamented with jewels (diamonds, pearls, etc.). It contains a relic of a saint. (Accessed 10/13/08)
www.newadvent.org/cathen/13059a.htm

30. Herbert Norris, *Church Vestments: Their Origin & Development*, op. cit. The entire book describes vestments that, for high-ranking churchmen, are often decorated with gold and jewels. Even their gloves have gold on them, and sometimes jewels as well. This was especially true during the Middle Ages, but it is also true today.

National Geographic, *Inside the Vatican*, pp. 59, 71, 83, 202, 209, op. cit. Page 59 shows a chalice of Pope Pius X that is solid gold and set with numerous diamonds. (When you look at it, you see more diamonds than gold.) Page 71 shows Pope John Paul II wearing a gold miter and vestments decorated with gold. Page 83 shows Pope John Paul II wearing gold vestments. (They are made of gold cloth, as opposed to just being decorated with gold.) Page 202 shows gloves and shoes of Pope Pius XII. They are decorated with gold. One pair of shoes has jewels on them. (They appear to be rubies and emeralds.) Page 209 shows a miter that was worn by Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul I. It is decorated with gold and jewels.

In the Vatican, there is a portrait of Pope Alexander VI wearing gold vestments that are covered with jewels. There is a large, full-color picture in Albert Skira, *Treasures of the Vatican*, p. 86, op. cit.

31. Albert Skira, *Treasures of the Vatican*, p. 31, op. cit. This shows a picture of the statue of Saint Peter wearing vestments of gold and scarlet, with a gold crown that is studded with jewels.

National Geographic, *Inside the Vatican*, pp. 92-93, op. cit. This shows a nun kissing the foot of the statue of Saint Peter. It also shows a close-up of the foot, which has been worn smooth from being kissed so much.

32. Herbert Norris, *Church Vestments: their Origin & Development*, pp. 114, 179, op. cit. Page 114 shows Pope Sixtus IV wearing a tiara and mozetta. Page 179 discusses the mozetta.

“Mozzetta,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. X, 1911. This is a special red cape worn by the Pope. In the six winter months, he wears a mozetta trimmed with white ermine. In the six summer months he wears a lighter mozetta without ermine. (Accessed 10/13/08)

www.newadvent.org/cathen/10624b.htm

33. National Geographic, *Inside the Vatican*, pp. 48-49, op. cit. This shows the Pope being carried on the sedia gestatoria (the portable papal throne). [2] Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, op. cit., has pictures of the Pope being carried on the sedia gestatoria on the front cover of the book and on page 11.

“Sedia Gestatoria,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XIII, 1912. This is the portable papal throne. (Accessed 10/13/08)

www.newadvent.org/cathen/13679a.htm

“Pontifical Mass,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XII, 1911. This describes the use of the sedia gestatoria (portable papal throne) for the solemn procession that occurs during a Pontifical Mass. (Accessed 10/13/08)

www.newadvent.org/cathen/13679a.htm

You can see pictures of the sedia gestatoria online. Google has a search engine just for pictures (images). Go to Google’s home page (www.Google.com). You will see some words that are underlined. Click on “Images.” Then type in “sedia” and hit the “Image Search” key.

34. Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, p. 503, op. cit.
35. Capella Sistina (Sistine Chapel), on the website *Christus Rex*. This web page has 27 categories listed. If you click on one of them, you will get a web page with small

pictures on it. If you click on the small pictures, you will get larger ones.(Accessed 10/13/08)

www.christusrex.org/www1/sistine/0-Tour.html

Citta del Vaticano (Vatican City), on the website *Christus Rex*. This web page has 14 categories, showing Saint Peter's Basilica, the pontifical palaces, and the vatican gardens. Click on a category and you will see small pictures. Click on a small picture and you will see a larger one. (Accessed 10/13/08)

www.christusrex.org/www1/citta/0-Citta.html

Musei Vaticani (Vatican museum), on the website *Christus Rex*. This web page has 22 categories. Click on a category, then click on small pictures to see larger ones. (Accessed 10/13/08)

www.christusrex.org/www1/sistine/0-Tour.html

You can also find good pictures by doing a Google search for "images." Go to Google's home page (www.Google.com). You will see some words that are underlined. Click on "Images." Then type what you are looking for in the bar and click on the "Search Images" button. You can search for **Sistine Chapel** or for **Vatican museums**, etc.

