

Christ the Teacher Series

**Defend
the
Faith!**

Volume IV

Lumen Verum Apologetics

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Volume IV

Revised Edition

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Cover picture: St. Dominic Guzman, defender of the Faith (1170-1221). From *The Mockery of Christ* by Fra Angelico (c. 1441): “*And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’*” (St. Matt. 27:28-29).

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Preface

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this four-volume set of catechetical texts.

These texts are supported by the *Knights of the Southern Cross* in New South Wales and are a collaborative effort between the Order and the authors of *Lumen Verum Apologetics*.

The *Knights of the Southern Cross* is an Order of Catholic laymen. Established in 1912, the Order has maintained an unbroken tradition of supporting the pastoral and apostolic needs of Australia, including the educational, intellectual and spiritual needs of its members, their families and Australia as a whole.

I have found the texts to be an invaluable source for Catholics and non-Catholics in understanding the basis for our Tradition, beliefs and creeds. In these secular and pluralistic times, it is necessary to have a good understanding of our Faith. Unfortunately, attaining such knowledge is time-consuming and requires substantial research.

These texts give the reader a ‘ready reckoner’ to the basic tenets of our Faith.

I congratulate the *Lumen Verum Apologetics* team for their dedication and commitment to bringing these catechetical teachings to the public in a concise but comprehensive way.

I commend these texts to you and hope you grow from them.

Robert Balzola
Chairman, NSW Knights of the Southern Cross.

Introduction

The word *apologetics* is derived from the Greek, *apologia*, which means “to defend.” Apologetics as a branch of Catholic theology is therefore aimed at establishing and defending the reasonableness of the Catholic Faith. Specifically, it has a threefold aim: (i) to strengthen the faith of believers by illustrating that the articles of the Catholic Faith are in full harmony with reason; (ii) to persuade unbelievers, inquirers and those in good faith that the articles of the Catholic Faith are in full harmony with reason; (iii) to refute the arguments and objections of those who reject the Catholic Faith.

An apologist is strictly speaking a theologian. In defending the Catholic Faith, he draws his arguments principally from Sacred Scripture and Apostolic Tradition. Nevertheless, the apologist is free to utilize and develop arguments from philosophy and history. Divine revelation and natural reason are consequently combined to prove that God exists, that He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, that Christ established a visible Church on earth to teach truths infallibly, and that this Church is the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.

Apologetics has been an integral part of the life of the Church since Apostolic times. Our Lord Himself was the first apologist, when after His resurrection He instructed the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures” (St. Luke 24:27). St. Luke in writing his Gospel did so with an apologetical purpose: “I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed” (St. Luke 1:3-4). In fact, it can be argued that all four Gospels are apologetical in nature, having been written to show the faithful that their belief in Jesus Christ was well grounded, and to lead Jews and pagans to belief in Christ.

St. Paul was no less of an apologist. St. Luke records that when in Rome “they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets” (Acts 28:23).

During the first centuries of the Church’s history, the Christian religion was outlawed by the civil authorities of Rome and attacked by pagan apologists as atheistic, cannibalistic and sexually promiscuous. Christian apologists such as Aristides, St. Justin Martyr and Athenagoras responded by showing that these accusations were no more than calumnies and that Rome had nothing to fear from toleration of the Christian religion.

The apologetical struggle against paganism was taken up in the late second and early third centuries AD by St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. They aimed their energies at exposing and refuting the plethora of mystery cults, Greek mythology and Gnostic heresies prevalent at the time. The middle of the third century was dominated by the character and works of Origen, who produced a monumental work against the teachings of Celsus, a pagan philosopher who attacked the supernatural nature of Christianity, the miracles of Christ and the reliability of the Gospels.

The three figures that stood out as the defenders of Christianity in the period after its toleration by Constantine were Lactantius, Eusebius of Caesarea and St. Augustine of Hippo. St. Augustine, in particular, was continually engaged in apologetical contest against pagans and heretics. His greatest work, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, took thirteen years to complete and was aimed at refuting allegations that the calamities befalling the Roman Empire at the time, such as the sack of Rome in 410 AD, were due to the abandonment of the pagan gods. Breaking new ground, St. Augustine went on to provide a Christian understanding of human history, as well as an outline of authentic civilization based on the teachings of Christ.

With the rise of Islam a new apologetical opponent entered the arena. Its challenge was met early on by St. John Damascene in the eighth century and systematically dealt with by St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, where the errors of the Muslim philosopher Averroes were given particular treatment. St. Thomas was also active apologetically in meeting the resurgent challenge of Gnosticism as manifested in the Albigensian heresy.

The outbreak of the Protestant Revolt in the sixteenth century gave rise to a new dimension in Catholic apologetics. St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More engaged themselves early in dispute against the Lutherans and other English heretics. The newly formed Jesuits became active in apologetical work throughout most of Europe, led by the example of St. Peter Canisius. By the end of the sixteenth century, another Jesuit, St. Robert Bellarmine, provided the Church with an arsenal to combat all the main Protestant heresies with his *Controversies of the Christian Faith against the Heretics of Our Time*. St. Francis de Sales, through great courage and charity, would challenge the Calvinists in their very heartland of Switzerland and convert tens of thousands of them through his apologetical pamphlets and writings.

The rising tide of rationalism soon came to dominate intellectual life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Led by anti-Christian philosophers such as Rousseau and Voltaire, it asserted that there was no divine Revelation, and that all that we know or need to know can be gauged from human reason rightly used. Hence, the teaching and sanctifying mission of Christ and the Church has no relevance. In opposition to such, the First Vatican Council declared that the learning of all religious and moral truths necessary for the right ordering of human life is derived both from natural reason and divine revelation, and that in the present condition of the human race even naturally known truths cannot be known readily by all with firm certitude and complete accuracy.

The history of Catholic apologetics in the twentieth century was a checkered one. The first half of the century witnessed the creation and work of the Catholic Evidence Guild. Begun in England by Frank

Sheed and Maisie Ward, it was to bear fruit on behalf of the Catholic Church throughout the English-speaking world for many decades. Unfortunately, since the Second Vatican Council, the word and idea of apologetics has gone the way of the dinosaurs for many, particularly those imbued with modernist notions of ecclesiology and universal salvation. Nevertheless, calls for its revival have been heard, including one from a 1981 edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* under the headline "Apologia for Apologetics." Furthermore, since the mid-1980's a series of astonishing conversions of Fundamentalist ministers and clergy to the Catholic Church in the United States has led to a dramatic revival of interest in apologetics, leading to the establishment of a number of strong and committed new organizations specializing in countering the aggressive work of the modern-day anti-Catholic.

Bible Truth

Objection: *“The Catholic Church is not a Bible-believing Church. It has no love for the Word of God!”*

The Catholic Church is not only a Bible-believing Church but also the Church of the Bible. Only the Catholic Church among the many thousands of others can demonstrate a continued existence from the time of Christ and the Apostles to the present day. When Christ ascended into heaven He left behind a living Church endowed with His power and authority to continue His work of salvation in the world. It was only in the immediately following decades that the Holy Spirit inspired certain Apostles and Evangelists to reduce into written form the teachings of Christ already delivered “once and for all to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

A simple cursory look at the Catholic Church’s history suffices to rebut the above objection. The Catholic Church has always used extensively the Scriptures in her public worship, reading out for the spiritual benefit of her children extracts from the Old Testament, the Gospels, the Epistles of St. Paul and the Universal Epistles. The Scriptures have always formed the backbone of the Divine Office, the official public prayer of the Church. When heresies arose denying the value of the Old Testament, the Catholic Church responded in its defense. Her apologists and heroes combated all other heresies directly from the Scriptures. The writings of the Church Fathers are replete with tens of thousands of references from every book of the Bible. Catholic philosophers, Scholastics, Doctors, Saints, theologians and writers of all sorts always had the words of Scripture flowing from both their pens and their lips, producing over the centuries the greatest treasury of literature in human history. Not one Council or Papal pronouncement is devoid of Scriptural references, neither does one find the Scriptures absent from one page of any official Church catechism. The Catholic Church gave the world an authoritative list of

the canonical books, translated them into every language before the emergence of Protestantism, and has faithfully interpreted them to all generations. Popes have granted plenary indulgences for the faithful reading of the Scriptures. If all this is not enough the following words of the Popes should end all debate:

“the Church has never failed in taking due measures to bring the Scriptures within reach of her children, and that she has ever held fast and exercised profitably that guardianship conferred upon her by Almighty God for the protection and glory of His holy Word; so that she has never required, nor does she now require, any stimulation from without.”¹

“a whole multitude of Doctors ... have sifted the Sacred Books in every way, and ... have thanked God more and more heartily the more deeply they have gone into them, for His divine bounty in having vouchsafed to speak thus to men.”²

“Wherefore we exhort all the Church’s children, and especially those whose duty it is to teach in seminaries, to follow closely in St. Jerome’s footsteps. If they will but do so they will learn to prize as he prized the treasure of the Scriptures, and will derive from them most abundant and blessed fruit.”³

These same Popes simultaneously attacked those who sought to deny the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, who found in them alleged errors and contradictions, who claimed they were forgeries made after the event, or who taught that they were simply collections of myths, stories and exaggerations:

“They deny that there is any such thing as revelation or inspiration, or Holy Scripture at all; they see, instead, only the forgeries and the falsehoods of men; they set down the Scripture narratives as stupid fables and lying stories: the

¹ Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, 1893.

² Pope St. Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, 1907.

³ Pope Benedict XV, *Spiritus Paraclitus*, 1920.

prophecies and the oracles of God are to them either predictions made up after the event or forecasts formed by the light of nature; the miracles and the wonders of God's power are not what they are said to be, but the startling effects of natural law, or else mere tricks and myths; and the apostolic Gospels and writings are not the work of the Apostles at all."⁴

"What can we say of men who in expounding the very Gospels so whittle away the human trust we should repose in it as to overturn Divine faith in it? They refuse to allow that the things which Christ said or did have come down to us unchanged and entire through witnesses who carefully committed to writing what they themselves had seen or heard. They maintain—and particularly in their treatment of the Fourth Gospel—that much is due of course to the Evangelists—who, however, added much from their own imaginations; but much, too, is due to narratives compiled by the faithful at other periods, the result, of course, being that the twin streams now flowing in the same channel cannot be distinguished from one another."⁵

Second objection: *“The popes and documents you quote are nearly a hundred years old. They do not reflect the position of the Catholic Church today!”*

A current statement that is often heard within Catholic circles is this: “Vatican II changed all that.” Those who use such a phrase often attribute every authorized or unauthorized change to the Second Vatican Council. The same have usually not even read the Council documents and refer instead to the so-called “spirit of the Council.” This spirit is really a smoke-screen set up in recent decades by neo-Modernists with the aim of hijacking the Council’s agenda and replacing it with their own. When Protestants hear certain Catholic clergy or laity speaking against the authenticity of the Scriptures, without a doubt they have come across a Catholic of modernist persuasion. The Protestant in this case may be excused if he fails to make such a distinction, particularly as Modernism is so widespread

⁴ Pope Leo XIII, *Ibid.*

⁵ Pope Benedict XV, *Ibid.*

today. In such a situation, two things must be pointed out to the Protestant: firstly, that modernist Biblical criticism actually had its origins in 18th and 19th century liberal Protestantism (and is found more recently in the writings of the German Protestant Rudolf Bultmann); and secondly, that Modernism is even a greater enemy of authentic Catholic Biblical teaching than Protestantism.

A close study of Church pronouncements immediately before, during and after Vatican II clearly shows that nothing has changed in official Catholic teaching since the time when Vatican I and Pope Leo XIII declared the Scriptures to be “written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost ... have God for their author, and as such have been delivered to the Church”⁶:

“When, subsequently, some Catholic writers, in spite of this solemn definition of Catholic doctrine, by which such divine authority is claimed for the ‘entire books with all their parts’ as to secure freedom from any error whatsoever, ventured to restrict the truth of Sacred Scripture solely to matters of faith and morals, and to regard other matters, whether in the domain of physical science or history, as ‘obiter dicta’ and—as they contended—in no wise connected with faith, Our Predecessor of immortal memory, Leo XIII in the Encyclical Letter *Providentissimus Deus*, published on November 18 in the year 1893, justly and rightly condemned these errors and safeguarded the studies of the Divine Books by most wise precepts and rules.”⁷

“They refuse to admit the existence of a supernatural order and the intervention of a personal God in the world through strict Revelation, and the possibility and existence of miracles and prophecies. Others begin with a false idea of faith, as if it had nothing to do with historical truth—or rather, were incompatible with it. Others deny the historical value and nature of the documents of Revelation *a priori* [as a starting point]. Finally, others make light of the authority of the Apostles as witnesses

⁶ *Providentissimus Deus*, Introductory.

⁷ Pope Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 1943, Preface.

to Christ, and of their task and influence in the primitive community, extolling rather the creative power of that community. All such views are not only opposed to Catholic doctrine, but are also devoid of scientific basis and alien to the correct principles of historical method.”⁸

“Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of our salvation. Therefore ‘all Scripture is divinely inspired and has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man of God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind’.”⁹

“Guided by the Holy Spirit and in the light of the living Tradition which it has received, the Church has discerned the writings which should be regarded as Sacred Scripture in the sense that, ‘having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church’ (*Dei Verbum*, 11) and contain ‘that truth which God wanted put into the Sacred Writings for the sake of our salvation’ (ibid.)”¹⁰

“The inspired books teach the truth. ‘Since therefore all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures’.”¹¹

⁸ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* (Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels), 1964.

⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), 1965, # 11.

¹⁰ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 1993, III, B, 1.

¹¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, # 107.

Third objection: “But virtually all Catholic schools today teach that the book of Genesis, for example, is only a myth. Why is this so?”

It is true that many Catholic schools and teachers today teach that Genesis is not historical, that chapters 1-11 contain only myths, and that the rest of the book contains numerous errors. This is symptomatic of the widespread surrender to Modernist exegesis and the adoption of dubious evolutionary notions to explain the origins of life and of man.

Nevertheless, it is not the role of Catholic schools or teachers to interpret Scripture. Such a role is properly reserved to the Magisterium:

“The task of an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office [Magisterium] of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.”¹²

It is the Magisterium that has declared consistently from Vatican I to Vatican II that all the books of Scripture were “written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit...have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.”¹³ With regard to the book of Genesis, the *Pontifical Biblical Commission* (PBC)—as an organ of the teaching Magisterium—declared in 1909 that the first three chapters were not legend or mythology, even if the sacred writer did not intend to write with scientific exactitude. Rather, the three chapters are a narrative of events that truly occurred and can be understood in a literal, historical sense, though certain passages are to be understood in a figurative sense. The Catechism of the Catholic

¹² *Dei Verbum*, *ibid.*, # 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, # 7; cf. CCC # 105.

Church uses similar language in upholding the historicity of Genesis in our days:

“The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man. Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents.”¹⁴

Earlier, the PBC declared, in 1906, that Moses was the principal and substantial human author of the Pentateuch and hence of Genesis, though he may have been inspired to use and edit earlier manuscripts and/or oral traditions. In 1950, Pope Pius XII stated that the first eleven chapters of Genesis “do nevertheless come under the heading of history.” He went on to say that “the same chapters, in simple and metaphorical language adapted to the mentality of a primitive people, both state principal truths which are fundamental for our salvation and also give a popular description of the origin of the human race and the Chosen People.”¹⁵

There is no doubt that Christ Himself accepted the book of Genesis as historical and true. That He came as Redeemer shows that He was aware of the original sin of Adam. This is reinforced by His teaching on marriage and divorce: “But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female’.” (St. Mark 10:6). Finally, His rebuking of Capharnaum for its faithlessness and His comparison of it with Sodom and Gomorrah illustrates that He believed the latter two were actual cities (St. Matt. 11:23-24).

¹⁴ CCC # 390.

¹⁵ *Humani Generis*, 1950.

Fourth objection: “*Many Catholic writers and speakers say that the Gospels were not written by the Apostles and Evangelists. What more proof do I need that the Catholic Church is no longer truly Christian?*”

Unfortunately, many Catholics and non-Catholics have probably read and heard such statements. Again, however, one must listen to the voice of the Magisterium to know the Church’s authentic position concerning the Gospels. The following is a list of pronouncements issued by the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) upholding the traditional belief that all four Gospels were written by Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John respectively:

- (i) *On the Author and the Historical Truth of the Fourth Gospel* (1907).
- (ii) *On the Author, Date of Composition, and Historical Truth of the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1911).
- (iii) *On the Author, Date of Composition, and Historical Truth of the Gospels According to St. Mark and St. Luke* (1912).

The PBC likewise ruled that it should be held as certain that St. Luke was the author of the Acts of the Apostles (1913) and St. Paul of the Pastoral Epistles (1913).

Admittedly, these five pronouncements were handed down many decades ago, nevertheless, *none of them has been overridden by subsequent Church statements*. Rather, the Second Vatican Council went out of its way to clearly reaffirm the historicity of the Gospels:

“The Church has always and everywhere maintained, and continues to maintain, the apostolic origin of the four Gospels. The apostles preached, as Christ had charged them to do, and then, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they and others of

the apostolic age handed on to us in writing the same message they had preached, the foundation of our Faith: the fourfold Gospel, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John ... Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held that the four Gospels ... whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ really did and taught for their eternal salvation.”¹⁶

Of all the Gospels, the one whose authenticity is most challenged is the fourth. Before the end of the eighteenth century no one denied that St. John the Apostle was the author. However, skeptical critics emerged at that time, dismissing the fourth Gospel as a work of fiction compiled by unknown Christians in the mid-second century who were disappointed by Christ’s failure to return as promised. These same critics further argued that the historic Jesus had nothing to do with the “miracle-working divine Son of God,” but rather was simply a profound teacher and revolutionary who challenged the corrupt institutions of His day.

The internal evidence in support of the Apostolic authorship of St. John’s Gospel can be briefly summarized as follows:¹⁷

- (i) The author possessed a clear familiarity with Old Testament Jewish thought, as well as social and religious customs. Historical and archeological research have subsequently revealed that the fourth Gospel depicts exactly the complex social and political orders that existed in the early first century AD, orders destroyed by the Romans in the year 70.
- (ii) The author had first-hand local knowledge of the geography of Israel and the topography of Jerusalem and its surrounds.

¹⁶ *Dei Verbum*, # 19.

¹⁷ From G. H. Duggan S. M., *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, St. Paul Books & Media, 1987, pp. 99-110.

- (iii) The author expressly claims to be an eyewitness and possess first-hand knowledge of facts, as well as thoughts and conversations of Christ and the Apostles which no one else was privy to. The author even records the original Aramaic words used by Christ, such as *Abba*, *Talitha cum*.
- (iv) St. John the Apostle is never mentioned by name in the Gospel even though the author is meticulous about naming other Apostles and characters. The only explanation for such an omission is that St. John was the author, and his devotion and humility led him to write about Christ and others rather than himself.
- (v) Again, the author's humility led him to simply call himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Such a reference obviously bespeaks the extraordinary relationship the author had with Christ, one that could only be of an Apostle.

Fifth objection: “*Why did the Catholic Church condemn the reading of the Scriptures during the Middle Ages? And what about the chaining of Bibles in churches to prevent ordinary people from finding out about Gospel truth?*”

This question insinuates that the Catholic Church is the enemy of the Word of God and, as such has strenuously endeavored throughout her history to deprive people from devoutly reading the Scriptures. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Protestant historians such as Dean Maitland¹⁸ show that the Middle Ages was a period of great reverence for the Word of God. Numerous monks industriously copied the Scriptures word for word for private and public use. The Scriptures were preached daily by the clergy, quoted by theologians of all ranks in their writings, schools and universities, used in the compilation of popular prayer books, and employed to determine the great deliberations of Popes and Councils. The Scriptures were neither ignored nor disparaged. Maitland admits, “I do not recollect any instance in which it is recorded that the Scriptures, or any part of them, were treated with indignity, or with less than profound respect.”¹⁹

What was condemned during the Middle Ages was not the reading of the Bible but the production, circulation and reading of perverted translations produced by heretical groups or individuals in support of their novel teachings. Such groups included the Albigensians, the Waldensians, and the Lollards (Wycliffites). It was out of zeal for the authentic word of God that the Catholic Church through local and universal laws prohibited the reading of the Scriptures *without the appropriate safeguards* (e.g., Toulouse 1229, Tarragona 1233, Oxford 1408, the Index of Forbidden Books 1574). A close examination of just two of the most well known heretical vernacular translations

¹⁸ *The Dark Ages*, pp. 208-241.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

would reveal the vast number of errors they contained—Tyndale’s English Bible contained two thousand errors; Luther’s German version three thousand!

In fact, Catholic vernacular translations of the Scriptures were produced abundantly during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Non-Latin Scripture versions (in whole or in part) produced before the Protestant Reformation include:²⁰

- (i) 62 Hebrew editions (12 of the entire Old Testament, 50 of selected portions)
- (ii) 22 Greek editions (3 of the Old Testament, 12 of the New Testament, 7 of selected portions)
- (iii) 6 Italian editions
- (iv) 10 French editions
- (v) 6 Dutch editions
- (vi) 4 Spanish editions
- (vii) 10 German editions

English versions of the Bible made before the Reformation include:²¹

- (i) An Anglo-Saxon translation of portions of the Old and New Testaments by the Northumbrian herdsman, Caedmon, c. 600 AD.
- (ii) An Anglo-Saxon translation of the Psalms by Guthlac at the end of the 7th century.
- (iii) A translation of the Psalms by Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, in the 8th century.
- (iv) A translation of the entire Bible by St. Bede the Venerable (+731 AD).
- (v) A translation of a portion of the Psalms by King Alfred the Great (+901 AD).

²⁰ Cf. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (edd. B. Metzger, M. Coogan), Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 755-758.

²¹ Cf. *A Companion to Scripture Studies*, Fr. John Steinmuller STD, Joseph Wagner, New York, 1941, p. 208.

- (vi) A translation of the Gospels in the West Saxon dialect, 10th century (the *Wessex Gospels*).
- (vii) A translation of the Gospels by Farmer and Owen in the 10th century.
- (viii) Interlinear glosses written around 950 AD in the Northumbrian dialect (the *Lindisfarne Gospels*).
- (ix) A translation of the first seven books of the Old Testament plus the Book of Job by Archbishop Aelfric of Canterbury in the 11th century.
- (x) A translation of parts of the Old and New Testaments by Orm, an English Benedictine monk, in the 13th century.
- (xi) A translation of the Psalms by William Shoreham, Vicar of Chart Sutton, in 1320.
- (xii) A translation of the Psalms by Richard Rolle, a hermit of Hampole, in the 14th century.

All of these appeared before Luther's alleged first German translation of the Bible published in 1534. In addition, there existed another 94 vernacular editions of selected portions of the New Testament and the Psalms!

The allegation that the Bible was kept in chains in Catholic churches only affords further proof of the high esteem in which the Catholic Church held the Scriptures. Prior to the invention of the printing press in 1456 the production of new manuscripts was very time-consuming and costly. Many of the Bibles produced manually by monks were also magnificent works of art. Some copies placed for auction in recent times have been sold for almost US\$15 million. Bibles were chained simply to prevent them from being stolen and hence taken away from public use. Only overly imaginative minds laboring under severe anti-Catholic bias could invent and propagate the tale that Bibles were chained to keep them exclusively in the hands of corrupt clergy, etc.

The true Catholic attitude towards the Bible and its study remains that of Pope Leo XIII, who said, over a century ago:

“The solicitude of the apostolic office naturally urges and even compels us, not only to desire that this grand source of Catholic revelation should be made safely and abundantly accessible to the flock of Jesus Christ, but also not to suffer any attempt to defile or corrupt it, either on the part of those who impiously and openly assail the Scriptures, or of those who are led astray into fallacious and imprudent novelties.”²²

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Catholic Church presently grants those faithful who devoutly read the Scriptures for up to thirty minutes in any given day a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions.

The Fathers

Papias (c. 60-130 AD) [Fragment in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3, 39, 15]

“And the Presbyter said this also: ‘When Mark became the interpreter of Peter, he wrote down accurately whatever he remembered, though not in order, of the words and deeds of the Lord. He was neither hearer nor follower of the Lord; but such he was afterwards, as I say, of Peter, who had no intention of giving a connected account of the sayings of the Lord, but adapted his instructions as was necessary. Mark, then, made no mistake, but wrote things down as he remembered them; and he made it his concern to omit nothing that he had heard nor to falsify anything therein’.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3, 11, 7-8 (c. 180 AD)

²² *Providentissimus Deus*, Introductory.

“There is such certainty surrounding the Gospels that the heretics themselves bear witness to them; and starting from the Gospels, each one of them attempts to establish his own doctrine ... Just as there are four regions of the world in which we live, and four universal winds, and since the Church is disseminated over all the earth, and the pillar and mainstay of the Church is the Gospel, the breath of life, it is fitting that she have four pillars ...”

**Clement of Alexandria, *Hypotyposesis* (inter 190-210 AD)
[Fragment in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6, 14, 5-6]**

“The Gospels containing the genealogies ... were written first. The circumstances which occasioned that of Mark were these: When Peter preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had been for a long time his follower and who remembered his sayings, should write down what had been proclaimed. Having composed the Gospel, he gave it to those who had requested it. When Peter learned of this, he did not positively forbid it, but neither did he encourage it. John, last of all, seeing that the plain facts had been clearly set forth in the Gospels, and being urged by his acquaintances, composed a spiritual Gospel under the divine inspiration of the Spirit.”

Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4, 2, 1 (inter 207-212 AD)

“First of all, we take the position that the evangelical testament has as its authors Apostles, upon whom the task of promulgating the Gospel was imposed by the Lord Himself ... Of the Apostles, then, John and Matthew first introduced the faith to us, and of the apostolic men, Luke and Mark refresh it for us.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Against the Letter of Mani* 5, 6 (397 AD)

“If you should find someone who does not yet believe in the Gospel, what would you answer him when he says: ‘I do not believe?’ Indeed, I would not believe in the Gospel myself if the authority of the Catholic Church did not influence me to do so.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Preface: Now all the doctrines in which the faithful are to be instructed are contained in the Word of God, which is found in Scripture and Tradition. To the study of these, therefore, the pastor should devote his days and nights, keeping in mind the admonition of St. Paul to Timothy, which all who have care of souls should consider as addressed to themselves: *Attend to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine, for all scripture divinely inspired is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work.*

Pt. III, Ch. III: (It is also honored) when we pay a religious attention to the word of God, which announces to us His will; make it the subject of our constant meditation; and strive by reading or hearing it, according to our respective capacities and conditions of life, to become acquainted with it.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 104: In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, “but as what it really is, the word of God.” “In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them.”

No. 105: God is the author of Sacred Scripture. “The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

“For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the

Holy Spirit, they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.”

No. 106: God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. “To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more.”

The Blessed Trinity

Objection: *“The doctrine of the Trinity is not found in the Bible. It is really a disguised form of pagan polytheism—the worship of three gods in one!”*

The Blessed Trinity is God, one and undivided, in three distinct divine Persons. It is the most fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Unaided human reason could never have known of the Blessed Trinity. It is a supernatural mystery fully revealed only by Jesus Christ Himself.

Early Christian Fathers of the West grappled with trying to understand the Blessed Trinity through the notion of the “mental word” in God. The argument runs as follows: As humans, we know and love ourselves according to the idea we have of ourselves in our minds, but this idea is limited and imperfect. God also knows and loves Himself in the idea He has of Himself. But God’s idea of Himself is utterly unlike any human idea. His knowledge of Himself is infinite and perfect. Furthermore, as there are no parts in God, this idea, or “mental word,” is not separate from God and, therefore, is divine in essence.

Being divine, it follows that the mental word is eternal, and therefore uncreated. This mental word St. John calls “the Word,” or Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. God the Father knows Himself in the Word and the Word knows God the Father. This mutual knowledge brings forth mutual love. This mutual love the New Testament calls the Holy Spirit, or the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Those who claim to be Christian yet attack the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity initially base their objections on the fact that the word “Trinity” is not found in the Scriptures, and conclude that it is an unscriptural teaching. According to groups such as the Jehovah’s

Witnesses, early Christian theologians slowly incorporated the doctrine of the Trinity from paganism, and being unable to adequately explain it cloaked it in the term “mystery”:

“Jehovah God is one, and Jesus Christ is his creature Son, and the holy spirit is Jehovah’s active force, and therefore the doctrine of a trinity is unchristian and really of pagan origin.”¹

In the view of the Witnesses, the Council of Nicaea formally accepted the doctrine of the Trinity in 325 AD. Of course, the Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that the originator of the ‘pagan’ doctrine of the Trinity is Satan himself:

“The plain truth is that this is another of Satan’s attempts to keep God-fearing persons from learning the truth of Jehovah and his Son, Christ Jesus. No, there is no trinity.”²

The fact that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery does not of itself render it unchristian or an absurdity. We can in this life know many things about the Trinity through the lights of faith and reason, yet we can never hope to fully understand it as it touches upon the very nature of God Himself: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12). The opponents of the Trinity themselves create absurdity and confuse the debate by often misrepresenting its meaning, for example, by stating that it is “three gods in one person” or “three persons in one.”

As for the word ‘Trinity,’ it simply means ‘threefold.’ ‘Trinity’ does not appear in the Scriptures, nevertheless, the doctrine of the Trinity certainly does. The first recorded use of the word ‘Trinity’ in relation to God was by St. Theophilus of Antioch (c. 180 AD). He speaks of “the Trinity (*Trias*): God, His Word, and His Wisdom.” Most

¹ *Let Your Name be Sanctified*, p. 300. Taken from John Francis Coffey, *The Gospel According to the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, The Polding Press, Melbourne, 1979, p. 18.

² *The Word—Who is He? According to John*, p. 7, quoted in J. F. Coffey, p. 18.

probably, the word ‘Trinity’ was in use even before this time, and soon after it appears in the West in the Latin form *Trinitas*.

The doctrine of the Trinity was unknown to the Jews during Old Testament times, and so the clearest Scriptural evidence for it is found in the New Testament. However, there are a number of Old Testament verses where the Trinity looms implicitly as a mystery that retrospectively becomes apparent in the light of Christ’s subsequent revelation. For example, the use of the word “us” in the following verses implies the plurality of Persons in the Godhead:

“Then God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him...” (Gen. 1:26-27).

“Then the Lord God said, See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil...” (Gen. 3:22).

“...Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there...” (Gen. 11:7).

From the very beginning of Christianity, this plurality of Persons in God has been evident:

“And the angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God’ (St. Luke 1:30-32 & 35).

The New Testament supplies the specific names of the trinity of Persons in God in Christ’s great commission to His disciples at the end of St. Matthew’s Gospel:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (St. Matt. 28:19-20).

In this verse the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mentioned distinctly but under the singular term “name.” They are therefore distinct Persons but not separate beings or gods. Their grouping together also denotes their equality.

The commencement of Christ’s public ministry provided another reference to the Trinity:

“And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased” (St. Mark 1:10-11).

This verse clearly reveals the First and Second Persons of the Trinity, Jesus Christ coming out of the water and His Father’s voice from heaven. The Holy Spirit, the Third Person, is revealed as a dove, descending from heaven onto Christ.

Jesus Christ as the Second Person of the Trinity is equal to the Father:

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, which means, God with us...” (St. Matt. 1:23).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (St. John 1:1).

“The Father and I are one” (St. John 10:30).

“...the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (St. John 10:38).

“...whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (St. John 14:9).

The Jews, when hearing these words of Christ, understood their significance and for this reason sought to stone Him to death, “because you, being a man, make yourself God” (St. John 10:33).

The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son as the Third Person of the Trinity, will be a living teacher of truth:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate (Holy Spirit)” (St. John 14:16).

“...the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything” (St. John 14:26).

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (St. John 16:13).

Rather than being simply an impersonal “active force”, the Holy Spirit is a personal guide, directing the Church in its decisions:

“For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15:28).

To sin against the Holy Spirit is to sin against God:

“...why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?...You did not lie to men but to God!” (Acts 5:3-4).

Further evidence of the Holy Spirit’s distinct personality is found in the following verses:

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26).

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

“How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the

covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:29).

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2:7).

The *Athanasian Creed* (so-called after St. Athanasius, the great fourth century fighter of Arianism) encapsulates perfectly the Catholic expression of the doctrine of the Trinity:

“The Christian faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance; for there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one; the glory equal; and the majesty co-eternal.”

The Fathers

St. Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians* 46, 6 (c. 98 AD)

“Do we not have one God, one Christ, and one Spirit of Grace poured out upon us? And is there not one calling in Christ?”

***The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* 14, 3 (c. 155 - 157 AD)**

“In this way and for all things I do praise you, I do bless you, I do glorify you through the eternal and heavenly High Priest Jesus Christ, your beloved child: through whom be glory to you with Him and with the Holy Spirit, both now and through ages yet to come. Amen.”

St. Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 2, 15 (181 AD)

“The three days before the luminaries were created are types of the Trinity: God, His Word, and His Wisdom.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 2, 28, 6 (c. 180 AD)

“If any one, therefore says to us, ‘How then was the Son produced by the Father?’ we reply to him, that no man understands that production, or generation, or calling, or revelation, or by whatever name one may describe His generation, which is in fact altogether

indescribable. Neither Valentinus, nor Marcion, nor Saturninus, nor Basilides, nor angels, nor archangels, nor principalities, nor powers (possess this knowledge), but the Father only who begat, and the Son who was begotten. Since therefore His generation is unspeakable, those who strive to set forth generations and productions cannot be in their right mind, inasmuch as they undertake to describe things that are indescribable.”

St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexameron* 6, 7, 40 (post 389 AD)

“But let us consider the course of our own creation. He says: ‘Let Us make man to our image and to our likeness.’ Who says this? Is it not God, who made you? ... To whom does He say it? Certainly not to Himself, for He does not say ‘Let Me make’ but ‘Let Us make.’ Nor to the Angels, for they are ministers; and servants can have no partnership in the operation of the master, nor works with their author. It is the Son to whom He speaks, even if the Jews will not have it and the Arians fight against it ... [And it is the Son] who is the image of God the Father, the Son who always is and who was in the beginning.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity* Bk. 7, Ch. 4 (inter 400-416 AD)

“For that which must be understood of persons according to our usage, this is to be understood of hypostases according to the Greek usage; for they say three hypostases, one essence, in the same way as we say three persons, one essence or substance.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)³

Pt. I, Ch. II: Since nowhere is a too curious inquiry more dangerous, or error more fatal, than in the knowledge and exposition of this, the most profound and difficult of mysteries...

³ This Catechism is variously called the *Roman Catechism*, the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, and the *Catechism of Pius V*. It was requested by the Bishops at Trent, and promulgated by Pope Pius V, in Rome, in 1566, three years after the Council of Trent had finished.

But these truths which should not be made the subject of too subtle investigation, when we recollect that *he who is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory*. We should be satisfied with the assurance and certitude which faith gives us that we have been taught these truths by God Himself, to doubt whose word is the extreme of folly and misery. He has said: *Teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and again, there are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.*

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 234: The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them...

No. 237: The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God. To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before the Incarnation of God's Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

No. 253: The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the "consubstantial Trinity." The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire: "The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e. by nature one God." In the words of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), "Each of the persons is that supreme reality, viz., the divine substance, essence or nature."

Call None Your Father

Objection: *“Why do Catholics call their priests ‘Father’ when the Bible clearly states ‘call no one your father on earth, for you have one father—the one in heaven’ (St. Matt. 23:9).”*

The above quote from the Gospel of St. Matthew must be read in the context of the whole of chapter 23, in which Our Lord Jesus Christ denounces the pride and hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, the contrast between their words and their actions (v. 3), the heavy burdens they placed on the shoulders of the people without giving any assistance (v. 4) and their love to be seen and praised: “They do all their deeds to be seen by men; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market places, and being called rabbi by men” (vv. 5-7).

Our Lord used this hyperbole to provide a lesson in humility, exhorting His followers to realize that only the Heavenly Father is the genuine Father, while all others simply partake, or reveal a part, of His Fatherhood. Those in positions of power or authority are not to lord it over others, imposing impossible burdens while seeking public recognition and praise. Christ concluded His admonitions, saying, “whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (v.12).

A literal understanding of Our Lord’s words would lead to an absurd conclusion, prohibiting us from calling our natural fathers “father,” while allowing us to call our mothers “mother.” Yet, such an interpretation would go against Scripture itself, where Our Lady says to the Child Jesus: “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your *father* and I have been looking for you anxiously” (St. Luke 2:48). It

would also prevent us from calling anyone “teacher” for Our Lord warned equally against the use of this title as well: “But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren” (St. Matt. 23:8).

St. Paul confirms that there are various types of fatherhood, all of which are based on the Fatherhood of God: “For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all *paternity* in heaven and on earth is named” (Eph. 3:15). Abraham is acknowledged as the father of all who have faith in numerous passages, even in the New Law:

“And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent’” (St. Luke 16:30).

“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad” (St. John 8:56).

“And Stephen said: ‘Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran’” (Acts 7:2).

“He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them” (Rom. 4:11).

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?” (St. James 2:21).

The Acts of the Apostles records that the early Christians in their prayers likewise referred to King David as their father:

“...who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things?’” (Acts 4:25).

St. Paul addressed a crowd in Jerusalem as follows:

“Brethren and fathers, hear the defense which I now make before you” (Acts 22:1).

St. Paul also applies the term “father” to himself, while on more than one occasion he writes to his own as if they were his children:

“I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:14-15).

“Here I am, ready to come to you this third time. And I will not be a burden, because I do not want what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children” (2 Cor. 12:14).

“But Timothy’s worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel” (Phil. 2:22).

“...for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you” (1 Thes. 2:11).

“To Timothy, his beloved son in faith. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from Christ Jesus our Lord” (1 Tim. 1:2).

“To Titus my beloved son, according to the common faith, grace and peace from God the Father, and from Christ Jesus our Savior” (Tit. 1:4).

“I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment” (Phile. 1:10).

In similar vein do the other Apostles themselves write:

“Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark” (1 Pet. 5:13).

“I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven on account of his name. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning” (1 John 2:12-13).

From these verses it is evident that the title “father” was used not with any sense of pride, but rather to engender tenderness and affection within spiritual relationships. The Catholic Church wishes her children to act in the same way when addressing those who partake in God’s Fatherhood through preaching the Gospel and sanctifying the faithful as “other Christs.”

The Fathers

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Trallians* 3, 1 (c. 110 AD)

“Reverence them [the deacons] as Christ Jesus, of whose place they are the keepers, even as the bishop is the representative of the Father of all things, and the presbyters are the council of God, and assembly of the apostles of Christ.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 4, 41, 2 (c. 180 AD)

“He who has received the teaching from another’s mouth is called the son of his instructor, and he is called his father.”

St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the First Epistle to Timothy* 6 (inter 392-397 AD)

“...priests are the Fathers of all, it is their duty to attend to all their spiritual children, edifying them first by a holy life, and afterwards by salutary instructions.”

St. Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels* 17 (c. 590-593 AD)

“Priests are Patres Christianorum (the Fathers of Christians).”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. III, Ch. V: In the first place, the prelates of the Church, her pastors and priests are called fathers, as is evident from the Apostle, who, writing to the Corinthians, says: *I write not these things to confound you; but I admonish you as my dearest children. For if you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers ...* It is written in Ecclesiasticus: *Let us praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation ...* Those who govern the State, to whom are entrusted power, magistracy, or command, are also called fathers; thus Naaman was called father by his servants ... The name father is also applied to those to whose care, fidelity, probity and wisdom others are committed, such as teachers, instructors, masters and guardians; and hence the sons of the Prophets called Elijah and Eliseus their father. Finally, aged men, advanced in years, we also call fathers.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1549: Through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers. In the beautiful expression of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop is *typos tou Patros*: he is like the living image of God the Father.

Canon of the Bible

Objection: “*The Catholic Church has added extra corrupt books to the Bible which were never part of the Hebrew canon!*”

This is an important accusation for Catholics to contend with, because we need to be certain that it is to the word of God and not the word of man that the Church refers when teaching and preaching to the human race, and determining vital questions of faith and morals. At the same time, it is a difficult question, because the Bible by itself does not tell us the *full* list of which books belong to it. Jesus Himself referred to “the Law and the Prophets.” This shows that He recognized, as the word of God, the Law or *Torah*, which is specifically in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible; along with “the Prophets.” In His ministry, Our Lord more specifically quoted the prophet Isaiah, the Book of Psalms, and other books of the Old Testament—but nowhere is He quoted as saying which is the full list of divinely inspired books.

The word “canon” may be defined as the catalogue or collection of books which the Church has declared to be divinely inspired, and which she regards as a rule of faith. The Old Testament books accepted widely from the very beginning of the Church, whose inspiration was never in doubt, are sometimes called *protocanonical* (protos = first). Books officially recognized some time later, and about the inspiration of which there was some uncertainty here and there, are called *deuterocanonical* (deuteros = second). The Church herself has never officially used the terminology of ‘protocanonical’ and ‘deuterocanonical.’ But we will use the terms here for convenience only. A book is simply inspired (and therefore in the canon) or not. For the Church, all the Biblical books are canonical; there is no ‘first’ or ‘second’ rank. [An *apocryphal* book is one that some have thought to be inspired by God, but which in fact is not inspired and the Church has rejected as such, regardless of how historical or orthodox it may be. The word *apocryphal* literally means to ‘hide from,’ to withhold from the public.]

“The Church accepts and venerates as inspired the 46 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New.”¹ (The O.T. has 45 books if *Jeremiah* and *Lamentations* count as one). The complete list is given in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 120, and can be found at the front of any Catholic Bible. The Protestant rejection of certain books of the Bible moved the Catholic Church to define the contents of the entire canon for the first time in 1546, in the first months of the Council of Trent. The list of books given was the same as that recognized by the Council of Florence in 1442 and other earlier lists.

At the time of Christ, there existed two collections of the Old Testament—the *Hebrew* of the Palestinian Jews and the *Greek Septuagint* of the Alexandrian Jews. The latter was a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, begun about 250 BC. According to a tradition, seventy Greek-speaking Jewish scholars performed the work. Thus the name *Septuagint*—Greek for ‘seventy.’ Due to the Hellenization of the eastern Mediterranean world after the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek became the popular and common language of that part of the world. The large Jewish communities outside of Palestine no longer spoke Hebrew or Aramaic as their first language. Therefore, it was felt necessary to produce a vernacular version of the Scriptures for them in Greek.

A dispute arises over the canon of Scripture because the Greek Septuagint contains forty-six books while the Hebrew version only thirty-nine. The additional books are *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Wisdom*, *Sirach* (*Ecclesiasticus*), *Baruch*, and *1 & 2 Maccabees*. In addition, there are extra fragments and chapters in the Septuagint versions of Esther and Daniel, namely: the seven last chapters of Esther (10:4 to 16:24); the prayer of Azarias and the canticle of the three children in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:24-90); the history of Susanna (Dan. 13); and the history of Bel and the Dragon (Dan. 14). Together, these additional books and paragraphs constitute the deuterocanonical books.

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 138.

An occasional dispute has also arisen over the canon of the New Testament. Some early Christians had doubts as to the genuineness of Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, St. James, St. Jude and Revelation.

These doubts were echoed by some of the early Protestant Reformers, notably Martin Luther. Added to this confusion, some in the early Church regarded letters such as the Epistles of Barnabas and Clement, among others, as scriptural. The oldest texts listing all of the Old Testament books date back only to the 4th century AD.

The initial objection against the deuterocanonical books is that they were not part of the Hebrew Old Testament used by Christ and the Apostles. Such a theory, however, relies on the incorrect notion that there was a fixed Old Testament canon known to all the Jews by this time. From Moses until the coming of Christ, divine revelation was communicated to the Jewish people through one of three ways: (i) the High Priests; (ii) prophets; or (iii) special men chosen by God to decide important matters in His name. Of these three, the most common were the prophets. Their extraordinary vocation, sanctity of life, and miraculous interventions in their favor testified to the divine origin of their public missions. Their testimony that a certain book was inspired was therefore a sure certification that it should be accepted as coming from God.

There are various theories as to when the Jews closed their Old Testament canon. One is that the Old Testament was closed once and for all by Ezra (400 BC). This is a view that was held by some of the Fathers and many Protestants. Such a view, however, runs into a number of difficulties. For example, the second book of Ezra contains genealogies of the High Priests continuing 150 years after the death of Ezra. In the same book is a list of the descendants of King David traced down to the sixth generation after Zerobabel, that is, down to about 300 BC. The existence of these genealogies is proof enough that the Old Testament canon remained open at least 150 years after Ezra's death.

In fact, the Old Testament canon was still in a state of flux in the time of Christ. Both the Sadducees and Samaritans, for example, accepted

only the first five books of Moses as inspired and canonical. The great Jewish historian, Josephus Flavius, provides one important hint as to why uncertainty still surrounded the Old Testament canon so late in its history:

“From the time of Artaxerxes to our own time, our history has been written down very particularly (accurately and in detail), but these books have not been considered worthy of the same credit as the books of earlier date, *because there has not been an exact succession of prophets.*”²

From these last words, it is evident that Josephus required a prophet to appear and canonize the deuterocanonical books in the same way other prophets in the past had done for the protocanonical books. The question at the time of his writing was still open. Unbeknownst to Josephus, this prophet was to be Christ speaking through His Church.

Nevertheless, Josephus makes it clear that the deuterocanonical writings enjoyed great credit among the Jews as sacred literature:

“But what credence we have given to all those books of our own nation is evident from our conduct; for, though so long a time has passed, no one has ever been so bold as to add anything to them whatsoever. *But all Jews are instinctively led, from the moment of their birth, to believe that these books contain divine oracles and to abide by them and, if need be, gladly to die for them.*”³

To emphasize this point, Josephus says that in the composition of his *Jewish Antiquities* he used exclusively “sacred writings,” yet he frequently quotes 1 Maccabees and the deuterocanonical fragments of Esther. Furthermore, the Talmud refers to Baruch as a ‘prophetic book;’ to Wisdom as a book ‘written by Solomon;’ and to the book of Sirach in quotation.

² *Contra Apion.*, I, 8.

³ *Ibid.*

In addition—with the exception of Wisdom, 2 Maccabees and possibly Tobit—all the other parts of the deuterocanon were previously written in Hebrew. This points to Palestine as the place, not only whence the texts originated, but whence the Alexandrian Jews received their belief in their inspiration and divine character. This is why there are no records of any schism or controversy on the subject between the Palestinian and Alexandrian Jews.

For Jews today, no final determination of the Old Testament was made until the so-called *Council of Jamnia (Javnah)* in 90 AD. The Jews in this gathering (and again in 118 AD), seeking to build a new focal point for their religious beliefs after the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, and in an attempt to counter the early Christians who quoted the Septuagint in support of the claims of Christ, only accepted those Old Testament books which (i) were written in Hebrew; (ii) conformed to the Torah; (iii) pre-dated the time of Ezra; and (iv) written in Palestine. The Jewish authorities now xenophobically considered the Septuagint “too gentile.” Only the Ethiopian Jews retained the Septuagint version and still do so today (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 6, p. 1147).

As to what happened at Jamnia: first, it is questionable how a small gathering of Jews could determine anything for Jews worldwide and forever, with no Prophet, no Temple and no recognizable authority when the nation had ceased to exist as a unit. Second, in any case, for Christians, Jamnia is not authoritative, as all legitimate authority had passed to the Catholic Church sixty years earlier at Pentecost. By rejecting the seven additional books of the Septuagint, Protestants therefore effectively follow the canon of the Old Testament as determined by a group of Jews at *Jamnia*. If Protestants accord Jews the authority to decide on such a matter, then why not consult Jews on whether Jesus is the Messiah? Third, digging deeper into history, we find that the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* says, “The suggestion that a particular synod of Jamnia, held c. 100 A.D., finally

settled the limits of the OT Canon, was made by H. E. Ryle;⁴ though it has had a wide currency, there is no evidence to substantiate it.”⁵

Second objection: “*The Deuterocanonical books and the Septuagint were never cited by Christ and the Apostles!*”

This objection against the deuterocanonicals is derived from the unfounded principle, “quotation equals canonicity.” It assumes that if a book was not quoted by Christ or the Apostles it is not canonical and vice versa. This argument is faulty for three reasons. First, “Jesus did many other signs ... which are not written in this book” (St John 20:30). We do not have every quotation He ever made. Second, the New Testament authors quote a number of works not in any Old Testament canon. St. Jude quotes the Book of Enoch and the Assumption of Moses, while St. Paul quotes the Ascension of Isaiah (Heb. 11:37) and pagan authors such as Epimenides, Aratus and Menander (Acts, 1 Cor. and Titus). If quotation means canonicity, then why are none of these works included by Protestants in the canon today? Third, there are protocanonical Old Testament books accepted by Protestants that are not referred to in the New Testament either, including the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Judges, 1 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Lamentations and Nahum. Should these books, in consequence, be excluded also?

The reality, however, is that there are many hundreds of quotations from, and allusions to, the Septuagint and deuterocanonical books found in the New Testament. For example, when Our Lord quoted Isaiah to condemn those whose “heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me” (St. Mark 7:6-7), He used that version of Isaiah found only in the Septuagint. Christ also alluded to Sirach 27:6 which reads “The fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree.” In St. John 10:22-36 Our Lord and the Apostles observed the key Feast of the Dedication, or *Hanukkah*, which celebrates events only recorded in 1 and 2 Maccabees. Likewise, St. Paul draws from Wisdom chapters 12 and

⁴ *The Canon of the Old Testament* (1892) p. 171 f.

⁵ *Oxf. Dict. of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, 1997, in “Jamnia” p. 861.

13 in Romans 1:19-25. Again, in Hebrews 11:35 we read of women who “received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life.” The ex-Protestant convert James Akin in his tract *Defending the Deuterocanonicals* states:

“There are a couple of examples of women receiving back their dead by resurrection in the Protestant Old Testament. You can find Elijah raising the son of the widow of Zarepheth in 1 Kings 17, and you can find his successor Elisha raising the son of the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4, but one thing you can never find—anywhere in the Protestant Old Testament, from front to back, from Genesis to Malachi—is someone being tortured and refusing to accept release for the sake of a better resurrection. If you want to find that, you have to look in the Catholic Old Testament—in the deuterocanonical books Martin Luther cut out of his Bible.”⁶

Altogether, there are over twenty allusions to the deuterocanonicals in the New Testament. In addition, there are another 335 verses in the deuterocanonicals that have a counterpart in the New Testament. They are divided as follows:⁷

St. Matthew	51	St. Mark	11	St. Luke	29
St. John	20	Acts	53	Romans	29
1 Cor.	22	2 Cor.	2	Galatians	3
Ephesians	8	Philippians	3	Colossians	1
1 Thes.	7	2 Thes.	1	1 Timothy	6
2 Timothy	5	Titus	2	Hebrews	24
St. James	23	1 Peter	5	2 Peter	4
1 John	1	St. Jude	1	Revelation	24

Furthermore, out of the 350 verses cited in the New Testament from the Old Testament, 300 are taken from the Septuagint. This extensive

⁶ James Akin, *Defending the Deuterocanonicals*, [www.ewtn.com.library](http://www.ewtn.com/library), 20/1/99.

⁷ This list is taken from pp. 800-804 of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, 27th edition (*Novum Testamentum: Graece et Latine*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft). See Appendix E.

use of the Septuagint is an informal and practical ratification of its contents by Christ and the Apostles. In doing so they embedded the Septuagint in the New Testament and made it a lasting inheritance for all Christians. Finally, the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Jewish Essene community also extensively cite passages from the Septuagint, particularly the books of Tobit and Sirach—another sign that these books were known to Palestinian Jews.

To appeal to Jewish authorities before or after Christ, in order to settle the canon definitively for Christians, is to ascribe to the custodians of a provisional Covenant a final and definitive authority for all time—which is a contradiction in terms. The Old Testament, a preparation for Christ, the Fullness of Revelation, is, by definition, closed upon the arrival of the Messiah—whether the Jews knew this or not. The Protestant appeal to Jewish practice or belief at the time of Christ attributes an exaggerated, over-arching authority to those who could not be given such authority, something which would have to wait for the commissioning of Peter and the Apostles by Our Lord.

Third objection: “*Many Fathers of the Church and even Catholic popes and saints did not accept the Deuterocanon!*”

Certainly a number of the early Fathers, especially St. Jerome, expressly rejected the deuterocanonical books as canonical Scripture. The same may be said for St. Gregory the Great. This is what they said respectively:

“Just as the Church reads Judith and Tobias and the Books of Maccabees, but does not accept them as belonging among the canonical Scriptures, so too let her read these two volumes for the edification of the people but not for the purpose of confirming the authority of the Church’s teachings.”⁸

“...we are not acting irregularly, if from the books, though not canonical, yet brought out for the edification of the Church, we bring forth testimony. Thus Eleazar in the battle smote and

⁸ St. Jerome, *On the Three Solomonian Books*, Preface (c. 398 AD).

brought down an elephant, but fell under the very beast that he killed.”⁹

First, it must be recognized that no Father *is* the Church or infallible in all he says. Pope St. Gregory the Great did not promulgate the above quotation as Church teaching, but as a private work, which he had begun before being elected Bishop of Rome. For many centuries, it remained open to all and sundry to express private opinions about the deuterocanonicals. The overwhelming majority of early Christian writers quoted from them as inspired Scripture without question, as, for example: the author of the *Didache*; St. Clement I, author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*; the author of *The Shepherd of Hermas*; St. Polycarp of Smyrna; Athenagoras of Athens; St. Irenaeus of Lyons; Clement of Alexandria; Tertullian; St. Hippolytus of Rome; Origen; St. Cyprian of Carthage; Dionysius of Alexandria and St. Augustine of Hippo. Other Fathers did not accept the deuterocanonicals as canonical but considered them ecclesiastical, and useful for edification and instruction in doctrine. These included Sts. Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil, Gregory Nazianzus and Epiphanius of Salamis. Sts. Jerome and Pope St. Gregory the Great fall into this latter category. St. Jerome calls Judith and deuterio-Esther ‘holy books’. Later Doctors and Saints also questioned the canonicity of the deuterocanon. Those who favored their inclusion included Gratian, St. Stephen Harding, Stephen Langton, St. Bonaventure, St. Albert the Great, St Thomas Aquinas; those against included Hugh of St. Victor, Nicholas of Lyra, Cardinal Ximenes and Cardinal Cajetan.

There is a distinction between *inspiration* and *canonization*, although the two are co-extensive. Inspiration precedes canonization in order of time and causality. It is only God who inspires, and this occurs simultaneously with the book’s composition. Canonization (being put into the canon) takes place after the book’s composition and presupposes inspiration. Therefore, all canonical books are known to be inspired; and now—since the final judgment of the Church—all inspired books are canonical. The canon is closed; there are no inspired books that we do not know of.

⁹ Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Moral Teachings Drawn from Job*, Bk 19, 34 (inter 578-595 AD).

Who then determines with certainty which books should form part of canonical Scripture, and by what criteria? This question applies to both the Old and New Testament canons. The Holy Spirit did not promise a revelation to any individual Christian concerning the authentic canon. Anglican Church historian, J. N. D. Kelly offers one possible solution:

“Unless a book could be shown to come from the pen of an apostle, or at least to have the authority of an apostle behind it, it was peremptorily rejected, however edifying or popular with the faithful it might be.”¹⁰

But how could early Christians know whether a book was Apostolic? Certainly not simply by a book’s claim to be so, since the Gospels were anonymous and there were numerous spurious gospels and epistles in circulation.¹¹ Protestant Scripture scholar F. F. Bruce writes that:

“[The early Fathers] had recourse to the criterion of orthodoxy ... This appeal to the testimony of the churches of apostolic foundation was developed especially by Irenaeus ... When previously unknown Gospels or Acts began to circulate ... the most important question to ask about any one of them was: What does it teach about the person and work of Christ? Does it maintain the apostolic witness to him...?”¹²

In other words, a book was reckoned as Apostolic only if its contents were consistent with the teachings of the Apostles (Apostolic paradosis, or tradition) as handed on *by the Church*. Who, however, was to make such a determination? To assert that this was the Holy Spirit alone without men who determined such is neither historical nor honest. The Holy Spirit did do all the work of inspiration and collection but it was through men who were leaders and pillars of the

¹⁰ *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. rev., Harper & Row, New York, 1978, p. 60.

¹¹ For example, the Gospel of Thomas, the Secret Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Acts of Peter, the Acts of John, etc.

¹² *The Canon of Scripture*, p. 260.

Church divinely founded, that is, the infallible voice of the successors to St. Peter and the Apostles. Thus came about the decrees of Popes St. Damasus (382 AD) and St. Innocent I (405 AD), and the Councils of Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD), which accepted as canonical the Greek Septuagint and all the books of the New Testament. In these pronouncements the Catholic has the way to certainty. Without such a voice the Protestant has a fallible collection of infallible books.

Fourth objection: *“These councils and popes made no final decision. The Council of Trent added the Deuterocanon to have Scriptural backup for its many false teachings, and in doing so contradicted the universal practice of Christianity up to that time.”*

The Council of Trent added nothing to the Old Testament. Rather it re-affirmed the ancient practice of the Apostles and the decisions of the early Church through a universal dogmatic definition.

The Council of Rome in 382 AD and the Councils of Carthage 393, 397 and 419 AD all published canons entirely identical with that of the Council of Trent. So did Pope Innocent I in 405 AD, Pope Gelasius I in 495 AD, Pope Hormisdas in 520 AD, the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 AD and the Council of Florence in 1442. Likewise, the Biblical canon of the separated Oriental Churches has always been the same as the Catholic Church—which confirms that in severing parts of the Bible, Protestants are out on an unhistorical limb.

However, all these Papal decrees and Council decisions lacked one or another important factor relating to its universal acceptance. Either they were decisions that acted only at a local level or, if they were universal, dealt with the sacredness or usefulness of the deuterocanonicals without necessarily declaring their canonicity. The Protestant Revolt, with its denials of the inspiration (and therefore canonicity) of the deuterocanonicals, provided the occasion for a universal dogmatic definition relating to their canonicity that would end all discussion. The Council of Trent’s *Decree Concerning the*

*Canonical Scriptures*¹³ solemnly canonized the lists of sacred books promulgated by all the above-mentioned councils and Popes going back to Rome 382 AD.

This Decree is fully justified, for neither the Jews before Christ, or any Church Father, Saint, Pope or Council placed the deuterocanonicals on the same level as profane or simply human literature. At the very least they were hanging, as it were, between heaven and earth for that “prophet” Josephus spoke about who would elevate them to the level of the canon. That prophet was Christ and the Apostles and their successors in the Council of Trent.

Protestants may have their own reasons for rejecting the extra seven books of the Septuagint. These additional books contain certain doctrines contrary to their teachings. For example, the second Book of Maccabees speaks of prayers for the dead in chapter 12 and the communion and intercession of saints in chapter 15. No longer constrained by the authority of the Catholic Church, Martin Luther rejected the Epistle of St. James as an “epistle full of straw...for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it”, simply because it contradicted his own theory of justification by faith alone. He said of Revelation, “I find many things defective in this book, which make me consider it neither Apostolic nor Prophetic.” He also placed Hebrews and Jude in the back of his Bible as “suspected books.” These judgments proceeded from his general arrogance, which he also exhibited in his reply when challenged for changing the text of Romans 3:28: “Thus I will have it, thus I order it, my will is reason enough ... Dr. Luther will have it so, and he is a Doctor above all Doctors in the whole of Popery.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, Luther had to admit that “We concede—as we must—that so much of what they (the Catholic Church) say is true: that the papacy has God’s word and the office of the apostles, and that we have received Holy Scriptures, Baptism, the Sacrament, and the pulpit from them. What would we know of these if it were not for them?”¹⁵

¹³ Session IV, April 8, 1546.

¹⁴ Letter to Wenceslaus Link, 1530

¹⁵ *Luther’s Works: Sermons on the Gospel of John*, 1537, Vol. 24, chaps. 14-16, p. 304.

Ultimately, only the magisterium (teaching authority) of the Church can tell us which books are inspired. There are many beautiful books, free from error, and full of truth, which are not inspired. Conversely, in the inspired books, there are many difficult and strange things which could have misled the limited mind of man into thinking they were not from God. In the final analysis, all purely human criteria are inadequate to resolve the question. Inspiration cannot be detected by investigation of the text alone; an external authority is needed to declare it is inspired. Only the authoritative voice of the Church of God can tell us which books are the word of God. So at Vatican I, the Church declared, “These books of the Old and New Testament, complete with all their parts ... as contained in the ancient Latin Vulgate edition, must be held as sacred and canonical. The Church holds them as sacred and canonical, not as having been composed by merely human labor and afterwards approved by her authority; nor merely because they contain revelation without error; but because, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God for their author, and have been transmitted to the Church as such.”¹⁶

The Fathers

***Exhortation to the Greeks* 13 (inter 260-302 AD) Author Unknown**

“Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, when he had constructed a library in Alexandria, and had filled it by collecting books from everywhere, afterwards learned that ancient histories written in Hebrew letters had been carefully preserved. Desiring to know these writings, he sent for seventy wise men from Jerusalem who knew both the Greek and the Hebrew languages, and appointed them to translate the books...He supplied attendants to care for their every need, and also to prevent their communicating with each other, so that it might be possible to know the accuracy of the translation, by their agreement one with another. When he found that the seventy men had given not only the same meaning, but even the same words, and had failed to agree with

¹⁶ Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, 1870, chapter 2.

each other by not so much as a single word, but had written the same things about the same things, he was struck with amazement, and believed that the translation had been written with divine authority.”

—*This is the Aristeian account, 3rd century BC, of the translating of the Septuagint accepted by many of the Fathers, e.g., St. Justin Martyr, St. Irenaeus of Lyons, St. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Augustine.*

Pope Damasus, *Decree on the Canon of Sacred Scripture 2 (382 AD)*

“Likewise it has been said: now indeed we must treat of the divine Scriptures, what the universal Catholic Church accepts and what she ought to shun ... Likewise Wisdom one book, Ecclesiasticus one book ... Likewise the order of the histories. Job one book, Tobias one book, Esdras two books, Esther one book, Judith one book, Maccabees two books.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Against the Letter of Mani 5, 6 (397 AD)*

“If you should find someone who does not yet believe in the Gospel, what would you answer him when he says: ‘I do not believe?’ Indeed, I would not believe in the Gospel myself if the authority of the Catholic Church did not influence me to do so.”

St. Jerome, *On the Three Solomonic Books Preface (c. 398 AD)*

“There is also the book of Jesus, son of Sirach ... and another book, Wisdom, attributed to Solomon ... the second was never known in Hebrew, for its very style bespeaks Greek eloquence; and some of the older authors affirm that it is a work of Philo the Jew. Just as the Church reads Judith and Tobias and the Books of Maccabees, but does not accept them as belonging among the canonical Scriptures, so too let her read these two volumes for the edification of the people but not for the purpose of confirming the authority of the Church’s teachings.”

St. Rufinus of Aquileia, *Explanation of the Apostles’ Creed 35 & 36 (404 AD)*

“These are the writings which the Fathers included in the canon, and on which they desired the affirmations of our faith to be based. At the same time we should appreciate that there are certain books which our

predecessors designated ‘ecclesiastical’ rather than ‘canonical.’ Thus, there is the Wisdom of Solomon, as we call it; and another Wisdom, ascribed to the son of Sirach ... The Book of Tobias belongs to the same class, as do Judith and the books of the Maccabees. In the New Testament we have the little work known as The Book of the Shepherd, or Hermas, and the book which is named The Two Ways, and The Judgment of Peter. They desired that all these should be read in the Churches, but that appeal should not be made to them on points of faith.”

St. Jerome, *Against Rufinus* 11, 33 (402 AD)

“What sin have I committed if I followed the judgment of the churches? But he who brings charges against me for relating the objections the Hebrews are wont to raise against the story of Susanna, the Son of the three Children, and the story of Bel and the Dragon, which are not found in the Hebrew volume, proves that he is just a foolish sycophant. For I wasn’t relating my own personal views, but rather the remarks that they are wont to make against us.”

Pope Innocent I, *Letter to Exsuperius, Bishop of Toulouse* 6, 7, 13 (405 AD)

“A short annotation shows what books are to be accepted as canonical. As you wished to be informed specifically, they are as follows: The five books of Moses, that is, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; and Jesus Nave, one of Judges, four of Kingdoms, and also Ruth, sixteen books of Prophets, five books of Solomon, the Psalter. Likewise, of histories, one book of Job, one book of Tobias, one of Esther, one of Judith, two of Maccabees, two of Esdras, two books of Paralipomenon. Likewise, of the New Testament: four books of Gospels, fourteen Epistles of Paul, three Epistles of John, two Epistles of Peter, the Epistle of Jude, the Epistle of James, the Acts of the Apostles, the Apocalypse of John. Others, however, which were written under the name of Matthias or of James the Less, or under the name of Peter and of John, by a certain Leucius—or under the name of Andrew, by the philosophers Nexocharis and Leonidas—or under the name of Thomas, and such others as may be, are not only to be repudiated, but, as you know, are also to be condemned.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

No reference was made in the Catechism of the Council of Trent to the Canon of the Bible; the question was addressed by the Council itself in the *Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures*, in 1546:

“But if anyone receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 120: It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books. This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes 46 books for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentations as one) and 27 for the New...

No. 121: The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, for the Old Covenant has never been revoked.

No. 124: The Word of God, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, is set forth and displays its power in a most wonderful way in the writings of the New Testament which hand on the ultimate truth of God’s Revelation. Their central object is Jesus Christ, God’s incarnate Son: his acts, teachings, Passion and glorification, and his Church’s beginnings under the Spirit’s guidance.

Celibacy of the Clergy

Objection: *“Where does it say in the Bible that Priests cannot marry? In any case, the Bible states that ‘Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh’ (Gen. 2:24).”*

God created our original parents, Adam and Eve, in marital joy and placed them in the paradise of Eden: “...and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man’” (Gen. 2:22-23). The Fall, however, disrupted not only Adam’s relationship with God but also introduced tension and disharmony into his relationship with Eve: “yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen. 3:16).

Our Lord Jesus Christ as Redeemer came to restore all things, including marriage. However, in the process of doing so, He introduced a new depth into the relationship between man and God—celibacy. It should be understood that, as true man, Christ was certainly physically capable of marrying. However, the marriage He entered into was not a marriage with one particular woman only. Through the love of a Bridegroom who was not only human but also divine, Christ came to marry spiritually all He redeemed on the Cross.

This new spiritual and celibate love highlighted for the first time that there is another state of existence awaiting humanity after our earthly pilgrimage—the state of resurrection. The love of Christ was of the kind the Just will finally and perfectly possess when they are united with God in the Beatific Vision. In heaven, there will be no bodily marriage, for our bodies will be completely absorbed in the spiritual

marriage with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity and a union of joy with the Saints.

Celibacy is not a dogma of faith but a disciplinary law designed to increase the dignity of the priesthood. In the early Church there were many married men chosen for the offices of priest and bishop, but as the numbers of single, eligible men increased, more of them were ordained. Though widely practised since the beginning of the Church, celibacy was introduced as a mandatory rule in the Western Church only during the eleventh century, as part of the reforms of Pope St. Gregory VII. The Church has the right to make (or unmake) such positive ecclesiastical laws on the basis of the power of the keys given to St. Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (St. Matt. 16:19). Unknown to many, the Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church have never changed their discipline and even to this day allow married men to become priests. However, once ordained, an Eastern Rite priest cannot marry, and only celibates can be chosen as bishops.

It was Our Lord Himself who first called some of His followers to celibacy:

“Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can” (St. Matt. 19:11-12).

“And he said to them, Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life” (St. Luke 18:29).

Our Lord clearly praises celibacy and promises to reward it abundantly when undertaken for His service and glory. The injunction to “be fruitful and multiply” in Genesis 1:28 is only a general counsel

for the human race; it is not obligatory for each individual, or Christ would have been counseling and allowing people to live in a state of disobedience, including St. John the Baptist and all the Apostles except St. Peter.

The teaching of the Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, is the same as Our Lord's. He, like Christ, led a life of celibacy and recommended it to others:

"I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. But if they are not practising self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion ... Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord ... Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a virgin marries, she does not sin" (1 Cor. 7:8-9 & 25 & 27-28).

Furthermore, he expressly states that celibacy is a higher state than the state of marriage:

"So that he who marries his betrothed does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better" (v. 38).

In the light of the words and examples of Christ and St. Paul, how can anyone say that the celibate life is not an excellent one and therefore deny souls the opportunity of following more closely the footsteps of their Master?

St. Paul also gives a practical reason why the priests of Christ should practise celibacy:

"The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided" (vv. 32-34).

As a final point, the one hundred and forty-four thousand who sing the new canticle and follow the Lamb wherever He goes in the Book of Revelation are all virgins, as St. John relates in Chapter 14.

Second objection: “*But still, is not Celibacy against nature?*”

With God all things are possible. The true celibate is filled with joy and radiates his light and warmth to all others. Celibacy is not impossible, for its inspirer and its guardian is the Holy Spirit: “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given” (St. Matt. 19:11). It is the grace of God, not purely human effort, which keeps a celibate person pure. The abuses that occur are not due to celibacy itself, but to the lack of correspondence and fidelity to God’s grace. In any case, abuse should never abolish use. Should marriage be discouraged because of the widespread prevalence of adultery and divorce? The Church is called to uphold the ideal, no matter how many may fail to live up to it.

Third objection: “*Did not St. Paul insist that a Bishop should be ‘married only once ... (and) if a man has not learned how to manage his own household, will he know how to govern God’s church’ (1 Tim. 3:2-5)?*”

This is a favorite accusation raised by the most heated anti-Catholics such as Loraine Boettner in his work *Roman Catholicism* (p. 310). In his book Boettner launches a series of attacks against so-called enforced celibacy, religious orders and the monastic system in general, together with his misinterpretation of St. Paul’s words to St. Timothy. St. Paul’s obvious intent was to advise the younger St. Timothy on the qualities to look for when choosing candidates for ordination. St. Paul could not have been insisting on marriage as a condition for ordination, for he himself—as mentioned earlier (1 Cor. 7:8)—never married.

One interpretation of St. Paul’s words is the following. If the candidate was a married man, he must not be in a second marriage which is adulterous. But if the candidate had been married and was now a widower, he was eligible, whereas a remarried man was not,

since celibacy after widowhood was more highly regarded: “since he who refrains from marriage will do better” (1 Cor. 7:38); and “the unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:32).

An alternative interpretation is that continence, or abstinence, was demanded of clerics after ordination, and therefore a second marriage was a sign that a man could not live by such a discipline.

Fourth objection: “*But St. Paul was married as well as the other Apostles according to 1 Cor. 9:5.*”

The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of 1 Corinthians 9:5 reads as follows: “Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?” (1 Cor. 9:5). However, the Greek word translated as wife here is actually *gunaika* which according to the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, 27th Ed., means a “woman,” either betrothed, married or single. The root word for *gunaika* is *gune*, which means either a woman, wife or spouse. In either case the most common meaning of these two words is simply woman, and this is the sense in which it is used in St. John 2:4 when Christ refers to His Mother as “woman”—the Greek word used here is *gune*. Also, the RSV for 1 Corinthians 9:5 does not give a translation for the word *adelphes* which is found in the original Greek of this verse and means sister. The Douai-Rheims Bible gives a better English translation of 1 Corinthians 9:5 being, “Have we not power to bring about a woman, a sister, as well as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?”

A number of the Fathers expressly denied that 1 Corinthians 9:5 inferred St. Paul had a wife (Tertullian, St. Jerome and St. Augustine). Rather, St. Paul, in this chapter, was asserting his claim to Apostleship and the privileges that attached to it. The privileges given to those who gave their all for Christ centered around being supported in their temporal needs, including food and drink gratuitously (v. 4). To be accompanied by a wife could not be a privilege of Apostleship for that is a right for all men in general. The privileges of Apostleship were exclusive and included having the attendance of holy women as Christ Himself had. Such was the custom in Judea at the time and was no

cause for scandal. These women were generally single, widows or elderly. If they were married to the prophet or apostle in question, they did not live normal marital lives but sacrificed such for the sake of their husband's mission.

To return to St. Paul himself, "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do" (1 Cor. 7:8).

Fifth objection: *"Did not St. Paul also say that 'forbidding marriage' was one of the 'doctrines of demons' (1Tim.4:1-3)?"*

St. Paul did make such a statement. However, he was not condemning the Catholic Church, but Gnostic heretics of his time and in the future who believed and taught that marriage was evil in itself. These Gnostics believed matter to be the creation of the Evil Principle and so also evil. As marriage led to the bringing into the world of human souls trapped in material bodies, it had to stand condemned. On the other hand, in addition to extolling the superiority of consecrated celibacy the Catholic Church has always regarded marriage as a sacrament of Christ and indissoluble (St. Matt. 19:6). Protestantism, as much as it extols the virtues of marriage in contrast to celibacy, preaches a form of marriage that is not strictly Christian marriage. Together with eliminating consecrated celibacy, the so-called Reformers of the sixteenth century introduced divorce (Henry VIII) and even sanctioned polygamy (Luther and the Landgrave of Hesse). Going further, since the Lambeth Conference of 1930, Protestantism also allows contraception which abrogates procreation, one of the essential purposes of marriage as established by God.

The Church forces no one into celibacy for it is a state of life that must be freely chosen by the individual in response to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Neither has anyone a right to ordination to the priesthood. However, the Church by virtue of the power of the keys has the right and the power to determine which persons may be ordained to the priesthood and under what conditions. The Catholic Church over the centuries has come to realize that in general a celibate rather than married clergy does better work for God's people. Candidates seeking ordination know the conditions well in advance and are given on

average seven years to discern God's will for them and make their final decision. Only those who know that they have been given the gift of celibacy and embrace it wholeheartedly are welcomed and ordained into the ministerial priesthood. Those who do not have the calling to celibacy are free to serve God in the other ministries available to lay people in the Church.

The Fathers

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to Polycarp* 5, 2 (c. 110 AD)

“If anyone is able to remain continent, to the honor of the flesh of the Lord, let him so remain without boasting.”

Origen, *Against Celsus* 1, 26 (c. 248 AD)

“Certain ones among the Christians, from a desire of excelling in chastity, and in order to worship God in greater purity, refrain even from physical pleasures as are in accord with the law.”

St. Ambrose of Milan, *Synodal Letter to Pope Siricius* 42, 3 (389 AD)

“They pretend to honor marriage; but what praise can be given marriage if there is no glory in virginity? Neither do we deny that marriage has been sanctified by Christ, since the divine word says: ‘The two shall become one flesh’ and one spirit. But we are born before we are brought to our goal, and the mystery of the divine operation is much more excellent than the remedy for human weakness. It is quite right that a good wife be praised, but even better that a pious virgin be preferred.”

St. John Chrysostom, *Virginity* 10 (c. 392 AD)

“That virginity is good I do agree. But that it is even better than marriage, this I do confess and if you wish, I will add that it is as much better than marriage as heaven is better than earth, as much better as the angels are better than men. And if there were any other way in which I could say it even more emphatically, I would do so.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Heresies* 82 (428 AD)

“He (Jovinian) destroyed the virginity of Mary, saying that it was lost by her parturition. He equated the merits of chaste spouses and of the faithful with the virginity of consecrated women and the continence of the male sex in holy persons choosing a celibate life.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. II, Ch. VIII: The words *increase and multiply*, which were uttered by the Lord, do not impose on every individual an obligation to marry, but only declare the purpose of the institution of marriage. Now that the human race is widely diffused, not only is there no law rendering marriage obligatory, but, on the contrary, virginity is highly exalted and strongly recommended in Scripture as superior to marriage, and as a state of greater perfection and holiness.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1618: Christ is the center of all Christian life. The bond with him takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social. From the very beginning of the Church there have been men and women who have renounced the great good of marriage to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, to be intent on the things of the Lord, to seek to please him, and to go out to meet the Bridegroom who is coming. Christ himself has invited certain persons to follow him in this way of life, of which he remains the model:

“For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it” (*Mt.* 19, 12).

No. 1619: Virginity for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven is an unfolding of baptismal grace, a powerful sign of the supremacy of the bond with Christ and of the ardent expectation of his return, a sign

which also recalls that marriage is a reality of this present age which is passing away.

No. 1620: Both the sacrament of Matrimony and virginity for the Kingdom of God come from the Lord himself. It is he who gives them meaning and grants them the grace which is indispensable for living them out in conformity with his will. Esteem of virginity for the sake of the kingdom and the Christian understanding of marriage are inseparable, and they reinforce each other:

“Whoever denigrates marriage also diminishes the glory of virginity. Whoever praises it makes virginity more admirable and resplendent. What appears good only in comparison with evil would not be truly good. The most excellent good is something even better than what is admitted to be good” (St. John Chrysostom, *De Virg.*, 10).

Crucifiction?

Objection: *“No sane person can believe the story of the crucifixion of Christ. Christ could not have died if He were God. Rather, He was only a Prophet of Allah. If the story of the Cross is disproved then the very foundation on which Christianity is based will be demolished.”*

The fastest growing religion in the world today is Islam. Ever since the Iranian revolution of 1978, Islam has experienced a militant resurgence throughout the world. Due to high levels of immigration and above-average birth rates, Islamic communities now number in the millions in many Western countries. All this comes at a time when Christian populations and practice in the West are undergoing marked decline. Consequently, for the first time since the retreat of the Ottoman Empire from Eastern Europe, Islam constitutes a direct and major challenge to Christianity.

Islam denies that Jesus was crucified and died on the Cross, as is recounted in the four Gospels of Christianity. According to the Qur’an, it was not Jesus who died on the Cross but another man put in his place:

“They denied the truth and uttered a monstrous falsehood against Mary. They declared: ‘We have put to death the Messiah Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of Allah.’ They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but they thought they did.

Those that disagreed about him were in doubt concerning his death, for what they knew about it was sheer conjecture; they were not sure that they had slain him. Allah lifted him up to His presence; He is mighty and wise. There is none among the People of the Book but will believe in him before his

death; and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them” (*Sura* 4: 157, 158).

Islamic scholars, however, are aware that Christians do not accept the Qu’ran to be the word of God and hence give no credence to any quotes from it. Consequently, to further their claims, Islamic apologists turn to the Gospels and attempt to highlight alleged contradictions and inconsistencies in order to discredit the crucifixion accounts as fabrications. The following collection of objections taken from Islamic sources is an example of such an attempt:

Objection (i): *“The Bible testifies to the fact that Jesus was known among the Jews; he used to preach and deliver sermons in the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. It was therefore unnecessary to hire a Jew for thirty pieces of silver to direct them as related in Matthew.”*

The betrayal of Jesus by Judas was neither unnecessary nor fictional; it was a tragic fulfilment of centuries-old prophecies made by Jeremiah and Zechariah (Jer. 32:7-9; Zech. 11:12-13). Jesus certainly was well known among the Jews for his public preaching, but it was not simply the ordinary Jews or Scribes and Pharisees who sought and ordered his arrest. This came at the counsel of the High Priest Caiaphas (St. John 11:49; 18:14). Caiaphas had not seen Jesus in the flesh; this came only after his arrest (St. Matt. 26:3; St. John 18:28). Consequently, he needed to employ the services of a one-time intimate associate of Jesus to secure his capture. In any case, Caiaphas did not seek Judas’ help. Judas *offered himself* to the Jews to betray Jesus (St. Matt. 26:14-15). Judas’ offer was an unexpected boost to the Jewish leadership who were perplexed as to how best to arrest Jesus and kill him without causing a tumult among the people (St. Matt. 26:5). Judas knew of the secluded garden across the Kidron Valley where Jesus often met with his disciples—the Garden of Gethsemane—a meeting place unknown to any outside the Twelve (St. John 18:2). It was only here at night and through the help of Judas that the Jewish leaders could achieve their objective of arresting Jesus *quietly*.

Objection (ii): *“There are numerous contradictions in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ arrest, trial and crucifixion. If Jesus wanted to die for the redemption of humanity then why did He ask that His Father turn away the cup of affliction from Him? Furthermore, how could the Disciples of Jesus be asleep when Jesus was suffering in Garden of Gethsemane? Such a weakness could not be spoken of righteous pupils of a pious teacher, let alone Disciples of Jesus the Prophet.”*

There is no contradiction in Jesus’ request that His Father take away the cup of suffering. Muslims find it incredible that such words could come from a believer in God, let alone a Prophet. Jesus was not simply true God, but also true man. As true God, Jesus could not suffer, yet in his humanity this was possible. Knowing the future even in His human intellect, Jesus’ humanity naturally recoiled from the sight of the immense suffering He was about to endure. Yet ultimately there was no disobedience towards His Father, for Jesus’ human will triumphantly submitted to the Divine: “nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt” (St. Matt. 26:39).

As for the Disciples, they were not exempt from the deficiencies that afflicted all men. According to the Scriptures they suffered from pride, weakness, ignorance as well as cowardice: “And he said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?’” (St. Mark 4:13). These faults manifested themselves on a number of occasions long before Jesus’ passion and persisted (as in the case of Judas’ greed) despite having the benefit of Jesus’ intimate teachings and example for three years. What transformed all of them after the death and resurrection of Jesus was the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost: “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you” (St. John 14:17).

After Pentecost, the Apostles preached the resurrected Christ with courage and conviction: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus

whom you crucified ... And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles” (Acts 2: 26 & 43). But even if they were now men of courage, the Apostles had nothing to gain from foisting a huge deception upon the world. Why would the Apostles compile written Gospels all speaking of the crucifixion of Christ that also showed themselves to be ignorant, cowardly, and denying; and why would they continue to preach the resurrected Christ even unto death? These are facts that testify to their sincerity.

Objection (iii): *“As a Prophet it was essential that Jesus always spoke up for truth and denied falsehood. How could he then have remained silent before Pilate when the truth was being challenged?”*

Everyone who heard Jesus speak and preach acknowledged His greatness with words: “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (St. Matt. 7:28-29). Pilate already had doubts about Jesus’ guilt and was skeptical of the charges brought against Him (St. Mark 10:15). He was even anxious to be rid of the whole matter, for he feared political complications. If Jesus had spoken in His own defense, He undoubtedly would have answered all the charges brought against Him and once more the Scribes and Pharisees might have “marvelled, and ... left him and went away” (St. Matt. 22:22). Jesus would have been released, He would not have been crucified and raised from the dead and we would still be in our sins: “But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?” (St. Matt. 26:54). Thoughts of Jesus avoiding crucifixion are not the thoughts of God but of man: “But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men’” (St. Matt. 16:23).

Furthermore, Our Lord told His disciples, “Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you” (St. Matt. 7:6). He may have judged that Caiaphas and Pilate did not deserve a dignified and full answer because they lacked the necessary dispositions to hear Him fruitfully.

Objection (iv): *“To believe that Jesus could cry out from the Cross, ‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me,’ is a blasphemous assertion that a Prophet lost faith in God!”*

These words have indeed been a source of much speculation over the centuries. There is great significance in Christ’s speaking them, and they are far from being blasphemous.

Whenever Jesus spoke or preached, He frequently quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures. This is not surprising, considering that the Old Testament contains over three hundred prophecies relating to the coming of the Messiah. Perhaps the most prophetic messianic part of the Old Testament is Psalm 22 (21). It is from this psalm that Jesus uttered the above words. Why did He do so? To prompt the Scribes and Pharisees before him into a certain realization. The Scribes and Pharisees generally knew the Scriptures by heart. Simply by hearing the first line of a psalm their memories should have been triggered, and recalled the whole psalm. Jesus wanted the Jews to recall the whole of Psalm 22 (21) and realize that they were fulfilling it step by step while watching and mocking Him on the Cross. However, the Jews failed to pick up the hint and thought that Jesus was just calling upon Elias.

Christians see in hindsight that Psalm 22 (21) foretold that the Messiah would be crucified and that Jesus’ crucifixion fulfilled the following verses:

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?” (v. 1).

“But I am a worm, and no man; scorned by men, and despised by the people” (v. 6).

“All who see me mock at me, they make mouths at me, they wag their heads” (v. 7).

“He committed his cause to the Lord; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, for he delights in him!” (v. 8).

“They open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion” (v. 13).

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast” (v. 14).

“My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; thou dost lay me in the dust of death” (v. 15).

“Yea, dogs are round about me; a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet” (v. 16).

*“I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me” (v. 17).
“They divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots” (v. 18).*

Jesus' words from the Cross can also be understood in a mystical sense. For love of man, Jesus of His own free will chose to place no human limit on His suffering, pouring out His Blood to the very last drop. It is possible to speculate that Jesus also endured and offered up a suffering that would have been greater than any other—the sensation in His human intellect of total abandonment even by His Father in heaven. Of course, God never abandons any of His servants, let alone His only Son. Nevertheless, in the history of the Church, a number of the most elevated Saints endured such a sensation of abandonment in the so-called 'dark night of the soul.' The purpose of such is to purify the soul of every vestige of self-love so that it loves God for God's sake alone, not for any consolation He may confer. For Jesus, it would have been not an opportunity for total purification but a demonstration of the greatest love for His Father at a time when all things for Him seemed humanly lost. His certain knowledge of the Father's love and unity with Himself is evident in His dying words, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (St. Luke 23:46).

The Fathers

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 1, 1 (c. 110 AD)

“...you are confirmed in love by the Blood of Christ, firmly believing in regard to our Lord that He is truly of the family of David according to the flesh, and God’s Son by the will and power of God, truly born of a Virgin, baptized by John so that all justice might be fulfilled by Him, in the time of Pontius Pilate and Herod the Tetrarch truly nailed in the flesh on our behalf...”

***Letter of Barnabas* 7, 2 (c. 117-132 AD)**

“If, then, the Son of God, being the Lord and destined to judge the living and the dead, suffered so that His being wounded might make us live, let us believe that the Son of God could not suffer, except for our sake. Furthermore, when he was crucified He was given gall and sour wine to drink ... The Lord commanded this because He Himself was about to offer the vessel of His spirit as a sacrifice for our sins, so that the type established in Isaac, who was offered on the altar, might be fulfilled.”

St. Hippolytus of Rome, *The Antichrist* 4 (c. 200 AD)

“Although He was without flesh, the Son of God took on flesh from the Holy Virgin, like a bridegroom putting on a robe, which He wove for Himself in the sufferings of the cross, so that by uniting our mortal body to His own power, and mixing the corruptible with the incorruptible and the weak with the strong, He might save man who was perishing. The beam of the loom, therefore, is the suffering of the Lord which He endured on the cross.”

St. Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentaries on the Psalms* [On Ps. 54 (53)] (c. 365 AD)

“We have declared repeatedly and without cease that it was the only-begotten Son of God who was crucified, and that He was condemned to death: He that is eternal by reason of the nature which is His by His birth from the eternal Father; and it must be understood that He underwent the passion not from any natural necessity, but for the sake of the mystery of man’s salvation; and that His submitting to the passion was not from His being compelled thereto, but of His own will ... God suffered, therefore, because He voluntarily submitted Himself

to the passion.”

St. Gregory of Elvira, *Homilies on the Books of Sacred Scripture* 2 (c. 365-385 AD)

“The tree of the cross, clearly represents an image which to some seems as hard and rough as wood, because on it the Lord was hung so that our sins, which came to us from the tree of transgression, might be punished by being affixed—again, it is through the same Man—to the tree of the cross ... To others it stands for shade and refreshment, because believers are protected from the heat and rigor of persecution, and there refreshed.”

Pope Leo I, *Letter to the Monks of Palestine* 124, 3 (453 AD)

“What hope, then, do they, who deny the truth of the human substance in the body of our Savior, leave for themselves in the efficacy of this sacrament? Let them tell by what sacrifice they have been reconciled; let them tell by what blood they have been redeemed. Who is He that gave Himself up on our behalf, as an oblation and victim to God in an odor of sweetness? And what sacrifice was there ever that was more sacred than that which the true High Priest placed upon the altar of the cross by the immolation of His own flesh?”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. I, Ch. V: Many other reasons which the Fathers have discussed in detail might be adduced to show that it was fit that our Redeemer should suffer death on the cross rather than in any other way. But, as the pastor will show, it is enough for the faithful to believe that this kind of death was chosen by the Savior because it appeared better adapted and more appropriate to the redemption of the human race; for there certainly could be none more ignominious and humiliating. Not only among the Gentiles was the punishment of the cross held accursed and full of shame and infamy, but even in the Law of Moses the man is called accursed that hangeth on a tree.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 601: The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of “the righteous one, my Servant” as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin. Citing a confession of faith that he himself had “received,” St. Paul professes that “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.” In particular Jesus’ redemptive death fulfils Isaiah’s prophecy of the suffering Servant. Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God’s suffering Servant. After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles.

No. 609: By embracing in his human heart the Father’s love for men, Jesus “loved them to the end,” for “greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men. Indeed, out of love for his Father and for men, whom the Father wants to save, Jesus freely accepted his Passion and death: “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” Hence the sovereign freedom of God’s Son as he went out to his death.

No. 617: The Council of Trent emphasizes the unique character of Christ’s sacrifice as “the source of eternal salvation” and teaches that “his most holy Passion on the wood of the cross merited justification for us.” And the Church venerates his cross as it sings: “Hail, O Cross, our only hope.”

The Divinity of Jesus Christ

Objection: “*Jesus Christ was no doubt the Son of God, but not God the Son!*”

The modern-day denial of Christ’s divinity has its roots in the Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries AD. Of the many heresies that have beset the Church one of the most devastating was *Arianism*. During the mid-third century, Lucian of Antioch began teaching the inferiority and subordination of the Son to the Father. Decades later, this teaching was picked up and developed by Arius of Alexandria. Using the analogy of human fatherhood, Arius taught that a father always pre-dates his son and thus there is a time when the son was not. Applying this to the Father and the Word, Arius coined the phrase, “There was a time once when the Word was not.” Therefore, Christ was not co-eternal and not of the same substance as the Father. Rather, He was only a creature and son of God by virtue of being “like in substance” to the Father.

Arianism was to sweep across the Christian world at a time when the Church had just been freed from official Roman persecution. The Arian whirlwind caught all virtually by surprise. As St. Jerome declared, “The world awoke and found itself Arian.” The number of bishops who resisted was only a handful. One of them was St. Athanasius of Alexandria.

With Arianism causing contention and strife throughout the Empire, the Emperor Constantine agreed to resolve the crisis by summoning a general council of bishops to meet at Nicaea commencing May 20, 325. At this Council, the bishops condemned Arianism and proclaimed Christ as *homo-ousios* (consubstantial), that is, “as the same substance” as the Father.

Though condemned, Arianism lingered on for centuries to come. Arius himself died an impious death in 336 and St. Athanasius continued the struggle in the face of multiple exiles and excommunications until 373. Nevertheless, the Church and the world had been preserved from a gross heresy and recovered to meet the challenge of another and more aggressive threat to Christ's divinity—namely Islam.

Modern-day Arians such as the Jehovah's Witnesses claim an affinity with Arius. They assert that he was one example of the earlier Witnesses who have been "on earth in every period of human history." Such a claim, however, is scarcely accurate and borders on dishonesty. While Arius taught that Christ was only a creature, he believed Him to be fully man. Like Arius, the Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ is the created and adopted Son of God but unlike him, hold that he is actually the Archangel Michael in human form. This is a teaching they rarely reveal early on to prospective converts. Before coming into the world clothed in human flesh, they say Christ had the singular privilege of sharing in the creation of all other creatures with Jehovah. In fact, Christ is the only creature directly created by Jehovah.

Numerous passages in Sacred Scripture provide evidence of Christ's divinity:

"...a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6).

The term "mighty God" in this passage is derived from the Hebrew *El Gibbor* which literally means "God the mighty." The Witnesses try to get around this verse by claiming that it speaks of Christ only as "mighty God" and not as "Almighty God," which is the term usually given to Jehovah. Christ is not God in the supreme sense, but only a god in the same sense the angels were called gods for their superhuman powers (Job 1:6). However, the alleged distinction between "mighty God" and "Almighty God" does not always hold, for

God Himself is called mighty on many occasions (Gen. 49:24; Ps. 50 [49]:1; Ps. 132 [131]:2 & 5; Is. 10:21; Jer. 32:18).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us” (St. John 1:1-14).

The Witnesses have a great preoccupation with this passage, devoting four pages of footnotes in their *New World Translation* of the Bible to explain it away. They render the last part of St. John 1:1 to read “and the Word was a god.” Again the Witnesses try to argue that Christ was only “a god” in the same sense mentioned above. However, as the original Greek has the definite article (*ho*-the) preceding the word Word (*Logos*) and no article preceding God (*Theos*), one would naturally translate the verse as “and the Word was God.” The Gospel of John is devoted to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. If the Apostle meant to say in the prologue that Christ is only “a god”—one god among many—he would destroy the purpose of the entire Gospel that follows.

“Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am” (St. John 8:58).

Scholars have always understood Christ’s use of “*I am*” as a claim to divinity, identifying Himself with the God of Moses: “*I am who am.*” The implication is obvious—Christ pre-exists all the Prophets and the Patriarchs, even all humanity itself. He belongs to a different order of being, the eternal self-existence of God. For the Witnesses, as Christ simply said in St. John 8:58 “*I am*” and not “*I am who am*”, He was only intending to say, “I existed before Abraham was born.” They accept Christ’s pre-existence but as the “first-born of all creatures” only, not as God. However, “*I am*” by itself is often used in the Old Testament to refer to God, for example, in Is. 43:25; 45:18; 48:12. This is how the Jews understood Him, that is why they “took up stones to throw at him” (8:59).

“The Father and I are one” (St. John 10:30).

Christianity has always understood these words of Christ to refer to the unity of being that exists between the Father and the Son. For the

Witnesses, these words simply indicate the “moral unity of will, purpose and activity” existing between Jehovah God and His first-born creature. Such an assertion, however, does not hold weight in light of the Greek word used for “one,” namely *hen*, which is neuter and means “one thing” or “one being”—“I and the Father are *one being*.” Again, this is how the Jews understood Him, taking up stones once more to stone Him ... “because you, being a man, make yourself God” (10:31, 33).

In this same chapter we read the following passage:

“Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your law, I said, you are gods?’ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’” (St. John 10:34-36).

The Witnesses often seize upon this verse and claim that Christ is comparing Himself to the judges of the Old Testament in the following sense: If they could be given the title of “gods” (Ps. 82 [81]:1-6, 8) despite their injustice, then how much more did He deserve to be called “Son of God” due to His righteousness. There is an argument here from the lesser to the greater, but it runs more like this: if the judges were called “gods” because they were vehicles of the word of God, how much more permissible is it then to call Him who is the actual Word of God, “Son of God”?

“My Lord and my God” (St. John 20:28).

These clear and unequivocal words of St. Thomas the Apostle pose the greatest difficulty for the Witnesses. One argument of theirs is that St. Thomas was directing his words as an exclamation of astonishment to God rather than to Christ. Furthermore, they state that even if they were directed to Christ, St. Thomas’ words have to be “harmonized with the rest of the Scriptures,” meaning re-interpreted according to the Witnesses’ pre-conceived doctrines.

The following passages also speak of Christ’s divinity:

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, His name shall be called Emmanuel (i.e., God with us)” (Is. 7:14).

“...to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen” (Rom. 9:5).

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited” (Phil. 2:5-6).

“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9).

“But of the Son he says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom” (Heb. 1:8).

Jehovah’s Witnesses accept the term “Son of God” for Christ but alter its meaning to suit their theology. Son of God becomes “Son by adoption;” “Only Son” becomes “only created Son.” No such qualifiers are actually used in reference to Christ’s Sonship in the New Testament. On the contrary, Christians are urged to acknowledge the true Sonship of Christ: “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:15). Our Lord constantly applied to Himself the supreme title of “Son of God,” and accepted it from His followers without question:

(St. Peter) *“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (St. Matt. 16:16).*

(The High Priest) *“I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus said to him, You have said so” (St. Matt. 26:63-64).*

(St. John the Baptist) *“Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ... And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God” (St. John 1:29-34).*

(St. Martha) *“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world”* (St. John 11:27).

Not only did Our Lord take the title of Son of God, but also He assumed all the functions, acts, and the necessary and supreme attributes of God:

“The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands” (St. John 3:35).

“...whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise” (St. John 5:19).

“If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (St. John 10:37-38).

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me” (St. John 14:1).

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied. Jesus said to him, Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father ... Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?” (St. John 14:6-10).

“I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it” (St. John 14:13-14).

“Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (St. John 14:23).

“All that the Father has is mine” (St. John 16:15).

The following points shed more light on the divine attributes of Christ:

- Yahweh was called “the God of glory” (Ps. 29 [28]:3); the resurrected Christ is “Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8).
- God is Lord of Lords (Deut. 10:17); Christ is Lord of Lords (Rev.17:14).
- God is the only savior (Is. 43:11); Christ is savior (St. Luke 2:11).
- God is the source of living water (Jer. 17:13); Christ is the source of living water (St. John 4:14).
- The Lord’s thoughts cannot be directed (Is. 40:13); so too, no one can instruct the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).
- The Lord God owns earth and all its fullness (Ps. 24 [23]:1); likewise does the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 10:26).
- God never changes (Ps. 102 [101]:26-27); Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8).
- God is the light (Ps. 27 [26]:1); Christ is the light of the world (St. John 8:12).
- God is the searcher of hearts and minds (Jer. 17:10); Christ is He who searches mind and heart (Rev. 2:23).
- God will come with all the holy ones (Zech. 14:5); Christ will come with all the saints (1 Thes. 3:13).

Furthermore, Christ is Lord of the Sabbath (St. Matt. 12:8); is eternal (Heb. 1:10); is omniscient (St. Luke 6:8); and is the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:17).

While others worked miracles in the name of God, Christ performed miracles as Supreme Master:

“Little girl, I say to you, arise” (St. Mark 5:41).

“Young man, I say to you, rise” (St. Luke 7:14).

“Lazarus, come out” (St. John 11:43).

As God, He forgives sins:

“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins ... Stand up, take your bed and go to your home” (St. Matt. 9:6).

And in the case of St. Mary Magdalene, He forgives all her sins against God as a debt contracted towards Himself.

Christ also declared that He would rise again by His own power:

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (St. John 2:19).

“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again” (St. John 10:18).

Final objections against the divinity of Christ are raised, based on St. John 14:28 and Colossians 1:15-16. These two verses respectively say, “the Father is greater than I”; “the first-born of all creation.” Together, they imply that Christ is only a creature and inferior to the Father. With respect to St. John 14:28, some early Christian writers understood the text in the sense that as man, but not as God, Christ is inferior to the Father. It could also mean that the Father is greater than the Son simply for having sent the Son into the world. This is gathered from the fact that the Greek word used here for “greater”—*meizon*—is a term normally used to denote comparisons of position rather than quality or nature. So, some other early Fathers said the phrase, “greater than I”, means “my origin”—since the Son has His origin in

the Father. Reading John 13:1-3 together with John 14:28, it becomes evident that this is a reasonable interpretation in the context.

As for “the first-born of all creation,” St. Paul was only meaning to point out the pre-eminence of Christ over all creation. St. Paul tells us in the same verse that in Christ “*all things* were created through him and for him” (v. 16)—he does not say “*all other things*.” Furthermore, by calling Christ the “image of the invisible God” in the immediately previous sentence (v. 15), St. Paul is calling to mind Christ’s essential likeness to God and hence His divine nature.

The Fathers

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans Address* (c. 110 AD)

“Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church that has found mercy in the greatness of the Most High Father and in Jesus Christ, His only Son: to the Church beloved and enlightened after the love of Jesus Christ, our God, by the will of Him that has willed everything which is: to the Church also which holds the presidency in the place of the country of the Romans ... To those who are united in flesh and in spirit by every commandment of His, who are filled with the grace of God without wavering, and who are filtered clear of every foreign stain, I wish an unalloyed joy in Jesus Christ, our God.”

St. Melito of Sardes, *Fragment in Anastasius of Sinai 13* (c. 177 AD)

“The activities of Christ after His Baptism, and especially His miracles, gave indication and assurance to the world of the Deity hidden in His flesh. Being God and likewise perfect man, He gave positive indications of His two natures: of His Deity, by the miracles during the three years following after His Baptism; of His humanity, in the thirty years which came before His Baptism, during which, by reason of His condition according to the flesh, he concealed the signs of His Deity, although He was the true God existing before the ages.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies 3, 19, 1* (c. 180 AD)

“Nevertheless, what cannot be said of anyone else who ever lived, that He is Himself in His own right God and Lord and Eternal King and

Only-begotten and Incarnate Word, proclaimed as such by all the Prophets and by the Apostles and by the Spirit Himself, may be seen by all who have attained to even a small portion of the truth. The Scriptures would not have borne witness to these things concerning Him, if, like everyone else, He were mere man. But that He had in Himself what no other ever had, that pre-eminent generation by the Most High Father; and that He also experienced that pre-eminent birth from a Virgin,—the divine Scriptures testify to both in His regard.”

Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 1, 7, 1 (ante 200 AD)

“This Word, then, the Christ, the cause of both our being at first (for He was in God) and of our well-being, this very Word has now appeared as man, He alone being both, both God and man—the Author of all blessings to us; by whom we, being taught to live well, are sent on our way to life eternal. For, according to that inspired apostle of the Lord, the grace of God which brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for the blessed hope, and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

St. Athanasius, *Letter Concerning the Decrees of the Council of Nicaea* 20 (c. 350-351 AD)

“The generation of the Son from the Father is otherwise than that which accords with the nature of men; and He is not only like, but is in fact inseparable from the substance of the Father. He and the Father are indeed one, as He did say Himself; and the Word is ever in the Father and the Father in the Word, as is the way of radiance in relation to light. The term itself indicates this; and the Council, so understanding the matter, did well, therefore, when it wrote *homoousios* [consubstantial], so that it might defeat the perverseness of the heretics, while proclaiming that the Word is other than created things.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. I, Ch. III: “Our Lord” ... this name applies to both natures, rightly is He to be called our Lord. For as He, as well as the Father, is the eternal God, so is He Lord of all things equally with the Father; and as He and the Father are not the one, one God, and the other, another God, but one and the same God, so likewise He and the Father are not the one, one Lord, and the other, another Lord.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 461: Taking up St. John’s expression, “The Word became flesh,” the Church calls “Incarnation” the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it. In a hymn cited by St. Paul, the Church sings the mystery of the Incarnation:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

No. 464: The unique and all together singular event of the Incarnation of the Son of God does not mean that Jesus Christ is part God and part man, nor does it imply that he is the result of a confused mixture of the divine and the human. He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. During the first centuries, the Church had to defend and clarify this truth of faith against the heresies that falsified it.

No. 469: The Church thus confesses that Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother:

“What he was, he remained and what he was not, he assumed,” sings the Roman Liturgy. And the Liturgy of St.

Defend the Faith!

John Chrysostom proclaims and sings: “O only-begotten Son and Word of God, immortal being, you who deigned for our salvation to become incarnate of the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, you who without change became man and were crucified, O Christ our God, you who by your death have crushed death, you who are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!” (Troparion “*O monogenes*”).

Fasting

Objection: *“Fasting is pointless. When one has faith it is useless for salvation or sanctification! And doesn’t St. Paul say, ‘For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ (Rom. 14:17).”*

Most Evangelical and Fundamentalist Protestants generally see no value in fasting, due to their doctrine of justification by faith alone. It is sufficient simply to accept Christ as one’s “personal Lord and Savior” to be “saved” and have one’s sinful nature “covered up” by the merits of Christ. In addition, in accord with the doctrine of “total depravity,” every action of man is considered sinful, including fasting. For other Protestants, though, fasting does have value, not as a means of sanctification but by way of appeasing God’s wrath and deterring His just chastisements.

In contrast, the Catholic Church teaches that fasting is a meritorious action which not only deters God’s wrath but goes to sanctify the Christian and assist him to achieve the ascendancy of the spirit over the flesh. As with all meritorious actions, fasting increases the life of sanctifying grace in the soul (“participants of the divine nature”: 2 Pet. 1:4) and remits temporal punishment due to sin.

Numerous passages both in the Old and New Testaments speak of fasting and its value for the People of God:

“Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning” (Joel 2:12).

“Prayer is good when accompanied by fasting, almsgiving, and righteousness” (Tob. 12:8)

“And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth” (Jon. 3:5).

“But as for me, when they were sick, I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting. I prayed with head bowed on my bosom” (Ps. 35 [34]:13).

“Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes” (Dan. 9:3).

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself spoke about fasting, giving us a more perfect understanding of how it should be practised:

“But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (St. Matt. 6:17-18).

“Jesus said to them, The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them ... As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day” (St. Mark 2:19-20).

Christ Himself fasted forty days and forty nights in preparation before beginning His public mission:

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry” (St. Matt. 4:1).

Fasting, together with prayer, has from the beginning of the Church’s history been part of her ceremonial worship:

“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:2-3).

“And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe” (Acts 14:23).

Fasting gives added strength to the Apostle and the servant of Christ against the powers of the Evil One:

“Then came the disciples to Jesus secretly, and said: Why could not we cast them out? Jesus said to them: Because of your unbelief... But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting” (St. Matt. 17:17-20).

Fasting is a sign of the suffering and penitential Christian:

“But in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings” (2 Cor. 6:4-5).

Second objection: “Isn’t the Catholic practice of abstaining from meat on Fridays one of the ‘doctrine of demons’ Paul spoke about to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:1-5)?”

The full text of St. Paul’s words of warning reads as follows: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and enjoin *abstinence from foods* which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

The Catholic Church for several centuries enjoined abstinence from meat on Fridays. Since 1966, Friday is rather designated as a “day of penance;” abstinence from meat is only compulsory on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Nevertheless, it is still the common practice of many faithful Catholics to abstain from meat on Fridays. On other days, they eat meat as other people do.