36. Anthony P. Kowalski, *Married Catholic Priests* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004), pp. 3-36. [2] Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy*, pp. 406-407, 420-421, op. cit. [3] Hans Küng, *The Catholic Church: A Short History*, pp. 92-93, op. cit. [4] Malachi Martin, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*, pp. 141-142, op. cit.

John Schuster, "39 Popes Were Married." (Accessed 10/13/08)

http://johnshuster.com/thirtynine_popes.htm

37. John Schuster, "39 Popes Were Married." (Accessed 10/13/08)

http://johnshuster.com/thirtynine_popes.htm

"List of Popes," *Wikipedia*. This lists Pope Benedict XVI as being the 265th pope. (Accessed 10/11/08)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Popes

38. Joe Mizzi, "Immoral Popes." This has information about the chain of apostolic succession. It also mentions that Benedict XVI is the 265th pope. (Accessed 10/12/08)

www.justforcatholics.org/a193.htm

39. "Timeline: Road to Tragedy in Jonestown," CNN, November 17, 2003. (Accessed 10/12/08)

www.rickross.com/reference/jonestown/jonestown50.html

Chapter 9—REFLECTIONS ON UNPLEASANT HISTORY

1. Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*. This is available in a number of editions. You can get it at Amazon.com.
2. I read about this in one of Corrie's books, but I no longer remember which one it was. She told about it in her video *Jesus Is Victor*.

Chapter 10—THE BIRTH OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. Malachi Martin, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*, pp. 31-33, op. cit. A major theme of this book is the radical change which occurred in the Church as a result of Constantine. The author was a Catholic priest and a theologian.
2. Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 67-68. Paul Johnson is a Catholic and a historian.
3. Ibid., p. 67. Information about the days of the week being named for pagan gods and goddesses can be found in a good dictionary. Look up each day of the week, and "Saturn." I used *Webster's Dictionary*, 1941 edition, which gives the origins of words.
4. Ibid., pp. 68-69.
5. Ibid., p. 69.
6. Malachi Martin, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*, pp. 33-34, op. cit.
7. Ibid., pp. 34-35.
8. James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God*, pp. 231-232, op. cit. The author is a former Catholic
9. Malachi Martin, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*, pp. 19-38, op. cit. [2] Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 67-69, 99-103, op. cit. [3] Hans Küng, *The Catholic Church: A Short History*, pp. 33-44, op. cit.
10. Theodosius was forbidden to go into the Cathedral of Milan or to take the sacraments. This is excommunication, being cut off from the Church. Theodosius had to repent in order to be restored to the Church.

"Theodosius I," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14. (Accessed 10/7/08)
www.newadvent.org/cathen/14577d.htm

“St. Ambrose Humiliates Theodosius the Great.” (Accessed 10/7/08)
www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/theodoret-ambrose1.html

11. Some of these different beliefs and practices are described by Malachi Martin in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*, pp. 22-24, op. cit. The author was a Catholic priest and a theologian.

Chapter 11—TRADITION

1. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 80, 84, 86, and 97, op. cit.
2. *Ibid.*, paragraphs 78, 98, 113, 2650, and 2661.
3. William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 22-33, op. cit. For a description of how pious practices can become official Catholic doctrine, and how this conflicts with both Scripture and the writings of the Early Fathers, see James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God*, pp. 281-309, op. cit.
4. Joan Carrol Cruz, *Miraculous Images of Our Lady: 100 Famous Catholic Portraits and Statues* (Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books & Publishers, 1994.) This Catholic devotional book has 125 pictures, 32 of which are full color. The tradition about Our Lady of the Pillar is described on pp. 401-406, along with 4 black-and-white pictures of the statue.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 105-107 and 161-166, op. cit.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
8. Joan Carrol Cruz, *Miraculous Images of Our Lady: 100 Famous Catholic Portraits and Statues*, pp. 401-406, op. cit.
9. *Ibid.* Following page 238 there are 32 pages with full color pictures, numbered 328-1, 328-2, 382-3, etc. There are color pictures of the statue of Our Lady of the Pillar on pages 238-2 and 238-7. The picture on 238-7 is a close-up of the crown and sunburst (large halo), showing the jewels clearly.
10. William Steuart McBirnie, *The Search for the Twelve Apostles* (Wheaton, Illinois: Living Books, Tyndale House Publishers, 1973, 1982), p. 103.