That St. Paul had in mind the Catholic practice of abstaining from meat on Fridays when he pronounced the above prophecy is out of the question, particularly in view of the well-known practice of the Prophet Daniel: “In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, *no meat* or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks” (Dan. 10:2-3). The Catholic practice is similar in essence to Daniel’s, who undertook a temporary abstinence of meat for penitential reasons. Daniel was hardly one to practise a “doctrine of demons.”

Rather, St. Paul was speaking of those Gnostic heretics, such as the Manicheans and Albigensians, who believed that matter was the creation of the Evil Principle and hence intrinsically evil. Consequently, they believed that the eating of meat was also evil and abstained from it perpetually. This view is akin to those of modern-day vegetarian “New Agers” and Seventh Day Adventists, who still insist that pork, oysters, prawns, rabbits are forbidden meats. St. Paul saw no difficulty with the idea of giving up meat, even permanently, so long as one did not regard the eating of it as intrinsically evil. St. Paul, for example, advised giving meat up permanently if it would prevent the sin of scandal (1 Cor. 8:13) and praised the man who abstains in the Lord’s honor: “He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God” (Rom. 14:6).

Contrary to Gnosticism, the Catholic Church regards the eating of meat to be good and healthy, even a delicacy, which is why she recommends that it be given up, but only temporarily. By abstaining from something good the Christian learns to cultivate a spirit of humility and sacrifice, as well as exercising the spiritual discipline of subduing the wayward desires of the flesh, that is, the unruly inclinations of our lower nature. Fasting raises our hearts and minds to the contemplation of heavenly things, aiding us to fulfil the universal call to sanctity. Conversely, the glutton is equated with being an enemy of Christ’s Cross (Phil. 3:18).

Third objection: *“Catholic fasts are a farce. As the Presbyterian minister Loraine Boettner says, ‘Rome’s fasts are purely*

arbitrary and mechanical, not spiritual ... True fasting is a spiritual exercise usually connected with prayer, repentance and meditation' (Roman Catholicism, p. 276)."

To outsiders, the days of fasting and abstinence appointed by the Church and their accompanying rules may seem arbitrary and without Biblical foundation. Nevertheless, Christ bestowed upon the Church power to legislate, binding and loosing laws for the spiritual benefit of her children (St. Matt. 16:18; 18:18). These are not simply "man-made commandments" as some claim, but the obligatory commands of the Church of Christ: "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (St. Luke 10:16). Not only has the Church the power to make laws regulating fasting, she also has the moral responsibility to do so, setting down balanced standards in order to avoid extremes of laxity or excess. The Church in this regard acts purely as a mother, guiding her children and ensuring that all within her fold are capable of undertaking appropriate levels of fasting, taking into account factors such as the health and age of her children as well as the environment in which they live.

No one doubts that true fasting must be spiritual and connected with prayer, repentance and meditation. In this regard Boettner unwittingly echoes the Catholic Church's own teaching and the practice of her saints and numerous millions of other faithful throughout the ages. However, he falls into the common error of attacking abuse while claiming to be attacking actual Catholic teaching. Let us abolish abuse, while remembering at the same time that abuse does not abolish use.

The Fathers

The Didache 7, 1; 8, 1 (c. 90-150 AD)

"Before the Baptism, let the one baptizing and the one to be baptized fast, as also any others who are able. Command the one to be baptized to fast beforehand for one or two days ... Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies: fast for those who persecute you ... Do not

let your fasts be with the hypocrites. They fast on Monday and Thursday; but you will fast on Wednesday and Friday.”

Shepherd of Hermas Parable 5, 3, 2 (c. 140-150 AD)

“First of all, be on your guard against every evil word, and every evil desire, and purify your heart from all the vanities of this world. If you guard against these things, your fasting will be perfect. And you will do also as follows. Having fulfilled what is written, in the day on which you fast you will taste nothing but bread and water; and having reckoned up the price of the dishes of that day which you intended to have eaten, you will give it to a widow, or an orphan, or to some person in want, and thus you will exhibit humility of mind, so that he who has received benefit from your humility may fill his own soul, and pray for you to the Lord. If you observe fasting, as I have commanded you, your sacrifice will be acceptable to God, and this fasting will be written down; and the service thus performed is noble, and sacred, and acceptable to the Lord.”

Tertullian, The Demurrer Against the Heretics 19, 1 (inter 200-206 AD)

“Likewise, in regard to days of fast, many do not think they should be present at the sacrificial prayers, because their fast would be broken if they were to receive the Body of the Lord ... Will not your fast be more solemn if, in addition, you have stood at God’s altar?”

St. Jerome, Epistle to Furia 54, 8 (394 AD)

“The apostle macerates his body and brings it into subjection to the soul lest what he has preached to others he should himself fail to keep; and can a mere girl whose passions are kindled by abundance of food afford to be confident of her own chastity?”

St. Ambrose of Milan, Epistle to the Church of Vercellae 63, 17 (396 AD)

“Who then are these new teachers who reject the merit of fasting? Is it not the voice of heathen who say, ‘Let us eat and drink?’ whom the Apostle well ridicules, when he says: ‘If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me if the dead rise not?’ ... And, consequently, if all hope of the resurrection is

lost, let us eat and drink, let us not lose the enjoyment of things present, who have none of things to come. It is then for them to indulge in meats and drinks who hope for nothing after death.”

St. Leo I, *Sermon 12, 4* (inter 440-461 AD)

“This threefold round of duty, dearly beloved, brings all other virtues into action: it attains to God’s image and likeness and unites us inseparably with the Holy Spirit. Because in prayer faith remains steadfast, in fastings life remains innocent, in almsgiving the mind remains kind. On Wednesday and Friday therefore let us fast: and on Saturday let us keep vigil with the most blessed Apostle Peter, who will deign to aid our supplications and fast and alms with his own prayers through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. IV, Ch. VI: To prayer let us unite fasting and almsdeeds. Fasting is most intimately connected with prayer. For the mind of one who is filled with food and drink is so borne down as not to be able to raise itself to the contemplation of God, or even to understand what prayer means.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1434: The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, *fasting, prayer, and almsgiving*, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: efforts at reconciliation with one’s neighbor, the intercession of the Saints, and the practice of charity “which covers a multitude of sins.”

No. 2043: ...The fourth precept (“You shall observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church”) ensures the times of ascesis and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.

Guardian Angels

Objection: *“As for guardian angels, they are a belief imported into Catholicism from the pagan Assyrians and Babylonians. God can help us without them.”*

God can certainly help us without the aid of any intermediary or creature. Nevertheless, that He wills to use intermediaries is evident in the Scriptures. It is Church teaching that every person has allotted to them a Guardian Angel by God. It is clear from both the Old and New Testaments that angels are God’s ministers who carry out His will, and at appointed times are allotted special commissions to intervene in the affairs of mankind.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas (S.T., I, q. 112, a. 4) only the lower five choirs of angels are sent to us as guardians. Guardian Angels can act upon our senses and our imaginations, and, through these faculties, upon our wills. Not only the baptized, but every person, including children, receives a Guardian Angel, who remains with us even in heaven. In the opinion of many Fathers and other holy writers every country, city, town and village also has a Guardian Angel. Altars, churches, parishes, dioceses and religious institutions do likewise. Even the Antichrist will have a Guardian Angel, who will restrain him from committing otherwise greater evils.

The good offices performed by the Guardian Angels on our behalf can be summarized as follows:¹

- (i) They preserve us from many unknown dangers to soul and body.
- (ii) They defend us against the temptations of evil spirits.

¹ See: The Benedictine Convent of Perpetual Adoration, *The Guardian Angels—Our Heavenly Companions*, TAN Books, 1996, pp. 8-10, 16.

- (iii) They inspire in us holy thoughts and prompt us to deeds of virtue.
- (iv) They warn us of upcoming spiritual dangers.
- (v) They admonish us when we have sinned.
- (vi) They unite their prayers with ours and offer them up to God.
- (vii) They defend us at the hour of death against the last attacks of the demons.
- (viii) They console the souls in purgatory and conduct them to heaven after they have expiated their sins.

In Scripture, the doctrine of Guardian Angels is given no special consideration, but, is rather taken for granted:

“The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground ... When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be consumed in the punishment of the city” (Gen. 19:1-15).

“Behold, I send an angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared. Give heed to him and hearken to his voice, do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him” (Exod. 23:20-21).

“But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; see, my angel shall go in front of you. Nevertheless, when the day comes for punishment, I will punish them for their sin” (Exod. 32:34).

“The prayer of both was heard in the presence of the glory of the great God. And Raphael was sent to heal the two of them” (Tob. 3:16-17).

“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them” (Ps. 34:7 [33:8]).

“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways” (Ps. 91[90]:11).

“But the prince (angel) of the kingdom of Persia opposed me twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia, and have come to help you understand what is to happen to your people at the end of days. For there is a further vision for those days ... But I am to tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is no one with me who contends against these princes except Michael, your prince” (Dan. 10:13-14; 21).

“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people” (Dan. 12:1).

“When Maccabeus and his men got word that Lysias was besieging the strongholds, they and all the people, with lamentations and tears, prayed the Lord to send a good angel to save Israel” (2 Macc. 11:6).

In the New Testament the doctrine of Guardian Angels is stated more precisely:

“Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven” (St. Matt. 18:10).

“Then the high priest took action; he and all who were with him (that is, the sect of the Sadducees), being filled with jealousy, arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life” (Acts 5:17-20).

“Then Peter came to himself and said, Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting. As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. When he knocked at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. On recognizing Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, You are out of your mind! But she insisted that it was so. They said, It is his angel” (Acts 12:11-15).

“Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” (Heb. 1:14).

Nor does the ministry of the angels cease at death:

“The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom” (St. Luke 16:2).

St. Michael was the special protector of Israel and is now invoked as the guardian of the Christian faithful, against the wickedness and snares of Satan. The Church sets aside October 2 to honor the Guardian Angels. How we should love our Guardian Angels and invoke their aid all the days of our lives!

“Angel of God, my guardian dear,
to whom God’s love commits me here,
ever this day be at my side,
to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.”

The Fathers

The Shepherd of Hermas Parable 5, 6, 2 (c. 140-155 AD)

“God planted the vineyard,” (the shepherd) said: “that is, He created the people, and gave them over to His Son. And the Son appointed the

angels to guard over them; and He Himself cleansed them of their sins, laboring much and undergoing much toil.”

Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 6, 17, 157, 4 (ante 217 AD)

“The thoughts of virtuous men are produced by divine inspiration. The soul is disposed in the way it is, and the will of God is conveyed to human souls, by special divine ministers who assist in such service. For regiments of angels are distributed over nations and cities; and perhaps some even are assigned to particular individuals.”

Origen, *Homilies on Luke* Hom. 12 (inter 233-254 AD)

“To every man there are two attending angels, the one of justice and the other of wickedness. If there be good thoughts in our heart, and if righteousness be welling up in our soul, it can scarcely be doubted that an angel of the Lord is speaking to us. If, however, the thoughts of our heart be turned to evil, an angel of the Devil is speaking to us.”

St. Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentaries on the Psalms* On Ps. 129 (130) 7 (c. 365 AD)

“We recall that there are many spiritual powers, to whom the name angels is given, or presidents of churches. There are, according to John, angels of the Churches in Asia. And there were, as Moses bears witness, when the sons of Adam were separated, bounds appointed for the peoples according to the number of the angels. And, as the Lord teaches, there are for little children, angels who see God daily. There are, as Raphael told Tobias, angels assisting before the majesty of God, carrying to God the prayers of suppliants. Mention is made of all this, because you might wish to understand these angels as the eyes, or the ears, or the hands, or the feet of God ... It is not the nature of God, but the weakness of men, which requires their service. For they are sent for the sake of those who will inherit salvation. God is not unaware of anything that we do; but in our weakness we are impoverished for a minister of spiritual intercession in the matter of beseeching and propitiating.”

St. Basil the Great, *Against Eunomius* 3, 1(c. 364 AD)

“All the angels, having but one appellation, have likewise among themselves the same nature, even though some of them are set over

nations, while others of them are guardians to each one of the faithful.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. IV, Ch. IX: By God’s providence Angels have been entrusted with the office of guarding the human race and of accompanying every human being in order to preserve him from serious dangers ... our heavenly Father has placed over each of us an Angel under whose protection and vigilance we may be enabled to escape the snares secretly prepared by our enemy, repel the dreadful attacks he makes on us, and under his guiding hand keep to the right road, and thus be secure against false steps which the wiles of the evil one might cause us to make in order to draw us aside from the path that leads to heaven.

(Sacred Scripture shows) the benefits bestowed by God on man through the ministry and intervention of Angels, whom He deposes not only on particular and private occasions, but also appoints to take care of us from our very births. He furthermore appoints them to watch over the salvation of each one of the human race.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 334: In the meantime, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels.

No. 335: In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance (in the funeral liturgy’s *In Paradisum deducant te angeli* ... [“May the angels lead you into paradise...”]). Moreover, in the “Cherubic Hymn” of the Byzantine Liturgy, she celebrates the memory of certain angels, more particularly St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels.

No. 336: From infancy to death human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession. “Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life.” Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.

Hell is Eternal

Objection: *“The idea of hell is for those who have an Old Testament mentality. It is unimaginable how the loving Christian God could condemn one to Hell for all eternity.”*

According to classical Catholic theology all who die at enmity with God—that is, in a state of unrepentant mortal sin—are condemned to the eternal punishment of hell where all therein will suffer the unimaginable pains of loss and of sense.

The doctrine of an eternal hell is today assailed from both within and without the Catholic Church. Within the Church there are Catholics teaching the modernist notion of “universal salvation,” which is that in the end all will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven because God’s mercy is so great that He could not allow otherwise. These Catholics forget that God is also a God of justice. On the other hand, Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, assert that the wicked have no eternal destiny, either in heaven or hell, but instead they will be “annihilated” upon death. In holding such a view they deny the immortality of the human soul, asserting that such a belief is derived from the pagan Babylonians and Greeks.

The Old Testament certainly does refer to hell:

“A land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwells” (Job 10:22).

“And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh” (Is. 66:24).

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2).

However, despite the protestations of many, hell is also clearly spoken of in the New Testament, both by St. John the Baptist and Christ Himself:

“Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him” (St. Matt. 3:10-12).

“But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, You fool! shall be liable to the hell of fire” (St. Matt. 5:22).

“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (St. Matt. 7:19).

“I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (St. Matt. 8:11-12).

“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (St. Matt. 10:28).

“The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (St. Matt. 13:41-42).

“Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes! And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire” (St. Matt. 18:7-9).

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (St. Matt. 22:11-13).

“As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (St. Matt. 25:30).

“Then he will say to those at his left hand, You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (St. Matt. 25:41).

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (St. Mark 9:42-48).

“The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on

me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames” (St. Luke 16:22-24).

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (St. John 15:5-6).

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet, who wrought signs before him, wherewith he seduced them who received the character of the beast, and who adored his image. These two were cast alive into the pool of fire, burning with brimstone. Where they were tormented day and night, for ever and ever” (Rev. 19:20).

“...and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).

Biographers of the founder of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Charles Taze Russell, all agree that his rejection of an eternal hell was based on his inability to reconcile the existence of such with the teaching that “God is love” (1 John 4:16). He preferred to believe that the souls of the wicked were simply annihilated at death. The following quote sums up the Witnesses’ objection to the doctrine of hell:

“The doctrine of a burning hell where the wicked are tortured eternally after death cannot be true, mainly for four reasons: (i) It is wholly unscriptural; (ii) it is unreasonable; (iii) it is contrary to God’s love; and (iv) it is repugnant to justice.”¹

The Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that the Hebrew word *sheol* (and its Greek equivalent *hades*) actually refers not to hell but to “the grave.” It is true that in certain contexts *sheol* does have that meaning (e.g., Gen. 37:35; 1 Kgs. 2:6; Job 21:13) but to claim that this is its only meaning is inaccurate. *Sheol* has a wider range of meanings such as the “pit” of the nether world (Job 33:24-28; Ps. 88 (87):4; Is. 38:18),

¹ *Let God be True*, p. 99.

“gates of death” (Job 38:17) or “chambers of death” (Prov. 7:27). In all these verses *sheol* is a place where the souls of the dead go. But in the parable of Lazarus and Dives (St. Luke 16:19ff.) St. Luke uses the word *hades* to describe specifically a place of punishment indistinguishable from hell, as it is traditionally understood.

The Hebrew *gehenna* is another word which means hell. It appears twelve times in the New Testament and is derived from *ge-hinnom*, the name for the valley southwest of Jerusalem where altars were erected for human sacrifices to Moloch (2 Kgs. 23:10). This valley was also used by potters for their sulphur furnaces and in the time of Christ it was employed as a dump for everything unclean. With its history of idolatry, uncleanness and sulphur fires, Gehenna provided the ideal symbol for the ultimate punishment that will befall the wicked, and it is used in this sense in the New Testament.

However, in accordance with their denial of the soul’s immortality, the Jehovah’s Witnesses hold that *gehenna* with its fire and brimstone is instead a symbol of the wicked soul’s total annihilation. They quote St. Matthew 10:28 for support: “But rather fear him which is able to *destroy* both soul and body in hell (*gehenna*).” The Greek word in St. Matthew 10:28 for destroy is *apolesai*. The Witnesses translate each usage of *apolesai* in the New Testament as “destroy” but this can lead to absurd conclusions such as in St. Matthew 2:13 where St. Joseph is warned of Herod’s plan to “search for the young child to destroy (*apolesai*) it.” There is no question of Herod here trying to annihilate Christ, only to kill him. Likewise, in St. Matthew 10:28 *apolesai* does not mean annihilation, but the destruction of all hope due to exclusion from God’s presence.

As for the eternity or otherwise of hell, a closer examination of Scripture assures us that it is eternal. The Book of Revelation, for example, uses the word *aionios* to describe the duration of hell (14:11). The Jehovah’s Witnesses attempt to water down the force of this word by claiming that it simply refers to an indefinite period of time. However, such an argument crumbles in the light of St. Matthew 25:46 which uses the same word *aionios* to describe both the duration of the reward for the good and the duration of the punishment for the

wicked respectively. Even the Witnesses' own version of the Bible, *The New World Translation*, contains passages that assert the eternity of hell:

“cannot be put out” (St. Matt. 3:12).

“everlasting cutting-off” (St. Matt. 18:8).

“cannot be put out” (St. Mark 9:43).

“tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

The Jehovah's Witnesses stand contradicted out of their own mouths.

The Fathers

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians* 16, 1 (c. 110 AD)

“My brethren: the corrupters of families will not inherit the kingdom of God. And if they who do these things according to the flesh suffer death, how much more if a man corrupt by evil teaching the faith of God, for the sake of which Jesus Christ was crucified? A man become so foul will depart into unquenchable fire; and so also will anyone who listens to him.”

St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 52 (c. 155 AD)

“He shall come from the heavens in glory with His angelic host; when He shall raise the bodies of all the men who ever lived. Then he will clothe the worthy in immortality; but the wicked, clothed in eternal sensibility, He will commit to the eternal fire, along with the evil demons.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter to the People of Thibar* 58 (56), 10 (253 AD)

“Oh, what a day that will be, and how great when it comes, dearest brethren! When the Lord begins to survey His people and to recognize

by examining with divine knowledge the merits of each individual! To cast into hell evildoers, and to condemn our persecutors to the eternal fire and punishing flame! And indeed, to present to us the reward of faith and devotion.”

Aphraates the Persian Sage, *Treatises* 22, 22 (inter 336-345 AD)

“And again, in regard to punishment, I say that not all men are equal. He that sinned much is much tormented. He that offended not so much is less tormented. Some shall go into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. And others shall be cast into the fire, in accord with their deserts; for it is written that they shall gnash their teeth, nor is that place accounted as dark. And some shall be cast into another place, a place where the worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched; and they shall be a wonder to all flesh. Others shall have the door closed in their faces, and to them the judge will say, ‘I do not know you’.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Enchiridion of Faith, Hope and Love* 29, 112 (421 AD)

“In vain, therefore, do some men, indeed, very many, because of human sentiment, bewail the eternal punishment, of the damned and their perpetual, unending torments, without really believing that it shall be so...But let them suppose, if it pleases them, that the punishments of the damned are, at certain periods of time, somewhat mitigated. For even thus it can be understood that they remain in the wrath of God that is, in damnation itself, for it is this that is called the ‘wrath of God,’ not some disturbance in the divine mind: that in His wrath, that is, by their abiding in His wrath, He does not shut up His mercies; yet He does not put an end to their eternal punishment, but only applies or interposes some relief to their torments.”

St. John Damascene, *The Source of Knowledge* 3, 4, 27 (inter 743-749 AD)

“We shall rise again, therefore, our souls united again to our bodies, the latter now made incorruptible and having put corruption aside; and we shall stand before the awesome tribunal of Christ. And the devil and his demons, and the man that is his, the Antichrist, and the

impious and the sinners shall be consigned to everlasting fire, not material fire such as we know, but such fire as God would know.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. I, Ch. VIII: The first words, *depart from me*, express the heaviest punishment with which the wicked shall be visited, their eternal banishment from the sight of God, unrelieved by one consolatory hope of ever recovering so great a good. This punishment is called by theologians the *pain of loss*, because in hell the wicked shall be deprived forever of the light of the vision of God ... The next words, *into everlasting fire*, express another sort of punishment, which is called by theologians *the pain of sense*, because, like lashes, stripes or other more severe chastisements, among which fire, no doubt, produces the most intense pain, it is felt through the organs of sense. When, moreover, we reflect that this torment is to be eternal, we can see at once that the punishment of the damned includes every kind of suffering.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1034: Jesus often speaks of “Gehenna,” of “the unquenchable fire” reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost. Jesus solemnly proclaims that He “will send His angels, and they will gather...all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire,” and that He will pronounce the condemnation: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!”

No. 1035: The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, “eternal fire.” The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

Objection: *“The Mass is a blasphemous medieval superstition. There is no continual sacrifice for sin, Christ having died ‘once for all’!”*

What then is the Mass? Is it a holy sacrifice or is the Eucharist meant to be simply a memorial meal as claimed by Protestants?

The Catholic teaching on the Mass is often either grossly misunderstood or misrepresented by Protestants. It is, therefore, essential to outline first exactly what the Catholic Church actually teaches. Vatican II succinctly outlined the Church’s teaching on the Mass as follows:

“At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his body and blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.”¹

In the on-going controversy between Catholics and Protestants over the Mass, debate initially centers around the meaning of Christ’s words *“This is my body”* used during the Last Supper:

¹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963, # 47.

“Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (St. Luke 22:19).

The Greek words used in St. Luke 22 for “This is my body” are *Touto estin to soma mou*. The verb *estin* means “is.” Depending on context, it can mean either “is really” or “is figuratively.” The usual meaning is the former; Protestants, of course, insist on the latter meaning. However, to accept only a figurative meaning for *estin* would entail a rejection of the universal understanding held since Apostolic times and contradict directly the tenor of St. John chapter 6, where Christ first promises the Eucharist:

“...the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? So Jesus said to them, Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you...for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink ... When many of his disciples heard it, they said, This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” (vv. 51-60).

In the above passage the Greek word used for flesh is *sarx*, which only means physical flesh, while the Greek word for ‘eat’ literally means ‘to gnaw.’

Another argument revolves around the claim that in Christ’s language, Aramaic, there was no separate word for ‘represents,’ and hence Christ only used ‘is’ because He was inhibited by a limited vocabulary. This argument, now outdated, was disposed of over a century ago by Cardinal Wiseman who showed that Aramaic possesses nearly forty different words for ‘represents.’ Therefore, there was no need for Christ to use “is” if He intended only to speak figuratively.

Protestant rejection of the Mass as a sacrifice is based on various verses in Hebrews, chapters 7, 9 and 10:

“He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself” (7:27).

“He entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (9:12).

“And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins” (10:10-11).

According to Protestants, by claiming that the Mass is a sacrifice, Catholics are adding another sacrifice in addition to Christ's. Therefore, Catholics hold that Christ's sacrifice was not sufficient, perfect or complete enough to atone for all sin. Furthermore, by claiming that in the sacrifice of the Mass Christ is being offered to the Father again and again, Catholics “crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt” (Heb. 6:6).

The Catholic Church, however, does not teach that the sacrifice of the Mass is another sacrifice in addition to Calvary or a re-crucifixion of Christ. Rather, it is a *re-presenting of Christ's original sacrifice*, making it present to all Christians in all places and at all times. The sacrifice of Calvary and the sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same sacrifice, only the manner in which they are offered is different. The Council of Trent expresses it thus:

“And inasmuch as, in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, Who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross: the holy synod teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory, and that by means thereof this is effected that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid ... For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered

Himself on the cross, only the manner of offering being different.”²

The sacrifice of Christ was accomplished once in time but to God it is an event eternally present before Him. This we know from St. John’s words in the Book of Revelation: “And all that dwell upon the earth adored him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb, *which was slain from the beginning of the world*” (13:8). In heaven, Christ still bears the appearance of a victim: “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, *as though it had been slain*” (Rev. 5:6). The Mass slices through time and re-presents this eternal sacrifice before us so all Christians may eat the flesh of the Eternal Lamb after it has been slain.

To the contrary, it is argued that the words in St. Luke 22:19, “*Do this in remembrance of me,*” testify that Christ only intended to establish a memorial meal whereby Christians throughout all ages would remember and give thanks for the ‘once and for all’ sacrifice of Calvary. However, the word for remembrance in Greek is *anamnesis*, which means a remembering that makes something past become present. As ex-Protestant Max Thurian wrote before his conversion, “This memorial is not a simple objective act of recollection, it is a liturgical action ... which makes the Lord present ... which recalls as a memorial before the Father the unique sacrifice of the Son, and makes Him present in His memorial.”³

The Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would offer a true sacrifice to God in the form of bread and wine, that Jewish sacrifices would one day be brought to an end, and that in their stead the Gentiles would in every place offer a daily and pleasing sacrifice to God’s Name. In Genesis 14 we read that Melchizedek, the king of Salem and priest, offered sacrifice under the form of bread and wine:

² *Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass*, Session XXII, 1562.

³ *The Eucharistic Memorial, II, The New Testament, Ecumenical Studies in Worship*: from Stephen K. Ray, *Crossing the Tiber—Evangelical Protestants Discover the Historic Church*, Ignatius Press, 1997, p. 210.

“After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand! And Abram gave him a tenth of everything” (vv. 17-20).

Psalm 110 [109] foretold that the Messiah would be a Priest “after the order of Melchizedek”:

“The Lord says to my lord: Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool ... The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (vv. 1 & 4).

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews clearly identifies Christ to be this priest:

“For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek” (7:14-17).

“After the order of Melchizedek” means ‘in the manner of Melchizedek.’ Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine and sacrificed them by offering them to Abraham to eat. Christ is a priest after this manner by offering His Body and Blood under the veil of bread and wine for us to eat.

The Book of Daniel chapter 9 speaks of the end of the Jewish priesthood and its sacrifices:

“After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall

destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator” (vv. 26-27).

The Jewish priesthood and sacrifices would be replaced by Gentile ones as predicted by the Prophet Malachi:

“I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts: and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For from the rising of the sun, even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 1:10-11).

Malachi’s words found fulfillment in the worship of the early Christians:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts” (Acts 2:46).

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16).

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).

The early Christians were also warned that dire consequences await those who do not partake of this sacrificial bread and cup worthily:

“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (1 Cor. 11:27-30).

Where is the prophecy of Malachi fulfilled today? James Cardinal Gibbons answers as follows:

“We may divide the inhabitants of the world into five different classes of people, professing different forms of religion—Pagans, Jews, Mohammedans, Protestants and Catholics. Among which of these shall we find the clean oblation of which the prophet speaks? Not among the Pagan nations; for they worship false gods, and consequently cannot have any sacrifice pleasing to the Almighty. Not among the Jews; for they have ceased to sacrifice altogether, and the words of the prophet apply not to the Jews, but to the Gentiles. Not among the Mohammedans; for they also reject sacrifices. Not among any of the Protestants sects; for they all distinctly repudiate sacrifices. Therefore, it is only in the Catholic Church that is fulfilled this glorious prophecy; for whithersoever you go, you will find the clean oblation offered on Catholic altars. If you travel from America to Europe, to Oceania, to Africa, or Asia, you will see our altars erected, and our Priests daily fulfilling the words of the prophets by offering the clean oblation of the body and blood of Christ.”⁴

In October 1529 Luther and Zwingli met in Marburg, Germany, to resolve their differences concerning the Eucharist. The two leaders failed to reach an agreement. Ever since, Protestantism has been a house divided over the issue, with hundreds of different interpretations of the words “This is my Body” appearing. How paradoxical that the very gift God gave to the world as a sign of the visible unity of Christians has become the source of so much dissension and division. St. Alphonsus de Liguori comments that Satan, through heretics and blasphemers, tries to deprive the world of the Mass and the Eucharist,

⁴ James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1980 Ed., p. 254.

making them precursors of the Antichrist, who before the coming of Christ will succeed in abolishing the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar as a punishment for the world's sins, according to the prophecy of Daniel: "And strength was given him against the *continual sacrifice*, because of sins..." (Dan. 8:12).

The Fathers

The Didache 14, 1 (c. 90-150 AD)

"Assemble on the Lord's day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist. But first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one ... For this is the offering of which the Lord has said, 'Everywhere and always bring me a sacrifice that is undefiled, for I am a great king, says the Lord and my name is the wonder of nations' (Malachi 1:11)."

St. Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians* 44, 4 (c. 98 AD)

"Our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those who blamelessly and holily have offered its Sacrifices. Blessed are those presbyters who have already finished their course, and who have obtained a fruitful and perfect release."

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians* 4, 1 (c. 110 AD)

"Take care, then, to use one Eucharist, so that whatever you do, you do according to God: for there is one Flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the union of His Blood; one altar, as there is one bishop with the presbytery and my fellow servants, the deacons."

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 4, 17, 5 (c. 180 AD)

"He took that created thing, bread, and gave thanks and said, This is My Body. And the cup likewise, which is part of that creation to which we belong, He confessed to be His Blood, and taught the new oblation of the new covenant, which the Church, receiving from the Apostles, offers to God throughout the world ... concerning which Malachi, among the twelve prophets thus spoke beforehand: From the rising of the sun to the going down, My name is glorified among the gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to My name and a pure

sacrifice ... indicating in the plainest manner that in every place sacrifice shall be offered to Him, and at that a pure one.”

St. Hippolytus of Rome, *Commentary on Daniel 22* (220 AD)

“For when the Gospel is preached in every place, the times being then accomplished ... the abomination of desolation will be manifested, and when he (the Antichrist) comes, the sacrifice and oblation will be removed, which are now offered up to God in every place by the Gentiles.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistle to Caecilius on the Sacrament of the Cup of the Lord* 4 (253 AD)

“In the priest Melchizedek we see prefigured the sacrament of the sacrifice of the Lord, according to what divine Scripture testifies, ‘And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine’ ... For who is more a priest of the most high God than Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered a sacrifice to God the Father, and offered that very same thing which Melchizedek had offered, that is, bread and wine, to wit, His body and blood? ... In Genesis therefore, that the benediction ... might be duly celebrated, the figure of Christ’s sacrifice precedes as ordained in bread and wine; which thing the Lord, completing and fulfilling, offered bread and the cup mixed with wine, and so He who is the fullness of truth fulfilled the truth of the image prefigured.”

St. Athanasius, *Sermon to the Newly Baptized* (ante 373 AD) [in St. Eutyches (+582 AD) *Sermon on Easter and the Holy Eucharist*]

“Let us approach the celebration of the mysteries. This bread and this wine, so as long as the prayers and supplications have not taken place, remain simply what they are. But after the great prayers and holy supplications have been sent forth, the Word comes down into the bread and wine—and thus is His Body confectioned.”

St. Ambrose of Milan, *Commentaries on Twelve of David’s Psalms* 38, 25 (inter 381-397 AD)

“We saw the Prince of Priests coming to us, we saw and heard Him offering His blood for us. We follow, inasmuch as we are able, being priests; and we offer the sacrifice on behalf of the people. And even if

we are of but little merit, still, in the sacrifice, we are honorable. For even if Christ is not now seen as the one who offers the sacrifice, nevertheless it is He Himself that is offered in sacrifice here on earth when the Body of Christ is offered. Indeed, to offer Himself He is made visible to us, He whose word makes holy the sacrifice that is offered.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Letter to Boniface, Bishop* 98, 9 (408 AD)

“Was not Christ immolated only once in His very Person? In the Sacrament, nevertheless, He is immolated for the people not only on every Easter Solemnity but on every day; and a man would not be lying if, when asked, he were to reply that Christ is being immolated. For if the Sacraments had not a likeness to those things of which they are Sacraments, they would not be Sacraments at all; and they generally take the names of those same things by reason of this likeness.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon Against the Jews* 9, 13 (post 425 AD)

““From the rising of the sun even to its setting My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place sacrifice is offered to My name, a clean oblation; for My name is great among the Gentiles, says the Lord Almighty.’ What do you answer to that? Open your eyes at last, then, any time, and see, from the rising of the sun to its setting, the sacrifice of Christians is offered, not in one place only, as was established with you Jews, but everywhere; and not to just any god at all, but to Him who foretold it, the God of Israel ... Not in one place, as was prescribed for you in the earthly Jerusalem, but in every place, even in Jerusalem herself. Not according to the order of Aaron, but according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. II, Ch. IV: We therefore confess that the Sacrifice of the Mass is and ought to be considered one and the same Sacrifice as that of the cross, for the victim is one and the same, namely, Christ our Lord, who offered Himself, once only, a bloody Sacrifice on the altar of the

cross. The bloody and unbloody victim are not two, but one victim only, whose Sacrifice is daily renewed in the Eucharist, in obedience to the command of our Lord: *Do this for a commemoration of me.*

The priest is also one and the same, Christ the Lord; for the ministers who offer Sacrifice, consecrate the holy mysteries, not in their own person, but in that of Christ, as the words of consecration itself show, for the priest does not say: *This is the body of Christ*, but, *This is my body*; and thus, acting in the Person of Christ the Lord, he changes the substance of the bread and wine into the true substance of His body and blood.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1333: At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood. Faithful to the Lord's command the Church continues to do, in his memory and until his glorious return, what he did on the eve of his Passion: "He took bread..." "He took the cup filled with wine..." The signs of bread and wine become, in a way surpassing understanding, the Body and Blood of Christ; they continue also to signify the goodness of creation. Thus in the Offertory we give thanks to the Creator for bread and wine, fruit of the "work of human hands," but above all as "fruit of the earth" and "of the vine"—gifts of the Creator. The Church sees in the gesture of the king-priest Melchizedek, who "brought out bread and wine," a prefiguring of her own offering.

No. 1362: The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice, in the liturgy of the Church which is his Body. In all the Eucharistic Prayers we find after the words of institution a prayer called the anamnesis or memorial.

No. 1364: In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice

Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present. “As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which ‘Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed’ is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out.”

No. 1367: The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: “The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.” “And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner ... this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.”

The Index of Forbidden Books

Objection: *“The Index of Forbidden Books proves that Rome has always sought to repress religious truth and scientific knowledge. At least the rest of the world has managed to free itself from ignorance and superstition!”*

In all places and at all times the Catholic Church has used and promoted books as a means of fulfilling her mission to spread the Gospel of Christ. Always cautious of propagating and preserving the truth, the Church has certainly and properly exercised a firm hand in ensuring that various books are submitted for her examination before publication, and/or banning the publication, sale, reading, retaining of prohibited books.

In a world today deluged by all sorts of literature and new forms of visual and electronic communication, and where meaningful censorship has been suppressed by the ideologues of unrestrained liberty, the Catholic Church has now become an easy target for her past and present policies concerning the control of information. Even to suggest censorship of any form these days is to invite howls of protests from all quarters allegedly claiming to uphold rights of free speech, expression and access to information. In fact, the Catholic Church is not only the victim of attacks for supporting censorship, but is herself constantly ridiculed, mocked and vilified for any or all of her beliefs and practices by a media taking advantage of the present climate of license.

Unfortunately, discussion of such issues as the *Index* or censorship is hampered not only by religious and historical bias against the Catholic Church but also by an equally appalling ignorance of the intention and

operation of the Church's regulations. One of the worst offenders is the professional anti-Catholic Loraine Boettner, who in his work *Roman Catholicism* published in 1962 reduces the *Index* to nothing more than an anti-Protestant mind-controlling tool:

“The Index of Forbidden Books, still in effect as rigidly as ever, proscribes all the controversial books, magazines, and other publications of Protestants and others who oppose Romanism, and so makes it impossible for Roman Catholics to know both sides of a question ... Roman Catholic students, therefore, in a real sense are forbidden to think. They let the priests think for them. But the fallacy of that system is that the priests too are forbidden to think. They too are limited by the Imprimatur and the Index ” (pp. 363-364).

Basic assumptions underlie the Church's control of reading. The Church is the divinely instituted custodian of revelation and, therefore, it is her solemn duty to interpret and protect the teachings of Christ for the welfare of her members. The Gospel of Christ has been delivered “once and for all to the saints” (Jude 1:3), and the Scriptures certainly warn Christians to be wary of false doctrines and instructs the Church to be intolerant of them:

“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

“But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practise immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols” (Rev. 2:20).

The earliest example of Christianity's attitude towards profane or perverted literature is found in the Acts of the Apostles, where citizens in Ephesus, after their conversion to Christianity by St. Paul, burnt superstitious books valued at fifty thousand pieces of silver (Acts 19:19). In subsequent early Church writings we find the beginnings of a more formalized approach to censorship. The *Muratorian Canon* (c. 170 AD) gives a list of those books that belong to the New Testament

and a group that should be excluded from liturgical use. In 405 AD, Pope Innocent I wrote to the Bishop of Toulouse outlining the total number of books which belonged to the Old and New Testament canons and a number of apocryphal books that were condemned. More importantly, in 496 AD, Pope Gelasius I published a decree which was divided into three sections: a list of authentic books of the Scriptures; a list of recommended readings from the Church Fathers and the Acts of the Martyrs; and a list of apocryphal and heretical books that had been banned by the Councils and the Popes.

During the Middle Ages control over literature by the Church could be exercised to a high degree owing to her temporal power and the relatively small number of books. The laborious nature of hand copying meant that only small numbers of books could be produced and only over a long period of time. During these centuries the Church was particularly vigilant over reproductions of the Sacred Scriptures. Heretical groups such as the Albigensians, Waldensians, and the Lollards (Wycliffites) produced their own vernacular versions of the Scriptures in order to support their novel teachings. The Church, out of zeal for the authentic word of God, through local and universal laws prohibited the reading of the Scriptures *without the appropriate safeguards* (e.g., Toulouse 1229, Tarragona 1233, Oxford 1408).

However, with the invention of the printing press in Guttenberg in 1456 a deluge of printed books flooded Europe. This made the examination of each new book quite impractical. Nevertheless, in 1467 Pope Innocent VIII decreed that all books treating on Christian doctrine be submitted to the local Church authorities for examination and permission before publication for general reading. The license to publish and the name of the local Ordinary were to be printed at the beginning of each book. A similar decree was issued by Pope Leo X at the Fifth Lateran Council on May 4, 1515 and was addressed to the whole world. With the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) commissioned a group of Fathers to draw up rules regarding prohibited books. These *Tridentine* regulations remained in force for the next three hundred years and also served as a guide to the average reader for any publications not condemned.

The first general list of forbidden books entitled *Index* was issued by Pope Paul IV in 1557 and was soon followed by a new *Index* issued in 1564. In 1571, Pope St. Pius V established the *Congregation of the Index* to handle all matters concerning Church evaluation of literature. It was responsible for publishing updated editions of the *Index* and judging works referred to it for final decision. In 1753, Pope Benedict XIV published new detailed regulations governing the examination of suspected books: the examination was to be carried out by two revisors, independent of each other, who were well versed in the particular language of the book and the branch of learning in question, and who would pass judgment free from all partisanship and in accordance with general Catholic dogma. Only when both revisors were of the opinion that a book should be prohibited, was the matter forwarded to the Cardinals of the Congregation for a final decision.

By the pontificate of Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) there were over three thousand books on the *Index*. Some of the more famous individuals whose works were listed included Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, Blaise Pascal, Thomas Hobbs, John Locke, David Hume, John Milton, Francois Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile Zola, Honore de Balzac, Alexander Dumas, Victor Hugo, Jeremy Bentham, Lord Acton, and Edward Gibbon. These writers generally wrote in the fields of philosophy, history or fiction and many were baptized Catholics. In 1897, Pope Leo XIII, taking into account the changed social and literary conditions of the nineteenth century, again revised the general rules of the Church's book legislation and incorporated them into the new *Index of Forbidden Books* published in 1900.

In 1904, Pope St. Pius X proposed a complete codification of canon law. This was completed and approved by Pope Benedict XV on May 27, 1917. Canons 1384-1405 related to book legislation. They were divided into three classifications: prior censorship before publication; the prohibition of books and the general classes of books prohibited; and the penalties assessed against violator of the regulations. These canons remained in force until the promulgation of the new *Code of Canon Law* in 1983. After the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI in 1966 abolished the *Congregation of the Index* and the *Index of*

Forbidden Books, replacing them with a set of norms on the reading of books dangerous to Catholic faith and morality.

The present canons in the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* governing the Church's mission as censor include the following:

Can. 823 §1: "In order to safeguard the integrity of faith and morals, pastors of the Church have the duty and the right to ensure that in the writings or in the use of the means of social communication there should be no ill effect on the faith and morals of Christ's faithful. They also have the duty and the right to demand that where writings of the faithful touch upon matters of faith and morals, these be submitted to their judgment. Moreover, they have the duty and the right to condemn writings which harm true faith or good morals."

Can. 825 §1: "Books of the sacred Scriptures may not be published unless they are approved by the Apostolic See or the Episcopal Conference. The publication of translations of the sacred Scriptures requires the approval of the same authority, and they must have necessary and sufficient explanatory notes."

Can. 826 §3: "Prayer books, for either the public or the private use of the faithful, are not to be published except by permission of the local Ordinary."

Can. 827 §1: "...the publication of catechisms and other writings pertaining to catechetical formation, as well as their translations, requires the approval of the local Ordinary;

Can. 827 §2: "Books dealing with matters concerning sacred Scripture, theology, canon law, church history, or religious or moral subjects may not be used as textbooks on which the instruction is based, in elementary, intermediate or higher schools, unless they were published with the approbation of the competent ecclesiastical authority or were subsequently approved by that authority."

Can. 830 §2: "In carrying out this task, a censor must put aside all preference of persons and look only to the teaching of the

Church concerning faith and morals, as declared by its *Magisterium*.”

Can. 831 §1: “Unless there is a just and reasonable cause, no member of Christ’s faithful may write in newspapers, pamphlets or periodicals which clearly are accustomed to attack the Catholic religion or good morals. Clerics and members of religious institutes may write in them only with the permission of the local Ordinary.”

Far from being a tool for repressing “religious truth and scientific knowledge,” the *Index* historically was a significant instrument in ensuring that the Catholic faithful were fed the pure milk of true doctrine, science and morality. Nor was it a weapon aimed solely at Protestantism. The Church sought to protect her children by screening books relating to all the following areas: the Bible, theology, Church history, canon law, natural theology, ethics, religious and moral sciences, ascetic or mystical doctrine, sacred pictures with or without prayers and all writings having a special bearing on religion or morality. The term “books” included booklets, pamphlets, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, etc.

Book dealers were also prohibited from selling, loaning or keeping books treating of “obscene matters.” Considering the current avalanche of pornography in the written and electronic medias, which reasonable Christian could object to such a prohibition? Nor could any Christian object to the Church’s provisions against books that promoted Freemasonry, superstition, fortune telling, magic, spiritism, séances, suicide, or divorce.

If fact, the Church’s book legislation always was and is still simply designed to assist Christians in their pre-existing personal obligation to practise censorship. Due to our fallen nature, Christians cannot deliberately expose themselves unnecessarily to proximate occasions of sin. For example, we are obliged to avoid prostitution houses, nude beaches, pornographic magazines or any other situation that could arouse our lower passions. That being the case, how can any self-professed Christian find it objectionable if the Church seeks to guide her children to fulfil this obligation, an obligation imposed upon all

Christians by Christ himself?

“And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire” (St. Matt. 18:8-9).

In this context, Loraine Boettner’s attacks against the *Index* fall completely flat. In addition to his above-mentioned quote, he rails against the *Index* as follows:

“The Bible was first officially forbidden to the people by the Church of Rome and placed on the Index of Forbidden Books by the Council of Valencia in the year 1229” (p. 99).

“even the Bible as such remains on the Index of Forbidden Books! ... What St. Paul wrote, if it stands by itself, is on the Index. What was written by St. Peter himself, who according to Roman Catholic tradition was the first pope, is on the Index unless some Roman Catholic annotates his writing” (p. 101).

“One of the most flagrant denials of freedom in the Roman Church is the Index of Forbidden Books, a device which deprives the people of freedom of judgment as to what they may read. This restriction is imposed on the pretense of shielding them from error; its real purpose is to isolate them from liberal and Protestant ideas, to maintain control over them, and so to hold them in the Roman Church.” (p. 417).

In response to these paragraphs Catholics should point out the following:

- The Bible was never officially forbidden to the people, only doctored versions produced by heretical sects as stated above.
- There was no *Index* in 1229 to include the Bible in any case.
- If Catholics should be free to read Protestant versions of the Bible indiscriminately, just which version should they ultimately follow? And why not read the *New World Version* of the Jehovah's Witnesses or even the *Book of Mormon*?
- What is inherently wrong with producing Bibles with explanatory notes? The Presbyterian *Schofield-Darby* version of the Bible was the first of now many Protestant Bibles to include explanatory notes. Explanatory notes are a safeguard against the "ignorant and unstable" who "twist" the Scriptures "to their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16).
- Would Loraine Boettner or any other anti-Catholic Protestant indiscriminately recommend Catholic literature? Would they hand out Bibles produced by Catholic editors and commentators without warning?
- Do not Protestant churches warn their members against pornography, immorality or other forms of obscene material? And if they do what would be the problem if they listed objectionable material in writing for their members?
- Does Boettner advocate freedom for freedom's sake? Freedom is a gift given by God to use in the service of truth and goodness. Freedom used to vainly read heretical or immoral material is freedom abused, not used.
- What proof is there that the Catholic Church employed the *Index* only "on the *pretense* of shielding them from error"? This unsubstantiated claim by Boettner is another example of wishful thinking on his part.
- What "liberal and Protestant ideas" would Boettner like Catholics to be exposed to? Would Boettner encourage

Protestant views opposed to his own? And when did Christ advocate so-called “liberal” views?

- Many of the “liberal” views condemned in the *Index* are expounded by authors unfriendly not only to the Catholic Church but also to Christianity *per se*. Would Boettner promote the atheistic views of Rousseau, Voltaire or Zola to his congregation simply in the name of liberalism?

The current degenerate moral condition of the world is due in part to the abolition of censorship laws by the governments of the Western world. No person in good faith can contest in principle the need for a return to laws restricting the levels of violence and vulgarity, the blasphemy and erotica that have flooded society and which are aimed particularly at the young. Should it be any surprise that while censorship has virtually vanished, the levels of sexual promiscuity, marriage and family breakdowns, drug use, violence and rebellion has simultaneously skyrocketed, while religious practice has plummeted? Nor is the publication of hundreds of millions of items of literature by tens of thousands of conflicting and contradictory Protestant churches objectively satisfactory. The Church in her wisdom knew that steps were necessary centuries ago to stem the tide of dangerous literature. Far from being free from “ignorance and superstition,” the Western world has collectively extinguished its own light of reason and is now going down a revolutionary process of self-destruction. If the Church’s policy concerning censorship overall and the *Index* in particular were successful, the world would not be in the sorry state it is in today.

Indulgences

Objection: “*Indulgences are nothing more than a permission to sin. It is a money-making exercise through which Catholics think they can buy their way into heaven!*”

The doctrine of indulgences was the very doctrine that triggered the Protestant Revolt in 1517. It is probably the least understood teaching of the Catholic Church. Only the ignorant or prejudiced take it to mean that the Church grants a license or permission to sin.

What then is an indulgence?

An indulgence is simply a remission through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ and His Saints, of the temporal punishment due for sins committed after guilt and eternal punishment have been remitted by God.

That Our Lord has given the Church the power of granting indulgences is implied in Scripture: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (St. Matt. 16:19).

St. Paul provides a clear example of the Church using this power with respect to the incestuous Corinthian upon whom he had imposed a severe penance. After learning of the Corinthian’s fervent sorrow, St. Paul absolved him of the penance which he had imposed, saying: “For, what I have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything, for your sakes have I done it *in the person of Christ*” (2 Cor. 2:10).

In this example we have the elements of a true indulgence: (i) a penance (temporal punishment) imposed on the Corinthian by St. Paul; (ii) sorrow on the part of the sinner for his crime; (iii) the relaxation of the penance by St. Paul (the indulgence); (iv) the relaxation done in the “person of Christ.”

An indulgence may be *plenary* or *partial* according to whether it removes all or part of the temporal punishment due to sin. The requirements laid down by the Church for gaining a plenary indulgence are (i) performance of the indulgenced work—for example, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for at least half an hour, devout reading of the Sacred Scriptures for at least half an hour, or praying the Rosary in a church, public oratory or family group; (ii) sacramental confession; (iii) Eucharistic communion, and (iv) prayer for the Pope's intentions. The last three conditions may be fulfilled several days before or after the performance of the prescribed work. However, it is fitting that communion is received and the prayer for the Pope's intentions is said on the same day the work is performed. If any of these conditions is not fulfilled, the indulgence gained will only be partial.

A partial indulgence is gained by any of the faithful who:

- (i) in the performance of their duties and bearing the trials of life, raise their mind with humble confidence to God, adding some pious invocation;
- (ii) in a spirit of faith and mercy, give of themselves or of their goods to serve their brothers in need;
- (iii) in a spirit of penance, voluntarily deprive themselves of what is licit and pleasing to them.¹

Works which can be performed for partial indulgences include the recitation of any of the following prayers: Profession of Faith, De Profundis, Magnificat, Sub Tuum Praesidium, Memorare, Salve Regina, Grace before and after meals, Adoro Te Devote, Angelus, Anima Christi, Te Deum, the Litanies, the Sign of the Cross—or, indeed, any prayer.

Indulgences are, therefore, a great aid to true devotion, fostering a spirit of prayer and sacrifice in the name of Christ, not just for one's own benefit, but for the benefit of all the faithful.

¹*Enchiridion of Indulgences: Norms and Grants*, Vatican City, 1968, 1999.

The charge that Catholics see indulgences as a means of buying their way into heaven is utterly without foundation. Anti-Catholics exploiting the ignorance of both Catholics and non-Catholics normally make such a charge. First, as indulgences relate only to the remission of temporal punishment, they have nothing to do with remitting eternal punishment in hell. Only God's forgiveness following true sorrow for sin can achieve that. Neither are indulgences permissions to commit or pardons in advance for future sins for, again, they relate only to the remission of temporal punishment remaining after *past* sins have been forgiven.

The abuses relating to indulgences in the time of Martin Luther involved almsgiving for the construction of the new St. Peter's Basilica. The giving of alms especially for the service of God is a meritorious work in itself and a worthy condition for the granting of an indulgence. There was no outright selling of indulgences, though one could gain that surface impression. For this reason the Council of Trent radically reformed the practice of granting indulgences and in 1567 Pope St. Pius V abolished all grants of indulgences in return for alms.

Second objection: *“Indulgences are a waste of time for we do not have to do any penance as temporal punishment as Christ paid all debt for sin when he died on the cross.”*

Only since the advent of Protestantism has anyone thought the system of penance and indulgences to be a waste of time. As the ex-Protestant convert James Akin explains:

“The system of penance goes back beyond the middle ages, through the patristic age, through the New Testament, and into the Old Testament. It has been part of the religion of Yahweh since before the time of Christ, it was part of the religion of Christ and his first followers, and it has been part of Christianity ever since. It was not until the rise of Protestantism that anyone in Christendom thought to deny it.”¹

¹ *Doing Penance*, Internet Website, 1/20/99.

The meritorious value of Christ's death on the Cross was infinite and superabundantly sufficient for the redemption and freeing of humanity from both the eternal damnation of hell and any additional temporal punishments. That being the case, why then are Christians required to do penance to remit temporal punishment for sin? One reason is that God can choose and has chosen to leave owing a debt of temporal punishment, even after the eternal penalty for sin has been remitted. For example, man suffers under the temporal punishments of labor, pain, sickness and death to this day even though the redemption has taken place and spiritual sonship has been restored through baptism. Also, King David was afflicted with the temporal punishment of his infant son's death even after being forgiven for the murder of Uriah (2 Sam. 12:13ff.). Mary, the sister of Moses, was forgiven by God for complaining against her brother. Nevertheless, God still imposed upon her the temporal punishment of leprosy and seven days' exile from the Chosen People (Num. 12). Similarly, Moses was forbidden to enter the Promised Land after being forgiven for striking the rock twice at the Waters of Contradiction (Num. 20:12).

One may also question why God leaves temporal penalties in place after removing eternal penalties for sins. It is, firstly, a question of discharging a debt of honor, making a reparatory gesture after the real reparation has been completed. Penance also has rehabilitative benefits. It teaches us to learn from our sins: "For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ... he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Heb. 12:11). Penance restores the loss or damage caused by sin. For example, a thief may be sorry for stealing a large sum of money from some one else, but is still required to return the money taken and even do time in prison. Finally, penance satisfies the human need to mourn for tragedies and sin, particularly mortal sin, which is the greatest tragedy.

Furthermore, Catholics believe that many of the faithful throughout the centuries—virgins, martyrs, confessors, saints—have performed penances and good works far in excess of what was due as temporal punishment for their own sins. Their merits, in union with the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, form a “spiritual treasury” which the Church can draw upon to assist other members of the Church in general or, in particular, pay the debt of temporal punishment both for the living and the dead. This can be done, for every good action possesses a double value—that of merit and that of satisfaction. The meritorious value of an act is the reward given by God to the performer of the act and cannot be transferred, while the satisfactory value of an act is the intention sought after by the petitioner which can be directed to benefit others. We see an example of this in the following words of St. Paul: “I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (Col. 1:24). St. Paul knew perfectly well that with regard to the eternal salvation of mankind, Christ’s afflictions were not only not lacking but that they were superabundant (i.e., more than enough) in value to save the whole world. Therefore, St. Paul and other Christians who, through the communion of saints, offer up prayers, Masses or alms as penance for the remission of others’ temporal punishment act as temporal saviors only. They unite their praiseworthy actions to those of the one eternal savior, Jesus Christ.

The Fathers

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians* 3 (c. 107 AD)

“For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are also with the bishop. And as many as shall, in the exercise of penance, return into the unity of the Church, these, too, shall belong to God, that they may live according to Jesus Christ.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *The Lapsed* 17 (251 AD)

“The Lord alone is able to have mercy. He alone, who bore our sins, who grieved for us, and whom God delivered up for our sins, is able to

grant pardon for the sins which have been committed against Him ... Certainly we believe that the merits of the martyrs and the works of the just will be of great avail with the Judge—but that will be when the day of judgment comes, when, after the end of this age and of the world, His people shall stand before the tribunal of Christ.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letters* 9, 2 (c. 253 AD)

“...sinners may do penance for a set time, and according to the rules of discipline come to public confession, and by imposition of the hand of the bishop and clergy receive the right of communion.”

St. Ambrose of Milan, *Penance* 1, 15, 80 (c. 387-390 AD)

“For he is purged as if by certain works of the whole people, and is washed in the tears of the multitude; by the prayers and tears of the multitude he is redeemed from sin, and is cleansed in the inner man. For Christ granted to His Church that one should be redeemed through all, just as His Church was found worthy of the coming of the Lord Jesus so that all might be redeemed through one.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed* 8, 16 (c. 395 AD)

“For those whom you see doing penance have committed crimes, either adultery or some other enormities. That is why they are doing penance. If their sins were light, daily prayer would suffice to blot them out ... In the Church, therefore, there are three ways in which sins are forgiven: in baptisms, in prayer, and in the greater humility of penance.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 124, 5 (416-417 AD)

“...man is obliged to suffer, even when his sins are forgiven, ... for the penalty is of longer duration than the guilt, lest the guilt should be accounted small, were the penalty also to end with it. It is for this reason ... that man is held in this life to the penalty, even when he is no longer held to the guilt unto eternal damnation.”

St. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon 261, 1* (ante 542 AD)

“Considering the number of sins, he sees that he is incapable of himself alone to make satisfaction for such grave evils; and so he is anxious to seek out the assistance of the whole people.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

This Catechism referred to canonical penances and works of satisfaction, but made no specific reference to Indulgences as. The question of Indulgences was dealt with by the Council itself in its *Decree Concerning Indulgences*, Session XXV, December 4, 1563:

“Since the power of conferring indulgences was granted by Christ to the Church; and she has, even in the most ancient times, used the said power, delivered unto her by God: the holy synod teaches and enjoins that the use of indulgences—most salutary for the Christian people, and approved of by the authority of sacred councils—is to be retained in the Church; and it condemns with anathema those who either assert that they are useless, or who deny that there is in the Church the power of granting them.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1472: To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that sin has a *double consequence*. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the “eternal punishment” of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the “temporal punishment” of sin.

No. 1478: An indulgence is obtained through the Church who, by virtue of the power of binding and loosing granted her by Christ Jesus, intervenes in favor of individual Christians and opens for them

Defend the Faith!

the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints to obtain from the Father of mercies the remission of the temporal punishments due for their sins. Thus the Church does not want simply to come to the aid of these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance, and charity.

Infallibility of the Church

Objection: *“The Church is not infallible. It fell into error after Constantine when it began to teach pagan doctrines.”*

The infallibility of the Church is a special supernatural prerogative given to her by God to preserve her from teaching error in her formal definitive dogmatic teaching in matters of faith and morals.

Infallibility involves not only the simple exemption from actual error but also exemption from the possibility of error. It is a Divine assistance that is not dependent on the holiness of life or the impeccability of individual Church members or organs.

Infallibility must be distinguished from both ‘inspiration’ and ‘revelation.’ Inspiration involves more than simply preserving the author from the possibility of error, for God Himself is the author of the utterance; revelation involves God making known supernatural truths otherwise entirely or morally beyond the scope of human observation.

In any discussion of infallibility it must be first acknowledged that Christ founded a Church as a visible and perfect society to govern, teach and sanctify His followers, and he obliged all that may come to know her to belong to and obey her: “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church” (St. Matt. 16:18); “...if he refuses to listen even to the Church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (St. Matt. 18:17). The only questions that need to be addressed then are whether, in what way, and to what extent Christ’s Church is infallible.

As the Church founded by Our Lord is made up of teachers and believers, the gift of infallibility will protect her both in teaching and

belief. Infallibility is thus found in the ‘Church teaching’ and in the ‘Church believing.’ The ‘Church teaching’ consists of the successors to the Apostles, namely, the Pope of Rome and all the bishops of the world united under him; the ‘Church believing’ is the entire body of all the faithful professing the Catholic Faith.

The Church may convey her infallible teaching either in ‘solemn pronouncements’ or through her ‘ordinary teaching.’ Her solemn pronouncements include all doctrines contained in the four great Creeds (*Apostles’, Nicene, Athanasian, Profession of Pius IV*), the definitions of the Popes, or General Councils deliberating under the Pope. The Church’s ordinary teaching is that doctrine taught by the Pope and the bishops of the world in the everyday exercise of their pastoral office without interruption since Apostolic times.

Individual bishops of the Church are not infallible in themselves, but only when they teach definitively in union with the Pope. Furthermore, no individual member of the Church is infallible in belief, not even the Pope. The Pope’s infallibility pertains only to his teaching office, not to his personal beliefs.

The object of the Church’s infallibility is the ‘Deposit of Faith’. This includes all doctrines delivered by Christ and His Apostles and forming God’s ‘public’ revelation to mankind. These doctrines are found in ‘Sacred Scripture’ and ‘Tradition.’ Sacred Scripture includes all the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments as contained in the Greek Septuagint version; Tradition embraces all those truths which have been passed on from age to age either orally, in the writings of the Church Fathers, in the Acts of the Martyrs, in early paintings and inscriptions, in the liturgy, in the practices and customs of the Universal Church, and in the definitions of Popes and Councils.

Before Our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven from Mount Olivet, He commanded His disciples as follows: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you*” (St. Matt. 28:19-20). These last words of Our Lord contain the promise of doctrinal infallibility

and were directed not only to St. Peter and the other Twelve, but also to their lawful successors: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Ibid.). If Christ is with His Apostles and their successors to the end of time, it follows that their listeners are bound to receive their teaching as if it were Christ’s own. In other words, they are bound to accept it as infallible. It is idle to believe that Christ’s command to teach all nations could be effectively accomplished if the Church He established could at any time teach error on vital matters of faith and morals.

Also, in St. Matthew 16:18-20 we read the words, “and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” This is Christ’s promise that the Church will survive all infernal assaults from within and without to remain faithful to her Divine commission until the end of the world. On this basis it would again be a mockery to contend that the Church has erred in any of her dogmatic definitions, for if she has ever poisoned her children through the teaching of formal error then the gates of hell have prevailed against her and Christ’s promise has been rendered meaningless.

It is through the Holy Spirit that Christ’s perpetual assistance to the Church against hell and error is conveyed: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth ... he abides with you, and he will be in you ... the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (St. John 14:16-17; 26). The Holy Spirit is responsible for the formal teaching of the Apostles and their successors in the realm of faith and morals. The consciousness of the Holy Spirit’s corporate assistance to the Church is evident in the expression used by the Apostles during the Council of Jerusalem, “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15:28). Consequently, as the Holy Spirit is responsible for Church teaching it is impossible for the Church which is the “Body of Christ” (Eph. 1:23) and the “pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15) to apostatize into error or be destroyed.

Second objection: “*It was the Reformers of the Sixteenth Century who restored true doctrine.*”

The following two quotes from Martin Luther and John Calvin respectively suffice as a response to such a claim:

“There are almost as many sects and beliefs as there are heads; this one will not admit Baptism; that one rejects the Sacrament of the altar; another places another world between the present one and the day of judgment; some teach that Jesus Christ is not God. There is not an individual, however clownish he may be, who does not claim to be inspired by the Holy Ghost, and who does not put forth as prophecies his ravings and dreams.”¹

“It is indeed important that posterity should not know of our differences; for it is indescribably ridiculous that we, who are in opposition to the whole world, should be, at the very beginning of the Reformation, at issue among ourselves.”²

From these quotes it is clearly evident that the Reformers restored no true doctrine but rather caused much of Christendom to be “tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14).

Third objection: “*Infallibility is a failure. It has not prevented schisms and heresies among Christians.*”

The Church was not endowed with infallibility to prevent schisms and heresies, but rather to ensure that she would always remain a fountain of truth and beacon of light among the tempests of error: “A city built on a hill cannot be hid” (St. Matt. 5:14). The existence of a Church protected from error takes away all justification for schism and heresy. However, men remain free to disrupt the unity of faith in the same way they are free to reject any of the teachings or commandments of Christ.

¹ Leslie Rumble MSC, *Bible Quizzes to a Street Preacher*, Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books and Publishers, 1976, p. 22.

² Patrick F. O’Hare, *The Facts About Luther*, rev. ed., Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books and Publishers, 1987, p. 293.

The Fathers

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3, 4, 1 (c. 180 AD)

“When, therefore, we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek among others the truth which is easily obtained from the Church. For the Apostles, like a rich man in a bank, deposited with her most copiously everything which pertains to the truth; and everyone whosoever wishes draws from her the drink of life. For she is the entrance to life, while all the rest are thieves and robbers. That is why it is surely necessary to avoid them, while cherishing with the utmost diligence the things pertaining to the Church, and to lay hold of the tradition of truth. What then? If there should be a dispute over some kind of question, ought we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches in which the Apostles were familiar, and draw from them what is clear and certain in regard to that question? What if the Apostles had not in fact left writings to us? Would it not be necessary to follow the order of tradition, which was handed down to those to whom they entrusted the Churches?”

Tertullian, *The Demurrer Against the Heretics* 28, 1 (c. 200 AD)

“Grant, then, that all have erred; that the Apostle was mistaken in bearing witness; that the Holy Spirit had no such consideration for any one Church as to lead it into truth, although He was sent for that purpose by Christ, who had asked the Father to make Him the Teacher of truth; that the Steward of God and Vicar of Christ neglected His office, and permitted the Churches for a time to understand otherwise and to believe otherwise than He Himself had preached through the Apostles: now, is it likely that so many and such great Churches should have gone astray into a unity of faith?”

St. Athanasius, *Letter on the Councils of Rimini and Seleucia* 5 (361-362 AD)

“Without prefixing Consulate, month, and day, (the Fathers) wrote concerning Easter, ‘It seemed good as follows,’ for it did then seem good that there should be a general compliance; but about the faith they wrote not, ‘It seemed good,’ but, ‘thus believes the Catholic Church’; and thereupon they confessed how they believed, in order to

show that their own sentiments were not novel, but Apostolic; and what they wrote down was no discovery of theirs, but is the same as was taught by the Apostles.”

St. Athanasius, Synodal Letter to the Bishops of Africa 2 (inter 368-372 AD)

“But the word of the Lord which came through the Ecumenical Council at Nicaea remains forever.”

St. Ambrose of Milan, Letter to the Emperor Valentinian II 21, 14 (386 AD)

“This (denial of the divinity of Christ) was written in the Council of Rimini, and I am right when I shiver at the thought of that Council. I follow the teaching of the Council of Nicaea, from which neither death nor the sword shall ever be able to separate me.”

The Fathers of the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, Letter to Pope Leo I 98, 1 (451 AD)

“For if where two or three are gathered together in His name, he says He is there in the midst of them, how much more will He not show His companionship with five hundred and twenty priests, who preferred the spread of knowledge concerning Him to their own home and affairs, when you, as head to the members, showed your good will through those who represented you.”

Pope St. Gregory the Great, Letter to the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem I, 24 (591 AD)

“But all persons that the aforesaid Councils (Nicaea, Constantinople I & II, Ephesus, Chalcedon) reject, I reject; those whom they venerate, I embrace; because, since those Councils were shaped by universal consent, anyone who presumes either to loose whom they bind or to bind whom they loose overthrows not them but himself. Whoever, therefore, deems otherwise, let him be anathema.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. II, Ch. VIII: For the Holy Ghost, who presides over the Church, governs her by no other ministers than those of Apostolic succession. This Spirit, first imparted to the Apostles, has by the infinite goodness of God always continued in the Church. And just as this one Church cannot err in faith or morals, since it is guided by the Holy Ghost; so, on the contrary, all other societies arrogating to themselves the name of *church*, must necessarily...be sunk in the most pernicious errors, both doctrinal and moral.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 889: In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility. By a “supernatural sense of faith” the People of God, under the guidance of the Church’s living Magisterium, “unfailingly adheres to this faith.”

No. 890: The mission of the Magisterium is linked to the definitive nature of the covenant established by God with his people in Christ. It is this Magisterium’s task to preserve God’s people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates. To fulfil this service, Christ endowed the Church’s shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals. The exercise of this charism takes several forms...

No. 892: Divine assistance is also given to the successors of the apostles, teaching in communion with the successor of Peter, and, in a particular way, to the bishop of Rome, pastor of the whole Church, when, without arriving at an infallible definition and without pronouncing in a “definitive manner,” they propose in the exercise of the ordinary Magisterium a teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals. To this ordinary teaching the faithful “are to adhere to it with religious assent” which, though distinct from the assent of faith, is nonetheless an extension of it.

Infant Baptism

Objection: *“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.’ Therefore, only people who have faith can be baptized. So why baptize infants? It is also unfair as infants have no say in the matter.”*

Those who believe that we should baptize only adults usually quote St. Mark 16:16 for support: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” They also point out that Jesus Christ Himself was not baptized until the age of thirty. Therefore, only those who are capable of consciously accepting Christ as their “personal Lord and Savior” and have undergone a “born again” experience should be baptized.

Catholics and Fundamentalists differ radically as to the meaning and effect of Baptism. Fundamentalists hold that baptism is only an ordinance whereby the “born-again” adult makes a public manifestation of his conversion. It is not necessary for salvation as the person has already been saved by accepting Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior. Baptism does not infuse any grace to re-generate the soul; rather, the candidate’s sins are “covered up” with the acceptance of Christ. Infants without reason who die unbaptized go straight to heaven as they only need to accept Christ as Savior after they have committed sin. Therefore, baptism of infants is pointless.

Catholics on the other hand assert that Baptism is an obligatory sacrament instituted by Christ which in itself makes us born-again: “Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God” (St. John 3:5). Furthermore, baptism imprints the *character*, which is the seal of the Christian, and bestows the grace it signifies into the soul of the recipient. This includes sanctifying grace, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the infused theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the infused moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, as well as the uncreated grace of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity: “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love

him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (St. John 14:23). Lastly, the candidate receives a right to actual graces to assist him in carrying out his baptismal promises.

Consequent upon infusion of grace, all sin, original and actual, is forgiven and all temporal punishment due to sin is remitted. Scripture speaks clearly about the power baptism has to forgive sins, as well as the role it has in bestowing the Holy Spirit:

“Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

“Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16).

Without this infusion of grace, the soul cannot be in a fit state to behold the Beatific Vision upon death. Baptism has all these effects, irrespective of the age of the candidate, because the sacraments operate *ex opere operato*, that is, by their very usage. Provided the recipient places no obstacle of actual sin in the way, every sacrament properly administered bestows the grace intended.

On this basis Catholics see no reason to withhold the wonderful effects of baptism from infants until they reach the age of reason. By baptizing infants, the Catholic Church frees them as soon as possible from the dominion of Satan and admits them into the company of children of God: “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (St. Matt. 19:14). Nowhere is it stated in Scripture that baptism be administered to adults only.

According to St. Paul, baptism in the Christian religion replaces the Jewish rite of circumcision (Col. 2:11-12). This Jewish rite was normally given to infants and made them “religiously clean” and a member of God’s Chosen Race. With the coming of Christianity it is appropriate that infants should be accorded a similar and even greater

spiritual privilege—namely, incorporation into Christ’s Mystical Body through baptism. If St. Paul believed that infants were ineligible for baptism it would have been strange for him to make the above parallel with circumcision.

We can also respond to the argument that infants have no choice with another parallel. According to God’s original plan, Adam and Eve were to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with their descendants. These children, by simply being offspring of Adam, were to be born in grace and hence friends of God. In this they had no choice. With the fall of Adam from grace, disastrous consequences were to befall his children as well. Having a father who was now spiritually bankrupt, Adam’s children were no longer going to be born in grace and friends of God, but disgraced and “children of wrath.” Again, in this, Adam’s children had no choice. With the coming of Christ all things were restored. After His redemption and the subsequent abundant flow of grace Christian parents would again have the privilege Adam and Eve had for their children, that is, to place them in grace and make them friends of God—and this by infant baptism. As we are all born in original sin through no choice of our own, it seems inappropriate to argue about being made a child of God without our consent. Rather, we should be grateful for the grace!

With the enormous growth of the Church after Pentecost, large numbers of adult Jews and pagans were being converted (Acts 2:41). This is why the New Testament speaks explicitly of adult baptisms only. Obviously, these new Christians first had to also express belief in Jesus Christ before being baptized. However, in the case of some of these adults their entire families were baptized with them. Probably some of these families would have had infant children:

(The family of Cornelius and all the persons present in his house during St. Peter’s visit) *“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”* (Acts 10:47).

“A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us ... The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said

by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us..." (Acts 16:14-15).

"At the same hour of the night he (the jailer) took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay" (Acts 16:33).

"I did baptize also the household of Stephanas" (1 Cor. 1:16).

Even Martin Luther and John Calvin upheld the legitimacy of infant baptism and defended it stridently:

"Who is to be baptized? All nations, that is, all human beings, young and old, are to be baptized ... Infants, too, are to be baptized because they are included in the words 'all nations;' (and) because holy baptism is the only means whereby infants, who, too, must be born again, can ordinarily be regenerated and brought to faith."¹

"Doubtless the design of Satan in assaulting infant baptism with all his forces is to keep out of view, and gradually efface, the attestation of divine grace which the promise itself presents to our eyes ... Wherefore, if we would not maliciously obscure the kindness of God, let us present to him our infants, to whom he has assigned a place among his friends and family, that is, the members of the Church."²

As for the claim that Jesus Christ was baptized only as an adult, it should be remembered that He did not receive Christian baptism in the name of the Trinity, but the baptism of St. John the Baptist, which was only symbolic washing and did not infuse grace.

Finally, it is entirely false that infant baptism began late in the Church's history. The early Church practised it without any evidence of opposition condemning it in principle or as a novelty. However, it is true that after three centuries of evangelization, generations were

¹ *Luther's Small Catechism*, Rev. ed.

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. 2, ch. 16, sect. 554.

now Christian by family tradition and this led to a decrease in the rate of adult catechumens and baptisms.

Second objection: “*Baptism of infants is also wrong because the child is not fully immersed in water. Simply pouring or sprinkling water on the child is not baptism at all!*”

It is true that the usual meaning of baptism (Greek: *baptizein*) is immersion, and for centuries immersion was the common form of Christian baptism. However, simply because immersion was the common practice does not mean that other methods were unlawful or invalid.

The Acts of the Apostles relates how St. Paul was baptized in a house (9:17-18), while St. Peter baptized numerous people in the house of Cornelius (10:47-48). Now, archaeologists would testify that bathing tubs were not usual fixtures in the homes of the ancients. It is also highly doubtful that there was sufficient open water to baptize by immersion the three thousand who converted to the Lord after St. Peter’s first sermon (2:41). All these were probably baptized by pouring or sprinkling, just as were thousands of others according to the earliest Christian mosaics, paintings and engravings in the Catacombs and ancient churches.

Besides this, to insist on full immersion leads to situations in which people are denied baptism. Those living in climactic extremes such as deserts would find it difficult to always procure enough water to fully immerse an adult, while it would be impossible for those rendered bed-ridden by illness to be baptized. Eusebius relates that the heretic Novation “received baptism in the bed where he lay, by pouring.”³ After all, water poured on the body retains the symbolism of washing.

³ *Ecclesiastical History* 6, 43, 11.

The Fathers

The Didache 7, 1 (c. 90-150 AD)

“Baptize thus: After the foregoing instructions, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water; and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

St. Hippolytus of Rome, *The Apostolic Tradition* 21 (c. 215 AD)

“Baptize first the children; and if they can speak for themselves, let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them.”

Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus* 8, 3 (inter 244-254 AD)

“According to the usage of the Church, Baptism is given even to infants. And indeed if there were nothing in infants which required a remission of sins and nothing in them pertinent to forgiveness, the grace of Baptism would seem superfluous.”

Origen, *Commentaries on Romans* 5, 9 (inter 244-254 AD)

“The Church received from the Apostles the tradition of giving Baptism even to infants. For the Apostles, to whom were committed the secrets of divine mysteries, knew that there is in everyone the innate stains of sin, which must be washed away through water and the Spirit.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letters to Fidus* 64 (59), 5 (c. 251-252 AD)

“As to what pertains to the case of infants: you said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth...and that you did not think that one should be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day after his birth. In our council it seemed to us far otherwise.”

St. Gregory Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* 40, 17 (381 AD)

“Do you have an infant child? Allow sin no opportunity; rather, let the infant be sanctified from childhood. From the most tender age let

him be consecrated by the Spirit. Do you fear the seal because of the weakness of nature? O what a pusillanimous mother, and of how little faith! ... Give your child the Trinity, that great and noble protector."

St. Augustine of Hippo, *The Interpretation of Genesis* 10, 23, 39 (inter 401-415)

"The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except Apostolic. The age of infancy also has a great weight of witness; for it was the infant age that first merited to pour out its blood for Christ."

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. II, Ch. II: If, then, through the transgression of Adam, children can inherit original sin, with still stronger reason can they attain through Christ our Lord grace and justice that they may reign in life. This, however, cannot be effected otherwise than by Baptism.

Pastors, therefore, should inculcate the absolute necessity of administering Baptism to infants, and gradually forming their tender minds to piety by education in the Christian religion. For according to these admirable words of the wise man: *A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1250: Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the

priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.

No. 1251: Christian parents will recognize that this practice also accords with their role as nurturers of the life that God has entrusted to them.

No. 1252: The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole “households” received baptism, infants may also have been baptized.

The Invocation of Saints

Objection: “*To worship saints, like Mary, is likewise idolatry!*”

No practice of the Catholic Church has received more attention and abuse from her opponents than the ancient custom of honoring the heroic servants of God. She is charged with idolatry and superstition.

The various Protestant denominations denounce the invocation of saints as follows:

“The Romish doctrine concerning ... (the) invocation of saints is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but is rather, repugnant to the Word of God.”¹

“It cannot be proved from the Scriptures that we are to invoke the saints or seek help from them. ‘For there is one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim. 2:5) who is the only savior, the only high priest, advocate and intercessor before God.”²

“(It is) the extreme of stupidity, not to say madness, to attempt to obtain access by means of others, so as to be drawn away from him without whom access cannot be obtained.”³

The Church has been in existence nearly two thousand years. She has on her list of known saints many thousands of names of men and women to whom she pays real religious homage. However, never in

¹ *39 Articles of Religion*, Article 22 (Church of England, 1563).

² *The Augsburg Confession*, Article 21 (Lutherans, 1530).

³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 28 (1559).

her history has she given adoration to them. The Catholic Church makes a complete and clear distinction between the supreme worship that is given to God alone and the relative and inferior homage which is paid to the saints.

Catholics have always distinguished emphatically between the *cultus duliae*, which translates as “the homage of veneration,” and the *cultus latraiae*, which signifies “the worship of adoration.”

Veneration is paid to the Saints. A higher form of it, called *hyperdulia*, is given to the Blessed Virgin Mary by virtue of her singular privilege as Mother of God; but adoration is given to God alone. Any attempt to give adoration to a creature would certainly be false worship—but the Catholic Church has never given it. She adores God and God alone.

It is noteworthy that while Christ was dying on the Cross He cried out “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (St. Matt. 27:46). Due to the distance, the Chief Priests and Scribes failed to discern that Christ was in fact quoting the first verse of Psalm 21, thinking instead that He was calling upon the Prophet Elijah. Their response was not to condemn Christ for idolatry, but rather to declare, “let us see whether Elijah will come to save him” (v. 49). The belief in the intercessory power of Elijah is still held by the Jews today, as Elijah is said to be invisibly present at all Brit Millah, or circumcision ceremonies.

Second objection: “*If the Catholic Church adores only God then why do Catholics speak of praying to the saints?*”

In traditional English usage, the word “pray” simply meant to “ask.” It was common for people to speak to each other in the following terms: “I pray thee, do tell;” or, “I pray thee, do grant me my request.” In Shakespeare, the word “pritheer” is often found—a contraction of “I pray thee.” In the King James Version of the Bible, Bathsheba makes a request of King Solomon and says, “I pray thee, say me not nay” (1 Kgs. 2:20). We still find “pray” being used in such a way in various courtrooms to this day. However, with the Protestantization of the

English-speaking world, the word “pray” lost its broader meaning and was restricted to God alone. This was in conformity with Protestant theology which refuses to make any distinction within the concept of worship between *adoration* and *veneration*.

Despite the persecution of Catholics in England, they never abandoned the older usage of the word “pray.” When Catholics today speak of “praying to the saints” they simply mean asking them to intercede on their behalf. There is no intention or desire to give them that worship which is due to God alone.

Third objection: “Nevertheless, there is only one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ!”

The most common Protestant objection to the intercession of the saints is that it diminishes the intercessory role of Christ who is the “one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim. 2:5). Understood properly, Christ is the one *mediator of redemption*, for there is no other name under heaven by which man is saved. Nevertheless, this does not prevent others from acting as *intercessors of prayer*. For in the same verse to St. Timothy, St. Paul says, “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. *This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior*” (2:1-3). Christian intercessory prayer is only possible because Christ is the one mediator who allows us to go boldly into the Father’s presence through Him.

Furthermore, Scripture itself attests that the Holy Spirit “intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). The Virgin Mary interceded with Christ at the wedding of Cana (St. John 2:1-10). Abraham interceded on behalf of Sodom and Gomorra (Gen. 18:16-32). An angel interceded on behalf of Jerusalem (Zech. 1:12). The “Lord accepted the intercession of Job” after he had prayed for his friends (Job 42:7-10). Moses also interceded for the people of Israel, asking God’s mercy and grace, for the sake of the dead Patriarchs who were righteous:

“But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, ‘O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’ And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people” (Exod. 32:11-14).

Christ Himself recommended that Christians should pray and intercede for others: “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (St. Matt. 5:44). St. Paul continually recommended himself to the prayers of his brethren (Rom. 15:30; Heb. 13:18). St. James declared that the prayer of “the righteous man has great power” (St. Jas. 5:16), and Simon Magus sought the intercession of St. Peter to save him from the wrath of God (Acts 8:24). Finally, angels likewise act as intercessors:

“Another angel with a golden censer came and stood at the altar; he was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel” (Rev. 8:3-4).

Fourth objection: *“The dead are dead. They cannot hear our prayers.”*

The assertion that dead saints cannot hear our invocations rests on Ps. 115 [113]:17: “The dead do not praise the Lord...” It should be noted that this psalm was written at a time when Jewish understanding of the after-life was not yet fully developed. By the second century BC the Jews would have a better understanding of both the after-life and the intercessory role of the dead. So it was that Onias saw the deceased prophet Jeremiah praying for Israel:

“What he saw was this: Onias, who had been high priest, a noble and good man, of modest bearing and gentle manner, one who spoke fittingly and had been trained from childhood in all that belongs to excellence, was praying with outstretched hands for the whole body of the Jews. Then in the same fashion another appeared, distinguished by his gray hair and dignity, and of marvelous majesty and authority. And Onias spoke, saying, This is a man who loves the family of Israel and prays much for the people and the holy city—Jeremiah, the prophet of God. Jeremiah stretched out his right hand and gave to Judas a golden sword, and as he gave it he addressed him thus: Take this holy sword, a gift from God, with which you will strike down your adversaries” (2 Macc. 15:12-16).

At the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, Moses and Elijah appeared talking with Christ (St. Matt. 17:3). This would have been impossible if they had been “dead” according to the Protestant understanding of Psalm 115 [113]. In relating to the Pharisees the parable of the Lost Sheep, Christ stated that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (St. Luke 15:10). Furthermore, in His discourse to the Sadducees, Christ declared that the just dead are “equal to angels” (St. Luke 20:36) for God “is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive” (St. Luke 20:38). In Hebrews 12:1 the Old Testament saints are called “a great cloud of witnesses” that surround the believers in Christ. Hence, it follows that both angels and humans in heaven are aware of what is happening on earth. This is because they possess the Beatific Vision which enables them to see in God whatever knowledge is relevant to them. That is, they become “multi-scient”: “Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully” (1 Cor. 13:12). In their glorified state the saints are capable of unimaginable things, including hearing multiple prayers in various languages. The Devil himself, though he is finite, is aware of many things simultaneously and is engaged in multiple activities.

Consider also the following passage:

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in

heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (Heb. 12:22-23).

In this text St. Paul explains to the faithful that although they are still on earth, they are in communion with the heavenly Jerusalem and with the dead saints, those *righteous made perfect*. The faithful on earth are not in communion with the bodies of the saints buried in peace, but with their souls. Death does not inhibit this communion.

Fifth objection: *“The dead in heaven are totally focussed on God. They are not concerned with our prayers or with what is happening on earth.”*

The Book of Revelation in the following verses indicates otherwise:

“...the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (5:8).

“I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?’” (6:9).

“And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, ‘We give thanks to thee, Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth” (11:16-18).

Sixth objection: “*But isn’t speaking to the dead forbidden in the Old Testament?*”

The relevant passage in the Old Testament is Deuteronomy 18:10-12: “There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abominable practices the Lord your God is driving them out before you.”

What is forbidden is the *conjuring* of the dead through trances, mediums or séances in order to obtain supernatural or prophetic information. Instead, the Jews were to rely on God who would send prophets and later the Messiah: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren—him you shall heed” (Deut. 18:15).

Practises used to conjure up the dead are essentially diabolical. The power employed is that of the Devil. The persons contacted are either demons impersonating dead people or the souls of the damned. The information obtained is mixed with lies and deceptions. This is why necromancy has been condemned by the Catholic Church from earliest times down to the present.⁴ It has no resemblance to the pious practice of calling upon those in heaven to pray to God in order to obtain His spiritual favors and blessings. In fact, talking to those in heaven (in this case the angels) is practised in the Psalms:

“Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word! Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will!” (Ps. 103:20-21).

Again, when Christ talked about His death to Moses and Elijah on Tabor was He guilty of necromancy? (St. Luke 9:30). Some may argue that Elijah was not one of the dead as he was taken from the world by a fiery chariot; however, Moses did die (Deut. 34:5).

⁴ CCC # 1852, 2110-2117.

The Fathers

Inscriptions from the Catacombs

“O Atticus, sleep in peace and in the security of thy salvation and pray earnestly for our sins” (Capitol Museum, Rome);

“Gentianus, faithful, in peace who lived twelve years, eight months and sixteen days. You will intercede for us in your prayers because we know that you are in Christ” (Lateran Museum, Rome).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 23 (Mystagogic 5), 10 (c. 350 AD)

“Then we make mention also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, Apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition; next, we make mention also of the holy fathers and bishops who have already fallen asleep, and, to put it simply, of all among us who have already fallen asleep; for we believe that it will be of very great benefit to the souls of those for whom the petition is carried up, while this holy and most solemn Sacrifice is laid out.”

St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Against All Heresies* 75, 8 (377 AD)

“Furthermore, as to mentioning the names of the dead, how is there anything very useful in that? What is more timely or more excellent than that those who are still here should believe that the departed do live, and that they have not retreated into nothingness, but that they exist and are alive with the Master? And so that this most august proclamation might be told in full, how do they have hope, who are praying for the brethren as if they were but sojourning in a foreign land? Useful too is the prayer fashioned on their behalf, even if it does not force back the whole of guilty charges laid to them.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Against Faustus the Manichean* 20, 21 (c. 400 AD)

“A Christian people celebrates together in religious solemnity the memorials of the martyrs, both to encourage their being imitated and

so that it can share in their merits and be aided by their prayers. But it is done in such a way that our altars are not set up to any one of the martyrs—although in their memory—but to God Himself, the God of those martyrs ... That worship, which the Greeks call latria and for which there is in Latin no single term, and which is expressive of the subjection owed to Divinity alone, we neither accord nor teach that it should be accorded to any save to the one God.”

St. Jerome, *Against Vigilantius* 6 (406 AD)

“You say in your book that while we live we are able to pray for each other, but afterwards when we have died, the prayer of no person for another can be heard; and this is especially clear since the martyrs, though they cry vengeance for their own blood, have never been able to obtain their request. But if the Apostles and martyrs while still in the body can pray for others, at a time when they ought still be solicitous about themselves, how much more will they do so after their crowns, victories, and triumphs.”

St. John Damascene, *Apologetical Sermons Against those who Reject Sacred Images* 3, 41 (post 725 AD)

“We worship and adore the Creator and Maker alone, as God who by His nature is to be worshipped. We worship also the Holy Mother of God, not as God, but as God’s Mother according to the flesh. Moreover, we worship also the saints, as elect friends of God, and as having gotten ready audience with Him.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. III, Ch. II: True, there is but one Mediator, Christ the Lord, who alone has reconciled us to the heavenly Father through His blood, and who, *having obtained eternal redemption, and having entered once into the holies, ceases not to intercede for us.* But it by no means follows that it is therefore unlawful to have recourse to the intercession of the Saints. If, because we have one Mediator Jesus Christ it were unlawful to ask the intercession of the Saints, the Apostle would never have recommended himself with so much

earnestness to the prayers of his brethren on earth. For the prayers of the living would lessen the glory and dignity of Christ's Mediatorship not less than the intercession of the Saints in heaven.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 955: So it is the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who sleep in the peace of Christ is in no way interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the constant faith of the Church, this union is reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods.

No. 956: *The intercession of the saints* “being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness ... [T]hey do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus ... So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped.”

Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life.

St. Dominic, dying, to his brothers.

I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux,
The Final Conversations.

No. 959: *In the one family of God.* “For if we continue to love one another and to join in praising the Most Holy Trinity—all of us who are sons of God and form one family in Christ—we will be faithful to the deepest vocation of the Church.”

Jesuits!

Objection: *“The Jesuits are the Gestapo of the Pope. They were founded to oppose the light of the Reformation and are known for their cunning, their advocacy of dubious moral principles, and their deceptiveness!”*

On 15th August 1534, in the crypt of the church of Montmartre in Paris, seven men renounced the world. They were Ignatius de Loyola, Francis Xavier, James Laynez, Alphonsus Salmeron, Nicolas Bobadilla, Peter Faber and Simon Rodriguez. Of these seven, all were Spanish except the latter two, who were from Savoy and Portugal respectively. Little did any one suspect at the time that a movement had begun that would profoundly shape world history for the next five centuries.

At the same time that Martin Luther was raising the banner of revolt against the Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church, God was raising another individual to combat his divisiveness and impiety. That man was St. Ignatius de Loyola. Born into the noble Loyola family, Ignatius in his youthful manhood was caught up in the sentimental chivalrous spirit of the Renaissance, desirous of fighting heroic wars and charming the ladies at Court. It was while taking part in a siege of a local castle in Pamplona, Navarre, that a cannon ball fired in the battle exploded close enough to him to shatter one of his legs. From this physical injury that befell Ignatius, God was to draw many spiritual blessings.

In the months of recuperation that followed, Ignatius was principally concerned about whether he would ever walk normally again, and whether his damaged leg would end up shorter than the other. Boredom set in, so he commanded one of his servants to get books for him to read in order to pass the time more easily. When the servant returned he told Ignatius that all he could find was a book on the life of Christ and some others on the lives of the Saints. At first indignant, Ignatius soon resigned himself and began reading them.

Before long, the action of God's grace began to enlighten our hero. Overcoming an initial sense of insipidness, Ignatius saw in the lives of Christ and the Saints a collection of heroic deeds that far outdid the greatest deeds of any swordsman or chevalier. Before long, Ignatius declared, "*If they could do it, so can I*"(1520).

There followed for Ignatius years of study, spiritual purgation and voluntary deprivation. Choosing to forego his family's wealth, Ignatius begged to pay for his studies at Paris University. It was there that he met St. Francis Xavier and Bl. Peter Faber. The three eventually shared the same dormitory while living at university.

By 1534, these three had been joined by four others. Ignatius now had in mind to form a new company living under formal vows. Besides the three normal vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, Ignatius proposed a fourth—a vow to place themselves at the disposal of the Pope. Ignatius saw a need to re-emphasize obedience to the Holy Father at a time when Protestantism was sweeping northern Europe and taking millions away from such obedience. For Ignatius, the root cause of this new disobedience was the same old enemy—pride—the same pride that caused the highest angel and the first man to fall.

By 1540, Ignatius' new company numbered sixty. An initial plan to go to the Holy Land was thwarted by war with the Ottomans. Instead, they worked in Rome serving the sick and poor. Ignatius himself was also studiously drawing up the company's constitutions. This he did with great prayer and deliberation. In the private notes of Ignatius we find that he listed eight arguments in favor of one article's inclusion and eighteen arguments in favor of an alternative. With respect to another article, Ignatius spent forty days praying for light on whether or not to include it.

On September 27, 1540, Pope Paul III approved the constitutions of Ignatius' company in the bull *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae*. After carefully reading its provisions the Holy Father exclaimed, "The finger of God is here!" The formal name of Ignatius' group was now the *Company of Jesus*. Later it would be changed to the *Society of*

Jesus. Individual members were informally known as *Jesuits*. The constitutions were devoid of articles that required long vigils, fasts, corporal penances and the recitation of the Divine Office in common. Rather, practices were designed to enable members to be involved in active and varied tasks—shock troops available for any mission the Holy Father and Holy Mother Church would ask of them.

The constitutions required total obedience towards the General of the Company, who was elected for life. In his turn, the General promised entire submission to the Pope. In the words of Ignatius, “Those who live under obedience are to allow themselves to be moved and directed by Divine Providence through their superiors just as though they were a dead body.” Though the Company possessed a strict hierarchy, any member could communicate directly with the General.

If the constitutions were the governing laws of the Company, the *Spiritual Exercises* were its soul. Composed by Ignatius in the wild solitude of Manresa, it is a manual of precepts and maxims to be used on retreats to aid the soul in its choice of vocation and along the road of sanctification. The *Exercises* are to be practised, not simply read through. In sanctioning their use, Pope Paul III described the *Exercises* as “full of piety and holiness, very useful and salutary, tending to the edification and spiritual progress of the faithful.”

Ignatius had no wish for his spiritual sons in the Company to be raised to episcopal honors. Rather, he desired for them another glory: that persecution and suffering might be their lot. On one occasion Ignatius was radiant after a long meditation. Asked why this was so he replied, “Our Lord has deigned to assure me that, in consequence of my earnest prayer to this intention, the Society will never cease to enjoy the heritage of His Passion in the midst of contradictions and persecutions.”

Being founded during the first decades of the Reformation, it was inevitable that the Company of Jesus should have a major role in combating Protestantism. The Jesuits were intent upon reunifying a Christendom now shattered by the various heresies of the innovators. Heresy had spread rapidly, due to the weakening of knowledge and

practice of the Catholic Faith among western Europeans, a weakening caused by the humanism of the Renaissance. Education was seen a principal means towards redressing this crisis.

Within the Company, members undertook up to thirteen years of study and formation before entering upon their life's apostolic work. Once his formation was complete, the Jesuit possessed the armoury that a thorough knowledge of the natural and spiritual sciences offered. Then, he was in a position to be the master educator of others.

The Jesuits aimed at reinvigorating education in the Faith at all levels of society. For those called to be rulers of either Church or State, the Jesuits founded the Roman and German Colleges in Rome. By the mid-1580's the Roman College alone had over 2,100 students. Between the years 1552 and 1750, one Pope, twenty-four Cardinals, twenty-one Archbishops, two hundred and twenty-one bishops, six Electors of the Holy Roman Empire and nineteen princes were former graduates of the German College.

For the education of all youth who entered Jesuit schools, the fifth General of the Order, Father Claudius Aquaviva, devised the *Ratio Studiorum* (Plan of Studies). In its day, the *Ratio* was considered the greatest system of study ever devised. According to Francis Bacon, "Never has anything more perfect been invented." The *Ratio* produced countless celebrated men in the fields of science, history, antiquity, mathematics and literature. The following all studied under this method: Popes Gregory XIII, Benedict XIV, Pius VII, St. Francis de Sales, the preacher Bossuet, the philosopher Descartes, generals Don Juan of Austria, Tilly, Wallenstein and Conde, and Emperors Ferdinand and Maximilian of Austria.

Within the Company of Jesus itself, a plethora of men of academic distinction was produced. Two of the original Jesuits, Fathers Laynez and Salmeron, were theologians of such high calibre that they were both appointed official theologians representing the Holy See at the Council of Trent. They were allowed to address the Council Fathers for three hours at a time when the customary limit was one hour. The entire Council was even suspended on one occasion after Father

Layne became ill. Other eminent Jesuit scholars and men of outstanding achievement included:

- Father Christopher Clavius, the “Christian Euclid,” who assisted in the revision of the calendar.
- Father Suarez, the “Jesuit Aquinas” (called the *Doctor Eximius* by Pope Paul V).
- Father Cornelius a Lapide, the great Scripture commentator.
- Father Emmanuel Sa, who revised St. Jerome’s Latin Vulgate.
- Father Bourdeloue, the highly eloquent and popular preacher in the Court of King Louis XIV of France.
- Father Fritz, who published the first map of the Amazon River in 1707.
- Father Gusmao, who invented the balloon.
- Father Terzi, who invented signs for the blind to communicate their thoughts.
- Father Allonez, who discovered Lake Superior in North America.
- Father Marquette, who discovered the mouth of the Missouri River.
- Father Goes, who discovered the overland route from India to China.
- Jesuits in Peru discovered the medicinal qualities of quinine.
- Jesuits discovered the use of India-rubber.
- Jesuits imported the rhubarb plant from Turkey.
- Jesuits imported turkeys from China.

Not only were the Jesuits outstanding educators and men of great achievement, they were also missionaries of the highest zeal and courage. Due to their preaching and apostolic works, whole regions and countries were restored to the Catholic Church. These included parts of Germany, Austria and Bohemia. Protestant influence in Poland and Hungary was significantly reduced, while the valiant efforts of the graduates of the Douai College in Belgium kept the underground Church in England alive.

Campion, Parsons, Southwell, Garnet and Ireland became household names to English Catholics during the era when Catholicism in

England was terribly repressed. These Jesuits preached the Faith in a land where spies abounded watching for Catholic activity, and would continue to witness for Christ in prison, under torture, and on the Tyburn gibbet. Anti-Jesuit hysteria was whipped up from time to time in order to justify and maintain severe anti-Catholic laws. Father Henry Garnet was executed for the alleged Gunpowder Plot of 1605, and six other Jesuits were executed for the fabricated Titus Oates Plot of 1678.

Even more impressive was Jesuit missionary activity outside of Europe. The greatest of the overseas missionaries was the intrepid St. Francis Xavier. He single-handedly introduced the Catholic Faith to India, Indonesia and Japan, enduring incredible hardships from hostile locals, language barriers, disease and poor climates. Only a premature death prevented him entering the mysterious land of China. That mission was achieved by another brilliant innovative missionary, Matteo Ricci. The work of St. Francis in India was carried on by Fathers Barzeus, Mesquita, de Torres and Robert de Nobili. Adopting the dress and manners of the Brahmin, the saintly Father de Nobili, early in the 1600's, penetrated into this hitherto inaccessible caste and began to convert and baptize them. By the end of the century, the mission numbered 150,000.

In South America, Father Emmanuel de Nobrega, Bl. Ignatius Azevedo, and Bl. Joseph Anchieta labored for the conversion of the natives in Brazil. The latter, gifted with the charisms of tongues and miracles, wrote a rule of life for the *Reductions*, communities of native Indian converts. The most famous of the Reductions were those of Paraguay. Together, they formed a virtual empire based on virtue. Even one of the greatest enemies of Christianity, Voltaire, said of the Reductions, "they appear to be in some respects the triumph of humanity."

North America was no less a missionary field of activity for the Jesuits. French Jesuits such as Fathers Lejeune, Bressani, Jogues, Lalemant and Brebeuf worked tirelessly among the Iroquois and Huron tribes in north-east America. Epic heroism was not lacking in

the horrific torture of Father Bressani and the martyrdom of Saint Isaac Jogues in the 1640's.

Nor was heroism lacking elsewhere. Returning by ship to Brazil in 1570, Bl. Ignatius Azevedo, together with thirty-nine other Jesuits were intercepted by a Dutch pirate. All were offered their lives and freedom if they apostatized to Calvinism. All of them, to the youngest novice, refused and were subsequently butchered. As he fell, mortally wounded, Bl. Ignatius Azevedo declared, "Angels and men are witness that I die on behalf of the holy Church, Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic."

This heroism was surpassed by the Jesuit missionaries of Japan. By 1597, the members of the infant church founded by St. Francis Xavier numbered two hundred thousand. The Taicosama (or Emperor), stirred into believing that the Jesuits were a threat to his rule, launched a massive persecution of the Church that lasted for decades. Among the hundreds of thousands that suffered for the Faith were numerous Jesuits. Three were martyred in Nagasaki in 1597; Father Charles Spinola was martyred in 1622 after being confined to a cage for four years; in the same year Father Constanzo was burnt alive and Father Carvalho froze to death after being thrown into an ice pond with some of his converts; in 1626, the Jesuit Provincial, Father de Couros, expired after spending many months hiding and suffering in a pit; his successor, Father Sebastian Vieyra, was arrested and put to death in 1632; in 1633, twenty-four Jesuits received the martyr's crown; Father Mastrilli was beheaded in 1637; and Father Anthony Rubino and four other Jesuits were executed after seven months' torture in 1643.

Only one Jesuit apostatized in the midst of all this—Father Christopher Ferreyra. After five hours of torture he surrendered and became a turncoat, assisting the Japanese authorities over the next nineteen years to hunt down and arrest his former brothers. In 1652, however, he confessed himself a traitor and announced his desire to return to his Order and God. Sixty-eight hours of torture failed to break him, and Father Christopher died purified by his repentance and suffering.

In addition to the great missionaries and martyrs, there have been many other outstanding Jesuit saints:

- *St. Francis Borgia*: the princely Spaniard who renounced a life of worldly honors to become the third General of the Order.
- *St. Stanislaw Kostka*: the holy Polish youth who spent just ten months in the Order before his death at the age of eighteen. Despite the fact that his profound humility shrouded many of his gifts, his reputation had spread far and wide, as evidenced by the throngs that came to venerate his remains.
- *St. Aloysius Gonzaga*: another youth of Italian background and angelic innocence who died at the early age of twenty-one while nursing the sick in Roman hospitals.
- *St. Peter Canisius*: the great apologist and missionary of Germany where, for fifty years, he labored through preaching and writing for the salvation of souls. His catechism, a masterpiece of brevity and clarity, was translated into every European language.
- *St. John Berchmans*: a native of Belgium, he was known never to have committed an act or utter a word the least imperfect.
- *St. Robert Bellarmine*: the great theologian and Doctor of the Church whose apologetical works against Protestantism were unchallenged in his day.
- *St. Francis Regis*: the French missionary who tirelessly evangelised the villages of southern France, hearing up to two thousand confessions a month.
- *St. Peter Claver*: another Spaniard who gave himself heart and soul to the physical and spiritual service of many thousands of Negro slaves, particular those cursed by leprosy. He called himself, “the slave of the Slaves.”

All the above missionaries, martyrs and saints are but a sample of the great men who belonged to the Society of Jesus. Where there exists such radical good it is not surprising that an equally radical opposing hatred would simultaneously arise. By the middle of the eighteenth century, powerful secular forces were combining to destroy the Jesuits. Their real target was the Church in general, but to destroy the Church it was felt necessary first to destroy her vanguard.

The alliance against the Jesuits comprised the following: de Pombal in Portugal, Choiseul, Madame de Pompadour and the French Parliament in France; d'Aranda and Charles III in Spain; Joseph II in Austria, Tanucci in Naples, Jansenists, and free-thinkers such as Voltaire. In carefully planned stages, the Jesuits were expelled from the Portuguese, French and Spanish Empires, then Naples and Parma. All the protests of Pope Clement XIII were ignored. After Spain threatened to leave the Church altogether, Pope Clement XIV signed the decree *Dominus ac Redemptor Noster* suppressing the Jesuits (21st July 1773). The General Superior Lorenzo Ricci was then imprisoned.

Ironically, the Order survived in Protestant Prussia and Orthodox Russia, for the leaders of these two nations were not bound to obey the Papal decree. Subsequent Popes Pius VI and Pius VII wanted to restore the Order. By now, Europe was being torn by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. This chaos led to the destruction of the Bourbon monarchies that campaigned against the Jesuits. Happily, after the downfall of Napoleon and the release of Pius VII from captivity, the Jesuits were restored by Papal decree on 7th August, 1814.

Numerous other attacks have also been made against the Jesuits over the centuries. Protestants have repeated claims that the Jesuits taught dubious and immoral doctrines, including regicide and the saying "the end justifies the means." Cries have also been raised about the alleged "*Jesuit Oath*" and the "*Monita Secreta*."

The charge of regicide is traced to a work published in Spain in 1599 by the Jesuit, Mariana. He laid down the principle that a king who

violates the rights of his subjects and his coronation oath may lawfully be deposed and even put to death. General Aquaviva, on being made aware of the contents of this work, immediately condemned it and ordered the work to be suppressed until the objectionable parts were purged. The original has only been preserved by Protestant controversialists seeking to make capital out of it.

The maxim “the end justifies the means”, rightly understood, is correct. It means that there is always a right way of achieving a right thing. So, if it is permissible to eat beef it is right to kill and cook oxen; if it is permissible to have children, it is right to marry; if it is permissible to kill in self-defense, it is right to make and bear arms, etc. If it means that one may do evil for a good intention, or that a good end or purpose justifies *any* (immoral) means, then this doctrine is condemned by the Catholic Church, as it was by St. Paul (Rom. 3:8).

The “*Monita Secreta*” were said to be secret instructions given to all Jesuits to pursue every crooked and unprincipled tactic to advance the interests of the Society, even at the expense of other Catholic religious orders. In reality, the *Monita* is an elaborate fraud emanating originally from Cracow, Poland in 1614. All reasonable Protestant historians hold the *Monita* to be simply a spurious lampoon of the Order. Likewise, the “*Jesuit Oath*” is nothing more than the hysterical fabrication of one Robert Ware in his work, *Foxes and Firebrands*, produced in the late seventeenth century. Among other things, the oath swears all Jesuits to assume the outward form of any religion in order to deceive unwitting Protestants back into the arms of Rome. Of course, no such oath was ever taken by any Jesuit. It reminds one of the fabricated plots of the same period implicating Catholics in alleged attempts to overthrow the English Monarchy aimed at re-igniting anti-Catholic sentiment throughout Britain.

The above illustrates the contribution of the Society of Jesus to the cause of Christ and the Church in the world since her foundation. Today, the Society of Jesus continues with a different collection of triumphs and crosses. Those members who strive to uphold faithfully the original spirit of St. Ignatius maintain the struggle for orthodoxy

Defend the Faith!

and fidelity to the Holy Father. In all things these Jesuits forge on, keeping in mind St. Ignatius' original motto for the Society, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* (For the Greater Glory of God).