Chapter 12—INFALLIBILITY

1. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 85, 87, 100, 862, 891, 939, 2034, 2037, 2041, 2050, op. cit. The *Catechism* is published in a variety of editions and languages. Because the paragraphs are numbered, information can be accurately located in any edition.
2. *Ibid.*, paragraphs 890, 891, 939, 2033, 2034, 2049, op. cit.
3. *Ibid.*, paragraphs 892, 2037, 2050, op. cit.
4. William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 34-55, op. cit.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-71, op. cit.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-85, op. cit.
7. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 85, 100, 891, 2051, op. cit.
8. *Ibid.*, paragraphs 87, 1310, 2037.
9. Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (“Apostolic Constitution on the Immaculate Conception”), December 8, 1854. Near the end of this encyclical there is a section titled “The Definition.” The statements that I described are in the last paragraph of that section. If the link doesn’t work, then search for **Ineffabilis Deus**. (Accessed 10/1/08)
www.newadvent.org/library/docs_pi09id.htm
10. Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 67-124. The author is Catholic.
11. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 87, 862, 891, 2051, op. cit.

Chapter 13—FAITH VERSUS WORKS

1. “Merit,” in John A. Hardon, *Pocket Catholic Dictionary* (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1985), p. 259.

Chapter 14—THE GOOD THIEF

There are no Notes for this chapter.

Chapter 15—ECUMENISM

1. The conciliar and post conciliar documents have been published in several editions and in various languages, so people generally refer to the Latin name of the Council's decree, or the number of the Post Conciliar document.
2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Paragraph 891, op. cit. The *Catechism* is available in many languages and editions. Because it has numbered paragraphs, information can be accurately located in any edition.
3. *Dignitatis Humanae* ("Declaration on Religious Freedom"), Sections 1 and 2. In Austin Flannery (Editor), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. 1, New Revised Edition (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1998), pp. 799-801.
4. Pius IX, *Quanta Cura* ("Condemning Current Errors"), December 8, 1864. (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quanta.htm

Pius IX, *Syllabus of Errors*, 1864. (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9syll.htm
5. "Orthodox Roman Catholic Movement," *Wikipedia*. (Accessed 10/22/08)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Roman_Catholic_Movement

The website of True Catholic. (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.truecatholic.us/
6. "101 Heresies of Anti-Pope John Paul II." (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.truecarpentry.netfirms.com/tccwww/cathwww/heresiesjp2.htm

"Vatican II: Its Heresies, Errors and Rites." (Accessed 10/22/08)
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"Catechism on the Errors of Vatican II...and its Popes." (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.truecarpentry.netfirms.com/tccwww/cathwww/v2errorcat.htm

"Vatican II Council Accepts Freedom of Religion, Teaches Heresy." (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.truecarpentry.netfirms.com/tccwww/cathwww/car8908.htm

"Papal Situation." This article claims that pope John XXIII and every Pope since are not true popes, but rather imposters (anti-popes). (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.truecarpentry.netfirms.com/tccwww/cathwww/electionnews1.htm

7. A website with locations of Catholic Churches with Latin Masses around the world. (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.latinmass.org/

 Latin Mass Society of Ireland. (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.latinmassireland.org/

 Latin Mass Society of England and Wales. (Accessed 10/22/08)
www.latin-mass-society.org/

 Traditional Latin Mass Society of the Lower Eastern Shore. (Accessed 10/22/08)
<http://tlmsocietylowereasternshore.org/>