Justification and Salvation

Questions: *“Are you born-again?” “Are you saved?” “Do you have assurance of salvation?” “Do you know you will go to heaven if you die now?”*

These are all difficult questions Catholics are confronted with from time to time by “born-again” Christians. In the face of these questions Catholics are often left dumbfounded, confused, bemused, or are led even to renounce their faith.

What do Fundamentalists mean by these questions? How should Catholics respond? Are they even valid questions?

“Are you born-again?”

Fundamentalists believe they are “born again” by simply accepting Jesus Christ as their “personal Lord and Savior.” Once Christ is accepted in this way one is saved, or “born again” (St. John 3:3). However, Christ specifically tells us that we are “born again” through Baptism:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (St. John 3:5).

Fundamentalists regard Baptism as only an ordinance and not necessary for salvation. Contrary to this, the Catholic Church basing itself on the following texts teaches that Baptism is necessary for salvation:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (St. John 3:5).

“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you...” (1 Pet. 3:21).

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved...” (St. Mark 16:16).

Fundamentalists assert that upon accepting Christ as personal Savior one’s sinful soul is “covered up” by His *imputed* merits. However, Sacred Scripture tells us that our sins are not simply “covered up” but actually washed away, and this by Baptism:

“Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

“Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16).

“...he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Tit. 3:5-7).

Furthermore, Scripture throughout conceives the forgiveness of sins as a real and total removal: “wash,” “cleanse” (Ps. 51 [50]:2; 1 John 1:7); “removes” (Ps. 103 [102]:12); “takes away” (St. John 1:29; 1 John 3:5); “inner renewal” (Eph. 4:23); “washed,” “sanctified” (1 Cor. 6:11).

Even the sixteenth century Protestant leader John Calvin wrote the following:

“Paul proves his previous assertion that Christ destroys sin in His people from the effect of baptism, by which we are initiated into faith in Him.”¹

¹ *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries*, 1540, 8:122.

Classical Fundamentalists and Evangelicals teach that even after one is justified, the soul remains “totally depraved,”² covered only by Christ’s imputed merits. However, Scripture tells us that the Christian becomes a “temple of the Holy Spirit” and that the soul is filled with the life of the Blessed Trinity:

“Jesus said to her, ‘Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life’” (St. John 4:14).

“He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive.” (St. John 7:38).

“If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (St. John 14:23).

“...through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4).

Many Fundamentalists, etc., hold that all the saved in heaven are equal because Christians when justified all receive the same mystical covering of Christ’s imputed merits. However, Scripture tells us that each of the saved will receive a different reward and shine with a greater or lesser glory depending on their own meritorious works done in faith:

“Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear” (St. Matt. 13:8).

² Calvin taught “total depravity” in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559 ed.), Bk. 2, ch. 2, sect. 26-27; ch. 3, sect. 1-7; ch. 4, sect. 1-5.

“He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor” (1 Cor 3:8).

“There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory” (1 Cor. 15:41).

“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done” (Rev 22:12).

Our Lord spoke of those who are greater and lesser in the Kingdom of Heaven:

“Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (St. Matt. 5:19).

In the Parable of the Talents (St. Matt. 25:14ff.) the three servants who had received varying talents received similarly varying rewards.

Ever since the beginning of the Reformation, Protestants have stridently claimed that we are justified by faith alone and that good works are not necessary for salvation. This is based on Martin Luther’s interpretation and insertion of the word “alone” in Romans 3:28 and 5:1. At most, they say, good works are only the results of imputed justification, not necessities in their own right. John Calvin was of the view that the whole Reformation stood or fell on the issue of “faith alone.” For both Luther and Calvin, Catholics taught a gospel of justification by “good works.”

In response to the Protestant challenge the Catholic Church formally declared as follows:

“If anyone says man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the

teaching of the law without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.”³

In fact, Scripture repeatedly tells us of the need for good works to be saved:

“Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (St. Matt. 7:21).

“If you would enter life, keep the commandments” (St. Matt. 19:17).

“And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said to him, What is written in the law? How do you read? And he answered, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (St. Luke 10:25-27).

“And a ruler asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” (St. Luke 18:18-20).

(God) *“will render to every man according to his works” (Rom. 2:6).*

“And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2).

“For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:10).

³ Council of Trent, Canon 1 on Justification, Jan. 13, 1545.

“What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save you? ... So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead ... Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren? ... You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone ... For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead” (St. Jas. 2:14; 17; 20-26).

There are numerous other verses in Scripture that concur with the above, speaking both of the meritorious value of good works as well as their necessity to enter eternal life: St. Matt 6:3-5; 6:19; 13:23; 25:31; St. Luke 3:8; 21:1; St. John 5:29; 1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Cor. 4:51; Gal. 6: 7-9; Col. 3:23-25; 1 John 2:4; 1 John 3:18; 1 John 5:3, etc., etc. The list is virtually endless. The notion of “faith alone” appears in Scripture only twice (St. James 2:17 and 2:24), where it is condemned.

“Are you saved?”

Salvation has a three-dimensional element:

- (i) We have been saved. The objective salvation, or redemption, by Christ’s death on the cross on our behalf. This is an unmerited free gift from God: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).⁴
- (ii) We are being saved by working out our salvation *“in fear and trembling”* (Phil. 2:12).
- (iii) We will be saved if we persevere through God’s grace: *“Whoever holds out to the end”* (St. Matt. 10:22).

Fundamentalists believe that upon the one-off act of accepting Christ

⁴ Eph. 2:8-9 is one of the most frequently used verses to support “faith alone” doctrine. Yet the very next verse (v. 10) illustrates St. Paul’s belief that good works proceeding from grace are necessary for salvation: *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

as ‘their personal Lord and Savior’ they are ‘saved,’ and that essentially nothing further needs to be done except wait for death. However, Scripture tells us that Christians should be working constantly to earn their salvation:

“Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

“Do you have assurance of salvation?”

Fundamentalists believe that once they are ‘saved’ they cannot lose their salvation, not even by serious sin. This was the teaching of Luther:

“Even if you sin greatly, believe even more greatly, and be a sinner and sin boldly but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly. No sin will separate us from the Lamb even though we commit fornication and murder a thousand times a day.”³

In contrast, Christ taught that *“whoever, then, relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven”* (St. Matt. 5:19).

Therefore, the Catholic Church, relying on these words of Christ and the following verses teaches that disobeying the Ten Commandments can cause us to lose our salvation:

“Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

“...but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:27).

³ Epistle # 99 to Melanchthon, *Let Your Sins Be Strong*, 1 Aug. 1521.

“Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

“You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace” (Gal 5:4).

“For if we wilfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries” (Heb. 10:26-27).

“For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them” (2 Pet. 2:20-21).

“Do you know you will go to heaven if you die now?”

Fundamentalists believe if they die now, that they are certain of entering heaven. However, Scripture tells us that St. Paul himself had no such belief:

“I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me” (1 Cor. 4:4).

“Not that I have already won the prize, already reached fulfillment. I only press on, in hope of winning the mastery, as Christ Jesus has won the mastery over me” (Phil. 3:12).

In conclusion, how does one receive new birth, justification, salvation and eternal life:

- By grace (Eph. 2:8).
- By Christ’s Blood (Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:22).
- By Christ’s Cross (Eph. 2:16; Col. 2:14).
- By faith in Christ (St. John 3:16; Acts 16:31).

- By repentance (Acts 2:38; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- By baptism (St. John 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21).
- By confessing publicly with our mouths (Rom. 10:9).
- By knowing and adhering to the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).
- By obeying the Commandments (St. Matt. 5:19 & 19:17).
- By the doing of good works in faith (St. James 2:24).

We could add others to the list, but our point has been made. The first three express what God has done to save us; all the others express our required response in co-operation with God. All of the latter are non-negotiable.

“Are you born-again?” Yes, answers the Catholic: by baptism (St. John 3:5), faith in Christ and in the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23) and obeying the Ten Commandments (St. Matt. 19:17).

“Are you saved?” “We are redeemed,” is our answer, “and like St. Paul we are working out our salvation in *fear and trembling*” (Phil. 2:12), doing good and avoiding evil, waiting for judgment day with hope when we will be judged according to all our works” (2 Cor. 5:10).

“Do you have assurance of salvation?” Like St. Paul, the Catholic answers, *“I punish my body and subdue it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified”* (1 Cor. 9:27).

“Do you know you will go to heaven if you die now?” Again with St. Paul we answer, *“I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me”* (1 Cor. 4:4).

The Fathers

The Shepherd of Hermas Parable 9, 16, 2 (c. 140-155 AD)

“They had need to come up through the water, so that they might be made alive; for they could not otherwise enter into the Kingdom of God except by putting away the mortality of their former life. These also, then, who had fallen asleep received the seal of the Son of God,

and entered into the Kingdom of God. For before a man bears the name of the Son of God, he is dead. But when he receives the seal, he puts mortality aside and again receives life. The seal, therefore, is the water. They go down into the water dead, and come out of it alive.”

St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 61 (c. 155 AD)

“Then they are led by us to a place where there is water; and there they are reborn in the same kind of rebirth in which we ourselves were reborn: in the name of God, the Lord and Father of all and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they receive the washing with water. For Christ said, ‘unless you be reborn, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven’. The reason for doing this, we have learned from the Apostles.”

St. Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 2, 16 (c. 181 AD)

“Moreover, those things which were created from the waters were blessed by God, so that this might also be a sign that men would at a future time receive repentance and remission of sins through water and the bath of regeneration—all who proceed to the truth and are born again and receive a blessing from God.”

Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor of Children* 1, 6, 26, 1 (ante 202 AD)

“When we are baptized, we are enlightened. Being enlightened, we are adopted as sons. Adopted as sons, we are made perfect. Made perfect, we are become immortal. ‘I say,’ he declares, ‘you are gods and sons of the Most High.’ This work is variously called grace, illumination, perfection, and washing. It is a washing by which we are cleansed of sins; a gift of grace by which the punishments due our sins are remitted.”

Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 6, 14, 108, 4 (ante 217 AD)

“When we hear, ‘Your faith has saved you,’ we do not understand (the Lord) to say simply that they will be saved who have believed in whatever manner, even if works have not followed. To begin with, it was to the Jews alone that He spoke this phrase, who had lived in accord with the law and blamelessly, and who had lacked only faith in the Lord.”

Origen, *Commentaries on St. John 19, 6* (inter 226-232 AD)

“Whoever dies in his sins, even if he profess to believe in Christ, does not truly believe in Him; and even if that which exists without works be called faith, such faith is dead in itself, as we read in the Epistle bearing the name of James.”

St. Jerome, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians 2, 3, 11* (c. 386 AD)

“But since in the Law no one is justified before God, it is evident that the just man lives by faith’ ... It should be noted that he does not say that a man, a person, lives by faith, lest it be thought that he is condemning good works. Rather, he says the just man lives by faith. He implies thereby that whoever would be faithful and would conduct his life according to the faith can in no other way arrive at the faith or live in it except first he be a just man of pure life, coming up to the faith as it were by certain degrees.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. III, Ch. I: ...in these our days there are not wanting those who, to their own serious injury, have the impious hardihood to assert that the observance of the law, whether easy or difficult, is by no means necessary for salvation ... A man, it is true, may be justified, and from wicked may become righteous, before he has fulfilled, by external acts, each of the Commandments; but no one who has arrived at the use of reason can be justified, unless he is resolved to keep all of God’s Commandments.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1987: The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ” and through Baptism:

But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:8-11).

No. 1989: The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is conversion, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man."

No. 1992: Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:21-26).

Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary as “Mother of God”

Objection: “*This so-called veneration of the Virgin Mary as ‘Mother of God’ is nothing but ‘Mariolatry’ and blasphemy!*”

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). This passage, called the *protoevangelion*, is the first promise of the Messiah, and the future defeat of the Devil.

The woman in the above passage is the Blessed Virgin Mary, her offspring is Our Lord Jesus Christ. There has been distinct controversy over the centuries among Biblical scholars as to whether the text should read “*she*,” “*he*” or “*it shall bruise*” (or crush). St. Jerome, who was fluent in the ancient Biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek, when translating the Bible into Latin rendered it as *Ipsa*, or ‘she shall crush,’ rather than *Ipse*, ‘he shall crush.’ So, likewise, did many other Fathers of the Church read this passage. In any case, the meaning is the same, as it is through her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, that the Blessed Virgin Mary crushes the Devil.¹

Genesis 3:15 together with the following passages form the basis for veneration of the Virgin Mary as Mother of God:

¹ It is also interesting to note that in two great Marian apparitions which have been officially approved by the Church, namely Guadalupe (1531) and Rue de Bac (1830), Our Lady appeared standing triumphantly, crushing the head of a serpent. In fact, in the former of these apparitions, Our Lady actually announced herself to Juan Diego as Our Lady of “Tequatzacuepae,” or “the Lady that crushes the Serpent.”

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, His name shall be called Emmanuel (which means God with us)” (Is. 7:14; cf. St. Matt. 1:23).

“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6).

“And he came to her and said: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you” (St. Luke 1:28).

This passage is also a source of much controversy. Most Protestants would prefer to render the original Greek *kecharitomene* as ‘highly favored’ rather than ‘full of grace.’ *Kecharitomene* certainly relates to “grace” as its root word *charis* literally means “grace.”² In fact, a strict translation of *kecharitomene* is “you who have been graced.” Of the two options, “full of grace” is a more clear and definite rendering of the angel’s words than is “favor.” This conclusion is supported by the authority of the Latin Fathers; the Syriac and Arabic versions of the Bible; and even the writings of the heretics Wycliff, Coverdale and Tyndale.

“And she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’” (St. Luke 1:42-43).

“...for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (St. Luke 1:48).

The Church distinguishes emphatically between *cultus duliae*, which translates as “the homage of veneration,” and *cultus latraiae*, which signifies “the worship of adoration.” Veneration is paid to the Saints; a higher form of it, called *hyperdulia*, is given to the Mother of God; but adoration is given to God alone. Any attempt to give it to a creature

² The King James Version of the Bible translates the word *charis* 129 times as “grace.”

would certainly be false worship—but the Catholic Church has never given it. She adores God and God only.

Most Evangelical Protestants abhor the title of “Mother of God” because for them it implies that Catholics believe the Virgin Mary existed before God, and that God only came into existence after being born from Mary. In fact, the term “Mother of God” was defined by the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) in response to the Christological controversy ignited by Nestorius, then Patriarch of Constantinople. The heresy attributed to Nestorius held that in Christ there existed not *one divine Person* with two natures, human and divine, but *two separate Persons, one human and one divine*, with two natures, human and divine. Consequently, the Virgin Mary, as she supplied only Christ’s human flesh and not His divinity, was only mother of Christ’s humanity and therefore in no sense could be called Mother of God. The Church, upholding that Christ was one divine Person only, and noting that the Virgin Mary was the mother of this divine Person, defined dogmatically that she could properly be called “Mother of God.”

Surprisingly, John Calvin expressed exactly the same view when writing about Mary:

“It cannot be denied that God in choosing and destining Mary to be the Mother of His Son, granted her the highest honor ... Elizabeth calls Mary, Mother of the Lord, because the unity of the person in the two natures of Christ was such that she could have said that the mortal man engendered in the womb of Mary was at the same time the eternal God.”³

Second objection: “*Mary is not so important, the Bible barely mentions her.*”

Those who oppose or try to minimize the honor given to the Virgin Mary often raise this simple objection. Some even liken the role of the Virgin Mary to that of an eggshell. What is important is the content of

³ *Calvini Opera, Corpus Reformatorum*, Braunschweig-Berlin, 1863-1900, vol. 45, p. 348.

the egg itself, the shell is disposable. The Virgin Mary was only important to bring Christ into the world. Once Christ had arrived His Mother was “no longer necessary.” Such people even cite St. Matthew 12:46 ff. as evidence of Mary’s alleged inconsequential role: “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? ... For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

This passage, however, only affirms the glory of the Virgin Mary. Christ was making the valid point that merit in the eyes of God the Father is based on obedience rather than blood ties. Not only was the Virgin Mary privileged for having been chosen to be the Mother of Christ (“for he who is mighty has done great things for me”: St. Luke 1:49) but she also perfectly fulfilled God’s will throughout her entire life: “behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word” (St. Luke 1:38).

Rather than being hardly mentioned in the Bible, the Virgin Mary is extensively mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, besides Gen. 3:15 and Is. 7:14 mentioned above, Mary is mentioned under various ‘types’:

- (i) *The Tree of Life*: planted by God in the middle of Paradise, this tree is a symbol of the Virgin Mary, who gave the world the holy fruit of life, namely, Jesus Christ, to eat of and live forever (Gen. 3:22).
- (ii) *The rainbow after Noah’s flood*: this rainbow signified the covenant between God and Noah (Gen. 9:17). It symbolizes the Virgin Mary, the sign of the New Testament, from whom came the One that would establish the “new and everlasting covenant.”
- (iii) *The burning bush*: God’s word came forth from the burning bush unto Moses (Exod. 3:1-6). While burning, the bush was not consumed by the flames. Similarly, the Word of God came forth from the Virgin, and in the process, her virginity was not consumed.

- (iv) *Elijah's little cloud*: this cloud watered Israel after years of drought (1 Kgs. 18:41). It symbolizes the Virgin Mary who carried and brought the living water of Jesus Christ to thirsty Israel.
- (v) *The Holy of Holies*: contained the presence of God (the *Shekinah Kabod*), who literally dwelt within it (1 Kgs 6:15-20). The Virgin Mary was the new Holy of Holies in who dwelt the Divine Person of Jesus.
- (vi) *Ezekiel's eastern gate*: Once the Lord God had entered in by this gate, it was shut; no man could afterwards pass through it (Ezek. 44:2). This represents how, after the Holy Spirit entered into Mary to impregnate her, no man would afterwards impugn her virginity.

In the New Testament, the Virgin Mary is the only person mentioned at every important point in the life of Christ: at the annunciation (St. Luke 1:26); at the visitation to St. Elizabeth (St. Luke 1:39); at Christ's nativity (St. Luke 2:1); at His presentation in the Temple (St. Luke 2:22); during the flight to Egypt (St. Matt. 2:13); during Christ's childhood—the finding in the Temple (St. Luke 2:41); at the performance of His first miracle in Cana (St. John 2:1); following nearby during His public preaching (St. Matt. 12:46); at the foot of the Cross (St. John 19:25); undoubtedly with Him after His resurrection; and with the infant Church during the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:14).

Third objection: *“But isn't it a fact that Jesus called Mary ‘woman’ only because he was displeased with her interference at the wedding of Cana?”*

Contrary to what is believed and taught by some, the word “woman” used by Christ towards His Mother was not a disrespectful rebuke, but rather a term of respect, dignity and honor. An equivalent in modern-day English usage would be “Lady.” A number of Protestant Bible commentaries readily admit this fact, for example:

“Jesus’ reply to Mary was not so abrupt as it seems. ‘Woman’ was a polite form of address. Jesus used it when he spoke to his mother from the cross and also when he spoke to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection.”⁴

“In his reply, the use of ‘woman’ does not involve disrespect.”⁵

In fact, the Virgin Mary is called “woman” three times in the New Testament:

- (i) “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come” (St. John 2:4).
- (ii) “Woman, behold, your son!” (St. John 19:26).
- (iii) “...a woman clothed with the sun” (Rev. 12:1).

By calling the Virgin Mary “woman” in the above verses, Our Lord and St. John identify her with the woman in Genesis 3:15 who would be at perpetual enmity with Satan: “I will put enmity between you and the woman.” A closer examination of Genesis 3:15 and Revelation 12 reveals the striking similarities. There are three main characters in Genesis 3: the serpent, Adam and the woman; likewise in Revelation 12 there is the dragon (the ancient serpent), the

⁴ Frank E. Gaebelien, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981, Vol. 9, p. 42.

⁵ C. F. Pfeiffer & E. F. Harrison, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1979, p. 1076.

male child who is to rule the nations (the New Adam) and the woman (the Virgin Mary, or New Eve). The early Church Fathers themselves noticed this parallel between Eve and the Virgin Mary, especially those with a spiritual inheritance traceable to the Apostle John (e.g., St. Irenaeus of Lyons).

Fourth objection: *“What about the following passage: ‘As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked! But he said, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!’” (St. Luke 11:27-28).*

The simple response one can give to this objection is that given by St. Augustine of Hippo: the Virgin Mary was the only person who had both the privilege to bear and suckle the Christ-child and the distinction of hearing and keeping the word of God. Furthermore, if she had not persevered in keeping the word of God throughout her entire life, she would not have been present at the foot of the cross during the darkest hour or at Mt. Olivet or the Cenacle in the moments of final triumph and glory.

With regard to the quote itself, the ex-Protestant Catholic apologist James Akin makes the following valuable point:

“...the Greek word here translated ‘rather’ (*menoun*) does not have anything like the adversive force in Greek that ‘rather’ does in English. It is simply an emphatic particle normally rendered ‘and.’ Thus, if Bibles had italics for emphasis, the passage would be better translated: ‘He said, **And** blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!’ He is not denying what she said, he is emphatically *adding* something to what she said.”⁶

Fifth objection: *“Isn’t the belief that Mary is the ‘mother of the Church’ a gross exaggeration?”*

⁶ *Internet Question Box*, 4/26/99.

St. John would not agree. In his book of Revelation, he refers to those who obey God and believe in Jesus as children of “the woman”: “the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17). The woman St. John saw is undoubtedly the Virgin Mary, for she is the mother of “a male child who is to rule all the nations” (12:5)—an obvious reference to Jesus.

Likewise, even the founder of Protestantism, Martin Luther, would not agree:

“Mary is the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of all of us ... If he is ours, we ought to be in his situation; there where he is, we ought also to be and all that he has ought to be ours, and his mother is also our mother.”⁷

Eve is the natural and biological mother of humanity, but due to her disobedience and sin she contributed to the spiritual destruction of her children. The Virgin Mary, through her obedience opened the way for the coming of Christ into the world and the subsequent spiritual restoration of humanity. How very true then is the ancient motto, “Death through Eve, life through Mary.”

When did “the woman” become the mother of Christians? When Our Lord Himself gave His mother to be our mother from the Cross itself. This we see in the verse cited earlier from St. John’s Gospel:

“Woman, behold your son ... behold your mother” (St. John 19:26-27).

The first question that needs to be asked about this verse is why Our Lord would instruct St. John to call the Virgin Mary “mother” when St. John’s own biological mother (Salome) was still alive and standing

⁷ Sermon, Christmas 1529.

nearly at the foot of the cross (St. Mark 15:40). *Prima facie*, Our Lord is entrusting His mother into the care of St. John, for St. Joseph himself had long passed away and the Virgin Mary had no other children remaining now to care for her. However, there has always existed the deeper understanding that St. John was given to the Virgin Mary as a son, not in the capacity of a simple individual but as an Apostle and Disciple representing the entire Church. If there is no symbolic significance in this passage then why is the term “disciple” used instead of John’s own name? Furthermore, why did Christ use the term “woman” rather than “mother” when first addressing the Virgin Mary? As we have seen, the term “woman” has strong prophetic and symbolic connotations. The woman prophesied in Genesis 3:15 as the enemy of the serpent and who was present at the beginning of Christ’s public mission is now made mother of the Church at the consummation of Christ’s mission. This certainly did not escape St. John, which is why he would record that the “woman” he saw in Revelation 12 is the mother of “*those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus*” (v. 17).

To crown all of the above, the Virgin Mary’s motherhood is not only a spiritual motherhood of the Church but also a royal one. Christ is King of heaven and earth and according to the Jewish Davidic tradition the King’s mother occupied the role of *Giberah*, or “great lady.” The “woman” in Revelation 12 is adorned with a “crown of twelve stars”

(v. 1) which obviously conveys queenship. The twelve stars in Mary’s crown means that she is queen of the people and kingdom of God, for the Old Testament people of God were founded upon the twelve tribes of Israel and the New Testament Church was founded upon the twelve Apostles.

Sixth objection: “*How can the Catholic Church justify calling Mary ‘Mediatrice’ when 1 Timothy 2:5 says that there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.*”

Understood properly, Christ is the one *mediator of redemption*, for there is no other name under heaven by which man must be saved. Nevertheless, Scripture itself attests that Christ is not the sole

mediator of prayer. For example, the Holy Spirit “intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). Also, Scripture shows that God occasionally does not answer prayer without a mediator or intercessor. For instance, Abimelech and the friends of Job were only pardoned through the prayers of Abraham and of Job (Gen. 20). St. James makes the point that the “prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects” (St. Jas. 5:16), and the Virgin Mary is certainly righteous. If having Christ as our one mediator precludes the intercession of the Virgin Mary, then St. Paul should never have recommended himself to the prayers of his brethren on earth, whose prayers would have lessened the importance of Christ’s mediatorship (Rom. 15:30; Heb. 13:18).

Seventh objection: “*The Ark of the Covenant was lost during the time of Jeremiah. How is it that Catholics call the Virgin Mary ‘Ark of the New Covenant?’*”

The original Ark of the Covenant was covered completely in gold and contained within itself a pot of manna, the priestly rod of Aaron, and the tables of the Ten Commandments (Heb. 9:4). It was overshadowed by a propitiatory—or mercy seat—upon which God Himself dwelt (the *Shekinah Kabod*) between two statues of Cherubim (Exod. 25). The Ark accompanied the Jews into battle, being carried by four men handling two poles. It was forbidden for anyone without consecrated hands to touch the Ark, on pain of death.

The Ark of the Covenant was a symbolic type of the Virgin Mary. In fact, the Virgin Mary in comparison is a greater Ark, being a rational creature immaculately conceived who carried within her womb not simply the symbols of Christ, but Christ Himself. Instead of being adorned in gold and gems she was adorned with grace and virtues. God, likewise, overshadowed her when the Holy Spirit conceived Christ within her after the Angel Gabriel had announced the glad tidings. Being a perpetual virgin, no one could, or did, touch her.

At the end of chapter 11 of Revelation we read the following verse:

“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail” (v. 19).

Immediately following this verse appears the “woman” crowned with twelve stars in chapter 12. This juxtaposition of the “ark of his covenant” and the “woman” becomes more significant when we remember that St. John did not record Revelation with chapter and verse divisions. Why Christ revealed the two together is only understandable when we see the former as the shadow-type of the latter and greater reality. Modern Catholic apologists also draw strong support for the Virgin Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant by comparing 2 Samuel 6 with St. Luke 1:

“In St. Luke’s account of the Visitation (Lk. 1:39-56), it is clear that Mary is the new ark of the covenant. Mary, like David, heads to the hill country of Judah. As Mary, bearing Christ in her womb, approaches the home of Elizabeth, St. John ‘leaps’ in Elizabeth’s womb as she exclaims with a ‘loud cry,’ reminding us of David’s leaping before the ark of the covenant and the shouts of the people of Israel. Elizabeth greets Mary with words similar to those of David, ‘[W]hy is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord [who is the new ark of the covenant] should come to me?’ (v. 43).”⁸

⁸ Quote from Timothy Gray, *Catholic for a Reason*, Ch. IX (Scripture’s Revelation of Mary), Emmaus Road Publications, 1997, p. 201.

The following is an outline of 2 Samuel 6 and St. Luke 1, matching the corresponding verses:

2 Samuel 6

St. Luke 1

“David rose and returned to Judah” (v. 2).



“Mary rose and journeyed to the hill country of Judah” (v. 39).

“How can the ark of the Lord come to me?” (v. 9).



“And why is this granted me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?” (v.43).

The house of Obededom the Gittite (v. 10).



House of Zechariah (v. 40).

“The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months” (v. 12).



“And Mary remained with her about three months” (v. 56).

“David went and brought up ark of God from the house of Obededom to City of David with rejoicing” (v. 12).



“Mary said, ‘My soul the magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior’” (vv. 46-47).

“So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the horn” (v. 15).



“Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and Blessed is the fruit of your womb!’” (v. 42).

King David leaping and dancing before the Lord (v. 16).



“And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” (v.41).

Joshua prostrated himself and venerated the Ark for hours (Josh. 7:6). As “Joshua” means “Jesus” we have a type of Jesus venerating a type of Mary. Applying this to the New Testament figures themselves, it symbolically represents the Son of God venerating His Mother.

The Fathers

St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 100 (155 AD)

“For Eve, a Virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent, and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the power of the Most High God. And she replied: ‘Be it done unto me according to thy word’.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3, 22, 4 (c. 180 AD)

“Consequently, then, Mary the Virgin is found to be obedient, saying: ‘Behold, O Lord, your handmaid; be it done to me according to your word.’ Eve, however, was disobedient; and when yet a Virgin, she did not obey. So also Mary, betrothed to a man but nevertheless still a virgin, being obedient, was made the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race ... Thus, the knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. What the virgin had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 5, 19, 1 (c. 180 AD)

The Virgin Mary ... being obedient to His word, received from an angel the glad tidings that she would bear God.”

Tertullian, *The Flesh of Christ* 17, 5 (c. 210 AD)

“Likewise, through a Virgin, the Word of God was introduced to set up a structure of life. Thus, what had been laid waste in ruin by this sex, was by the same sex re-established in salvation. Eve had believed the serpent; Mary believed Gabriel. That which the one destroyed by believing, the other, by believing, set straight.”

St. Athanasius, *Homily of the Papyrus of Turin* (ante 373 AD)

“O noble Virgin, truly you are greater than any other greatness. For who is your equal in greatness, O dwelling place of God the Word? To whom among all creatures shall I compare you, O Virgin? You are greater than them all, O Covenant, clothed with purity instead of gold! You are the Ark in which is found the golden vessel containing the true manna, that is, the flesh in which divinity resides.”

St. Athanasius, *Apology Against the Arians* 3, 29 (c. 347 AD)

“It was for our sake that Christ became man, taking flesh from the Virgin Mary, Mother of God.”

St. Ambrose of Milan, *The Virgins* 2, 2, 6 (377 AD)

“Mary’s life should be for you a pictorial image of virginity. Her life is like a mirror reflecting the face of chastity and the form of virtue. Therein you may find a model for your own life...showing what to improve, what to imitate, what to hold fast to.”

St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Well-Anchored Man* 30 (374 AD)

“Without manly seed, he made himself of a holy body, taking it from the Theotokos Mary, ‘born of a woman’ according to the Scriptures, after he had taken our human nature. Then, as man, he could say: ‘My God,’ while, in his eternal nature as Son, he could say: ‘My Father’.”

St. Cyril of Alexandria, *The Twelve Anathemas* 1 & 2 (430 AD)

“If anyone does not confess that the Emmanuel is in truth God, and that the Holy Virgin is Mother of God, because she bore according to the flesh of the Word of God when He became flesh: let him be anathema;”

“If anyone does not confess that the Word of God the Father is united hypostatically to the flesh, and that Christ with His own flesh is one, that is to say, the same one is God and Man at the same time: let him be anathema.”

St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten* 26 (post 431 AD)

“The Word, then, was God, and He became also Man; and since He was born according to the flesh for the sake of mankind, it is necessary that she who bore Him is the Mother of God. For if she did not bear God, neither is He that was born of her to be called God. If the divinely inspired Scriptures name Him God, as God having been made man and incarnate, He could not become Man in any other way than through birth from a woman: how then should she who bore Him not be the Mother of God?”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. I, Ch. IV: *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.* Then began the fulfillment of the splendid promise made by God to Abraham, that in his seed *all the nations of the earth should one day be blessed*; for Mary, whom we truly proclaim and venerate as Mother of God, because she brought forth Him who is at once God and man, was descended from King David.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 495: Called in the Gospels “the mother of Jesus,” Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her Son, as “the mother of my Lord.” In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father’s eternal Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly “Mother of God” (*Theotokos*).

No. 970: “Mary’s function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin’s salutary influence on men...flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power

from it. No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source.”

No. 971: *“All generations will call me blessed”*: “The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship.” The Church rightly honors “the Blessed Virgin with special devotion. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of ‘Mother of God,’ to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs ... This very special devotion ... differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration.” The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the Rosary, an “epitome of the whole Gospel,” express this devotion to the Virgin Mary.

The One True Church

Objection: *“All Churches that believe in Christ and the Bible are the same. In any case, I don’t need to attend any church to worship God. All I need is a personal relationship with Christ which I can have by praying and reading the Bible on my own.”*

The Protestant Reformation introduced new and radically different concepts concerning the nature and role of the Church. In contrast to long held doctrines such as the Communion of Saints and the corporate view of the Church as the Body of Christ, Protestantism asserted an individualistic Christianity that focused on one’s personal relationship with Jesus Christ to the exclusion of any need for a Church or other visible organization. One modern-day anti-Catholic sums up the Evangelical approach to the Church as follows:

“salvation is found, not in a Church and its sacraments, but through a personal relationship with Christ himself. Salvation is given directly by Christ to an individual, without the need for any other mediation.”¹

However, faith in Jesus Christ not only obliges the Christian to have trust and commitment in His person, but to believe in and follow what He taught and established to continue His work of salvation in the world. That Our Lord Jesus Christ intended to establish an authoritative Church of His own is clear from Sacred Scripture: *“and on this rock I will build my Church”* (St. Matt. 16:18).

The Church belongs to Christ as He founded her while still on earth. Being her founder He is also her head: “Christ is the head of the church, his body” (Eph. 5:23). Those baptized in the name of the

¹ William Webster, *The Catholic Church at the Bar of History*, Carlisle, Penn.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995, Ch. 9, p. 133.

Trinity (St. Matt. 28:19) are incorporated into Christ's Body, that is, the Church. In no way is the Church simply a man-made institution established centuries later bearing the name of the particular heresiarch who spawned its existence. Rather, she is a divine institution which requires the membership of all those who claim the title of Christian.

Denying the absolute necessity of the Church in the economy of salvation, Protestantism also denies the visibility of the Church, insisting instead that it is simply the collection of the "true believers" or "saved" whoever and wherever they may be. However, the visibility of the Church is implied in St. Matt. 5:14: "*A city built on a hill cannot be hid.*" Furthermore, rather than being only a nebulous collection of "true believers," Christ established His Church with a hierarchical authority to govern it (St. Luke 6:13; St. Matt. 18:17-18), invested it with His own mission (St. John 20:21), the power to sanctify the faithful (St. John 15:16) and to forgive sins (St. John 20:23), as well as the authority to teach (St. Matt. 28:20) and to baptize (St. Matt. 28:19).

As head of this visible and hierarchical Church, Christ appointed St. Peter as His Vicar, or representative:

"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (St. Matt. 16:18).

As Vicar and head of the Church on earth, St. Peter is invested with Christ's own authority to rule and govern:

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (St. Matt. 16:18-19).

St. Peter and the Apostles, as rulers of the Church on earth, are to be obeyed:

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account" (Heb. 13:17).

To obey St. Peter and the Apostles, and logically their successors, is to obey Christ:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (St. John 13:20).

The Scriptures themselves show that the Apostles handed on their office through the laying of hands to subsequent generations as their successors (Acts 13:2; 1 Tim. 4:14; Tit. 5-10). To believe that the written New Testament replaced the authority of the Apostles after the death of St. John, is to deny historical reality and believe erroneously that the Church founded by Christ subsequently changed in her essence.

Those who ignore the legitimate leaders of Christ’s Church through their own disobedience no longer belong to her unity:

“if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (St. Matt. 18:17).

To ignore the leaders of the Church, one effectively ignores Christ:

“He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me” (St. Luke 10:16).

It is the Church that guarantees that the faithful are taught truth, assisted by the Holy Spirit:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever” (St. John 14:16).

“if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

The Protestant assertion that Christians need only pray and read the Bible privately in their own homes or in fellowship groups has only

resulted in the birth of over 35,000 different Protestant denominations all claiming to be “Bible-believing,” yet agreeing on little more than their anti-Catholic tenets. They fulfil the very words of St. Peter himself who warned of the “ignorant and unstable” who “twist” the Scriptures “to their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16).

Despite the disobedience and protestations of its enemies and the rebellious, Christ will protect His Church until the end of time:

“the gates of hades will not prevail against it” (St. Matt. 16:18).

“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (St. Matt. 28:20).

Second objection: “So Christ did found a Church. But that Church is definitely not the apostate Church of Rome!”

Not only did Our Lord establish a Church, but he also made that Church identifiable according to certain marks. To qualify as a mark the means of identification must possess two aspects: (i) it must be an outwardly visible sign objectively evident to everyone, including non-Christians; (ii) it must be an essential characteristic without which the Church would not be the Church of Christ.

According to the Presbyterian minister Loraine Boettner,

“The marks of a true church are:

1. The true preaching of the Word of God.
2. The right administration of the sacraments. And,
3. The faithful exercise of discipline.”²

One obvious difficulty with Boettner’s marks is that they do not include a test to determine whether the church in question was actually founded by Christ. Furthermore, his criteria (based on Calvin’s) do not aim to discover “the true Church” but “a true church.” Any man-made institution could therefore claim to be a true

² *Roman Catholicism*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. (Phillipsburg, NJ), 1962, p. 20.

church so long as it fulfils the three above outlined points. We would soon end up with the absurd situation of having many true churches each considering themselves to be teaching the truth concerning the word of God, the sacraments and discipline, while having no unity of belief, government or discipline between themselves. This absurd situation is what some hope to replace the Catholic Church with.

The real marks of the true Church, which are visible and essential, number four. They are: one, holy, catholic and apostolic. These marks are found in Scripture, are based on reason and can be defended by it.

One

“I will build my Church” (St. Matt. 16:18). The true Church is founded and built by Christ. Christ founded one Church, not many. Protestantism is not one united body in doctrine and discipline, but a series of disparate organizations antagonistic not only to Catholicism but also often to each other.

“one flock, one shepherd” (St. John 10:16). The central authority of the Pope of Rome has kept the Catholic Church united in doctrine and discipline since the days of the Roman Empire. Protestantism continues to splinter with the advent of each new self-appointed “prophet” or minister who claims to hold the true meaning of Scripture.

Holy

“And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth” (St. John 17:19).

The true Church will be holy in her founder, teachings and worship. There is no guarantee that all its members will practise what she preaches as is gathered from Our Lord’s images of the sower of the seed (St. Matt. 13:18-23), the net enclosing the fish (St. Matt. 13:47-

52), and the sheep and the goats (St. Matt. 25:31-46). The survival of the Catholic Church—despite the examples of half a dozen bad Popes (out of 264), and other scandals—only reinforces the fact that the holiness of the Church derives from Christ and Him alone. In any case, Protestantism is far from free when it comes to scandal, and none of its founders can claim to match the holiness of any Catholic saint, let alone Christ Himself.

Catholic

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (St. Matt. 28:19).

Remaining essentially one and the same, the Church adapts to all times, places and people. No nation or race is excluded from her fold, no language from proclaiming her Gospel. Those who assert that the true believers are only white and Anglo-Saxon limit the redeeming power of Christ’s Precious Blood. Christ opened His arms on the Cross for all peoples and nations, hence the true Church must be universal, not simply a national church based on race, or subject to a particular king or parliament.

Apostolic

The true Church will trace its history, episcopal succession and doctrine right back to the Apostles themselves: “I am with you always” (St. Matt. 28:20). It was not established in 1517, 1534, 1540, in the nineteenth century, or last week in California. It must have existed since the Apostles, exist now, and continue until the end of the world.

Only the Catholic Church can show herself to be One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

The Fathers

St. Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians* 42, 1 (c. 98 AD)

“The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; and Jesus Christ was sent from God. Christ, therefore, is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both of these orderly arrangements, then, are by God’s will. Receiving their instructions and being full of confidence on account of the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and confirmed in faith by the word of God, they went forth in the complete assurance of the Holy Spirit, preaching the good news that the Kingdom of God is coming. Through countryside and city they preached; and they appointed their earliest converts, testing them by the Spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of future believers. Nor was this a novelty: for bishops and deacons had been written about a long time earlier. Indeed, Scripture somewhere says: ‘I will set up their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith’.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3, 4, 1 (c. 180 AD)

“When, therefore, we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek among others the truth which is easily obtained from the Church. For the Apostles, like a rich man in a bank, deposited with her most copiously everything which pertains to the truth; and everyone who wishes draws from her the drink of life. For she is the entrance to life, while all the rest are thieves and robbers. That is why it is surely necessary to avoid them, while cherishing with the utmost diligence the things pertaining to the Church, and to lay hold of the tradition of truth...In the Church, God has placed apostles, prophets and doctors, and all the other means through which the Spirit works; in all of which none have any part who do not conform to the Church. On the contrary, they defraud themselves of life by their wicked opinion and most wretched behavior. For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God, there is the Church and every grace.”

Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 7, 17, 107, 3 (ante 217 AD)

“From what has been said, then, it seems clear to me that the true Church, that which is really ancient, is one; and in it are enrolled those

who, in accord with a design are just...We say, therefore, that in substance, in concept, in origin and in eminence, the ancient and Catholic Church is alone, gathering as it does into the unity of the one faith which results from the familiar covenants—or rather, from the one covenant in different times, by the will of the one God and through the one Lord—those already chosen, those predestined by God, who knew before the foundation of the world that they would be just.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter to Florentius Pupianus* 66 (69), 8 (254 AD)

“There speaks Peter, upon whom the Church would be built, teaching in the name of the Church and showing that even if a stubborn and proud multitude withdraws because it does not wish to obey, yet the Church does not withdraw from Christ. The people joined to the priest and the flock clinging to their shepherd are the Church.”

St. Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity* 7, 4 (c. 357 AD)

“The Church, instituted by the Lord and confirmed by the Apostles, is one for all men; but the frantic folly of the diverse impious sects has cut them off from her. It cannot be denied that this tearing asunder of the faith has arisen from the defect of poor intelligence, which twists what is read to conform to its opinion, instead of adjusting its opinion to the meaning of what is read. However, while individual parties fight among themselves, the Church stands revealed not only by her own doctrines, but by those also of her adversaries. And although they are all ranged against her, she confutes the most wicked error which they all share, by the very fact that she is alone and one.”

St. John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God* 3, 6 (c. 387 AD)

“You cannot pray at home as at church, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. I, Ch. X: The true Church is also to be recognized from her origin, which can be traced back under the law of grace to the Apostles; for her doctrine is the truth not recently given, nor now first heard of, but delivered of old by the Apostles, and disseminated throughout the entire world. Hence no one can doubt that the impious opinions which heresy invents, opposed as they are to the doctrines taught by the Church from the days of the Apostles to the present time, are very different from the faith of the true Church.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

“Outside the Church there is no salvation”

No. 846: How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Fathers? Reformulated positively, it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body:

Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.

No. 847: This affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church:

Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation.

No. 848: Although in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel, to that faith without which it is impossible to please him, the Church still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelize all men.

Original Sin

Objection: *“How can any reasonable person accept the Catholic doctrine of original sin? Why should we be punished for the alleged sins of others committed so long ago?”*

The state of Original Sin is the consequence of the sin of our first parents Adam and Eve. This sin involved their disobedience through pride, in eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil located in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:6).

Adam and Eve were endowed with various supernatural and preternatural gifts. By definition, a gift is something freely given that is not owed. The supernatural gifts were given by God to raise man above his nature so as to share in the divine life, to know and serve God far beyond his natural capacities and to behold God in the Beatific Vision in the next world. They included sanctifying grace, the supernatural theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, the supernatural infused moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Concomitant with sanctifying grace is Uncreated Grace, or the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity (St. John 14:23). The preternatural gifts were given by God to perfect man as man, not to elevate him above his nature. These gifts included immortality, impassibility (freedom from suffering), integrity (freedom from disordered passions) and infused knowledge. Through natural generation, all these gifts were to be transmitted to the whole human race. By their disobedience, Adam and Eve lost them for themselves and for all future generations.

The loss of sanctifying grace is the greatest consequence of Adam’s sin. It carried with it the privation of the supernatural destiny God willed for humanity, namely, heaven. Man was also expelled from the Garden of Eden and became subject to sickness, suffering and death. In addition, our natural powers were “wounded”—ignorance in the intellect, malice in the will, concupiscence in the concupiscible

appetite, and debility in the irascible appetite. Pain and sorrow in childbirth, together with subjection to the lust of men, were to be the special lot of women. The natural elements, plants and animals, were no longer subject to man and a curse came upon the earth, the necessity for sweat and hard labor (Gen. 3:16-24).

Many passages of Sacred Scripture testify to the truth of original sin:

“For behold I was conceived in iniquity; and in sins did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51 [50]:5).

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned ... But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:12; 15-19).

“For as by a man came death, and by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

“All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else” (Eph. 2:3).

Throughout history there have been a number of significant heresies that have either denied the existence or distorted the effects of original sin. The first of these was Pelagianism. Founded by an Irish monk named Pelagius (+418 AD), Pelagianism denied the supernatural elevation of humanity by asserting that Adam and Eve were created only in a natural state without sanctifying grace. Consequently, the Fall had no effect on them and their children by way of loss of grace, the only effect of original sin on others was by way of setting bad example. Hence, sin was not contracted through natural generation but was learnt from the scandal of others. It followed, further, that the children of Adam were born naturally good and were in no need of a Redeemer. Christ's act of redemption was thus reduced to providing lofty teaching and virtuous example, while forgiveness of sin through faith meant forgiveness from punishment, not renewal in grace. If the children of Adam kept good company and directed their wills and ordinary powers to live a sinless and holy life, they could achieve eternal beatitude through their own natural efforts. This many had done, not only since Christ, but also before. Pelagianism thus descended to pure naturalism, and was an unmistakable reproduction of the Stoic ideal of virtue.

Pelagius' errors found a partial vacuum in which to disseminate, as the Church, absorbed by the controversies concerning the Incarnation, had not developed in detail the doctrines concerning man's fall, renewal, grace and freewill. Though meeting sporadic opposition in Rome, Carthage and in the East, it was St. Augustine of Hippo as the "Doctor of Grace" who rose to combat Pelagianism with his powerful pen: "They (the Pelagians) contend that in this life there are or have been righteous men having no sin at all. By this presumption they most clearly contradict the Lord's Prayer, in which all the members of Christ cry aloud with true heart these words to be said each day: 'Forgive us our debts.'"¹ For the self-confident Pelagian, the Lord's Prayer served only as a profession of humility, not a statement of fact.

¹ *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 4, 10, 27 (420 AD).

St. Augustine drew on the parable of the vine and the branches (St. John 15:1) to strike at Pelagianism and expose it as a novelty contrary to the teachings of Christ. Only when the vital union between Christ (the vine) and His members (the branches) is established is it possible to bring forth supernatural fruit: for “without me you can do nothing” (St. John 15:5). St. Augustine also presented this particular thought: “Could we bring together here in living form all the saints of both sexes and question them whether they were without sin, would they not exclaim unanimously: ‘If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us’?”² Before all the world St. Augustine attested that “Such is the Pelagian heresy, not ancient, but having sprung up a short time ago.”³

Appealing to Pope Zosimus, Pelagius received an opportunity to defend his teachings before a Council. On May 1st, 418, the Council of Carthage formally condemned Pelagius and defined these doctrines against his errors:

- (i) that death, in Adam, is the result of sin.
- (ii) that infants require baptism, by reason of their contracting original sin as children of Adam.
- (iii) that grace is needed both to know and obey God’s commandments.
- (iv) that without grace it is impossible to perform good works.⁴

The Council of Trent, more than a thousand years later, would answer the proud assertions of Pelagianism in more precise language:

² *On Nature and Grace* 36 (415 AD); cf. 1 John 1:8.

³ *Grace and Free Choice* 6 (426 AD).

⁴ M.L. Cozens, *A Handbook of Heresies*, Sheed and Ward, 1928, p. 58.

“If any one shall say that a man once justified ... can throughout his life, avoid all sins, even venial, except by a special privilege of God, as the Church believes of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let him be anathema.”⁵

While Pelagius denied the supernatural elevation of man, Martin Luther in the sixteenth century went to the opposite extreme by asserting that grace was an essential part of human nature, not super-added to it by way of gratuitous elevation. Hence, the loss of grace caused by the Fall had the effect of depriving man of an essential, not a gratuitous part, of his nature, leaving it *totally depraved*. Total depravity, according to Luther, consists of more than simply the “wounding” of man, and entails the following more far-reaching effects:

- (i) The destruction of the human intellect to the point of rendering man by himself incapable of achieving knowledge of religious truth.
- (ii) The enslavement of the will, reducing it to being purely a passive agent, incapable of actively cooperating with grace, rejecting the inspirations of God or the temptations of the devil.
- (iii) The total vitiation of the life of grace, leaving humanity incapable of performing any morally good actions (in fact, all human actions are as a consequence at least venially sinful).
- (iv) The inability of grace to intrinsically regenerate the human soul, grace being not a reality infused by God in the soul but simply God’s good will towards it. Justification is reduced to a juridical act of God whereby He mystically “cloaks” the

⁵ Canon 23 on Justification.

Christian in the merits of Christ (*Justitia Christi extra nos* – the Justice of Christ outside us).

In response to Luther’s teachings, the Council of Trent asserted that in active justification an actual and real regeneration of the soul takes place, removing both original and actual sin through the infusion of sanctifying grace by the sacraments of Baptism and Penance:

“If anyone denies that, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted; or even asserts that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away; but says that it is only canceled, or not imputed; let him be anathema.”⁶

The Council of Trent also restated the Church’s traditional teaching on original sin:

“If anyone does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he had transgressed the commandment of God in Paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice wherein he had been constituted; and that he incurred, through the offense of that prevarication, the wrath and indignation of God, and consequently death, with which God had previously threatened him, and together with death captivity under his power who thenceforth had the empire of death, that is to say the Devil, and that the entire Adam, through that offense of prevarication, was changed in body and soul for the worse: let him be anathema.”⁷

“If anyone asserts that the sin of Adam—which in its origin is one, and is transmitted into all by propagation, not by imitation, is in each one as his own—is taken away either by the powers of human nature, or by any other remedy than the merit of the one mediator, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has reconciled us to God in His own blood, made unto us justice, sanctification, and redemption; or if he denies that the said merit of Jesus Christ is applied, both to adults and to infants, by

⁶ *Decree on Original Sin*, Canon 5.

⁷ *Decree on Original Sin* Session V, 1, (June 17, 1546).

the Sacrament of Baptism rightly administered in the form of the Church: let him be anathema.”⁸

Today, the main opponents of the doctrine of original sin are those who propagate atheistic evolution theory. For these people, humanity has its beginnings not in Adam and Eve as our original parents but in a multitude descended from lower life forms. Pope Pius XII formally condemned this belief, known otherwise as Polygenism, in 1950:

“Christ’s faithful cannot embrace a theory which involves the existence, after Adam’s time, of some earthly race of men, truly so called, who were not descended ultimately from him, or else supposes that Adam was the name given to some group of our primordial ancestors. It by no means appears how such views can be reconciled with what the sources of revealed truth and the statements of the Magisterium of the Church propound concerning the doctrine of Original Sin...”⁹

The Fathers

St. Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolytus* 2, 25 (c. 181 AD) *“For the first man, disobedience resulted in his expulsion from Paradise. It was not as if there were any evil in the tree of knowledge; but from disobedience man drew labor, pain, grief, and, in the end, he fell prostrate in death.”*

Tertullian, *The Testimony of the Soul* 3, 2 (inter 197-200 AD) *“Finally, in every instance of vexation, contempt, and abhorrence, you pronounce the name of Satan. He it is whom we call the angel of wickedness, the author of every error, the corrupter of the whole world, through whom man was deceived in the very beginning so that he transgressed the command of God. On account of his transgression man was given over to death; and the whole human race, which was infected by his seed, was made the transmitter of condemnation.”*

⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹ *Humani Generis*, 1950.

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *The Advantage of Patience* 19 (256 AD)

“The Devil bore impatiently the fact that man was made in the image of God; and that is why he was the first to perish and the first to bring others to perdition. Adam, contrary to the heavenly command, was impatient in regard to the deadly food, and fell into death; nor did he preserve, under the guardianship of patience, the grace received from God.”

St. Ambrose of Milan, *Explanation of David the Prophet* 1, 11, 56 (inter 383-389 AD)

“No conception is without iniquity, since there are no parents who have not fallen. And if there is no infant who is even one day without sin, much less can the conceptions of a mother’s womb be without sin. We are conceived, therefore, in the sin of our parents, and it is in their sins that we are born.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Against the Pelagians* 1, 2, 5 (420 AD)

“Who of us would say that by the sin of the first man free will perished from the human race? Certainly freedom perished through sin, but it was that freedom which was had in paradise, of having full righteousness with immortality; and it is on that account that human nature has need of divine grace.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. IV, Ch. XIII: Our condition, therefore, is entirely different from what his and that of his posterity would have been, had Adam listened to the voice of God. All things have been thrown into disorder, and have been changed sadly for the worse...The dreadful sentence pronounced against us in the beginning remains.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 402: All men are implicated in Adam's sin, as St. Paul affirms: "By one man's disobedience many (that is all men) were made sinners": "sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned..." The Apostle contrasts the universality of sin and death with the universality of salvation in Christ. "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men."

No. 403: Following St. Paul, the Church has always taught that the overwhelming misery which oppresses men and their inclination toward evil and death cannot be understood apart from their connection with Adam's sin and the fact that he has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born and afflicted, a sin which is the "death of a soul."

No. 404: How did the sin of Adam become the sin of his descendants? It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed"—a state and not an act.

No. 406: The Church's teaching on the transmission of original sin was articulated more precisely in the fifth century, especially under the impulse of St. Augustine's reflections against Pelagianism, and in the sixteenth century, in opposition to the Protestant Reformation. Pelagius held that man could, by the natural power of free will and without the necessary help of God's grace, lead a morally good life; he thus reduced the influence of Adam's fault to bad example...

The Pope is Infallible

Objection: *“How can an ordinary man be infallible? This belongs to God alone. The Pope can commit sin like anyone else!”*

Christ instructed the Apostles to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (St. Matt. 28:19-20). Together with this commission, Christ promised the Apostles the protection of the Holy Spirit: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (St. John 16:13).

For the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ to fulfill its mission as teacher, she must never teach error with respect to faith or morals, otherwise she would be failing as a mother of souls and faithful spouse of Christ. Following from this, it is logical that the supreme head of the Church of Christ be also a perpetual source of truth. Christ, foreseeing that false teachers would arise—“false messiahs and false prophets will appear” (St. Mark 13:22)—endowed the supreme head of the Church with the power and authority to decide infallibly all controversies concerning written and unwritten doctrine (St. Matt. 16:18-20). This supreme head of the Church is the Pope of Rome.

Infallibility is a negative protection, the inability of the Church or Pope to teach error with respect to faith and morals when a formal teaching is proclaimed. It is distinct from *inspiration*, in that it does not help the Pope to know the truth or inspire him to teach it. The Pope must still work to know the truth and know it to an extraordinary level, considering his unique position. Infallible pronouncements are sparingly made, usually only when a key doctrine is doubted or denied.

Papal infallibility had its prefigurement in the Old Testament. In Exodus 28:30 the High Priest wore a special breastplate called the “Breastplate of Judgment” which carried two objects known as the *Urim and Thummim*. In Numbers 27:21, 1 Samuel 14:41, Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65 we see the High priest use the Urim and Thummim to inquire of God, determine fault, obtain directions and settle disputes on behalf of the Jewish people. Whenever the High Priest used the Urim and Thummim, his decisions were regarded as having come from God and therefore were unquestionable. Furthermore, this “charism” operated irrespective of the High Priests’ personal holiness.

In the New Testament, the Scriptural texts in support of the doctrine of Papal infallibility are as follows:

(i) *“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it”* (St. Matt. 16:18).

From these words there is no doubt that St. Peter (and logically his successors) was to be the rock-foundation of the Church and the source of its indefectibility against the forces of hell. This indefectibility must include, by implication, protection from doctrinal error, and this protection cannot be effectively secured without infallibility.

(ii) *“Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brethren”* (St. Luke 22:31-32).

This prayer of Christ was for St. Peter alone, conferring on him (and his successors) the office of authoritatively strengthening the brethren—that is, the other Apostles and the Church in general. As we cannot deny the efficacy of Christ’s prayer, the implication is that infallibility is also bestowed.

(iii) “*Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my lambs. A second time he said to him, Simon son of John, do you love me? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon son of John, do you love me? Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, Do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep*” (St. John 21:15-17).

Our Lord in these words bestows upon St. Peter (and his successors) the supreme pastoral charge over all His flock, an authority that undoubtedly includes feeding the faithful with the true food of divine truth. However, this charge cannot effectively secure the unity of the Church in truth unless there is attached to it infallibility.

What has the Protestant denial of the Pope’s infallibility produced except the creation of many thousands of Protestant “popes” and an anarchy of private self-interpretation of the Bible?

Infallibility has nothing to do with the personal morality of the Pope. He is capable of committing sin like any other person. The history of the Church shows clearly that there were, sadly, a number of Popes who lived scandalous lives (though a distinct minority in contrast to the vast majority who led holy and even saintly lives). Nevertheless, no connection exists between the idea of *impeccability*, which means immunity from sin, and infallibility, which is freedom from error in teaching and defining the doctrines of Christ.

Second objection: “*Catholics regard everything that the Pope says to be infallibly true!*”

The First Vatican Council (1870) defined Papal Infallibility as follows:

“the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when, in discharge of the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal

Church, is, by the divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, irreformable.”¹

Consequently, the Pope is only infallible when:

- (i) He speaks *ex Cathedra*, i.e., as supreme teacher of the universal Church. He is not infallible in any other capacity.
- (ii) When he *defines* a doctrine *absolutely* and *finally*.
- (iii) When he treats of *faith* or *morals*.
- (iv) When he clearly shows his intention of *binding the universal Church*.

Infallibility has nothing to do with the personal actions of Popes, their disciplinary decisions or even their unofficial comments or personal opinions, even on faith and morals. It should also be noted that papal infallibility is a charism that is personal to the Pope and cannot be communicated, transferred or delegated to any other individual, tribunal or congregation. Even doctrinal decisions issued by Roman congregations and approved by the Pope cannot be considered infallible. Only decisions issued by the Pope himself in his name and which satisfy all four of the above conditions are infallible.

Third objection: “Was not the doctrine of Papal infallibility invented in 1870 by the First Vatican Council?”

No. The First Vatican Council simply defined a doctrine that had always existed in the heart of the Church. This is proven by the fact that the Popes had made 13 infallible pronouncements before 1870—for example, that of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Pope Bl. Pius IX in 1854.

¹ *Pastor Aeternus*, Ch. 4, (1870).

Furthermore, there exist numerous explicit and formal pronouncements by ancient ecumenical councils recognizing the finality, and therefore implicitly the infallibility, of papal definitions:

- (i) The Council of Ephesus (431) declared that they “were compelled” to condemn Nestorius “by the letter of our holy father and co-minister, Celestine the Bishop of Rome.”
- (ii) The Council of Chalcedon (451)—“Peter has spoken through Leo.”
- (iii) The Third Council of Constantinople (680)—“Peter has spoken through Agatho.”
- (iv) The Fourth Council of Constantinople (869-870)—“The Catholic faith is preserved inviolable in the Apostolic See.”
- (v) The reunion Councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1438-1445)—“The Roman Pontiff...to him in blessed Peter the full power of feeding, ruling and governing the universal Church was given by Our Lord Jesus Christ”.

These are but a few of many statements from the early centuries that can be quoted in support of the supreme doctrinal authority and therefore the infallibility of the Pope. On the other hand, there existed no formal denial of papal authority until the first Eastern schism (that of Photius) in 862 AD.

Fourth objection: *“How could St. Peter as first Pope be infallible when it is clear from the Bible that on one occasion St. Paul proved him wrong (Gal. 2:11-16)?”*

In this episode, which occurred in Antioch, St. Paul withstood St. Peter “to his face” because of his decision to withdraw from the table of the Gentiles for fear of offending the visiting Jews from Palestine who belonged to the “circumcision party.” St. Paul did accuse St. Peter of error: “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a

Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (v. 14). Nevertheless, infallibility was not involved, as the issue was one of prudence and expedience, not faith and morals. Also, St. Peter did not teach others to do the same or declare his example as binding the whole Church.

Fifth objection: *“There have been Popes who have taught heresy, Pope Liberius in the fourth century for example.”*

No Pope has ever solemnly taught or endorsed heresy or any other kind of teaching contrary to Catholic faith and morals. Pope Liberius was imprisoned, threatened with death and treated with cruelty for two years by Arians who sought to extract a heretical statement in their favor. But none was forthcoming. The only evidence is that he may have signed a creed that did not include the full definition of Nicaea but contained no positive statement in favor of heresy. But, even then, he did not promulgate this creed to the whole Church. His alleged condemnation of St. Athanasius as a heretic may also be discounted, for any papal decision made in circumstances of coercion can never qualify as infallible.

Likewise, in the sixth century Pope Vigilius ascended to the Throne of St. Peter with the help of the Empress Theodora because of his pro-Monophysite views. However, once Pope, Vigilius suddenly underwent a dramatic change and declared, “Formerly, I spoke wrongly and foolishly. Though unworthy, I am Vicar of Blessed Peter.” In return for his fidelity to Catholic orthodoxy, Pope Vigilius was taken to Constantinople for eight years where he endured a “white martyrdom” ending with death on his return journey to Rome.

Pope Honorius is often alleged to have taught Monothelitism, which held that in Christ there was only one divine will and not two wills, human and divine. The reality is that he taught nothing, preferring (though unwisely) to remain silent in order to maintain peace within the Church. However, infallibility is only involved when the Pope is defining a doctrine for the universal Church, not when he is not defining a doctrine. Honorius’ condemnation by the Third Council of Constantinople (680), which was approved by Pope Leo II, was based

not on doctrinal grounds but on his moral failure to crush a heresy early before it had the opportunity to spread.

Concerning the case of Galileo, since neither Popes Paul V nor Urban VIII promulgated the condemnation of the heliocentric system by the Holy Office as their own, papal infallibility was not involved. As stated earlier, a Pope cannot delegate the exercise of infallible authority to any other Church congregation or organ.

The Fathers

Tertullian, *The Demurrer Against the Heretics* 23, 10 (c 200 AD)

“Moreover, if Peter was reproached [by Paul] because, after having lived with the gentiles, he later separated himself from their company out of respect for persons, the fault certainly was one of procedure and not of doctrine.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter to Cornelius of Rome* 59 (55), 14 (252 AD)

“With a false bishop appointed for themselves by heretics, they dare even to set sail and carry letters from schismatics and blasphemers to the chair of Peter and to the principal Church, in which sacerdotal unity has its source; nor did they take thought that these are Romans, whose faith was praised by the preaching Apostle, and among whom it is not possible for perfidy to have entrance.”

Pope St. Zosimus, *Epistle to the Africans* 11 (417 AD)

“Although the tradition of the Fathers has assigned so great an authority to the Apostolic see, that no one should dare to dispute about a judgment given by it, and that See, by laws and regulations, has kept to this...you know, dearest brethren, and as priests you are not ignorant, that we rule over his place, and are in possession also of the authority of his name, nevertheless, though so great be our authority that none may refuse our sentence, we have not done

anything, which we have not, of our will referred by letter to your knowledge, conceding this to the Brotherhood.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons* 131, 10 (inter 391-430 AD)

“(On this matter of the Pelagians) two Councils have already been sent to the Apostolic See; and from there rescripts too have come. The matter is at an end; would that the error too might some time be at an end.”

St. Peter Chrysologus, *Letter to Eutyches* 25, 2 (449 AD) *“We exhort you in every respect, honorable brother, to heed obediently what has been written by the Most Blessed Pope of the City of Rome; for Blessed Peter, who lives and presides in his own see, provides the truth of faith to those who seek it. For we, by reason of our pursuit of peace and faith, cannot try cases on the faith without the consent of the Bishop of the City of Rome.”*

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. I, Ch. X: So has (Christ) placed over His Church, *which He governs by His invisible Spirit*, a man to be His vicar and the minister of His power. A visible Church requires a visible head; therefore the Savior appointed Peter head and pastor of all the faithful, when He committed to his care the feeding of all His sheep, in such ample terms that He willed the very same power of ruling and governing the entire Church to descend to Peter’s successors.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 891: The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful—who confirms his brethren in the faith—he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals ... The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter’s successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium, above all in an Ecumenical

Council. When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine “for belief as being divinely revealed,” and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions “must be adhered to with the obedience of faith.” This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself.

The Perpetual Virginity of Our Lady

Objection: *“Mary had other children besides Jesus. This is clear from the following passages of the Bible:*

‘While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him’ (St. Matt. 12:46).

‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this? And they took offense at him’ (St. Matt. 13:54-57).’

According to Fundamentalists, it appears clear from these passages that Jesus Christ had brothers and sisters, and that the Virgin Mary did not remain a virgin all her life; yet it has been the belief in the Catholic Church since ancient times that the Virgin Mary was a virgin before, during, and perpetually after the birth of Christ (ante partum, in partu, post partum).

The so-called *Protoevangelium of St. James* (written c. 170 AD) says that the Virgin Mary was one of the women who, like the prophetess Anna, lived celibate lives in the Temple of Jerusalem, praying full-time: “(from the time she was three) Mary was in the temple of the Lord as if she were a dove that dwelt there” (4:7). A life of continual prayer and service to the Lord in the Temple meant that Mary could not live the ordinary life of a childbearing mother, and so she made a vow of perpetual virginity.

However, due to considerations of ceremonial cleanliness, it was eventually necessary for Mary to have appointed a guardian who would respect her vow of virginity. Thus Joseph, an elderly widower who already had children, was chosen: “And Joseph [was chosen] ... And the priest said to Joseph, ‘You have been chosen by lot to take into your keeping the Virgin of the Lord.’ But Joseph refused, saying, ‘I have children, and I am an old man, and she is a young girl’” (8-9). Nevertheless, St. Joseph humbly resigned himself to the Lord’s will.

The view of the *Protoevangelium* (whatever be its historical value) that the brethren of the Lord were Jesus’ stepbrothers (children of Joseph of another marriage) was the most popular one until the time of St. Jerome, who argued that they were cousins instead. Whatever view one takes, any notion that the brethren of the Lord were other children of the Virgin Mary was certainly anathema to early orthodox Christianity as can be gathered from the following statement of Pope St. Siricius:

“Surely, we cannot deny that regarding the sons of Mary the statement is justly censured, and Your Grace has rightly abhorred it, that from the same virginal womb, from which according to the flesh Christ was born, another offspring was brought forth.”¹

The Lateran Council in 649 proclaimed emphatically the perpetual virginity of Mary:

“If anyone does not properly and truly confess according to the holy Fathers, that the holy Mother of God, the ever-Virgin and immaculate Mary, in these latter days, properly and truly conceived of the Holy Spirit without seed, namely, God the Word Himself, who was born of God the Father before all ages, and that she bore Him incorruptibly, her

¹*Accepi Litteras Vestras* (to Anysius, Bishop of Thessalonica) 392 AD.

virginity remain-ing inviolable even after His birth, let him be condemned.”²

Belief in the Virgin Mary’s perpetual virginity was re-asserted during the first decades of the Protestant reformation:

“This immaculate and perpetual virginity forms, therefore, the just theme of our eulogy. Such was the work of the Holy Ghost, who at the Conception and birth of the Son so favored the Virgin Mother as to impart to her fecundity while preserving inviolate her perpetual virginity.”³

Ironically, the founders of Protestantism, unlike their modern-day disciples, strictly defended the same teaching. Martin Luther said:

“It is an article of faith that Mary is Mother of the Lord and still a virgin ... Christ, we believe, came forth from a womb left perfectly intact.”⁴

“I am inclined to agree with those who declare that ‘brothers’ really mean cousins here, for Holy Writ and the Jews always call cousins brothers.”⁵

Ulrich Zwingli, another major Protestant leader (1484-1531), even more adamantly stated:

“I firmly believe that Mary, according to the words of the gospel, as a pure Virgin brought forth for us the Son of God and in childbirth and after childbirth forever remained a pure, intact Virgin.”⁶

According to Jewish custom at the time, there were two stages to marriage. The first stage, betrothal, was when the marriage

² Can. 3.

³ *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 1566, Pt. I, Ch. IV.

⁴ Weimer, *The Works of Luther*, Pelikan, Concordia, vol. 11, pp. 319-320.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 22-23, pp. 214-215.

⁶ *Zwingli Opera, Corpus Reformatorum*, Berlin, 1905, in *Evang. Luc.*, vol. 1, p. 424.

was legally made (Exod. 21:9). The Virgin Mary and St. Joseph had concluded this stage (St. Luke 1:27). The second stage of marriage was the social formality of the public celebration. A marriage would normally be consummated after the bringing of the bride to the husband's home. However, at the time of the annunciation it was obvious that the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph had not consummated their marriage: "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (St. Luke 1:34). It may well be the case that the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph also missed out on publicly celebrating their marriage due to their flight to Egypt; nevertheless, this did not invalidate their marriage.

Like the *Protoevangelium of St. James*, a number of distinguished Catholic commentators, including St. Thomas Aquinas, also hold that the Virgin Mary had made a formal vow of perpetual virginity before being betrothed to St. Joseph. The Jews, during the four centuries before Christ, had begun to develop a concept of consecrated virginity, particularly in the community of the Essenes. Knowledge of this vow of virginity explains why Mary was so perplexed after the Angel Gabriel announced to her that she was about to bear a son.

The Catholic answer to St. Matthew 12:46 and 13:54 is detailed but decisive. There existed no special word in Hebrew or Aramaic for "cousin." The word "brother" is used in these languages in a general sense, and does not necessarily imply that children are of the same parent. There are many examples in the Old Testament when the word *brother* was applied to any sort of relations: nephew (Gen. 12:5; 13:8; 14:16); uncle (Gen. 29:15); husband (Songs. 4:9); a member of the same tribe (2 Kgs. 9:13); of the same people (Exod. 2:21); an ally (Amos 1:9); a friend (2 Kgs. 1:26); one of the same office (1 Sam. 9:13).

Second objection: *"This may well be the case but St. Matthew 1:25 says that Joseph 'had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.' This implies that*

Mary, therefore, had other children conceived by Joseph after giving birth to Jesus.”

It would be well here to reproduce the footnote commentary on this verse from the Douai-Rheims version of the New Testament:

“St. Jerome shows, by divers examples, that this expression of the Evangelist was a manner of speaking usual among the Hebrews, to denote by the word *until*, only what is done, without any regard to the future. Thus it is said, Genesis 8, 6 and 7, that Noe sent forth a raven, which went forth, and did not return till the waters were dried up on the earth. That is, did not return anymore. Also Isaias 46:4, God says: I Am till you grow old. Who dare infer that God should then cease to be? ... God saith to his divine Son: Sit on my right till I make thy enemies thy footstool. Shall he sit no longer after his enemies are subdued?”

Other examples from Scripture include:

“Michal the daughter of Saul had no child until the day of her death” (2 Sam. 6:23)—Does this mean that Michal had children after she died?

“So they went up to Mount Zion with gladness and joy, and offered burnt offerings, because not one of them had fallen till they returned in safety” (1 Macc. 5:54)—Are we to read this verse to mean that the soldiers were killed after they returned from battle?

Even early Protestant leader John Calvin shared St. Jerome’s opinion:

“There have been certain folk who have wished to suggest from this passage (Matthew 1:25) that the Virgin Mary had other children than the Son of God, and that Joseph then dwelt with her later; but what folly this is! For the gospel writer did not wish to record what happened afterwards; he simply wished to make clear Joseph’s obedience and to show also that Joseph had been well and truly assured that it was God who

had sent His angel to Mary. He had therefore never dwelt with her nor had he shared her company.”⁷

Third objection: *“What about the fact that in some versions of St. Matthew 1:25 Jesus is called ‘first-born.’ Doesn’t this imply that he was therefore the first-born of several?”*

According to the Jewish Law a child was named “first-born” irrespective of whether there were yet, or ever to be, other children born to the same mother. The law as stated in Exodus 13:2 required that “whatever is first to open the womb among the people of Israel” be consecrated to God thirty-one days after its birth. The child is designated “first-born” even though it is only thirty-one days old and hence impossible for it to have any brother or sister yet. John Calvin also conceded this fact:

“And besides this, Our Lord Jesus Christ is called the first-born. This is not because there was a second or a third, but because the gospel writer is paying regard to the precedence ... Scripture speaks thus of naming the first-born whether or not there was any question of the second.”⁸

Fourth objection: *“Psalm 69 (68) is Messianic and speaks of the Messiah as a stranger and an alien even unto His mother’s children.”*

The verse in question reads as follows: “I have become a stranger to my brethren, an alien to my mother’s sons” (v. 8). There is no doubt that this psalm is Messianic and in the New Testament it is referred to as a forecast of Our Lord’s experiences: St. Matt. 27:34; St. John 15:25; Acts 1:20; and Rom. 15:3. The following verses specifically speak of Christ:

“...those who hate me without cause” (v. 4).

“For zeal for thy house has consumed me” (v. 9).

⁷ *Sermon on Matthew 1:22-25*, published 1562.

⁸ *Ibid.*

“...for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (v. 21).

However, the Messianic interpretation of the psalm does not exclude the possibility that it also describes personal experiences of the psalmist. This must be the conclusion when considering the following other verses:

“O God, thou knowest my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from thee” (v. 5).

“Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (v. 20).

“Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from thee” (v. 27).

The above words in verse 8 simply apply to David who considers the consequences of those sins he wails over in verse 5. It is in the other verses that he is carried on by the Holy Spirit to depict the ideal Messianic sufferer.

Who, then, exactly were the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ? It is best to start by looking at St. John 19:25. There it is evident that the Virgin Mary had an older “sister” whose name was also Mary: “Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and *his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas*, and Mary Magdalene.” The wife of Clopas may have been a direct sister of the Virgin Mary or more probably a cousin. Nevertheless, they would have had blood kinship ties.

Turning next to St. Mark 15:40, speaking on the same point we read: “There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger (Less) and of Joses (Joseph), and Salome.” Who is this “*Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses?*” Of the Marys mentioned in St. John 19:25 it must be Mary the wife of Clopas, not Mary the

“mother of Jesus,” as the Virgin Mary is never mentioned by any other title in the Gospels except as “mother of Jesus.” Furthermore, we know that the father of James the younger was Clopas, the husband of Mary of Clopas (St. Mark 3:18), making Mary of Clopas James’ mother. Jude was also a son of Clopas and the Virgin Mary’s sister as Scripture speaks of him as a brother of James the younger: “James son of Alphaeus (Clopas), and Simon the Zealot, and Judas (Jude) the brother of James” (Acts 1:13). Evidently, Our Lord had cousins by the names of James, Joseph and Jude.

One can safely state then that the “brothers” of Our Lord—as mentioned in St. Matthew 13:54-57 being James, Joseph, Jude—are in fact the same James, Joseph and Jude who were His cousins. It would be forcing credulity to believe that the Virgin Mary and her older “sister” both had the same names and also had children with the same names. One can expect, also, that after St. Joseph died, the Virgin Mary would have gone with Our Lord to live with or nearby her older “sister,” explaining why she was traveling with those mentioned in St. Matthew 12:46. It is a clear example of the word “brother” being used to refer to a first or second cousin.

Some Protestants attempt to scuttle the above reasoning by claiming that in St. John 19:25 there are in fact four women, not three. They argue that *“his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas”* are in fact two different women indicated by the placement of the comma between “sister” and “Mary.” Hence, the Virgin Mary and Mary of Clopas are not blood related and their children cannot be cousins. The counter argument is founded on Galatians 1:19, where St. Paul calls the Apostle James “the Lord’s brother.” Why does St. Paul use such a term for St. James and which St. James is he referring to? There were only two Apostles named James—James the Great son of Zebedee and Salome, and James the Less the son of Alphaeus (Clopas) and Mary. Neither had St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary as their parents. In fact, St. Paul is referring to St. James the Less and calls him “the Lord’s brother” because his mother (Mary of Clopas) and the mother of Jesus were “sisters” according to St. John 19:25.

It is also important to examine closely three major events in Our Lord's life mentioned in the Gospels: (i) the return of the Holy Family from Egypt to Nazareth after the death of Herod; (ii) the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple after being lost for three days; (iii) Our Lord giving His Mother to the care of St. John at His crucifixion. Our Lord, according to the best of our knowledge, was about 2, 12 and 33 years of age respectively when each of these events occurred. Yet, never is there any mention of brothers or sisters of His being present, which one would naturally expect if they had actually existed.

The Fathers

St. Athanasius, *On Virginity* (ante 373 AD)

“But since she was a virgin, and was his Mother, he gave her as a mother to his disciple, even though she was not really John’s mother, because of his great purity of understanding and because of her untouched virginity.”

St. Ephrem of Edessa, *Prayers to the God-Bearer* (ante 373 AD)⁹

“...the rod of Aaron that budded, truly have you appeared as a stem whose flower is your true Son, our Christ, my God and my Maker; you did bear according to the flesh God and the Word, did preserve your virginity before His birth, did remain a virgin after His birth, and we have been reconciled to God by Christ your Son.”

St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Generation of Christ* 5 (ante 379 AD)

“But since the lovers of Christ (the faithful) do not allow themselves to hear that the Mother of God ceased at a given moment to be a virgin, we consider their testimony to be sufficient.”

Didymus the Blind, *The Trinity* 3, 4 (inter 381-392 AD)

⁹ *Enchiridion Patristicum*, M. J. R. de Journal, SJ, no. 745.

“It helps us to understand the terms first-born and only-begotten when the Evangelist tells that Mary remained a virgin ‘until she brought forth her first-born son;’ for neither did Mary, who is to be honored and praised above all others, marry anyone, nor did she ever become the Mother of anyone else, but even after childbirth she remained always and forever an immaculate virgin.”

St. Jerome, *Against Helvidius* 17 & 18 (c. 383 AD)

“I now ask to which class you consider the Lord’s brethren in the Gospel must be assigned. They are brethren by nature, you say. But Scripture does not say so; it calls them neither sons of Mary, nor of Joseph. Shall we say they are brethren by race? ... The only alternative is to adopt the previous explanation and understand them to be called brethren in virtue of the bond of kindred, not of love and sympathy, nor by prerogative of race, nor yet by nature ... It is clear that our Lord’s brethren bore the name in the same way that Joseph was called his father.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Holy Virginity* 4, 4 (401 AD)

“In being born of a Virgin who chose to remain a Virgin even before she knew who was to be born of her, Christ wanted to approve virginity rather than impose it. And He wanted virginity to be of free choice even in that woman in whom He took upon Himself the form of a slave.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *The Annunciation of the Lord* 3, *Sermones Supp.* 195 (ante 430 AD)

“It is written (Ezekiel 44:2): ‘This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it. Because the Lord the God of Israel has entered in by it.’ What does this closed gate in the house of the Lord mean, except that Mary is to be ever inviolate? What does it mean that ‘no man shall pass through it,’ but that Joseph shall not know her? And what is this—‘The Lord alone enters in and goes out by it,’ except that the Holy Spirit shall impregnate her, and that the Lord of Angels shall be born of her? And what means this—‘It shall be shut for evermore,’ but that Mary is a Virgin before His birth, a Virgin in His birth, and a Virgin after His birth.”

**St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew*
Hom. 1 (c. 390 AD)**

“Joseph did not know her, until she gave birth, being unaware of her dignity: but after she had given birth, then did he know her (by way of acquaintance). Because by reason of her child she surpassed the whole world in beauty and dignity: since she alone in the narrow abode of her womb received Him whom the world cannot contain.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. I, Ch. IV: He is born of His Mother without any diminution of her maternal virginity, just as He afterwards went forth from the sepulcher while it was closed and sealed, and entered the room in which His disciples were assembled, the doors being shut; or, not to depart from every-day examples, just as the rays of the sun penetrate without breaking or injuring in the least the solid substance of glass, so after a like but more exalted manner did Jesus Christ come forth from His mother’s womb without injury to her maternal virginity. This immaculate and perpetual virginity forms, therefore, the just theme of our eulogy. Such was the work of the Holy Ghost, who at the Conception and birth of the Son so favored the Virgin Mother as to impart to her fecundity while preserving inviolate her perpetual virginity.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 499: The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary’s real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. In fact, Christ’s birth “did not diminish His Mother’s virginal integrity but sanctified it.” And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the “Ever-virgin.”

No. 500: Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus. The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, “brothers of Jesus,” are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls “the other Mary.” They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression.

No. 501: Jesus is Mary’s Son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: “The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formulation she co-operates with a mother’s love.”

Saint Peter and Papal Primacy

Objection: *“St. Peter was not the head of the other Apostles. All of them were equal in power and authority!”*

It has been said by many outside the Church that if you disprove the primacy of St. Peter (i.e., show that he was not the leader of but only equal to the other Apostles), you undermine the Papacy and, therefore, the very foundations of the Catholic Church.

It is evident in numerous places in the Bible that St. Peter was made by Christ, and regarded by others, as the head of the Apostles:

- (i) The keys of the kingdom of heaven to bind and loose on earth were given by Our Lord to St. Peter (St. Matt. 16:19).
- (ii) St. Peter’s name is listed first when he, St. James and St. John are mentioned as being with Our Lord at the Transfiguration (St. Matt. 17:1).
- (iii) Our Lord made St. Peter’s home His headquarters while staying in Capernaum (St. Mark 1:29).
- (iv) The resurrection of Christ was first pronounced by the angel to St. Peter (St. Mark 16:7).
- (v) Our Lord prayed for St. Peter alone and instructed him to “strengthen your brethren” (St. Luke 22:31-32).
- (vi) After His resurrection, St. Peter was the first of all the Apostles to whom Christ appeared (St. Luke 24).

- (vii) At His first meeting with St. Peter, Our Lord gave him the new name of “Cephas” (Rock) (St. John 1:42).
- (viii) It was to St. Peter that Our Lord entrusted the care of His flock, lambs and sheep (St. John 21:15-17).
- (ix) The election that chose St. Matthias as the replacement for Judas was conducted by St. Peter (Acts 1:25).
- (x) The first miracle at the Temple was performed by St. Peter (Acts 3).
- (xi) St. Peter replied to the Sanhedrin on behalf of the Church (Acts 4).
- (xii) The case of Ananias and Saphira was judged by St. Peter (Acts 5).
- (xiii) St. Peter was the first to preach to the Jews (Acts 2:14) and to receive Gentiles into the Church (Acts 11).
- (xiv) At the Council of Jerusalem the multitudes “kept silence” after St. Peter rose up and spoke (Acts 15:12).
- (xv) After his conversion St. Paul first went to St. Peter (Gal. 1:18).
- (xvi) The lists of Apostles in St. Matthew 10, St. Mark 3, St. Luke 6, and Acts 1 all place the name of St. Peter first.
- (xvii) In the New Testament, St. Peter is mentioned 195 times. The other Apostles are together mentioned only 130 times, with St. John receiving 29 mentions, St. James the Great 24, Judas Iscariot 23 and Philip 6.¹

¹ Fulton J. Sheen, *Life of Christ* (New York; Doubleday Image, 1958, p. 106

Second objection: *“Too much is made of Simon’s name being changed to Peter. According to St. Paul, Christ is the rock (1 Cor. 10:4).”*

In the Old Testament we find God Himself more than once changing the names of certain men. This He does when He gives to one of His faithful followers a change of mission. So with Abraham we read the following:

“Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations” (Gen. 17:5).

Likewise, with Jacob:

“And he said to him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob.’ Then he said, ‘Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed’” (Gen. 32:27-28).

On first beholding Simon, Our Lord changed his name to *Cephas*: “So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas” (St. John 1:42). Cephas and Peter both mean *rock*. The significance of this name change cannot be ignored. It was to contrast what Simon Peter was before he met Our Lord to what he would become afterwards, that is, the firm rock on which Our Lord would build His Church (St. Matt. 16:18ff.).

In six other verses of the New Testament we find Simon being specifically called Cephas, or rock: 1 Cor. 1:12; 1 Cor. 3:22; 1 Cor. 9:12; 1 Cor. 15:5; Gal. 2:7, 11, 14.

Third objection: *“But in St. Matthew 16:18 St. Peter was called ‘Petros,’ meaning ‘little stone’ while Christ said He would build His Church on ‘Petra,’ or a ‘massive rock.’ Therefore, Christ did not intend to build His Church on Peter!”*

Undoubtedly, the different Greek words “Petros” and “Petra” appear in St. Matthew’s Gospel. However, we must understand that when Christ spoke to St. Peter in c.16, v.18 He spoke in Aramaic and not Greek. In Aramaic, Our Lord would have said “*Anath-her kipha, v’all hode Kipha.*” Numerous Protestant scholars today acknowledge this point, including the Baptist Biblical Professor D. A. Carson:

“...the underlying Aramaic is in this case unquestionable; and most probably *Kepha* was used in both clauses (‘you are *kepha*’ and ‘on this *kepha*’), since the word was used both for a name and for a ‘rock’ ... The Greek makes the distinction between *petros* and *petra* simply because it is trying to preserve the pun, and in Greek the feminine *petra* could not very well serve as a masculine name.”²

If Christ had intended to characterize St. Peter as a “little stone”—as distinct from a “massive rock”—he could have chosen other more suitable words to signify such a contrast, such as *evna* in Aramaic, meaning “little stone.” Likewise, had St. Matthew really wanted to record in his Gospel that St. Peter was only a “little stone” the more preferable and common word to use would have been *lithos*, which means “stone of virtually any size.”

Fourth objection: “Admittedly, St. Peter is given the keys of the kingdom of heaven by Christ but didn’t Christ also give the power to bind and loose to the other Apostles as well in Matthew 18?”

Our Lord gives to St. Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven in St. Matthew 16:19:

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

² *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume 8 (Matthew, Mark, Luke)*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984, p. 368.

This bestowal of the keys is made solely to St. Peter as the word here for “you” in the Greek is the singular dative form soi, and the verbs “bind” and “loose” are the singular forms as well.

Christ’s bestowal of the keys on St. Peter is reminiscent of the bestowal of authority upon the Chamberlain, or Vizier, in the Royal House of Israel in Isaiah chapter 22:

“And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open” (v. 22).

Undoubtedly, Isaiah 22 lies behind St. Matthew 16. The Chamberlain in Isaiah 22 is given responsibility over the “inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah,” while St. Peter is given authority to govern the New Israel, or Christ’s Church. The symbol of the keys in both instances represents the authority of administrator and teacher, while the language of binding and loosing is a rabbinic expression for authoritative teaching and the declaring of what is permitted and what is not. The noted Lutheran Biblical scholar Oscar Cullman likewise sees the parallels:

“In Matthew 16:19 it is presupposed that Christ is the master of the house, who has the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, with which to open to those who come in. Just as in Isaiah 22:22 the Lord lays the keys of the house of David on the shoulders of his servant Eliakim, so Jesus commits to Peter the keys of his house, the Kingdom of Heaven, and thereby installs him as administrator of the house.”³

The position of Chamberlain was established during the reign of King Solomon and continued under his successors throughout the history of Israel. Likewise, St. Peter too would have successors during the

³ *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr*, trans. Floyd V. Filson, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), p. 203.

history of the new Israel, the difference being that his successors would always be under the one Davidic king, Jesus Christ.

St. Peter and his successors will hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven until Christ visibly returns at the end of the world. But what of the other Apostles? What specific powers were they (and therefore their successors) given? St. Matthew 18:18 reads as follows:

“Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

St. Matthew 18 is distinct from St. Matthew 16 in three important ways. First, Christ in chapter 16 specifically promises to build His Church only on St. Peter. Second, in chapter 18 the word “you” which appears three times is always the Greek plural *humin*, indicating that Christ is talking to the Apostles as a whole. Third, chapter 18 makes no mention of keys together with the power to bind and loose.

Chapters 16 and 18 should be read together and are reconcilable in the following manner:

- (i) The power of the keys is the wider power and authority that includes the power of binding and loosing. St. Peter alone is given the keys to exercise the power of binding and loosing in its fullness as Vicar of Christ.
- (ii) St. Peter holds individually and personally the power given to the Apostles in common. He can exercise this power and authority alone without reference to the other Apostles.
- (iii) The Apostles share in the power of binding and loosing but can carry it out only in union with St. Peter.

The pre-eminence of St. Peter over the other Apostles is supported by Our Lord’s instruction to him to “strengthen your brethren” (St. Luke 22: 31-32). Commenting on St. Luke 22:31-32, Ethelbert Stauffer, a Lutheran scholar notes:

“What is the basis of Peter’s unique position? Not upon any special qualification of the apostle, but upon the intercession of

the Lord...In praying specially for Peter, Jesus is protecting and delivering the young community as a whole. He prays for fallen Peter so that Peter uplifted might strengthen his brethren in the faith, and so all attain the goal reserved for them—the Kingdom. So in this one saying it is made clear that the only possible ground of the Church's existence and the very basis of its life is the mediatorial office of Christ, and also that Peter's own mediatorial function is to be co-ordinated with and subordinated to this Christological office of the mediator."⁴

It is unreasonable to assert that the unique power and authority held by St. Peter was to die with him. To believe this would be to believe that Christ would leave the Church on earth without central leadership for more than nineteen centuries. On the contrary, it has always been the universal view of Christendom that St. Peter continues to govern the Church with the same power and authority given him by Christ in the person of his lawful successors, that is, those who occupy the See of Rome, the Popes.

Fifth objection: *“If St. Peter was the head of the Church then why was St. James in charge of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15?”*

The Acts of the Apostles, more than any other book of the New Testament, supports the primacy of St. Peter. In the first 12 chapters alone St. Peter is mentioned fifty-three times.

The Council of Jerusalem took place about 49 or 50 AD. It displayed the same features of later ecumenical councils in the history of the Church: the rulers of the whole Church attend the Council; it promulgates decisions relating to faith and morals binding on all Christians; its decisions are recorded in written form and proclaimed universally.

In the first phase of the Council of Jerusalem there was much discussion and debate over the entry of Gentiles into the Church: “But

⁴ *New Testament Theology* (tr. John March), SCM Press, London, 1955, pp. 31-32.

some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up, and said, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses'" (vv. 6-7). In the second phase St. Peter got up and spoke authoritatively on the issue: "And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith" (vv. 8-9). Then there was silence as the multitude contemplated St. Peter's words. In the third phase Sts. Paul and Barnabas spoke, relating... "what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles" (v. 12). Next, St. James asked to be heard and echoed what St. Peter had first said: "Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood" (vv. 19-20).

It is argued by Protestant apologists that St. James' statement in verse 13 ("Brethren, listen to me") is an ecclesiastical dictate denoting supreme authority over the Council as he was bishop of Jerusalem. This is reinforced by his words in verse 19: "Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God." The consequence of such an argument is to show that St. James was the final and undisputed decision-maker and St. Peter had no absolute authority at all.

Such a conclusion, however, is totally unwarranted. The Greek for 'listen to me' is *akouoo*, which is not of itself an imperative connoting authority, but a word which can be used by any person seeking the attention of another. It is used hundreds of times in the New Testament in this sense. As for the words "my judgment," the original Greek words are *ego krino*, which mean "I give my opinion, or voice." The fact that St. James spoke in the first person singular ("My" or "I") suggests that he was only giving his opinion, conviction or recommendation, one that had to be accepted by the rest of the Council.

Sixth objection: "I don't see any significance in St. Paul's visit to St. Peter after spending three years in the desert."

Some may see no significance, but St. John Chrysostom certainly did:

“He says, ‘to visit Peter;’ he does not say to see (*heiden*), but to visit and survey (*historesai*), a word which those who seek to become acquainted with great and splendid cities apply to themselves. Worthy of such trouble did he consider the very sight of Peter; and this appears from the Acts of the Apostles also” (*Homily on Galatians 1*, 18 [393-397 AD]).

Galatians 1:18-19 reads as follows:

“Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord’s brother.”

The words “visit” in relation to St. Peter and “saw” for the other Apostles in Greek, are, respectively *historesai* and *heiden*. *Historesai* connotes more than just to visit; it also means “to question” or “to examine.” Together, the words “*historesai Kephana*” means “to get information from Cephas.” St. Paul spent more than two weeks with St. Peter and in that time would have discussed a vast range of topics concerning the Christian faith with him. This he did not do with St. James, the other Apostle he “saw” (*heiden*). Why? For St. Peter alone was the Rock and head of the others.

Seventh objection: “*The primacy of the Roman popes based on St. Peter began with Pope Gregory the Great. The early Church recognized no such primacy in the bishop of Rome!*”

There are numerous instances in early Church history when either individuals or groups, both orthodox and heretical, appealed to Rome for a decision or declaration in their favor, for example:

- (i) The early Church historian Hegesippus traveled throughout the Empire to ascertain on behalf of Pope Anicetus (155-166 AD) whether the teachings of the various churches were in uniformity with Rome.
- (ii) Tertullian states that the Montanist community dispatched letters to Rome seeking recognition (c. 173-180 AD).
- (iii) St. Irenaeus of Lyons was delegated by the Church of Lyons to take to Pope St. Eleutherius letters concerning the Montanist troubles (c. 178 AD); and interceded with Pope St. Victor I concerning the Paschal observance (c. 190-191 AD).
- (iv) Rome formally condemned Montanism in 212 AD.
- (v) The Priscillianists petitioned Pope Damasus for support (c. 381-382 AD).
- (vi) St. Prosper of Aquitaine traveled to Rome to obtain from Pope Celestine a condemnation of the semi-Pelagians (c. 430-431 AD).
- (vii) Pope St. Leo I condemned the Monophysite heresy in 451 AD.

These examples are but a few. A more detailed study would reveal many more instances of Papal intervention. One thing is certain, both in the Empire and in the early Church all roads led to Rome.

The Fathers

St. Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians Address* (c. 98 AD)

“The Church of God which sojourns in Rome to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth. ... Owing to the sudden and repeated calamities and misfortunes which have befallen us, we must acknowledge that we have been somewhat tardy in turning our attention to the matters in dispute among you.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3, 3, 2 (c. 180 AD) “...by pointing out here the successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient Church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, that Church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the Apostles. For with this Church, because of its superior origin, all Churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world; and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the Apostolic tradition.”

Tertullian, *The Demurrer Against the Heretics* 22 (c. 200 AD)

“Was anything hidden from Peter, who was called the Rock whereon the Church was to be built: who obtained the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the power of loosing and of binding in heaven and on earth.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter to all his People* 43 (40), 5 (251 AD)

“There is one God and one Christ, and one Church, and one Chair founded on Peter by the word of the Lord. It is not possible to set up another altar or for there to be another priesthood besides that one altar and that one priesthood. Whoever has gathered elsewhere is scattering.”

St. Pope Julius I, *Acknowledging Your Letter* [contained in St. Athanasius’ *Apology Against the Arians* 35] (341 AD)

“And above all, why was nothing written to us about the Church of the Alexandrians? Are you ignorant that the custom has been to write first to us, and then for a just decision to be passed from this place?”

St. Jerome, *Letter to Pope Damasus* 15, 2 (inter 374-379 AD)

“I speak with the successor of the fisherman and the disciple of the Cross. Though I acknowledge none as first except Christ, I am joined in communion with Your Holiness, that is to say, in communion with

the Chair of Peter. I know that it is upon that rock that the Church has been built. Whoever eats the Lamb outside this house is profane.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Hymn Against the Donatists* 18 (393 AD)

“Run through the list of those priests who have occupied the See of Peter Himself; and in that list of Fathers, see who succeeded to whom. This is the Rock which the proud Gates of Hell do not overcome.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. I, Ch. X: The Church has but one ruler and one governor, the invisible one, Christ, whom the eternal Father *hath made head over all the Church, which is his body*; the visible one, the Pope, who, as legitimate successor of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, fills the Apostolic chair.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 880: When Christ instituted the Twelve, “he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them.” Just as “by the Lord’s institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter’s successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another.”

No. 881: The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the “rock” of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head. This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church’s very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.

No. 882: The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful." "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered."

Was St. Peter Ever in Rome?

Objection: *“How can today’s Pope, the Bishop of Rome, be the modern-day successor to St. Peter when St. Peter himself never visited Rome?”*

The case is stated bluntly by the Presbyterian minister Loraine Boettner in *Roman Catholicism*, the “Bible” of anti-Catholic Fundamentalism:

“The remarkable thing, however, about Peter’s alleged bishopric in Rome is that the New Testament has not one word to say about it. The word Rome occurs only nine times in the Bible, and never is Peter mentioned in connection with it. There is no allusion to Rome in either of his epistles. Paul’s journey to the city is recorded in great detail (Acts 27 and 28). There is in fact no New Testament evidence, nor any historical proof of any kind, that Peter ever was in Rome. All rests on legend” (p. 117).

Boettner’s invective does not end there. He goes on to say:

“Not one of the early church fathers gives any support to the belief that Peter was a bishop in Rome until Jerome in the fifth century. Du Pin, a Roman Catholic historian, acknowledges that the primacy of Peter is not recorded by the early Christian writers, Justin Martyr (139), Irenaeus (178), Clement of Alexandria (190), or others of the most ancient fathers” (p. 122).

On the other hand, at the end of his first epistle St. Peter writes: “Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark” (1 Pet. 5:13). St. Peter used Babylon here as an early Christian code word for Rome.

St. John also uses the term Babylon in the Book of Revelation six times in the same way:

“Then another angel, a second, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (v. 14:8).

“The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. God remembered great Babylon and gave her the wine-cup of the fury of his wrath” (v. 16:19).

“...and on her forehead was written a name, a mystery: Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth’s abominations” (v. 17:5).

“He called out with a mighty voice, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!” (v. 18:2).

“...they will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, Alas, alas, the great city, Babylon, the mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come” (v. 18:10).

“With such violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down, and will be found no more” (v. 18:21).

Babylon in the Book of Revelation can only refer to Rome as it was the only “great city” in the time of Christ and the Apostles. Babylon proper in Mesopotamia had, by 100 AD, been reduced to insignificance. Other extra-biblical works also refer to Rome as Babylon, such as the Sibylline Oracles (5:159ff.), the Apocalypse of Baruch (2:1) and 4 Esdras (3:1). Boettner, however, dismisses the argument that Babylon in 1 Peter is a code for Rome, preferring to believe that St. Peter actually visited Babylon itself:

“While there is no Scriptural evidence at all that Peter went west to Rome, here is a plain statement of Scripture that he did go east to Babylon. Why cannot the Roman Church take Peter’s word to that effect? ... there is no good reason for saying that Babylon means Rome” (p. 120).

Boettner also asserts that St. Peter wrote 1 Peter (and probably 2 Peter) while in Babylon. All credible Scripture scholars believe that St. Peter wrote 1 Peter between 62 and 64 AD. This is because St. Peter seems to have known St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (written during St. Paul's first Roman captivity which ended in 62 AD) and because of the absence of any reference to an official Roman persecution of Christians, which began in August 64 AD. St. Peter outlines the same duties for slaves, wives and husbands as in Ephesians 5:22-33 and 6:5-8. To have such precise knowledge of this letter so soon after its composition, as well as being certain of its authenticity, St. Peter must have been in close proximity to St. Paul—that is, in Rome with him, not in far-away Babylon.

Furthermore, in the final farewell of 1 Peter, St. Peter mentions Silvanus and St. Mark. Silvanus, the bearer of 1 Peter, was a constant companion of St. Paul (Acts 15:22 & 32-40; 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1) while St. Mark was with St. Paul in Rome during his first captivity (Col. 4:10). Why would Silvanus be in Babylon with St. Peter if he normally traveled with St. Paul; and how could St. Mark so easily team up with St. Peter and be in Babylon so soon after being mentioned in Colossians 4:10 with St. Paul in Rome? The more likely answer is that they were with St. Paul and St. Peter who were both in Rome at the same time.

So much is made also of the fact that St. Paul never refers to St. Peter being in Rome in Romans or in any of his Captivity Epistles. Boettner exclaims, "How strange for a missionary to write to a church and not mention the pastor! That would be an inexcusable affront" (p. 121). The answer is quite simple. Christians were well known and despised even before the first official persecution of Nero. The Emperor Claudius expelled all Christians and Jews from Rome in 50 AD because of their disputes over a man named "Chrestus," according to the ancient historian Suetonius.¹ St. Peter was known as the leader of

¹ *Lives of the Caesars*, Claud. 25, 4. By "Chrestus," Suetonius clearly intended "Christus," which is Latin for Christ.

this seditious sect. Therefore, it was necessary to always conceal the identity and whereabouts of St. Peter in order to protect both him and the Christians he visited. Roman officials routinely read mail for security reasons, hence the prudence on the part of early Christians, concealing the name of St. Peter and even Rome in any important correspondence.

Disproving Boettner's claim that "Not one of the early church fathers gives any support to the belief that Peter was a bishop in Rome until Jerome in the fifth century," Herbert Cardinal Vaughan, Archbishop of Westminster back in 1895 set forth some of the early Patristic evidence in support of St. Peter's presence in Rome²:

- (i) Tertullian (200 AD) speaks of St. Peter ordaining St. Clement in Rome (*The Demurrer Against the Heretics* 32) and of St. Peter baptizing in the Tiber River (*On Baptism* 4).
- (ii) Clement of Alexandria (ante 217 AD) speaks of St. Peter proclaiming the word of God publicly in Rome (in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6, 14).
- (iii) Caius (214 AD) referred to Pope Victor as thirteenth bishop of Rome after St. Peter (in Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 5, 28).
- (iv) St. Hippolytus (225 AD) names St. Peter as first bishop of Rome (fragment *On the Twelve Apostles* XLIX);
- (v) St. Cyprian of Carthage (250 AD) speaks of the "the place of Peter" (*Ep. ad Anton.*) and "the seat of Peter" (*Ep. ad Cornel.*) when referring to Rome.
- (vi) Firmilian of Caesaria (257 AD) speaks of the "succession of Peter" and "the chair of Peter" (*Ep. ad Cyp.*) when referring to Rome.

² Tenth Lecture at Free Trade Hall, Manchester, England, Autumn 1895.

- (vii) The Council of Sardica (342-343 AD) “honors the memory of the Apostle Peter” by referring appeals to the See of Peter in Rome (*Can. IV* and *Ep. ad Julium*).
- (viii) Pope Julius I (337-352 AD), Bishop of Rome, referred to the doctrines received by him as coming from St. Peter (*Apud. Apol. Athanas. 35*).
- (ix) St. Athanasius (358 AD) called Rome the Apostolic Throne (*Hist. Arian. ad. Monach., 35*).
- (x) St. Optatus of Milevi says that the episcopal chair in Rome was first established by St. Peter, in which chair sat St. Peter himself (*Schism. Donat. II, 2*).
- (xi) Pope Damasus (370 AD) speaks of the “Apostolic Chair (in which the) holy Apostle sitting, taught his successors how to guide the helm of the Church” (*Ep. 9, ad Synod, Orient. Apud Theodoret, V., 10*).
- (xii) St. Ambrose (387-390 AD) refers to “Peter’s chair” in Rome where “Peter, first of the apostles, first sat” (*De Poenit. I., 7-32, Exp. Symb. ad Initiand.*).

The actual story of the discovery of St. Peter’s tomb and his skeletal remains spreads over centuries. On the site where St. Peter’s Basilica now stands, stood originally a chariot racecourse track built by the Emperor Caligula. All that remains of that racetrack today is the tall Egyptian obelisk standing in the middle of the piazza. Nearby, at a short distance from the stone structure of the racetrack, along the Via Cornelia, was a pagan burial-ground lying in a knoll called Vaticanus. It was in this burial-ground that the bones of St. Peter, wrapped in linen, were laid after his martyrdom.

St. Anacletus, third Bishop of Rome, erected a shrine over St. Peter’s grave which was visible to all those who passed by Vatican Hill. This shrine, despite the persecutions, became a familiar meeting place for

Christians from the beginning and was mentioned in the *Acts of St. Sebastian*.

In the early fourth century, the Emperor Constantine allowed Pope Sylvester I to construct a large new church over the burial place of St. Peter and the remains of other early Popes now gathered there. The stones for this new church were quarried from the old racecourse and the structure of St. Peter's shrine became the high altar. Begun in 326, this church was finally completed in 349. It contained five naves, fifty-two altars with seven hundred candles burning day and night, and golden mosaics decorating the walls and arches.

The actual bones of St. Peter were ordered removed from their shrine by Constantine, covered in fine purple cloth interwoven with gold, put into a box and reposed in a niche of a nearby wall (Wall G) to protect them from humidity. This wall was later covered by red plaster. The original burial place of St. Peter was also walled off to protect it from injury and the outside world, to become lost for the next 1600 years.

In 1506 it was decided, due to subsidence and decay, to replace the old church built by Constantine with a grand new basilica. In 1626, Bernini, testing the floor over St. Peter's burial place for the erection of his weighty baldacchino, came across numerous skeletons. These skeletons were arranged like spokes of a wheel, pointing to a central spot under the high altar.

More than three hundred years later, Pope Pius XII, in March 1939, ordered excavations under St. Peter's to find "the foundations of our faith." In a radio broadcast on 23rd December 1950, the Pope announced to the world that the original tomb of St. Peter had been discovered. It lay 25 feet beneath the high altar and was decorated with Christian mosaics, one of a fisherman with a rod, one of the Good Shepherd, and another of Jonah and the whale.

However, the bones of St. Peter (as opposed to his tomb) still remained missing. Doctor Margherita Guarducci, a professor of Greek epigraphy, noticed that during the excavations for the tomb pieces of red plaster chipped off a nearby wall (Wall G) had Greek inscriptions

carved on them. The Greek letters “pe” in the form of a monogram appeared on every line of the wall. By chance, on 2nd August, 1951, a Jesuit excavator, Father Antonio Ferrua, noticed a piece 1 x 3 inches in size, with the words “*Petros eni*” (Peter is inside) on it and put it into his pocket and took it home. When Pius XII heard of this he ordered the Jesuit to return the fragment. Wall G also included many other references to St. Peter, accompanied by the names of Jesus and Mary, the letters “pe” joined in the form of a key, and the name of Peter intersected by the names of Jesus and Mary. All this indicated that the bones of St. Peter could not be far away.