 Lake Charles Latin Mass Society. (Accessed 10/22/08)
<http://lakecharleslatinmasssociety.stblogs.com/>
8. Unitatis Redintegratio (“Decree on Ecumenism”), Paragraph 24. In Austin Flannery (Editor), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. 1, New Revised Edition, p. 470, op. cit.
9. Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue (Post Conciliar Document No. 42). In Austin Flannery (Editor), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. 1, New Revised Edition, pp. 540-541, op. cit. The quotation is on page 541.
10. Matthew Bunson (editor), *Our Sunday Visitor’s 2008 Catholic Almanac* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2007), p. 235.
11. Ibid. Also see Chapter 1 of *Catholic Concerns* (“Mixing Catholicism with Non-Christian Religions”).
12. Matthew Bunson, *Our Sunday Visitor’s 2007 Catholic Almanac* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2006), pp. 576.
13. Rama P. Coomaraswamy, *The Destruction of the Christian Tradition* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, Inc., 2006), pp. vii, xiii, xv. (When he uses the term “Christian” in the title, he is referring to Roman Catholicism.)
14. Ibid., p. 263.
15. Ceremonies for crowning statues of Mary are traditionally done in May. They include processions with the statues. You can see pictures of them by doing a Google Image search. Go to www.Google.com. At the top of the page, on the left, there are some words that are underlined. Click on “Image.” Type what you are looking for in the rectangle under the word “Google.” The best way to find good pictures is to search for **May crowning**. You can also search for **procession Mary**.

Click on the “Search Images” button. You will see a page with lots of small pictures. If you click on one of them you will go to another page. You should see the picture at the top left of the page. Click on it and you will probably get a larger picture.

16. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Paragraph 891, op. cit.
17. “Declarations of the Council of Trent.” This article gives general information about the Council of Trent and it quotes a number of decrees relating to Evangelical doctrines. (Accessed 10/14/08)
www.wayoflife.org/fbns/trent.htm
18. *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1978).
19. Mike Gendron, “Past Popes Taught Destructive Heresies.” This includes quotations from popes who said that there is no salvation apart from Mary, or apart from the Catholic Church, or apart from the popes. (Accessed 10/14/08)
www.reachingcatholics.org/pastpopes.html
20. Lumen Gentium (“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”), paragraph 51. In Austin Flannery (editor), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. 1, p. 412, op. cit.
21. Optatum Totius (“Decree on Priestly Training”), “Conclusion.” In Austin Flannery (editor), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. I, p. 724.
22. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* used to be available online with a search engine that enabled you to search for things by key word or by paragraph number. I searched for “Council of Trent” and found the phrase in 75 paragraphs. I printed those paragraphs and read them.
23. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 2270-2279, op. cit.
24. This is discussed and documented in Wesley J. Smith’s book *Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America*, op. cit.
25. Mike Gendron, “Catholic Evangelical Alliance?” (Accessed 10/14/08)
http://pro-gospel.org/x2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=42&Itemid=1

26. Richard Bennett, "The Catholic-Lutheran Accord: A Denial of the Gospel and the Righteousness of Christ." The author is a former Roman Catholic priest. (Accessed 10/14/08)
www.bereanbeacon.org/articles_pdf/Catholic_Lutheran_Accord.pdf

 27. Peter Doyne, "To Rome and Back Home: My Journey into Catholicism and Back into Biblical Christianity." (Accessed 10/16/08)
<http://toromeandbackhome.homestead.com/about.html>

 28. Mike Gendron, "The Disappearing Doctrine of the Evangelical Church." (Accessed 10/14/08)
http://pro-gospel.org/x2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=1

 29. "Merit," in John A. Hardon, *Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, p. 295, op. cit. Hardon is a Catholic priest with a doctorate in theology.

 30. *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 394-407. Quoted in James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God*, p. 22, op. cit.

 31. "Grace," in John A. Hardon, *Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, pp. 166-167, op. cit.

 32. Mike Gendron, "Past Popes Taught Destructive Heresies." Quotations from popes who said that there is no salvation apart from the Roman Catholic Church. Some said that there is no salvation apart from the Pope. (Accessed 10/15/08)
www.reachingcatholics.org/pastpopes.html
- Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, November 18, 1302. (See the very last sentence.) (Accessed 10/15/08)
www.papalencyclicals.net/Bon08/B8unam.htm
- Pope Pius IX, *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* ("On Promotion of False Doctrines"), August 10, 1863. (See paragraph 8.) (Accessed 10/15/08)
www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quanto.htm
- Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* ("On the Mystical Body of Christ"), June 29, 1943. (See paragraph 41.) (Accessed 10/15/08)
www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/P12MYSTI.HTM
- Pope Pius XII, *Ad Apostolorum Principis* ("On Communion and the Church in China"), June 29, 1958. (See paragraphs 45 and 46.) (Accessed 10/15/08)
www.newadvent.org/library/docs_pi12aa.htm

33. Mike Gendron, “Past Popes Taught Destructive Heresies.” This has quotations from popes who taught that there is no salvation apart from Mary. (Accessed 10/15/08)
www.reachingcatholics.org/pastpopes.html
- Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (“The Immaculate Conception”), December 8, 1854. (See the last paragraph of the encyclical.) (Accessed 10/15/08)
www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9ineff.htm
- Pope Pius IX, *Ubi Primum* (“On the Immaculate Conception”), February 2, 1849. (See paragraph 5.) (Accessed 10/15/08)
www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/P9UBIPR2.HTM
- Pope Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* (“On the Immaculate Conception”), February 2, 1904. (See paragraphs 12 through 15.)
www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_02021904_ad-diem-illum-laetissimum_en.html
34. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 969, op. cit.
35. Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (“Splendor of the Truth”), August 6, 1993. (See paragraph 120.) (Accessed 10/15/08)
www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor_en.html
36. Brian H. Edwards, *God’s Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndale and the English Bible*, pp. 168-170.
37. Personal correspondence. Used with permission.

Chapter 16—FAITH UNDER FIRE

1. Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*. The book comes in a number of editions. You can find it at Amazon.com by searching for the title plus “Corrie ten Boom.” (Be sure to include her name in your search, because there is another book with the same title.) You can also get the DVD at Amazon.com. Corrie was a consultant for the movie. She was there during the filming.
2. The website for Voice of the Martyrs. (Accessed 10/11/08)
www.persecution.com/

Appendix B—FOR FORMER CATHOLICS

1. “Inquisition,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VIII, 1910. The statement opposing freedom of religion is in the second paragraph of the article. (Accessed 10/25/08)
www.newadvent.org/cathen/08026a.htm

2. *Code of Canon Law*, Canons 752, 1311-1312, op. cit. The 1983 *Code of Canon Law* is available online. The following links go to the Index of the book, which has links to the laws. Canon 752 is near the beginning of Book III. Canons 1311-1312 are in the beginning of Book VI. (Accessed 10/25/08)
www.intratext.com/X/ENG0017.htm
www.ourladywarriors.org/canon/
3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Paragraphs 85, 100, 891, 2051, op. cit. The *Catechism* summarizes the essential and basic teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. It comes in numerous editions and languages. Because it has numbered paragraphs, statements can be accurately located in spite of the variety of editions.
4. *Ibid.*, paragraphs 87, 1310, 2037.

Appendix D—A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

1. “Lectio Divina,” Lighthouse Trails Research. (Accessed 10/25/08)
www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/lectiodivina.htm
2. “Jonestown,” *Wikipedia*. (Accessed 10/27/08)
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonestown>

 “Timeline: Road to Tragedy in Jonestown,” CNN, November 17, 2003. (Accessed 10/12/08)
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3. “Young Muslims in Turkey Murder Three Christians,” *Christianity Today*, April 20, 2007. (Accessed 10/25/08)
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Appendix G—WHAT I BELIEVE

1. Philip G. Davis, *Goddess Unmasked: The Rise of Neopagan Feminist Spirituality* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing Company, 1998), pp. 29-31.
2. “Fairies” in Theresa Cheung, *The Element Encyclopedia of the Psychic World: The Ultimate A-Z of Spirits, Mysteries and the Paranormal* (London, HarperElement, Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), pp. 202-205.