In fact, about 10 years earlier, in 1942, an excavator named Giovanni Segoni had emptied the niche in Wall G. Included in the material collected were bones that were dusted and freed from the other rubble. Without informing the excavators, Monsignor Ludwig Kaas, the administrator of St. Peter’s Basilica, had the bones put into a wooden box and stored, first, in a damp area of the underground grotto and then in a cupboard of a basilica office. In 1962, these bones were analyzed by Venerando Correnti, one of Europe’s most distinguished anthropologists. “The remains,” he said, “are from a single male between sixty and seventy years, about five feet seven inches tall and of robust constitution. Judging from the soil, the body must have been buried in the earth. The bones—and not the body—were at some time wrapped in purple cloth.” The fabric with the bones was interwoven with gold threads.

In February 1964 Pope Paul VI gave permission for further tests on the bones and the fabric. The analysis found, firstly, that the fabric was the same type used to wrap the bones of St. Peter when they were transferred in the time of Constantine; secondly, the earth particles covering the bones were found to be identical in type to the soil in St. Peter’s original tomb. Other tests on the repository Wall G established that it was an ancient Roman work with absolutely no trace of later tampering or rebuilding. All the evidence all pointed now to only one conclusion.

Pope Paul VI announced to one of the excavators that “those bones are like gold to us.” On June 26, 1968, he surprised the world by

announcing officially that the bones of St. Peter had finally been rediscovered and identified: “The relics of St. Peter have been identified in a manner which we believe convincing ... very patient and accurate investigations were made with the result which we believe positive.” On the following day the Pope, in a solemn ceremony, restored the sacred bones to their ancient resting-place.³

The Fathers

Dionysius of Corinth, *To Pope Soter* (c. 170 AD) [in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2, 25, 8 (303 AD)]

“You have also, by your very admonition, brought together the planting that was made by Peter and Paul at Rome and at Corinth; for both of them alike planted in our Corinth and taught us; and both alike, teaching similarly in Italy, suffered martyrdom at the same time.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3, 3, 2 (c. 180 AD)

“...by pointing out here the successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient Church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, that Church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the Apostles. For with this Church, because of its superior origin, all Churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world; and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the Apostolic tradition.”

Clement of Alexandria (ante 217 AD) [in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6, 14 (c. 303 AD)]

“When Peter preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had been for a long time his follower and who remembered his sayings, should write down what had been proclaimed.”

Tertullian, *The Demurrer Against the Heretics* 36, 1(c. 200 AD)

³ Cf. J. E. Walsh, *The Bones of St. Peter*, Doubleday, New York, 1982.

“How happy is that Church ... where Peter endured a passion like that of the Lord, where Paul was crowned in a death like John’s.”

Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History* 2, 15, 4 (303 AD)

“It is said that Peter’s first epistle, in which he makes mention of Mark, was composed at Rome itself; and that he himself indicates this, referring to the city figuratively as Babylon.”

Eusebius Pamphilus, *The Chronicle Ad An. Dom* 42 (c. 303 AD)

“The second year of the two hundredth and fifth Olympiad (42 AD) the apostle Peter, after he has established the Church in Antioch, is sent to Rome, where he remains a bishop of that city, preaching the gospel for twenty five years...”

Eusebius Pamphilus, *The Chronicle Ad An. Dom.* 68 (c. 303 AD)

“Nero is the first, in addition to all other crimes, to make a persecution against the Christians, in which Peter and Paul died gloriously in Rome.”

St. Peter of Alexandria, *Canonical Letter*, canon 9 (311 AD)

“Peter, first chosen of the apostles, having been apprehended often and thrown into prison and treated with ignominy, at last was crucified in Rome.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

The Catechism of the Council of Trent did not directly refer to the question of whether St. Peter had ever been in Rome, but in Pt. I, Ch. X quotes the following from Optatus of Milevi (*De Schism. Donat.* ii. 2):

“You cannot be excused on the score of ignorance, knowing as you do that in the city of Rome the episcopal chair was first conferred on Peter, who occupied it as head of the Apostles...”

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

Likewise, the Catechism of the Catholic Church makes no direct statement on the question of whether St. Peter ever visited Rome, but re-affirms that the Pope is “the Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor” (No. 882).

Purgatory and Praying for the Dead

Objection: *“I don’t believe in purgatory, because it is not mentioned in the Bible. There exist only heaven and hell.”*

For Catholics, the strongest arguments for the existence of purgatory include the constant and universal writings of the early Church Fathers, the ancient liturgies of the East and West, the numerous inscriptions on the walls of the Catacombs, and the dogmatic pronouncements of the Councils of Florence (1438-45) and Trent (1545-63).

The Catholic Church teaches that purgatory is a temporary process of purification, where those who have died undergo expiation to remove all temporal punishment due to mortal sin duly forgiven, or all stain of unrepentant venial sin. It is not a “second chance” opportunity or a place where souls that are not-good-enough-for-heaven-but-too-good-for-hell go. All the selfishness, inordinate attachment to creatures, dross and impurities in our souls are burned away by the fiery love and holiness of Christ. Souls undergo purgatory, as “nothing unclean can enter heaven” and behold the glorious and overwhelming light of the Beatific Vision (Rev. 21:27).

Purgatorial cleansing is a passive process. We do nothing ourselves to purify our souls. The purification is done solely by God. Following immediately after death, the soul appears before the judgment seat of Christ: “It is appointed unto a man once to die, and then the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). This judgment involves the burning away of all “wood, hay, and straw” and the refining of all “gold, silver and precious stones” (1 Cor. 3:13ff.). All this takes place before the soul enters heaven. All souls that undergo purgatory are destined ultimately for heaven.

The Church does not formally teach that purgatory is a particular region in the afterlife. We are unsure as to how space operates in the next world, in particular for disembodied spirits. Likewise with regards to time; a different temporal modality—called *aeviternity*—operates in the next life for humans which is distinct from the ordinary flow of events experienced on earth. After the General Resurrection and Final Judgment, purgatory will no longer operate and all humanity will be in either heaven or hell.

Christians can pray for the souls in purgatory and assist them through good works and penances, especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: “But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin” (2 Macc. 12:45). Each good action of a just man possesses a double value—that of merit, and that of satisfaction or expiation. Merit is personal and cannot be transferred to another, but satisfaction can be applied for the benefit of others. God accepts the charitable acts of others to abate the temporal punishment of the souls in purgatory and these same souls will pray for us out of gratitude when they reach heaven.

It should also be noted that purgatory is not all pain. Since the soul is closer to God than when it was on earth, it experiences correspondingly greater joys. St. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) wrote in her *Treatise on Purgatory*:

“An incessant communication with God renders their happiness daily more intense, and this union with God grows more and more intimate, according as the impediments to that union, which exist in the soul, are consumed ... With regard to the will of these souls, they can never say that these pains are pains, so great is their contentment with the ordinance of God, with which their wills are united in perfect charity.”

The ex-Protestant convert, James Akin, lists some of the other “advantages” of purgatory:

“(a) Freedom from the committing of sin; (b) freedom from the desire to sin; (c) closer unity with God and Christ; (d) certainty of one’s final salvation in a way not possible in this life; (e) a final and full appreciation of just how gracious God has been to one; (f) a final and full appreciation of just how much God loves one; (g) the unencumbered and pure love we will feel for God and for others; (h) partial rewards which may be given in anticipation of one’s entrance into the full glory of heaven at the end of purgatory.”¹

Second objection: “Sure, but all this means nothing, for the Bible still says nothing about purgatory.”

Protestants are always very quick to assert that the doctrine of purgatory is unbiblical, insisting that there is only heaven and hell. However, as we have just seen, 2 Maccabees 12:43-46 shows that the Jews in the Old Testament certainly believed in a state where the dead could profit from the sacrifices and prayers of the living. The full text of this passage reads as follows:

“He also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.”

Protestants deny the canonicity of the Maccabean books. Nevertheless, their historical value cannot be denied. Even Jewish prayer books today contain prayers for the dead (the *Mourner’s Qaddish*). If the Jews had invented the doctrine of purgatory or prayers for the dead, undoubtedly Christ would have condemned it, as He condemned them for a long list of changes in doctrine and discipline in St. Matthew 23. Furthermore, the doctrine of purgatory is implied in the Gospels:

¹ *How to Explain Purgatory to Protestants*, Internet Website, 1/20/99.

“And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (St. Matt. 12:32).

According to Pope St. Gregory the Great, these words of Christ infer that there are some sins that can be forgiven in the next life. Now, as this cannot be done in heaven or hell, Christ must have had in mind another state—that which the Church calls purgatory.

“Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny” (St. Luke 12:59).

The judge in this parable represents God, the accuser our neighbor. If we have not reconciled with our neighbor before death, God will hold us accountable for the wrong inflicted on him. However, it will be a punishment that is only temporary, as implied by the words *“you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.”*

St. Paul also writing his first letter to the Corinthians (3:13-15) says: *“each man’s work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”*

The words *“he himself will be saved, but only as through fire”* indicate a process of purification that takes place before the soul enters heaven. Some Protestants argue that this verse does not refer to purgatory, for it is our works and not our souls that will be tested by fire. This might appear to be the case on the surface, nevertheless, it is the soul that will feel the consequences of that testing. This is what St. Paul means when he says that *“he will receive a reward”* and *“he will suffer loss.”*

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (Heb. 12:22-23).

The ‘heavenly Jerusalem’ is inhabited by ‘innumerable angels’ and ‘the spirits of the righteous made perfect.’ These spirits are the souls of the Just, made perfect by the merits of Christ applied through the mysterious purifying process the Church calls purgatory.

“Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?” (1 Cor. 15:29).

This passage is one of the most difficult in the Scriptures to understand. The most plausible interpretation is that “baptized” in this context means sufferings and afflictions undergone on behalf of others (St. Mark 10:38-39; St. Luke 12:50). What St. Paul was alluding to was the practice of the Apostolic Church to sacrifice, pray and fast for the souls of departed Christians.

“May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me eagerly and found me—may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus” (2 Tim. 1:16-18).

The sense of this passage is that Onesiphorus is dead at the time of writing and that St. Paul is praying for his soul. It is a simple prayer, akin to our present-day funeral utterances, such as “may he rest in peace.”

Finally, the Scriptures give one clear example of another place besides heaven and hell in the next world. St. Peter tells us (1 Pet. 3:19) that after His death Jesus preached His redemption “to the spirits in prison.” Based on this, the concept of another temporary, intermediate place such as purgatory is not totally out of the question.

Third objection: “But St. Paul says, ‘To be absent from the body is to be present with Christ’ (2 Cor. 5:6-11). Therefore, when a true Christian dies he immediately goes to Christ. There is no half-way house or waiting room in the middle.”

Does St. Paul actually say the above words? In reality he says the following:

“So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.”

St. Paul in verse 6 says, “*while we are in the body we are away from the Lord.*” No one doubts that while we are still on earth we are not in the immediate presence of Christ. In verse 8 St. Paul states, “*we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*” This is an expression of a pious desire by St. Paul. All good Christians would rather be with Christ than to continue on through this valley of tears. Nevertheless, what follows after we leave this body and come before Christ is the particular judgment, where we have to give an account for all our words and deeds and have them tested by fire!

Fourth objection: “But purgatory is unnecessary, for Christ has paid all debt of punishment for sin by His death on the Cross.”

One important reason why Protestants reject the doctrine of purgatory is due to their belief in the unscriptural doctrines of total depravity and non-imputation of sin formulated by Martin Luther and John Calvin. They taught that the sin of Adam so damaged man that we are now nothing more than wild beasts whose every action, no matter how good, is sinful. Since we are incapable of good actions, there is nothing we can do to remit our temporal punishments, either for ourselves or for anyone else. Only Christ, therefore, is capable of achieving this and this He did on the Cross. Furthermore, as our souls are already totally depraved, any additional sin on our part cannot

leave a 'stain of sin' which needs to be purified in purgatory. When we accept Christ as our "personal Lord and Savior", God "covers up" our sinful natures, making us fit to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Christ's death on the Cross more than certainly sufficed to redeem humanity and free us from both the eternal damnation of hell and any additional temporal punishments. That being the case, why is there any obligation on the part of Christians to do penance to remit temporal punishment for sin? One reason is that God may choose to leave a temporal debt outstanding even after the eternal penalty for a sin has been remitted. For example, humanity is still subject to the temporal punishments of labor, pain, sickness and death even though we have now been redeemed and baptized. Also, King David still had to endure the temporal punishment of the death of his infant son even after he had been forgiven for murdering Uriah (2 Sam. 12:13ff.). Likewise, Moses was still excluded from the Promised Land after God forgave him for striking the rock at the Waters of Contradiction (Num. 20:12).

It may also be asked why God leaves temporal penalties in place after removing eternal penalties for sins. It is a question, first, of discharging a debt of honor, making a gesture of reparation even after the real reparation has already been completed. Penance also has a rehabilitative effect. It helps us to learn from our sins and restore the loss or damage caused by them. Finally, penance satisfies our innate need to mourn for tragedies and sin, especially mortal sin, which is the greatest tragedy that can befall a person.

The reality is that the purgatorial cleansing we endure for sin is in a special way a consequence of Christ's sacrifice for us. Christ's sufferings paid the price for our sanctification from beginning to end. Purgatory is our final sanctification. If Christ had not suffered, there would be no purgatory and therefore no final sanctification at all. Rather, there would be only a permanent exclusion from heaven!

The Fathers

Tertullian, *The Soul* 58, 8 (inter 208-212 AD)

“In short, if we understand that prison of which the Gospel speaks to be Hades, and if we interpret the last farthing to be the light offense which is to be expiated there before the resurrection, no one will doubt that the soul undergoes some punishments in Hades, without prejudice to the fullness of the resurrection, after which recompense will be made through the flesh also.”

Tertullian, *The Crown* 3, 3-5 (211 AD)

“The Sacrament of the Eucharist, which the Lord commanded to be taken at meal times and by all, we take even before daybreak in congregations, but from the hand of none others except the presidents ... We offer sacrifices for the dead on their birthday anniversaries ... We take anxious care lest something of our Cup or Bread should fall upon the ground.”

Tertullian, *Monogamy* 10, 1 (post 213 AD)

“A woman, after the death of her husband, is bound not less firmly but even more so, not to marry another husband...Indeed, she prays for his soul and asks that he may, while waiting, find rest; and that he may share in the first resurrection. And each year, on the anniversary of his death, she offers the Sacrifice.”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 23 (Mystagogic 5), 10 (c. 350 AD)

“Then we make mention also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, Apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition; next, we make mention also of the holy fathers and bishops who have already fallen asleep, and, to put it simply, of all among us who have already fallen asleep; for we believe that it will be of very great benefit to the souls of those for whom the petition is carried up, while this holy and most solemn Sacrifice is laid out.”

St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermon on the Dead* (383 AD)

“After his departure out of the body, he gains knowledge of the difference between virtue and vice, and finds that he is not able to partake of divinity until he has been purged of the filthy contagion in his soul by the purifying fire.”

St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians* 41, 5 (c. 392 AD)

“Let us help and commemorate them. If Job’s sons were purified by their father’s sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* Bk. 9, 2 (400 AD)

St. Augustine’s mother, St. Monica, on her death-bed said to him: “This one request I make of you, that, wherever you be, you remember me at the Lord’s altar.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *The Care that Should be Taken for the Dead* 1, 3 (421 AD)

“We read in the book of Maccabees that the sacrifice was offered for the dead. But even if it were found nowhere in the Old Testament writings, the authority of the universal Church which is clear on this point is of no small weight, where in the prayers of the priest poured forth to the Lord God at His altar the commendation of the dead has its place.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. IV, Ch. VI: Prayers for the dead, that they may be liberated from the fire of purgatory, are derived from Apostolic teaching ... (The Eucharist) ... its benefits extend not only to the celebrant and communicant, but to all the faithful, whether living with us on earth, or already numbered with those who are dead in the Lord, but whose sins have not yet been fully expiated. For, according to the most authentic Apostolic tradition, it is not less available when offered for

them, than when offered for the sins of the living, their punishments, satisfactions, calamities and difficulties of every sort.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1030: All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

No. 1031: The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire:

As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come (St. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4, 39).

No. 1032: This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "Therefore [Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin" (2 Maccabees 12:46). From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice, why should we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 41:5).

Relics

Objection: *“The veneration of relics is vain and superstitious. It amounts to nothing less than another form of Catholic idolatry!”*

The modern word *relic* is derived from the Latin *reliquiae*, which means an extant part of a deceased person’s body or clothing. In its traditional Catholic sense, the word ‘relic’ is normally used only in relation to a portion of body or clothing of a declared blessed or saint.

The veneration of relics of deceased saints has always been an approved practice of the Catholic faithful. For example, during the centuries of imperial Roman persecution the early Christians were meticulous in their collection and veneration of the remains of martyrs. As early as the mid-second century AD the Smyrnaeans “took up his [St. Polycarp’s] bones, more precious than costly gems and finer than gold, and put them in a suitable place” (*The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* 17, 3). In contrast to pagan Roman practice, dead Christian bodies were not cremated; rather, they were usually carefully buried in such places as the Catacombs. The reason for this contrast lies in the Christian attitude towards the body. Christians regard the body as something good in itself, an essential part of human nature created by God. More particularly, while alive on earth the Christian was a “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19). Furthermore, as the body participated in the good or evil actions of the Christian, so after the general resurrection will it participate with the soul in either its eternal glory or condemnation.

Rather than being a superstitious practice, both Scripture and history testify to the marvellous prodigies God has rendered through the use and veneration of relics:

“...as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he came to life and stood on his feet” (2 Kgs. 13:21).

“...so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in order that Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he came by” (Acts 5:15).

“...so that when the handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his (St. Paul’s) skin were brought to the sick, their diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them” (Acts 19:12).

Miracles were also wrought through relics belonging to Old Testament saints while they were still alive: Elias’ mantle parted the Jordan River (2 Kgs. 2:8-14); and the rod of Moses performed prodigies in the presence of Pharaoh (Exod. 7:10).

We may add to these examples the veneration shown to the bones of Moses (Exod. 13:19; Josh. 24:32) in stark contrast to the Jewish ceremonial laws against contact with the dead (Num. 19:11ff.).

Faithful Jews also sought miracles through objects of Christ Himself:

“And behold, a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment; for she said to herself, ‘If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well.’ Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, ‘Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.’ And instantly the woman was made well” (St. Matt. 9:20-22).

“And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or country, they laid the sick in the market places, and besought him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment; and as many as touched it were made well” (St. Mark 6:56).

There exist, literally, thousands of cases of miracles worked through relics. In the writings of the Church Fathers, we find both St. Ambrose and St. Augustine relating miraculous stories, not only stories they heard and read, but also miracles they themselves had personally witnessed at the tombs of martyrs (St. Ambrose: *Epist.* 22, 2 & 17; St. Augustine: *Serm.* 284, 5; *City of God* 22, 8; *Confessions* 9, 7). The

Protestant historian Harnack in his *History of Dogmas* is forced to admit that “no Church doctor of repute restricted it (veneration of relics). All of them, even the Cappadocians, countenanced it” (IV, 313).

Even in more modern times the Church still proclaims to the world in her beatification and canonization ceremonies accounts of unquestionable miracles that have occurred through the deceased’s intercession. Often, the certified miracle is one that occurred when a relic of the deceased was physically applied to an afflicted portion of the favored person’s body. Such miracles are on public record and have been thoroughly investigated and analyzed by doctors and scientists.

The official Catholic teaching on the veneration of relics was articulated by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century:

“Also that the holy bodies of holy martyrs, and of others now living with Christ, which bodies were the living members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, and which are by Him to be raised unto eternal life and to be glorified, are to be venerated by the faithful, through which (bodies) many benefits are bestowed by God on men; so that they who affirm that veneration and honor are not due to the relics of saints; or that these and other sacred monuments are uselessly honored by the faithful; and that the places dedicated to the memory of the saints are in vain visited with the view of obtaining their aid, are wholly to be condemned.”¹

There is nothing in the above paragraph that smacks of idolatry. The first commandment not only obliges us to honor and love God, but also to honor and revere everything belonging to Him (*dulia*). This is the reason why the Church venerates the bodies and relics of saints, for their bodies were the living members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Church has always remembered the relatively inferior nature of the honor due to relics. As St. Jerome says, “We do

¹ *On the Invocation, Veneration, and Relics of Saints, and on Sacred Images*, December 4, 1563.

not worship, we do not adore, for fear that we should bow down to the creature rather than to the Creator, but we venerate the relics of the martyrs in order the better to adore Him whose martyrs they are.”² Neither does the Church promote the belief that there exists any magical or curative power dwelling in the relic itself. Relics are merely instruments, as Trent says, “through which many benefits are bestowed *by God* on men.”

Second objection: “*The Catholic practice of relic veneration is copied from ancient pagan usages.*”

Undoubtedly, the veneration of relics can be found in many other religious traditions besides that of Christianity. We possess numerous records detailing how ancient pagan cultures practised it and how modern pagan cultures likewise do today. But of what consequence is this? Where is the proof of a deliberate adoption of relic veneration from paganism? There is none. Rather, relic veneration is an instinctive pious practice rooted in human nature. In any case, the veneration of relics of pagan personages cannot be compared legitimately with the veneration of the relics of those who followed Christ.

Furthermore, how is the Catholic practice of relic veneration any different to the veneration given by all peoples, including Protestants, to the relics of famous figures of history, politics, war or sport? All nations and peoples have monuments and museums set up in honor of national heroes. Items belonging to them, such as clothing, diaries, documents, weapons, etc., are carefully displayed for public viewing and respect. Anyone attempting to steal or damage such items would certainly have to face the wrath of public outrage. *A fortiori*, the Catholic Church can certainly claim the same privilege to honor her heroes, especially as God can and often has granted special blessings and miracles through their instrumentality.

² Epistle 109, *To Riparius* 1 (404 AD).

Third objection: “There are numerous abuses associated with relic veneration. And what about all those frauds passed off as true relics such as the Shroud of Turin?”

In the same pronouncement of the Council of Trent quoted above, the Council also urged all pastors to ensure that “in the invocation of saints the veneration of relics and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed and all filthy lucre abolished.” Throughout the long history of the Church there have, unfortunately, been numerous instances of error and fraud in relation to relics. As early as the late fourth century, St. Augustine of Hippo decried against impostor monks who profited from the sale of fake relics. Even the Catholic Encyclopedia admits “that many of the more ancient relics duly exhibited for veneration in the great sanctuaries of Christendom or even at Rome itself must now be pronounced to be either certainly spurious or open to grave suspicion” (Vol. XII, p. 737, ed. 1911).

Professional anti-Catholics such as Loraine Boettner and Bart Brewer attempt to make great headway from the existence of fraudulent relics. In their writings we find ridicule and derision directed not only against proven frauds but also against the very doctrine of relic veneration itself. For example, Bart Brewer in his life-story, *Pilgrimage from Rome*, states:

“It is said that if all the pieces of the cross displayed in Catholic churches were assembled together, it would take a ten-ton truck to carry them. It is clear that most ‘relics’ are frauds. Furthermore, there is nothing in the Bible that supports the veneration of relics, even if they are genuine.”³

Despite the existence of frauds it must always be remembered that abuse does not abolish use. Even if fraudulent relics of the True Cross or Apostles exist, there are also genuine relics in both cases deserving of veneration. In any case, no one is obliged to pay homage to dubious

³ P. 132.

relics, and even when people do so, no dishonor is done to God if the error has been passed down in perfect good faith over centuries.

The claim that there are enough fraudulent pieces of the True Cross to fill a “ten ton truck” was examined and refuted by Rohault de Fleury in the late nineteenth century. Despite long and arduous research, de Fleury could only discover enough relics to make up approximately one-third of a cross. This included 370 cubic inches of relics that once allegedly existed but at the time no longer did.

Critics of the Shroud of Turin say it is a Medieval fraud, but their endeavors to produce conclusive proof have failed. This is partly due to the fact that the following obvious questions have yet to be explained:

- (i) Given the scientific certainty that the Shroud is not a painting, who using what methods in the Middle Ages could have produced a negative image when this technique only emerged in the mid 19th century?
- (ii) If it was a forger who subjected his contemporary to the same sufferings as Jesus Christ, how could he have obtained an image impressed on one side of the cloth only? And how, even at the beginning of the 21st century with all its scientific advances, does the method for producing this image remain unknown?
- (iii) How could this forger have arranged for the presence in the cloth of microscopic grains of pollen coming from Palestine, Asia Minor, France and Italy?
- (iv) How could the forger on the face on the Shroud produce details that only the modern invention of three-dimensional photography has been able to reveal, for instance, the imprint of two coins, one over the right eye and the other over the arch of the left eyebrow?

These and many other questions remain unanswered by the skeptic, but the faithful undoubtedly see the work and face of God before them.

Like all the wonderful relics of Christendom, this miraculous relic is in the possession of the Catholic Church and forms part of the treasures of history and an addendum to the treasure of the Deposit of Faith of which she is the custodian.

The Fathers

The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp 17, 3 (c. 156 AD)

“Christ we worship as the Son of God, but the martyrs we love as disciples and imitators of the Lord; and rightly so, because of their unsurpassable devotion to their own King and Teacher. With them may we also become companions and fellow disciples. When the centurion saw the contentiousness caused by the Jews, he confiscated the body, and, according to their custom, burned it. Then, at least, we took up his bones, more precious than costly gems and finer than gold, and put them in a suitable place. The Lord will permit us, when we are able, to assemble there in joy and gladness, and to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have already engaged in the contest, and for the practice and training of those who have yet to fight.”

St. Jerome, Letter to Riparius 109, 1 (404 AD)

“We, it is true, refuse to worship or adore, I say not the relics of the martyrs, but even the sun and moon, the angels and archangels, the Cherubim and Seraphim and ‘every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come.’ For we may not serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Still we honor the relics of the martyrs, that we may adore Him whose martyrs they are. We honor the servants that their honor may be reflected upon their Lord who Himself says: ‘he that receives you receives me.’ I ask

Vigilantius, Are the relics of Peter and of Paul unclean? Was the body of Moses unclean, of which we are told (according to the correct Hebrew text) that it was buried by the Lord Himself? And do we, every time that we enter the basilicas of apostles and prophets and martyrs, pay homage to the shrines of idols? Are the tapers which burn before their tombs only the tokens of idolatry.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God* Bk. 1, Ch. 13 (ante 413 AD)

“The bodies of the dead, nevertheless, are not to be despised and thrown aside, and least of all, those of the righteous and faithful, which were used in a chaste manner by the Spirit as the organs and vessels for all good works.”

Theodoret of Cyr, *The Cure of Pagan Maladies* 8 (ante 449 AD)

“The noble souls of the triumphant are sauntering around heaven, dancing in the choruses of the bodiless; and not one tomb for each conceals their bodies, but cities and villages divide them up and call them healers and preservers of souls and bodies, and venerate them as guardians and protectors of cities; and when they intervene as ambassadors before the Master of the universe the divine gifts are obtained through them; and though the body has been divided, its grace has continued undivided. And that little particle and smallest relic has the same power as the absolutely and utterly undivided martyr.”

St. Pope Gregory the Great, *Letter to the Empress Constantia Augusta* 4, 30 (594 AD)

“Let my Most Tranquil Lady know that it is not the custom of the Romans, when they give relics of the saints, to presume to touch any part of the body. But only a cloth is put into a box and placed near the most sacred bodies of the saints. When it is taken up again it is deposited with due reverence in the Church that is to be dedicated, and effects so powerful are thereby produced, that it is as if their bodies had actually been taken there.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. III, Ch. II: But who would not be convinced of the honor due to the Saints and of the help they give us by the wonders wrought at their tombs? Diseased eyes, hands, and other members are restored to health; the dead are raised to life, and demons are expelled from the bodies of men! These are facts which St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, most unexceptionable witnesses, declare in their writings, not that they heard, as many did, nor that they read, as did many very reliable men, but that they saw.

But why multiply proofs? If the clothes, the handkerchiefs, and even the very shadows of the Saints, while yet on earth, banished disease and restored health, who will have the hardihood to deny that God can still work the same wonders by the holy ashes, the bones and other relics of the Saints? Of this we have proof in the restoration to life of the dead body which was accidentally let down into the grave of Eliseus, and which, on touching the body (of the Prophet), was instantly restored to life.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1674: Besides sacramental liturgy and sacramentals, catechesis must take into account the forms of piety and popular devotions among the faithful. The religious sense of the Christian people has always found expression in various forms of piety surrounding the Church's sacramental life, such as the veneration of relics, visits to sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the stations of the cross, religious dances, the rosary, medals, etc.

The sign of the Cross

Objection: *“According to the Presbyterian minister, Loraine Boettner, the ‘sign of the cross’ was introduced into Catholic worship from paganism in the late third century. Indeed, the cross is a detestable thing, a pagan symbol of sin and shame.”*

Anyone of objective mind and fairness cannot take such claims seriously. There is no doubt that the cross as an instrument of execution was considered hideous and fearful in its day. It was the most painful and degrading punishment inflicted by the ancient Romans on prisoners. After the Christianization of the Empire, crucifixion was abolished.

However, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it” (Ps. 24[23]:1; 1 Cor. 10:26). Therefore, the Church of Christ has the power and authority to take any object created by God and attribute to it a Christian meaning, that is “baptize it,” and employ it in her official worship. Simply because ancient pagan cultures engaged in certain practices or used certain objects in their worship does not of itself render those same practices or objects illicit for all time. Certain pagans would have prayed with the hands outstretched or used incense in their worship. Should Christians refrain from doing likewise simply because of that fact? Obviously not.

What was sinful was that such practices and objects were employed in idolatrous worship. This was the case when incense was offered to worship Baal, Astarte or Caesar. Nevertheless, Scripture testifies to the use of incense in the worship of the true God by the heavenly court: “And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne” (Rev. 8:3). What meaning an object or practice had for pagans has, therefore, no relevance for Christians in their worship.

It testifies to the glory and power of Christ that He could take the most abject of objects and cause it to become the most glorious of all symbols. For early non-Christians the cross was a “stumbling block” (Gal. 5:11) and a “shame” (Heb. 12:2). However, as Christians saw in the Cross of Christ the great love He had for us, the symbol of the cross began to take on a deep Christian meaning. As St. Paul would say, “May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14). For Christians, the cross only has significance because Our Lord Jesus Christ died upon it. Apart from this fact, the cross has only a pagan or historical significance. Thus, we see the value of the Catholic practice of placing an image of Our Lord upon crosses to form the image of the Crucifix. It is a means to “preach Christ crucified” and to show forth “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23).

Many Protestants use crosses in their churches and homes but object to having crucifixes because they regard three-dimensional images to be idols in breach of their second commandment. However, there exists a strange inconsistency in all this, for if one peruses their children’s Bible-story books one would discover many two-dimensional pictures of the crucifixion!

Second objection: *“Crucifixes should not be used because we worship Christ risen, not crucified.”*

Christ ought to be worshipped both as crucified and as risen. This is the spirit shown by St. Paul in Galatians 6:14 and 1 Corinthians 1:23 quoted above. Indeed, Christians should worship Him in all the stages of His incarnation as He is the divine Son of God at all times. The above objection fails to give full significance to the Crucifixion as the event (rather than the resurrection) that paid the price for our sins. St. Paul himself said, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

There are some who claim that Our Lord Jesus Christ was in fact not crucified on a cross at all, but instead was impaled to a punishment stake with His two hands nailed together above His head rather than

stretched outwards to His right and left. The Jehovah's Witnesses have been propagating this position since 1930 (previously, from their foundation in 1879 they had held the Catholic position). Needless to say, there is nothing in Scripture to support such a novel view. Rather there are numerous quotes that can be cited to the contrary, for example:

“He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me”
(St. Matt. 10:38).

“And they compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross” (St. Mark 15:21).

“And he said to all, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (St. Luke 9:23).

“So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha”
(St. John 19:17).

“And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8).

There is no direct reference to the use of the Sign of the Cross in worship in Scripture. Nevertheless, it would be highly presumptuous to denigrate this holy practice simply because of this fact, particularly given that Scripture speaks so highly of the Cross as the instrument of our salvation. The Church employs the Sign of the Cross when she wishes to bestow the blessings of God on animate and inanimate creatures. It has also always been used as a means to mark out Christ's faithful. In this it has its prefiguration in the Old Testament: “And the Lord said to him: Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem: and mark *Thau* upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and mourn for all the abominations that are committed in the midst thereof ... Utterly destroy old and young, maidens, children and women: but upon whomever you shall see *Thau*, kill him not, and begin at my sanctuary” (Ezek. 9:4 & 6). *Thau* is the last letter of the

Hebrew alphabet and is in the shape of a cross. From the very beginning, Christians have seen in the Thau a prefiguration of Christ's own Cross, and its application on people's foreheads, the Sign of the Cross.

Ezekiel 9:4 has its echo in Revelation 7:3: "Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a *seal* on their foreheads." Can this *seal* be possibly any different from the "sign of the Son of man" (St. Matt. 24:30), which is the Cross?

The early Christians were always eager to develop signs and symbols that summarized the great mysteries of the Faith. In the Sign of the Cross, two immense truths are signified together, namely the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the misery and humiliation of the Crucifixion. Spontaneously they drew this holy sign everywhere, accompanied by any one of the following words: "Sign of Christ;" "In the Name of Jesus;" or "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Constantine, before his great victory in the battle of Milvian Bridge (312 AD), which brought him to power as the first Christian Roman Emperor, saw in the sky a cross with the words "*In Hoc Signo Vinces*"—"in this sign you shall conquer." The victory of every Christian is achieved always through the power of the Cross.

The Fathers

Tertullian, *The Crown* 3, 2 (211 AD)

"At every forward step and movement, when coming in and going out, when putting on our clothes, when putting on our shoes, when bathing, when at table, when lighting the lamps, when reclining, when sitting, in all the ordinary occupations of our daily lives, we furrow our forehead with the sign."

St. Athanasius, *Treatise on the Incarnation of the Word* 47, 2 (c. 318 AD)

“And while in times past demons, occupying springs or rivers or trees or stones, cheated men by deceptive appearances and imposed upon the credulous by their juggleries, now, after the divine coming of the Word, an end is put to their deceptions. For by the sign of the cross, a man but using it, their wiles are put to flight.”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 15, 22 (c. 350 AD)

“But what—lest a hostile power dare to counterfeit it—is the sign of His coming? ‘And then shall appear,’ He says, ‘the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens.’ Christ’s own true sign is the cross. The sign of a luminous cross shall go before the King, pointing out Him that was formally crucified.”

St. Basil the Great, *The Holy Spirit* 27, 66 (375 AD)

“Indeed, were we to try to reject unwritten customs as having no great authority, we would unwittingly injure the Gospel in its vitals; or rather, we would reduce Kerygma to a mere term. For instance, to take the first and most general example, who taught us in writing to sign with the sign of the cross those who have trusted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ?”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Homilies on John* 11, 3 (416-417 AD)

“If we should say to a catechumen: ‘Do you believe in Christ,’ he will answer, ‘I do believe,’ and he will sign himself. He already carries the cross of Christ on his forehead, and he is not ashamed of the cross of the Lord.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Homilies on John* 118, 5 (416-417 AD)

“What is the sign of Christ, as everyone knows, if not the cross of Christ? For unless the sign be applied, whether to the foreheads of believers, whether to the very water out of which they are regenerated, whether to the oil by which they are anointed with chrism, or whether to the sacrifice by which they are nourished, none of these is properly administered.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. II, Ch. III: Besides, that mark by which the Christian is distinguished from all others, as the soldier is by certain badges, should be impressed on the more conspicuous part of the body.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 617: The Council of Trent emphasizes the unique character of Christ's sacrifice as "the source of eternal salvation" and teaches that "his most holy Passion on the wood of the cross merited justification for us." And the Church venerates his cross as it sings: "Hail, O Cross, our only hope."

No. 618: The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men." But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men. He calls his disciples to "take up (their) cross and follow (him)," for "Christ also suffered for (us), leaving (us) an example so that (we) should follow in his steps..."

Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven (St. Rose of Lima, *Vita Mirabilis*, Louvain, 1668).

Sola Scriptura?

Objection: *“I am not going to believe anything unless it is in the Bible!”*

A Christian who believes that the Bible is the sole rule of faith (Sola Scriptura) believes that all questions relating to faith and morals can be answered completely from the written word of God as contained in all the books from Genesis to Revelation. That being the case, there is no need for any other rule to guide the Christian, whether it be tradition, a teaching authority, philosophy, or nature. These inhibit a Christian’s path to salvation.

However, a Bible-only approach, when applied logically, runs into immediate and numerous problems. For example, can a Bible held in the hand of any Christian answer the following questions: “How do I know that my Bible was correctly translated?,” “Does my Bible have the correct number of books in both the Old and New Testaments?,” “Is the interpretation of this or that verse the correct one?” Ordinary Christians lacking an extensive knowledge of the languages, cultures and history of the Holy Land and its surrounds would be hard-pressed to answer with certainty any of these questions, with or without a Bible.

Does the Bible actually teach that it is the sole rule of faith? According to self-described ‘Bible Christians’ it certainly does. They cite as proof the following verses:

“But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (St. John 20:31).

“All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

“These Jews were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

However, when looking at each of these three verses closely it is clear that none say anything in support of Sola Scriptura. The verse from St. John’s Gospel speaks only of the purpose of the book, which is, to convince its readers that Jesus was the Christ. It does not assert that the Bible as it stands today contains all that is needed for salvation, neither does it exclude any other medium, whether written or oral, as a means of passing on the truths of Christ. In fact, if one were to be consistent, St. John’s words could be construed as an argument that his Gospel alone, excluding the other three, is necessary for salvation—that is, *Solus Joannes!* (John alone!).

The second verse is words of St. Paul to St. Timothy. They are the cornerstone for most Protestant arguments in favor of Sola Scriptura. Yet, again, there are no words such as “alone” or “only” used with respect to Scripture. No one who claims to be Christian, least of all the Catholic Church, denies that Scripture is “inspired” and “profitable” to perfect a “man of God.” But it is certainly different to assert that Scripture is “sufficient.” However, “sufficient” is not the word used by St. Paul in 2 Tim. 3:16. He uses the Greek word *ophelimos*, which translates as “useful” or “profitable.” Certain Protestants might argue that “profitable” means “sufficient.” If so, then they would run into difficulties with Titus 3:8 which says, “The saying is sure. I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men.” Would any Protestants assert from this verse that good works are sufficient to get to heaven, thus rendering faith in Christ unnecessary? Similarly, St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says that “his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, *to equip the saints* for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (4:11-12). In other words, is the perfecting of the saints to be done through the leaders of the Church alone without the aid of Scripture?

Cardinal Newman certainly saw the Protestant fallacy

“It is quite evident that this passage furnishes no argument whatever that the Sacred Scripture, without Tradition, is the sole rule of faith; for, although Sacred Scripture is profitable for these four ends, still it is not said to be sufficient. The Apostle requires the aid of Tradition (2 Th. 2:14). Moreover, the Apostle here refers to the Scriptures which Timothy was taught in his infancy [i.e., the Old Testament].”¹

The third passage from Acts refers to the Bereans, who received the Gospel enthusiastically and who checked its claims against “the Scriptures.” At first glance it could be claimed that as the Bereans were using the written Scriptures as their only “rule of faith”, they established the precedent for all other Christians. However, what is often overlooked is that the Bereans had “received the word” orally, and that they were checking its claims against the Old Testament Scriptures only. Certainly no one could reasonably suggest that Christians today imitate the Bereans and have only the Old Testament as their rule of faith.

Not only is the doctrine of Sola Scriptura not found in the Bible, it is expressly denied by it. The Scriptures we have in hand expressly state that they do not contain everything (St. John 20:30; 21:25), or give us an account of all that Christ had said or done (St. John 16:12). In addition, we know that there existed other Apostolic writings now lost, such as an earlier letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9: “I wrote to you in my letter ... But now I am writing to you...” Also missing is a Laodicean epistle recommended to the Colossians by St. Paul, probably written by himself (Col. 4:16).

Nevertheless, the fact there are certain Apostolic writings missing is of no fatal consequence to Catholics. This is so because the Catholic Church maintains that divine revelation is fully contained in her Deposit of Faith (body of teaching), comprised of both written Scripture and Tradition. Tradition here is Apostolic Tradition, not merely the tradition of men, and ranks equally with the written word to complete divine revelation. Tradition supplements the written word of God, it does not contradict it. Furthermore, it assists the Church to

¹ *Inspiration in its Relation to Revelation*, 1884.

fully understand and appreciate the whole written word. Tradition embraces all those truths which have been passed on from age to age either orally, in the writings of the Church Fathers, in the Acts of the Martyrs, in early paintings and inscriptions, in the practices and customs of the Universal Church, and in the definitions of Councils and Popes.

Second objection: “But ‘tradition’ is condemned in the Bible as contrary to the Word of God (St. Matt. 15:6)!”

Contrary to general Protestant opinion, tradition is actually praised in Scripture: “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the *traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter*” (2 Thes. 2:15). Christ acknowledged the Jewish tradition of the authority of the seat of Moses and commanded His listeners to obey it, even though such a seat is not mentioned in the Old Testament (St. Matt. 23:1-2). Oral preaching was the medium by which the Gospel spread before the New Testament was written: Acts 2:42; Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 11:2; 15:3; 2 Tim 2:2; 1 Pet. 1:25. St. Paul received the following words of Christ orally, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35) for such words are not recorded in the Gospels. Were the early Christians, therefore, victims of false prophets preaching the “commandments of men” simply because they received the Gospel orally? Such an assertion would be ridiculous. Stephen Ray, a convert from Evangelical Christianity, makes the following interesting point:

“As an Evangelical, when I read the phrase ‘word of God’ I would automatically plug in the word ‘Bible;’ this, however, is not at all the meaning usually intended in the Bible itself. Roughly nine out of ten times, ‘word of God’ is referring to the spoken word, not the written word (e.g., 1 Thes. 2:13). The *spoken* words, the oral tradition, were *also* the very ‘words of God’.”²

What was condemned by Christ in St. Matt. 15:6 (and by St. Paul in Colossians 2:8) was not tradition *per se*, but those traditions, whether doctrines or practices, which made God’s word and commandments

² Stephen K. Ray, *Crossing the Tiber*, Ignatius Press, 1997 Ed., p. 30.

ineffective. Christ Himself observed all the noble traditions of the Jews, such as the Pasch and all the liturgical festivals with their appurtenances, songs and ceremonies. It is the Church, as the indefectible teaching authority established by Christ (St. Matt. 16:19; 28:18-20), which determines what is or is not authentic Tradition.

Other verses that speak laudably of Christian tradition include:

“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:1-2).

“If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God” (1 Cor. 11:16).

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us” (2 Thes. 3:6).

Interestingly, Christ Himself, as well as some of the Apostles, referred to *unwritten Old Testament tradition*:

- (i) St. Paul (Gal. 3:19) and St. Stephen (Acts 7:52-53) refer to the Law being “put into effect through angels.” Nowhere is this mentioned in the Old Testament.
- (ii) St. Paul refers to “Jannes and Jambres” who “opposed Moses” (2 Tim. 3:8-9). Neither of these two men are mentioned in the Old Testament.
- (iii) St. Jude mentions the prophecy of Enoch, saying, “Behold the Lord came with his holy myriads” (St. Jude 1:14). This prophecy is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament.
- (iv) St. Jude mentions the struggle between St. Michael and the Devil for the body of Moses (St. Jude 1:9). The only prior written account of such a struggle is contained in the apocryphal work, *The Assumption of Moses*.

- (v) The author of *Hebrews* mentions the Prophet Isaiah being “sawed in two” (11:36). Such a death for the Prophet is mentioned only in the apocryphal work, *The Ascension of Isaiah* 5:1-4).
- (vi) Christ says, “the scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat” (St. Matt. 23:2-3). Nowhere is such a seat mentioned in the Old Testament.

It is, therefore, not a question of Scripture *or* Tradition but rather Scripture *and* Tradition. Ironically, it is the doctrine of Sola Scriptura and its condemnation of Tradition *per se* that is the man-made tradition of the sixteenth century Reformers that contradicts the word of God.

Third objection: “*But once the New Testament was finally complete there was no more need for ‘tradition’.*”

Such an argument goes back to the very core of the Sola Scriptura debate. The short Catholic answer is: “Where does it say that in the Bible?” Nowhere is it recorded that the Apostles or any of their faithful contemporaries gathered all the inspired Gospels and epistles and declared to the Christian world, “this will be the sole rule of faith after we have gone to the Lord.” As time passed, the written New Testament would supplement Tradition, but not supplant it. The best response, however, is that Christ did not intend to leave all His teachings in a single book, but *in the Church*, whether written, oral or otherwise. When Christ ascended into heaven He left behind a hierarchical authority to continue His mission in the world. This hierarchy was invested with divine authority to govern in His name (St. Matt. 16:13; 18:18); is to be obeyed by all the faithful (St. Luke 10:16); and will last until the end of the world (St. Matt. 16:18; 28:20).

Sola Scriptura, by implication, rejects the need for an authoritative body outside of the Bible to determine vital questions of faith and morals. Yet Christ never promised to give us an authoritative book, but rather an authoritative Church: “on this rock I will build my Church” (St. Matt. 16:18). St. Paul attests that “the Church of the

living God ... is the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). It must be also remembered that it was the Catholic Church who assembled and canonized the books of the Old and New Testaments, translated them faithfully, safeguarded them in times of persecution and interpreted them free from error throughout the rise and fall of every heresy under the sun. Without the Church and Tradition, there would have been no Bible to base Sola Scriptura on in the first place. As another convert from Protestantism, James Akin, states:

“The Protestant apologist is in a fix. In order to use sola scriptura he is going to have to identify what the scriptures are, and since he is unable to do this from scripture alone, he is going to have to appeal to things outside of scripture to make his case, meaning that in every act of doing this he undermines this case. There is no way to escape the canon of tradition.”³

As the Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth to Christ and then nurtured and protected Him as her child and Lord, so the Church gave birth to the New Testament Scriptures and now preserves and adheres to them faithfully.

Fourth objection: “*But I can understand the Bible through the Holy Spirit without the need for a church or ‘tradition’!*”

St. Peter himself warned that the “ignorant and unstable” would “twist” the Scriptures “to their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16). One fruit of private interpretation of the Bible has been the spawning of over 35,000 different Protestant denominations all claiming to be “Bible-believing”, yet agreeing on little more than their anti-Catholic tenets. A person who builds his faith on private interpretation is akin to the fool in St. Matthew 7:24-27 who built his house on the grains of sand. As grains of sand tend to shift to the downfall of the house, so too do individual minds continually change the interpretation of Scripture to the downfall of faith. On the contrary, the wise man built his house on rock (kepha); likewise does the faithful Catholic build his faith on St. Peter (Kepha) and his successors.

³ *The Two Canons: Scripture and Tradition*, Website 1/18/99, p. 6.

The Bible is a compilation of books all written in the ancient past and in languages for the most part dead to the average layman. Scripture itself mentions the difficulty of interpretation: 2 Pet. 3:16; Heb. 5:11-12. If the Holy Spirit gives an infallible explanation of the Bible to every individual reader, why did He not explain it to the Ethiopian minister in Acts 8:30-31: “So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, Do you understand what you are reading? He replied, How can I, unless some one guides me?” It is the Catholic Church that has the true understanding of Scripture, aided by the Holy Spirit who will guide it in all truth until the end of the world (St. Matt. 28:20). It is entirely unreasonable to assert that Christ would leave behind a written book without a divinely protected living authority to safeguard and interpret it.

The Fathers

Papias (inter 125-160 AD) [fragments in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3, 39, 4 (c. 303 AD)]

“And then too, when anyone came along who had been a follower of the presbyters, I would inquire about the presbyters’ discourses: what was said by Andrew, or by Peter, or by Philip, or by Thomas or James, or by John or Matthew, or by any other of the Lord’s disciples: and what Aristion and the Presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. It did not seem to me that I could get so much profit from the contents of books as from a living and abiding voice.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3, 4, 1 (c. 180 AD)

“If there should be a dispute over some kind of question, ought we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches in which the Apostles were familiar, and draw from them what is clear and certain in regard to that question? What if the Apostles had not in fact left writings to us? Would it not be necessary to follow the order of tradition, which was handed down to those to whom they entrusted the Churches?”

Tertullian, *The Demurrer Against the Heretics* 19, 3 (200 AD)

“Wherever it shall be clear that the truth of the Christian discipline and faith are present, there also will be found the truth of the

Scriptures and of their explanation, and of all the Christian traditions.”

Origen, *Fundamental Doctrines 1, Preface, 2* (c. 220 AD)

“Although there are many who believe that they themselves hold to the teachings of Christ, there are yet some among them who think differently from their predecessors. The teaching of the Church has indeed been handed down through an order of succession from the Apostles, and remains in the Churches even to the present time. That alone is to be believed as the truth which is in no way at variance with ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition.”

St. Basil the Great, *The Holy Spirit 27, 66* (375 AD)

“Of the dogmas and kerygmas preserved in the Church, some we possess from written teaching and others we receive from the tradition of the Apostles, handed on to us in mystery. In respect to piety both are of the same force. No one will contradict any of these, no one, at any rate, who is even moderately versed in matters ecclesiastical. Indeed, were we to try to reject unwritten customs as having no great authority, we would unwittingly injure the Gospel in its vitals.”

St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Against all Heresies 61, 6* (377 AD)

“It is not necessary that all the divine words have an allegorical meaning. Consideration and perception is needed in order to know the meaning of the argument of each. It is needful also to make use of Tradition; for not everything can be gotten from Sacred Scripture. The Holy Apostles handed down some things in the Scriptures, other things in Tradition.”

St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on 2 Thessalonians 4, 2* (c. 400 AD)

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or by our letter.’ From this it is clear that they did not hand down everything by letter, but there was much also that was not written. Like that which was written, the unwritten too is worthy of belief. So let us regard the tradition of the Church also as worthy of belief. Is it a tradition? Seek no further.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Against the Letter of Mani* 5, 6 (397 AD)

“If you should find someone who does not yet believe in the Gospel, what would you answer him when he says: ‘I do not believe?’ Indeed, I would not believe in the Gospel myself if the authority of the Catholic Church did not influence me to do so.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Letter to Januarius* 54, 1, 1 (c. 400 AD)

“But in regard to those observances which we carefully attend and which the whole world keeps, and which derive not from Scripture but from Tradition, we are given to understand that they are recommended and ordained to be kept, either by the Apostles themselves or by plenary councils, the authority of which is quite vital in the Church.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Preface: Now all the doctrines in which the faithful are to be instructed are contained in the Word of God, which is found in Scripture and Tradition. To the study of these, therefore, the pastor should devote his days and nights, keeping in mind the admonition of St. Paul to Timothy, which all who have care of souls should consider as addressed to themselves: *Attend to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine, for all scripture divinely inspired is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct injustice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work.*

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 80: Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal. Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own “always, to the close of the age.”

No. 82: As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.

No. 83: The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus' teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit. The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament, and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition.

Statues and Images

Objection: *“Why are Catholic Churches and homes decorated with statues and images in clear breach of the Ten Commandments?”*

God prohibits in the Ten Commandments the making of idols and the worshipping of them: “You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them...for I the Lord your God am a jealous God” (Exod. 20:4-5). At first instance it would appear that this commandment imposes an absolute prohibition against the making and use of all images *per se*. However, a thorough examination of the Old Testament precludes such an interpretation, as this would necessitate God prohibiting what He allows and commands elsewhere, especially concerning the Temple of Jerusalem itself.

It follows that if the Commandments prohibited the making of any images whatsoever, Protestants ought to remove and destroy all their statues of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and even Mount Rushmore, as well as burning all their pictures of relatives and friends. Common sense though tells us that such would be an absurd outcome.

The Catholic doctrine on the veneration of images was fully outlined by the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 AD:

“Proceeding as it were on the royal road and following the divinely inspired teaching of our holy Fathers, and the tradition of the Catholic Church (for we know that this tradition is of the Holy Spirit which dwells in the Church), we define with all care and exactitude, that the venerable and holy images are set up in just the same way as the figure of the precious and life-giving cross; painted images, and those in mosaic and those of other suitable materials, in the holy churches of God, on holy vessels and vestments, on walls and in pictures, in houses and

by the roadsides; images of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ and of our undefiled Lady, the holy God-bearer, and of the honorable angels, and of saintly and holy men. For the more frequently these are observed by means of such representations, so much the more will the beholders be aroused to recollect the originals and to long after them, and to pay the images the tribute of an embrace and a reverence of honor, not to pay to them the actual worship which is according to our faith, and which is proper only to the divine nature: but as to the figure of the venerable and life-giving cross, and to the holy Gospels and the other sacred monuments, so to those images to accord the honor of incense and oblation of lights, as it has been the pious custom of antiquity. For the honor paid to the image passes to its original, and he that honors an image honors in it the person depicted thereby.”

The real purpose of the commandment is to steer the people of God away from *idolatry*, that is, the worship of any false god. Consider the following passages:

“For they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire” (Deut. 7:4-5).

“And the people of Israel did secretly against the Lord their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places at all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city; they set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree; and there they burned incense on all the high places, as the nations did whom the Lord carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the Lord to anger, and they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, ‘You shall not do this’” (2 Kgs. 17:9-12).

God obviously abhors idolatry; however, in the same Scriptures we see the Jews making statues for legitimate religious purposes, and under God’s command:

“And the Lord said to Moses, Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live. So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live” (Num. 21:8-9).

When the bronze serpent was later adored by the Jews, rather than simply venerated, it was destroyed:

“He [Hezekiah] removed the high places, and broke the pillars, and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had burned incense to it; it was called Nehushtan” (2 Kgs 18:4).

In the construction of the Ark of the Covenant God gave the following instructions:

“You shall make two cherubim of gold; you shall make them of hammered work, at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other; of one piece with the mercy seat you shall make the cherubim at its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings. They shall face one to another; the faces of the cherubim shall be turned toward the mercy seat” (Exod. 25:18-20).

The Temple of Jerusalem was thoroughly decorated with statues of all kinds:

“In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olivewood, each ten cubits high” (1 Kgs. 6:23).

“The height of one cherub was ten cubits, and so was that of the other cherub. He put the cherubim in the innermost part of the house; the wings of the cherubim were spread out so that a wing of one was touching the one wall, and a wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall; their other wings toward the center of the house were touching wing to wing” (1 Kgs. 6:26-27).

“...on the borders that were set in the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. On the frames, both above and below the lions and oxen, there were wreaths of beveled work” (1 Kgs. 7:29).

“...for the altar of incense made of refined gold, and its weight; also his plan for the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the Lord” (1 Chron. 28:18).

“In the most holy place he made two carved cherubim and overlaid them with gold” (2 Chron. 3:10).

“Under it were panels all around, each of ten cubits, surrounding the sea; there were two rows of panels, cast when it was cast. It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; the sea was set on them” (2 Chron. 4:3-4).

“It was formed of cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Each cherub had two faces” (Ezek. 41:18).

The Temple with all these statues was built by Solomon. What is particularly remarkable is that just after construction was begun, God spoke to Solomon as follows:

“Now the word of the Lord came to Solomon, ‘Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my ordinances and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.’ So Solomon built the house, and finished it” (1 Kgs. 6:11-14).

What does Solomon do in the light of God’s admonition to “walk in my statutes and obey my ordinances and keep all my commandments”? He carves statues for the house of the Lord, and to the Lord’s delight!:

“When Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord and the king’s house and all that Solomon desired to build, the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. And the Lord said to him, ‘I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before me; I have consecrated this house which you have built, and put my name there for ever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time’” (1 Kgs. 9:1-3).

The ancient Jewish practice in this regard was very strict, for they were prone to imitate the idolatry of the pagans around them. The early Christians, who lived in the age of the Incarnation, had no such difficulty. So the Catacombs are a treasury of paintings, gilded glasses, depicting scenes from the lives of Christ, His Mother, the Apostles and other persons of the Old and New Testaments. The mind of the early Christians was clearly a Catholic mind.

Objection two: *“But I have seen Catholics worshipping statues by kissing and bowing before them.”*

The acts of kissing and bowing are not in themselves exclusively acts of adoration or idolatry. Scripture again gives examples of legitimate bowing done in honor of human beings:

“Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be every one who curses you, and blessed be every one who blesses you!” (Gen. 27:29).

“He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept” (Gen. 33:3-4).

“Then Joshua ... fell to the ground on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening” (Josh. 7:6).

“Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him over against them, they said, ‘The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.’ And

they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him.” (2 Kgs. 2:15).

“Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you” (Rev. 3:9).

If someone kisses the photograph of his mother is he paying respect to a piece of cardboard, or is he making an act of love offered to his mother? A Catholic pays respect to images and statues only because they remind him of God, Christ, Our Lady or the Saints. The homage given to the image refers to the prototype it represents. A pagan adores and worships a statue in itself. A Catholic kisses a Crucifix, not to worship the actual metal or wood, but because it represents Our Lord and what He did for us. Christians see in the Cross of Christ the great love He had for us and with St. Paul would say, “May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14). Thus, we see the value of the Catholic practice of placing an image of Our Lord upon crosses to form the image of the Crucifix. It is a means by which we “preach Christ crucified” and show forth “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23).

The Fathers

St. Basil the Great, *The Holy Spirit* 18, 45 (375 AD)

“It does not follow that there are two kings because we speak of a king and a king’s image. The authority is not split nor is the glory divided. The sovereignty and power to the authority which we are subject is one, just as the glory we ascribe thereto is not plural but one; for the honor paid to the image passes to the prototype.”

St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Psalms* On Ps. 113B (115), 16 (ante 429 AD)

“Even if we make images of pious men it is not so that we might adore them as gods but that when we see them we might be prompted

to imitate them; and if we make images of Christ, it is so that our minds might wing aloft in yearning for Him.”

St. John Damascene, *Apologetical Sermons Against Those Who Reject Sacred Images 2, 5 (inter 725-749 AD)*

“We would certainly be in error if we were making an image of the invisible God; for what is incorporeal and invisible and uncircumscribable and without defined figure is not able to be depicted. And again, if we were making images of men and thought them gods, certainly we would be impious. But we do not do any of these things.”

The Second Council of Nicaea, *Letter of the Synod to the Byzantine Emperor and Empress (787 AD)*

“The things which we have decreed, being thus well supported, it is confessedly and beyond all question acceptable and well-pleasing before God, that the images of our Lord Jesus Christ as man, and those of the undefiled Mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, and of the honorable Angels and of all Saints, should be venerated and saluted. And if anyone does not so believe, but undertakes to debate the matter further and is evil affected with regard to the veneration due the sacred images, such an one our holy ecumenical council (fortified by the inward working of the Spirit of God, and by the traditions of the Fathers and of the Church) anathematizes. Now anathema is nothing less than complete separation from God ... And in taking pleasure at the insults which are offered to the Church, they clearly show themselves to be of those who madly make war upon piety, and are therefore to be regarded as in the same category with the heretics of old times, and their companions and brethren in ungodliness.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. III, Ch. II: Let no one think that this Commandment entirely forbids the arts of painting, engraving or sculpture. The Scriptures inform us that God Himself commanded to be made images of Cherubim, and also the brazen serpent. The interpretation, therefore, at which we must arrive, is that images are prohibited only inasmuch

as they are used as deities to receive adoration, and so to injure the true worship of God.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1159: The sacred image, the liturgical icon, principally represents Christ. It cannot represent the invisible and incomprehensible God, but the incarnation of the Son of God has ushered in a new “economy” of images:

“Previously God, who has neither a body nor a face, absolutely could not be represented by an image. But now that he has made himself visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God ... and contemplate the glory of the Lord, his face unveiled”: (St. John Damascene, *De Imag.* 1, 16).

No. 1161: All the signs in the liturgical celebrations are related to Christ: as are sacred images of the holy Mother of God and of the saints as well. They truly signify Christ, who is glorified in them. They make manifest the “cloud of witnesses” who continue to participate in the salvation of the world and to whom we are united, above all in sacramental celebrations. Through their icons, it is man “in the image of God,” finally transfigured “into his likeness,” who is revealed to our faith. So too are the angels, who also are recapitulated in Christ.

Sunday Worship

Objection: *“The Commandments speak of remembering the Sabbath day, and keeping it holy (Gen. 2:3; Exod. 20:8). The Sabbath is Saturday, so why do Catholics worship publicly on the first day of the week, that is, Sunday?”*

This is a question normally posed by those—such as the Seventh-Day Adventists—who regard Sunday worship as a mark of the Apostate Church of the Beast. For such people Sunday worship originated in paganism and is an abomination relating to sun worship. It is a commandment of men that contradicts the clear commandment of God.

The Seventh-Day Adventists were founded in 1831 under the original name of “The Adventists” by William Miller, an American farmer. He was obsessed with the second coming of Christ and predicted its occurrence for October 1843 and then October 1844. When these dates failed, Miller abandoned his own movement. However, from among the Adventists arose a “prophetess,” Mrs Ellen Gould Harmon White, who declared that she had been taken up to heaven and shown the truth of Sabbath observance. In reality, E. G. H. White had picked up the idea of reinstating observance of the Jewish Sabbath from a Miss Preston, who was a member of the Seventh-Day Baptists diffusing her ideas throughout Washington in 1844. In 1845, E. G. H. White re-organized the Adventists and gave them the new name of “Seventh-Day Adventists.”

Currently the Seventh-Day Adventists are engaged in a public campaign alleging that the Catholic Church is involved in a worldwide conspiracy to introduce laws enforcing Sunday observance. As they state:

“Soon international law will require the observance of Sunday, the pagan day of sun worship, as a day of rest and worship for

everybody. The United States of America will be the first to enact and later enforce a National Sunday Law in defiance of God's Commandments. National apostasy will be followed by national ruin."¹

Satan himself will appear as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, performing false miracles and commanding Sunday worship. The true Sabbath-keepers who resist will be put to death.

Our Lord Jesus Christ declared that He was Lord of the Sabbath and that its observance was at His disposal: St. Matthew 12:1-8; St. Mark 2:24-26; St. Luke 6:5; St. John 5:10-11. As a consequence, the early Church, in order to distinguish itself from the worship of the Synagogue, was free to depart from the Jewish Sabbath and worship God on another day of the week. This is evident from the words of St. Paul to the Colossians: "Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or *sabbaths*. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (2:16-17). There is no command or injunction in the New Testament that the followers of Christ must continue to observe Saturday.

If Christ Himself had the power to "dispose" of the Sabbath, so too does His Church which is His Body. The power of the Church to make such a change is specifically found in Our Lord's words to St. Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (St. Matt. 16:19).

From the outset of the Church's history Christians replaced the Sabbath day with a new day of public worship in commemoration of Christ's resurrection from the dead—the *Day of the Lord*. This day is Sunday, the first day of the week:

"But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb" (St. Luke 24:1-2).

¹ *Eternity Publications*, Grenfell, NSW, Australia, 1986.

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb” (St. John 20:1).

The official “birthday” of the Church, Pentecost Sunday, also fell on the first day of the week: Acts 2:1.

The early Christians celebrated the public worship of the Mass on Sunday:

“On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread...” (Acts 20:7).

Collections in support of the Church were gathered on Sunday:

“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come” (1 Cor. 16:2).

St. John received his Revelation on Sunday:

“I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution ... was on the island called Patmos ... I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day...” (Rev. 1:9-10).

In response, Seventh-Day Adventists cite the following passages as proof that the Sabbath-day was the day of worship of the early Christians:

“The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid; then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment” (St. Luke 23:55-56).

“As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next sabbath. And when the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace

of God. The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:42-44).

“And he argued in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus” (Acts 18:3-5).

However, in St. Luke 23 the resurrection of Christ had not yet occurred and therefore the significance of the Lord’s day was not yet a reality. In any case, the Jewish authorities would have prohibited work on Christ’s body even if the holy women had wanted to do some. Furthermore, from a closer reading of Acts it should be obvious that St. Paul went to the Synagogues on the Sabbath not to actually worship but because the gatherings of Jews there provided ideal forum in which to preach Christ. These synagogue gatherings only occurred on the Sabbath and were solely for Jews who had not yet accepted Christ.

Finally, it is important to note that, in changing the Sabbath law, the Church did not make a change in the divine law obliging men to worship God but merely a change in the day on which it was to be offered. That is, only a change in the positive ceremonial law. The law obliging men to worship God is a law based both on God’s own nature and ours, as Creator and creature respectively. As natures cannot change, natural laws are irrevocable. Not even God can alter them. On the other hand, all divine positive laws are based not on God’s nature but on God’s will, and hence can be altered or revoked by God directly or through His Church according to changes in time, circumstance or place.

The Fathers

The Didache 14, 1 (c. 90-150 AD)

“On the Lord’s Day of the Lord gather together, break bread and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure...”

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Magnesians* 9, 1 (110 AD)

“Those who lived according to the old order of things have come to a new hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath, but the Lord’s Day, in which our life is blessed by Him and by His death.”

***Letter to Diognetus* 4, 1 (inter 125-200 AD)**

“Furthermore, I do not suppose that you need to learn from me how ridiculous and unworthy of any argument are their scruples about food, their superstition about the Sabbath, their pride in circumcision, and their sham in fasting.”

St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67 (c. 155 AD)

“We all gather on the day of the sun, for it is the first day (after the Jewish Sabbath, but also the first day) when God, separating matter from darkness, made the world; and on this same day Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead.”

St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 23 (c. 155 AD)

“If circumcision was not necessary before Abraham, nor before Moses the Sabbath observance and festivals and sacrifices, then, similarly they are not necessary now, when in accordance with the will of God, Jesus Christ the Son of God has been born without sin, of a Virgin of the offspring of Abraham.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Against Faustus the Manichean* 18, 4 (c. 400 AD)

“The things in the Law and in the Prophets which Christians do not observe are those which did but signify the things they do observe. They were but figures of things to come, which figures, now that the things themselves have been revealed and made present by Christ, must be removed, so that in the very fact of their removal the Law and the Prophets may be fulfilled.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. III, Ch. IV: But the Church of God has thought it well to transfer the celebration and observance of the Sabbath to Sunday. For, as on that day light first shone on the world, so by the Resurrection of our Redeemer on the same day, by whom was thrown open to us the gate to eternal life, we were called out of darkness into light; and hence the Apostles would have it called *the Lord's day*.

We also learn from the Sacred Scriptures that the first day of the week was held sacred because on that day the work of creation commenced, and on that day the Holy Ghost was given to the Apostles.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 2173: The Gospel reports many incidents when Jesus was accused of violating the sabbath law. But Jesus never fails to respect the holiness of this day. He gives this law its authentic and authoritative interpretation: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." With compassion, Christ declares the sabbath for doing good rather than harm, for saving life rather than killing. The sabbath is the day of the Lord of mercies and a day to honor God. "The Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath."

No. 2175: Sunday is expressly distinguished from the sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the sabbath. In Christ's Passover, Sunday fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish sabbath and announces man's eternal rest in God. For worship under the Law prepared for the mystery of Christ, and what was done there prefigured some aspects of Christ.

Our Lady - Her Assumption and Coronation

Objection: *“The belief in the assumption of Mary is just another medieval Catholic invention. Mary died like everyone else. And in any case, there is no mention of it in the Bible.”*

Another aspect of the Virgin Mary’s uniqueness and exceptional holiness is her assumption. The meaning of this doctrine is as follows: that by a special and singular privilege bestowed by God, the Virgin Mary was taken up *body and soul* into heavenly glory and re-united with Jesus Christ to live and reign with Him in His kingdom for all eternity.

Belief in the Virgin Mary’s Assumption can be traced back to the earliest days of the Church. In the ancient Church an account circulated that the Apostles had been divinely warned of the Virgin Mary’s impending death. All, except St. Thomas, managed to return in time for her death and funeral. For three days the Apostles and other faithful kept up a vigil outside her tomb, where they heard at times the distinct sound of heavenly music. When St. Thomas finally arrived, he requested to see the Virgin Mary’s body. To everyone’s surprise, when the tomb was opened her body was not there, only flowers and her burial shroud being left in the sepulcher.

As early as the fifth century, Catholics were celebrating a “memorial of Mary.” This primitive celebration eventually evolved into the Feast of the Dormition (falling asleep) of the Virgin, and during the sixth century, homilies on the Assumption appeared. In the sixth century also the following prayer was written for August 15:

“May today’s venerable festivity, O Lord, bring us salutary aid, whereon God’s Holy Mother underwent temporal death, yet, could not be held fast by the shackles of death, who gave birth to Your Son made flesh of her.”¹

From the moment when the Virgin Mary’s Immaculate Conception was defined as a Dogma of the Faith, numerous petitions were sent to Rome asking for a definition of her Assumption as the crowning glory of the privileges which stem from being Mother of God. After receiving over 85,000 petitions from Religious and Clergy, and over 8,000,000 from the lay faithful, Pope Pius XII infallibly proclaimed and defined the Dogma of the Assumption on November 1, 1950:

“The Immaculate Mother of God, Mary Ever-Virgin, after her life on earth, was assumed, body and soul, into heavenly glory.”²

This definition, though, left open the question as to whether the Virgin Mary died before being assumed into heaven. *Prima facie*, as Mary was free from original sin due to being immaculately conceived, she would also have been free from all its consequences, including death. There are a number of great Saints and theologians, however, such as St. Louis de Montfort, who hold that the Virgin Mary did die before being assumed, due to her wish to be more conformed to her Son who died for all humanity. Yet this death, they say, was not accompanied by pain and suffering but rather, according to St. Francis de Sales, was a death of love with her soul leaving her body out of her great desire to be re-united with Christ.

The theological reasoning for belief in the Assumption of Mary is as follows: The First Adam and the First Eve both shared the same fate due to their sin, namely death and decomposition into dust. It follows that the New Adam and the New Eve should also share the same reward for their fidelity. Christ, by His glorious death, resurrection and ascension, gained a perfect victory over the devil, hell, sin and death. The Virgin Mary, as the immaculately conceived Mother of

¹ *The Gregorian Sacramentary*.

² *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1950.

God, is most intimately associated with Christ's perfect victory (Gen. 3:15). If there was no Assumption of Mary, she would have been vanquished by death and that parallel to Christ would, therefore, be destroyed.

No one can reasonably doubt that the Virgin Mary's soul is now in heaven, Christ would not have it otherwise. She is pictured as being in heaven by St. John: "A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars ... And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron" (Rev. 12:1, 5). The doctrine of the Assumption is not contained explicitly in Scripture, but the fact that Scripture does not record an event is no absolute argument against it. The Bible does not record the death of St. Joseph either, but all believe this must have happened.

What Scripture does tell us, however, is that God has taken, in the past, other individuals both body and soul from the world and translated them into paradise. Such was the privilege granted to Enoch (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5) and the Prophet Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:1-13). St. Jude may have believed that the same privilege was given to Moses by referring to the apocryphal work *Assumption of Moses* in his short epistle (v. 9). Considering such precedents, it is not unreasonable to believe that God would bestow upon the Virgin Mary an even more sublime privilege, namely a glorious Assumption into heaven, in view of her fulfilment of her proportionately greater vocation as Mother of God. Such an opinion was certainly held by the 16th century Protestant Reformer, Heinrich Bullinger:

"Elijah was transported, body and soul, in a chariot of fire; he was not buried ... but mounted up to Heaven, so that ... we might know what immortality and recompense God prepares for his faithful prophets and for his most outstanding and incomparable creatures ... It is for this reason, we believe, that the pure and immaculate embodiment of the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, the Temple

of the Holy Spirit, that is to say, her saintly body, was carried up to heaven by the angels.”³

The bodies of the glorious Apostles, the martyrs who shed their blood for Christ, men and women noted for their holiness, have been carefully preserved and venerated in the Church from the beginning of Christianity. While the remains of St. Peter and St. Paul are jealously possessed in Rome, no Christian city or center has ever claimed to possess the bodily remains of the Virgin Mary. No doubt her relics would have been regarded of greater value than those of other Apostles or Saints, so close was she to Christ.

Of the Mother of God no relics were to remain. The Immaculate Conception, formed by the Holy Spirit, and which formed the body of Christ, would not be allowed to see corruption. In her Assumption the Virgin Mary shows forth the fullness of redemption and is an example of what will happen to all one day. After all, as God took her glorified body into heaven, so will He take the glorified bodies of all the Just on the last day.

Second objection: “The worship of Mary as Queen of Heaven is another form of Catholic idolatry similar to what the Prophet Jeremiah preached against before Jerusalem’s destruction.”

What the Prophet Jeremiah was speaking against was the rampant idolatry infecting Judah during the late seventh and early sixth century BC, involving Baal worship and human sacrifice: “The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger” (Jer. 7:18). There can be no comparison between Catholic veneration given to the immaculate Mother of God and the hideous sacrificial worship of the Canaanites.

The recognition of the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven should not be surprising when we consider the great dignity accorded the Queen-mother in the Kingdom of Israel. Under the reign of the Davidic kings

³ *On Original Sin*, 16 (1568).

the Queen-mother occupied the role of *Giberah*. In Hebrew, *Giberah* literally means “great lady.” The Queen mother sat at the right hand of the king and intercession was a natural part of her office. Solomon showed great deference to his mother Bathsheba when she came to ask a favor of him (1 Kgs. 2:19-20) and the ritual that surrounded her intercession suggests that it was a regular courtly event. In the later history of the Davidic dynasty the importance of the Queen-mother is testified by the careful recording of her name after the introduction of each new king (1 Kgs. 14:21; 15:2; 22:42; 2 Kgs. 8:26; 12:2; 14:1; 15:2; 18:2; 21:1; 22:1; 23:31) and by Jeremiah’s remark, that the Queen-mother wears a diadem like the king (Jer. 13:18).

At the annunciation the Angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary that the son to be born of her was of the royal line of David and would inherit his throne forever. We also acknowledge that Christ is King of heaven: “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16). It follows in the *Giberah* tradition that His mother should be Queen of Heaven. St. Elizabeth acknowledged this queenship when greeting Mary not by her name but by saying, “Why is this granted me, that *the mother of my Lord* should come to me?” (St. Luke 1:43). St. John saw the woman clothed with the sun wearing “on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rev. 12:1). All the saved in heaven will wear crowns of glory, as is gathered from the words of St. Paul: “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day” (2 Tim. 4:8). The Virgin Mary, having fulfilled the greatest of all vocations, being Mother of God, has been rewarded with the greatest crown; hence, her queenship over all other creatures in heaven.

Christ Himself crowned His mother as Queen of heaven and earth after her Assumption. Pope Pius XII officially proclaimed the universal queenship of Mary on October 11, 1954. He stated that the “maternity of Mary is without doubt the principal argument on which her royal dignity is based.”⁴ Thus was realized the dream of St. Catherine Labouré: “Oh, how beautiful it will be to hear Mary is queen of the universe, especially of France, and each person in

⁴ *Ad Coeli Reginam*, Oct. 11, 1954.

particular. She will be carried in procession and will go around the world.”

The Queenship of Mary is not only a title and honorary distinction but also a “power of action and a principle of government.” However, in the mind of God no one is ever raised to greatness for their own good but only that they may serve others. The Queenship of Mary is not a sinecure but a noble bondage. In co-operation with the Most Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary plays an invisible and wondrous role in the government of the universe. She has a word to say in the divine counsels and this word, without being a command, is a queenly prayer capable of intimately moving the Most High. Cana is the first place where the Virgin Mary publicly performed her intercessory role (St. John 2:3). Such is the will of God who exalts the humble in reward for their fidelity. As Son and Mother were united in suffering on earth for the sake of our redemption, they are now united in glory for the sake of our salvation.

The Fathers

St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panacea Against all Heresies* 78, 23 (inter 374-377 AD)

“If the holy Virgin is dead and has been buried, surely her dormition happened with great honor: her end was most pure and crowned by virginity. If she was slain, according to what is written: ‘a sword shall pierce your soul,’ then she obtained glory together with the martyrs, and her holy body, from which light shone forth for all the world, dwells among those who enjoy the repose of the blessed. Or she continued to live. For, to God, it is not impossible to do whatever He wills; on the other hand, no one knows exactly what her end was.”

St. Jerome, *Commentary on the Psalms* Ps. 44 (ante 420 AD)

“(‘The Queen stood on the right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety’). We read how the angels have come to the death and burial of some of the saints, and how they have accompanied the souls of the elect to heaven with hymns and praises. How much more should we believe that the heavenly army, with all its bands, came

forth rejoicing in festal array, to meet the Mother of God, surrounded with her effulgent light, and led her with praises and canticles to the throne prepared for her from the beginning of the world.”

St. Gregory of Tours, *Eight Books of Miracles* 1, 4 (inter 575-593 AD)

“And behold, the Lord Jesus came with his angels and, taking her soul, handed it over to the archangel Michael and withdrew. At dawn, the apostles lifted up her body on a pallet, laid it in a tomb, and kept watch over it, awaiting the coming of the Lord. And behold, again the Lord presented himself to them and ordered that her holy body be taken and carried up to heaven. There she is now, joined once more to her soul; she exults with the elect, rejoicing in the eternal blessings that will have no end.”

St. Germain I of Constantinople, *Sermon on the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary* 2 (ante 733 AD)

“Let death pass you by, O Mother of God, because you have brought life to men. Let the tomb pass you by, because you have been made the foundation stone of inexplicable sublimity. Let dust pass you by; for you are a new kind of formation, so that you may be mistress over those who have been corrupted in the very stuff of their potter’s clay.”

St. Andrew of Crete, *Homilies on the Dormition* 2 (ante 740 AD)

“Why is no body visible? And why are the burial wrappings missing from the tomb, if not because what had been entombed there escaped destruction, and because the treasure was transferred to another place?”

St. John Damascene, *Second Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin* 10, 18 (inter 725-749 AD)

“From ancient tradition we have received that at the time of the glorious falling asleep of the Blessed Virgin, all the holy Apostles, traversing the whole earth for the salvation of all nations, were in one moment borne on high and carried to Jerusalem; and whilst they were there, they saw and heard angels; and thus amid divine glory, she

yielded her soul into the hands of God. Her body, which God in some unutterable way has taken, was borne amid angelic and apostolic hymns, and was put in a tomb at Gethsemane, where angelic songs lasted for three consecutive days. The angelic singing ceasing after three days, the tomb was opened by the Apostles, who were then all together; for Thomas, the only one first absent, had come the third day, and desired to pay homage to the body which had received God. But nowhere could they find her body ... Astonished at this mysterious miracle, they could only conclude that He who was pleased from the Virgin Mary to take flesh and to become man ... the same was pleased, after her death, to preserve incorrupt her immaculate body, and to honor it, before the common and universal resurrection..."

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

The Catechism of the Council of Trent made no reference to the Virgin Mary's Assumption into heaven.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 966: "Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death." The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians:

In giving birth you kept your virginity; in your Dormition you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our soul from death (Byzantine Liturgy, Feast of the Dormition).

No. 974: The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the Resurrection of all members of his Body.

The Crusades

Objection: *“The Crusades together amount to the most scandalous episode in the Catholic Church’s history. The Crusaders were for the most part vicious, bloodthirsty and rapacious. They were responsible for countless deaths and atrocities and deserve to be roundly condemned.”*

A myriad of critics are ready to condemn the Crusades and the Catholic Church for promoting them. According to these critics, the Crusaders were obviously ruthless and greedy adventurers used by Popes and Kings to realize their worldly economic and territorial interests, under the pious motive of “recapturing the Holy Sepulcher.” No justification can be had for a movement that so obviously illustrated how far the Catholic Church had strayed from Christ’s Gospel of love, peace and forgiveness.

To respond to such charges it is necessary to examine the Crusades in the context of the ongoing struggle between Christianity and Islam. This struggle began immediately after the death of Mohammad in 632 AD. After conquering western Arabia, the successors to Mohammad rapidly expanded the Moslem realm throughout the Middle East, North Africa, southwest Asia and Western Europe. The various Caliphs and their respective conquests were as follows:

- *Abu Bakr* (632-634 AD): conquered the remainder of the Arabian Peninsula and entered Palestine.
- *Omar* (634-644 AD): fought and won the following battles—Ajnadain (634); Damascus (635); Yarmuk (636); Qadisiya (636); Ramla, Fihl and Jerusalem (638); Heliopolis (640); Mosul (641); Alexandria (642) and Nehavend (642). By the time of his death, Omar had spread Islam into the Tigris—Euphrates region, overrun Persia, conquered Syria, Lebanon

and Palestine, entered Asia Minor, devoured Egypt, and advanced into Libya.

- *Othman* (644-656 AD): conquered Tripoli in North Africa (644); attacked Cyprus (648); captured Persepolis (648); conquered Nishapur, Herat and Balkh in Afghanistan (651); attacked the island of Rhodes (654); won at Basra (656).
- *Ali* (656-661 AD): expansion stalled under his reign due to Berber resistance in North Africa.
- *The Umayyad Caliphate* (661-750 AD): restored Islamic expansion with the conquest of Kabul in 664. With the construction of the naval base of Kairouan in North Africa in 670, Islam became a major naval power enabling the conquest of Carthage (698) and the invasion of Spain in 711. After victories at Rio Barbate, Lisbon and Cordoba (711) and Toledo (712) most of Spain was quickly subjugated. France was then invaded with Narbonne captured in 715 and Toulouse in 721. In the East, expansion continued with the conquest of Bukara and Samarkand (710), Multan (711) and the occupation of the Sind region in northwest India (712). The Umayyads also twice besieged Constantinople in the years 673-678 and 717-718.

In the one hundred years between 632 and 732 AD the Middle East, North Africa and Spain, regions that had known Christianity for up to six centuries, were now lost to the followers of the new “prophet.” At the same time, the Christian Byzantine Empire with its capital of Constantinople (the first city in history founded and dedicated as a Christian city by the Emperor Constantine) was under the constant threat of being overwhelmed. What had to be the response of Christendom in the face of this grave crisis?

Contrary to the opinions of certain schools of thought, Christianity has never advocated pacificism as an essential part of “*Christ’s Gospel of love, peace and forgiveness.*” Rather, the Church has always advocated the concept of the “just war.” The conditions for when a

just war may be fought are outlined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

“The strict conditions for legitimate defence by military force require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time:

- the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave and certain;
- all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;
- there must be serious prospects of success;
- the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.

These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the ‘just war’ doctrine.

The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgement of those who have responsibility for the common good.”¹

The first great Christian victories against the tide of Islam were achieved at Constantinople (673-678 and 717-718), Covadonga in Spain (722) and Poitiers in France (732). The Christians fought these battles as defensive battles against an unjust aggressor. They had to fight, for Islam at the time was in no mood for negotiation and if left unopposed, the damage inflicted on the Christian world certainly would have been “lasting, grave and certain.”

¹ CCC # 2309.

Despite suffering military setbacks in the early eighth century, Islam retained its appetite for military conquest. Crete was conquered in 823, Sardinia in 827 and Corsica in 850. Repeated raids were also launched into southern Italy and the Rhone River region of France. After a struggle of 114 years, Sicily finally capitulated to the Moslems in 941. The conquerors now were the Abbasid Dynasty, who displaced the Umayyads in 750. Unlike the Umayyads, the Abbasids were less tolerant of non-Islamic beliefs. Previously, subjugated Christians and Jews were generally left alone to practice their beliefs, subject only to the payment of a special tax. Now, conversion to Islam was more insisted upon and commonplace.

This change was most particularly evident after the defeat of the Byzantines at the battle of Manzikert in 1071. The Byzantine Emperor had raised a well-armed and highly disciplined force of over 60,000 men. Their opponents were over 100,000 Seljuk Turks, descendants of wild Mongolian horsemen from the Russian steppes. These nomads were easy converts to Islam as its looser morality and aggressive spirit coincided with their own. During the battle itself, the Christian army, exhausted by great heat, was outmanoeuvred and overwhelmed by repeated waves of swift horsemen firing showers of arrows. The Turkish warriors then moved in for the kill with their razor sharp curved swords.

The consequences of defeat at Manzikert for Christendom were far-reaching. The heartland of Anatolia, once the region where St. Paul had planted the first seeds of Christianity, was now in the hands of a more fanatical strain of Islam. Constantinople was once again threatened, while pilgrimages to the Holy Land were now subject to an official policy of harassment. Word of deaths and oppression would soon be reaching the ears of a concerned Europe. Pope St. Gregory VII first conceived the idea of a crusade to relieve the East in 1073, but he did not live to see it materialize. However, when Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus sent a plea for assistance to Pope Bl. Urban II in 1095, the West was now ready and willing to respond.

Western Christendom was already very familiar with and experienced in the crusading spirit. The Spanish Reconquista was nearing its four hundredth year and had achieved great successes under King Alfonso II in the ninth century and currently under the legendary Rodrigo del Bivar (El Cid). However, few could have foreseen the overwhelming response to Pope Bl. Urban II's speech delivered at the Council of Clermont on November 10, 1095, calling for a large expeditionary force to turn back the Moslem advance and liberate the Holy Land. In his speech the Pope promised a plenary indulgence—a full remission of temporal punishment due to sin—to all those prepared to take up the cross and reclaim the Holy Sepulcher. Pope Urban then quoted from the Gospel of St. Matthew: “every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.” The crowd of thousands then exclaimed with one voice, “*God wills it!*”

From that day forward, tens of thousands of commonfolk, soldiers, knights, nobles and even kings took up the standard of crusade. Admittedly, not everyone's motives were pure. Besides the spiritual values underpinning the crusade, some were lured by the prospect of territorial gain, rich treasure and financial opportunities, others by a simple thirst for adventure. Nevertheless, in its ideal the crusade was a true expression of faith based on the sacrifice of one's life for the sake of Christ.

In all there were eight official crusades and two unofficial ones. The official crusades, their leaders and achievements were as follows:

- *First Crusade* (1096-1099):
Godfrey de Bouillon, Raymond of Toulouse,
Bohemund of Taranto;
Captured Jerusalem and established the four
Crusader states of Jerusalem, Tripoli, Antioch
and Edessa. A total success.
- *Second Crusade* (1147-1149):
Conrad III of Germany; Louis VII of France;

Aimed at alleviating the threat to the Crusader states after the loss of Edessa in 1144. A major and demoralizing failure.

- *Third Crusade* (1189-1192):
Frederick I of Germany; Richard I of England; Philip II of France;
Aimed at recapturing Jerusalem lost to Saladin on October 2, 1187. Conquered Cyprus, recaptured Acre. Saladin also defeated at Arsuf and Jaffa. Lacking manpower, a treaty was negotiated with Saladin allowing pilgrims to enter Jerusalem. A partial success.
- *Fourth Crusade* (1202-1204):
Thibaud of Champagne;
Aimed at recapturing Jerusalem through Egypt; Crusaders diverted from their original objectives to capture the Hungarian dependency of Zara for Venice and sacked Constantinople on April 13, 1204, after failing to secure agreed transportation to the East. The Latin kingdom of Constantinople was established—a kingdom that would earn the hatred of the Greeks. A total disaster.
- *Fifth Crusade* (1218-1221):
Papal Legate Cardinal Pelagius;
Aimed to capture Egypt. Damietta captured in November 1219. Christian forces negotiated an eight-year truce and withdrew after the failure of Frederick II's forces to appear. A frustrating failure.
- *Sixth Crusade* (1228-1229):
Frederick II of Germany;
Despite being under the penalty of excommunication for delaying to fulfill his vow to go on crusade, the German Emperor secured control of Jerusalem,

Bethlehem and Nazareth through negotiation. A surprising success.

- *Seventh Crusade* (1248-1254):
St. Louis IX of France;
Aimed at recapturing Jerusalem lost to the Turks in 1244. The Crusaders won a major victory at Damietta in Egypt in June 1249 but were later defeated at Mansura on February 8, 1250. Captured by the Egyptians on April 6, 1250, St. Louis was forced to pay a large ransom for his release. He returned to France four years later after failing to secure an alliance with the Mongols. Another frustrating failure.
- *Eighth Crusade* (1270-1271):
St. Louis IX of France and Edward I of England;
Aimed at propping up the flagging fortunes of the Christians after the fall of Antioch to the Mamelukes in 1268. St. Louis landed at Tunis and besieged the city before contracting the plague and perishing. His brother, Charles of Anjou, took control of the army, negotiated a treaty with the Moslems, and retreated to France. Edward I continued on to Acre where, after fighting a number of battles, he returned to England after concluding a treaty with the Mameluke Sultan, Baybars. Once again, another frustrating failure.

After 1271, Christian resolve weakened further, and in the following twenty years the Mamelukes systematically reduced the remaining Crusader strongholds. The last to fall was Acre, which was besieged by 120,000 men under the leader Malek-Aschraf. The 25,000 Christian defenders resisted heroically for three months, only to flee in their ships to Cyprus when all was lost. The garrison of Knights Templars, however, remained, and together with the Christian presence in the Middle East was completely annihilated.

Without a doubt, the Crusades for the Holy Land from the military point of view were ultimately a total failure due in large part to the self-interest, contention, infidelity and avarice that racked and divided the Christian forces. The various massacres after the fall of Jerusalem in 1099 and at Constantinople in 1204 are without excuse and still leave their scars on East-West relations. In addition, the unofficial People's Crusade of 1096 and the Children's Crusade were tragic follies that led to the deaths of tens of thousands of enthusiastic but misled individuals. In his Easter Message of 2000, Pope John Paul II showed that the Church was willing to admit responsibility for "sins committed in the service of truth." But those who continually raise these failings in order to denigrate the whole crusading movement and the Church *per se* overextend themselves. Excesses occur in any just

war – for example, the bombing of Dresden by the Allies in February 1945. Nevertheless, the ideal of the crusade stands unchallenged; that is, wars fought in self-defense to recapture what was lost to an unjust aggressor whose actions over the previous 450 years had showed an intention to devour the whole of Christendom.

Critics of the Crusades are also strangely silent about Islamic militarism and expansion. One never hears outrage over the Moslem conquests of Christian regions and the large-scale kidnappings of Christian children, discriminatory taxation policies and the forced conversions of whole populations to Islam. Apologies are never demanded of the Moslems for invading Western Europe in the eighth century or Eastern Europe in the fifteenth century. This silence also extends to present-day persecutions of Christians in Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and most particularly in the Sudan.

Nor does one hear from the critics anything about the positive aspects of the Crusades. The renewed communication with the East brought about a greater exchange of trade and culture; there was renewed contact with beleaguered Christians such as the Maronites in Lebanon; the West benefited from contact with Moslem mathematicians and philosophers versed in Aristotelian thought; the rise and flourishing of the religious military orders of the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templars brought about a renewal of lofty ideals and noble fighting spirit; and, most importantly, the Crusades delayed the desired Islamic invasion of Eastern Europe for nearly 200 years.

Despite the defeat of the Crusades, the authentic crusading spirit was to live on for another four centuries. Continued Islamic expansionism necessitated further Christian efforts at self-defense, particularly after the conquest of Constantinople by Mohammed II in 1453. The great battles and the heroes who fought them on behalf of Christendom were as follows:

- *Belgrade* (1456): John Hunyadi and St. John Capistrano against the Turkish Sultan Mohammed II; 10,000 Christian troops against 150,000 Moslem; a flotilla of two hundred ships led by John Hunyadi and St. John Capistrano sailed

down the Danube River and broke the Turkish blockade; after a five hour battle the relieving Christians entered the besieged city; the Christian defenders then destroyed the counter-attacking Janissaries with a burning wall of sulphur, pitch and gunpowder; after losing their main battery of siege cannons to a Christian onslaught the Turks retreated; Hungary was saved for another sixty years.

- *Albania* (1443-1467): George Castriota (Scanderberg)—destroyed sixteen successive Turkish invasions led by Sultans Murad II and Mohammed II; the Turks invaded with armies of 40,000 in 1443, 160,000 in 1450 and two of 200,000 in 1466 and 1467. While Scanderberg lived the Turks could never capture Albania.
- *Malta* (1565): the Knights of St. John Hospitallers against the Turkish Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent; 65,000 Turks invaded Malta which was defended by only 7,000 knight monks led by Jean la Valette; the Turkish siege of three fortresses lasted for four months; Ottoman losses during the campaign reached 30,000; when Spanish reinforcements of 7,000 finally arrived only 600 of the original defenders were left; exhausted, the Turks then abandoned the siege.
- *Lepanto* (1571): continued Ottoman aggression in the eastern Mediterranean led to the capture of Cyprus in 1570 and the massacre of all the Christian inhabitants of Nicosia and Famagusta; under the auspices of Pope St. Pius V an alliance of Spain, Venice, Genoa, the Papal States and Knights of Malta was effected in May 1571; Don Juan of Austria was appointed commander-in-chief of the Christian forces; the Pope ordered all convents and monasteries in Rome to pray for the coming battle; Pius V himself fasted three days a week and prayed hours every day; Mass and Holy Rosary were said on every ship each day; the battle was joined with the Turkish fleet under Ali Pasha in the Strait of Corinth; the din of noise on the Ottoman ships contrasted with the silence, prayer and absolutions on Christian ships; losses—7,500 Christians

killed, 12 ships lost; 30,000 Turks killed, 8,000 taken prisoner; 225 Turkish ships sunk or captured; 15,000 Christian galley slaves freed; Ali Pasha was captured and beheaded; St. Pius V was told miraculously of the victory which was confirmed two weeks later by courier; the Pope attributed the victory to Our Lady Help of Christians and added this invocation to the Litany of Loreto and decreed October 7th the Feast of Our Lady of Victory.

- *Vienna* (1683): 200,000 Turks were camped outside Vienna under the command of the Grand Mustapha; only 10,000 Christian troops remained in Vienna as defenders; Mustapha decided to starve out the city; meanwhile, two armies, one from Poland (under King Sobieski) and one from Lorraine were advancing towards Vienna to give added strength to the defenders; on 12th September 1683, these two armies, numbering 45,000 men, descended on the surprised Turks; the Catholic armies now possessed greater discipline and determination, and by the end of the day the Turks had fled; on hearing the news of victory, Bl. Pope Innocent XI declared September 12 the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary in thanksgiving for Our Lady's intercession.
- *Zenta* (1697): As the years progressed the Turks suffered further defeats: Buda, Neuhausel, Gran, Mohacs, Athens, Belgrade; in 1697, the Turks reinvaded Transylvania at Zenta; a Catholic army led by Prince Eugene of Savoy met them on September 11; the battle was engaged and ended with 20,000 Turks killed and only 300 Christians dead; on January 26, 1699, the Turks signed the Treaty of Carlowitz, restoring Transylvania and most of Hungary to the Holy Roman Empire; it was the first time that the Turks had negotiated with Christian forces; the Turks had made their last attack on Europe.

Other Christian military campaigns possessing the Crusader spirit can also be mentioned, including the war against the Albigensians launched by Pope Innocent III in the thirteenth century and the final

stages of the Spanish Reconquista under Queen Isabella in the late fifteenth century. All the above wars and battles were fought in ages when the character of European states were Christian, and so their armies were also. It is not illegitimate for a nation, Christian or otherwise, to possess an army and to employ it in self-defense.

The secularisation of the Western world in the past two centuries has only resulted in more frequent wars and greater atrocities. Modern attacks launched against the Crusades are generally one-sided affairs which fail to take into account the history of Islamic aggression against Christianity, and which are more motivated not out of love of Christ's message of "peace, love and forgiveness" but by a broader anti-Catholic secularist agenda. If Christendom existed today and it faced imperilment from an external enemy, the cry of "onward Christian soldiers!" would still be a noble call to answer.

The Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Objection: “*Why pray the Rosary? It is not mentioned in the Bible.*”

The Holy Rosary is a form of popular devotion that has its earliest origins in the Later Middle Ages. Since the time of the Church Fathers, it has been the common practice of laity to recite with clergy and religious the Liturgical Hours commonly known as the Divine Office. The most popular Hour is that of Vespers (6:00 p.m.). For the most dedicated laity, daily recitation of the Divine Office would involve praying all one hundred and fifty Psalms of David per week. According to Cassian and St. Benedict of Nursia, certain religious even prayed all one hundred and fifty Psalms per day.

Throughout the Church’s history, however, the Divine Office has been a prayer only for the literate or those who could memorize the Psalms. For the illiterate the Holy Spirit would inspire a simpler but wonderful alternative. Thus, over time, another “psalter” of one hundred and fifty prayers was developed and adopted by the learned and unlearned alike—the Psalter of Mary. Both the physical form of the Holy Rosary and the type and number of prayers have been changed over the centuries.¹

¹ For example, the second half of the Hail Mary (“...pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen”) only reached its final form in the Breviary promulgated by Pope St. Pius V in 1568; the ‘O my Jesus’ prayer was added at the injunction of Our Lady at Fatima in 1917; Pope John Paul II in October 2002 released *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, adding the five “Mysteries of Light.”

Certainly, being a form of prayer first developed in the Middle Ages, we do not find the Holy Rosary mentioned in the Bible. But of what ultimate consequence is this? There are hundreds, if not thousands, of excellent prayers used by both Catholics and Protestants that have been written only in recent centuries and therefore not mentioned in the Bible. Most of these are prayers to Jesus Himself or the Holy Spirit rather than to the Father. Should they, together with the Holy Rosary, be discarded simply because they are of relatively recent composition?

What is important is whether the doctrines contained in the prayers of the Holy Rosary are found in or are consistent with the Bible. In general, mainstream Protestants would have no objection to the contents of the Apostles' Creed, which is the first prayer of the Rosary. Nor would any reasonable Protestant object to the Lord's Prayer, the Trinitarian Doxology (the Glory Be)² or the contents of the 'O my Jesus' prayer³. The only real problems for Protestants are the prayers commonly known as the 'Hail Mary' and the 'Hail, Holy Queen.' Protestant objection to the Holy Rosary is essentially tied up with Protestant objection to Marian devotion in general. This is not the place to give a detailed defense of Marian devotion. All that needs to be said is that the Hail Mary and the Hail Holy Queen are simply intercessory prayers, having their foundation and legitimacy in the doctrine of the Communion of Saints (1 Cor. 12:26-27; St. Luke 15:10; Heb. 12:1).

Second objection: “*Catholics think that counting beads is going to get them to heaven!*”

Those who do not know what the Holy Rosary is often dismiss it as “counting beads.” The Holy Rosary is a prayer primarily to the Virgin Mary that is both oral and mental. The Holy Rosary in its entirety

² “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

³ “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell; lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy.”

recalls twenty events (otherwise known as “mysteries” because of their sublimity) in the lives of Jesus and Mary that each teach a lesson in faith and virtue. These mysteries are divided into four groups of five. The first group is called the *Joyful Mysteries* (because of their joyous nature), the second the *Luminous Mysteries* (because they commemorate Christ’s revealing of Himself and the announcement of His Kingdom), the third the *Sorrowful Mysteries* (because they commemorate Our Lord in His passion and death) and the fourth the *Glorious Mysteries* (because they commemorate the triumph of Jesus and Mary over the Devil, sin and death). Each mystery consists of one ‘Our Father,’ ten ‘Hail Marys,’ one ‘Glory be’ and one ‘O my Jesus’ prayer. While these vocal prayers are recited, the person praying simultaneously meditates on the mystery at hand. Rosary beads are valued not only as a blessed sacramental, but also as an efficacious tool to help keep track of where one is up to in the recitation.

The *Joyful Mysteries* are:

- (i) *The Annunciation*: This mystery calls to mind the visit of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary in Nazareth. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are purity and obedience.
- (ii) *The Visitation*: This mystery calls to mind the visit of the Virgin Mary to St. Elizabeth in the hills of Judea. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery is the love of neighbor in service.
- (iii) *The Nativity of Our Lord*: This mystery calls to mind the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are love of God and poverty of spirit.
- (iv) *The Presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple*: This mystery calls to mind the purification of the Virgin Mary and the presentation of the baby Christ in the Temple of Jerusalem. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery is obedience to God.

- (v) *The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple*: This mystery calls to mind the finding of Christ in the Temple of Jerusalem by the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are the desire to always be in the presence of God and a love for Holy Wisdom.

The *Luminous Mysteries* are:

- (i) *The Baptism of Jesus*: This mystery calls to mind the baptism of Jesus by St John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery is fidelity to our baptismal promises through the Holy Spirit.
- (ii) *The Wedding at Cana*: This mystery calls to mind the first public miracle performed by Christ through the intercession of His holy Mother. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery is trust in Jesus through Mary.
- (iii) *The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Call to Repentance*: This mystery calls to mind the proclamation by Christ of His Father's Kingdom on earth. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are repentance and trust in God.
- (iv) *The Transfiguration*: This mystery calls to mind the manifestation of Christ's Divinity on Mt. Tabor. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are wonder, and contempt of the world.
- (v) *The Institution of the Eucharist*: This mystery calls to mind the institution of the Holy Eucharist by Christ at the Last Supper. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery is adoration.

The *Sorrowful Mysteries* are:

- (i) *The Agony in the Garden*: This mystery calls to mind the agony of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are obedience to God's will and sorrow for sin.
- (ii) *The Scourging at the Pillar*: This mystery calls to mind the cruel scourging that Christ received at the hands of the Romans. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are the practice of penance, and sorrow for sins of the flesh.
- (iii) *The Crowning with Thorns*: This mystery calls to mind the crown of thorns that was placed on and pierced the sacred head of Christ. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery is the practice of moral courage.
- (iv) *The Carrying of the Cross*: This mystery calls to mind Christ carrying His cross to Mount Calvary. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are perseverance in the love of God and in the spiritual life.
- (v) *The Crucifixion on Mount Calvary*: This mystery calls to mind the crucifixion and death of Christ on the cross. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are the love of God and the desire for a happy and holy death.

The *Glorious Mysteries* are:

- (i) *The Resurrection*: This mystery calls to mind the Resurrection on the third day of Christ from the dead. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are faith in God and hope of Heaven.
- (ii) *The Ascension*: This mystery calls to mind the Ascension of Christ by His own power into heaven. Included among the

virtues exemplified by this mystery is a desire to be with Jesus.

- (iii) *The Descent of the Holy Spirit*: This mystery calls to mind the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Virgin Mary and the Apostles on Pentecost Day. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery is a zeal for spreading the faith.
- (iv) *The Assumption of the Virgin Mary*: This mystery calls to mind the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, body and soul, into heavenly glory by God. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery are a love of Mary and true devotion to her.
- (v) *The Coronation of the Virgin Mary*: This mystery calls to mind the Coronation of the Virgin Mary as Queen of heaven and earth. Included among the virtues exemplified by this mystery is a confident trust in the intercession of the Virgin Mary.

Simply counting beads certainly gets nobody into heaven, but the Holy Rosary is not about bead counting. It is about praying and meditating on the lives of the two greatest persons in history. Meditating on the deeds of the Lord is certainly an action praised by Scripture (Ps. 77:12; St. Luke 1:49). The sublimity of the first Joyful Mystery alone (the Incarnation) is a truth so awesome that it goes to the heart of God's own love for humanity. Catholics have, for almost eight centuries, obtained many spiritual and temporal benefits from the faithful recitation of the Holy Rosary and know that, together with their baptism, faith in Christ and obeying the Ten Commandments, it will help them get to heaven.

Third objection: “*The Bible condemns repetitious prayer, so how can repeating Hail Marys be right?*”

This objection is usually raised by those Protestants who use the *King James Version* of the Bible that incorrectly translates St. Matthew 6:7

as follows: “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”

The critical Greek word in St. Matthew 6:7 is ‘*battalogēsēte*’. It literally means to “babble.” The *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible more appropriately renders this verse in these words: “And in praying do not heap up *empty phrases* (babble) as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words...” Our Lord was not intending to condemn repetitious prayers *per se* but rather the use of many *empty phrases*. We know this also from the fact that Christ Himself repeated the same prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane three times: “So, leaving them again, he went away and *prayed for the third time, saying the same words*” (St. Matt. 26:44).

Furthermore, it was the custom of the Jews to praise God singing the Psalms in the Temple, in the synagogues and in Jewish homes. Christ Himself would have often sung the Psalms in public and in private. St. Paul in Colossians 3:16 exhorts Christians to continue in the singing of psalms. Christ and the early Christians therefore would have often sung Psalm 136 (135), a wonderful example of a prayer that praises God with the words “for his steadfast love endures forever” repeated twenty-six times!

Finally, Martin Luther had fond words for the *Hail Mary*, and certainly recommended his followers to recite it:

“We can use the Hail Mary as a meditation in which we recite what grace God has given her. Second, we should add a wish that everyone may know and respect her ... He who has no faith is advised to refrain from saying the Hail Mary.”⁴

Fourth objection: “*Why Ten Hail Marys and only one Our Father! Is Mary ten times more important for Catholics?*”

⁴ Weimer, *The Works of Luther*, Pelikan, Concordia, vol. 43, pp. 39-41.

No, she is not. There is only one God for Catholics and He is infinitely “more important” than any creature, even one as great as the Virgin Mary. Listen to the words of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716), perhaps the greatest Marian devotee in the Church’s history:

“I avow, with all the Church, that Mary, being a mere creature that has come from the hands of the Most High, is in comparison with His Infinite Majesty less than an atom; or rather, she is nothing at all, because only He is ‘He who is’.”⁵

It is erroneous to look at the Our Father and Hail Mary as if they were *ultimately* prayers to two different persons. The Our Father is a prayer *directly* to God the Father through Christ our Lord. The Hail Mary is a prayer *indirectly* to God the Father through the intercession of the Virgin Mary: “...*pray for us* sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.” Who does the Virgin Mary pray to in heaven but God the Father; and through whom does she go to the Father but her Son Christ our Lord? If those in heaven are “a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1) then why is it wrong for Catholics to ask the Virgin Mary to pray for them, given that St. Paul could ask for the prayers of his fellow earth-bound Christians who yet did not possess the vision of God (Rom. 15:30; Heb. 13:18)?

Lastly, as the Holy Rosary is a devotion honoring and invoking the Virgin Mary it should not be so surprising that it has such a pronounced Marian flavor to it. The fact that there are ten Hail Marys also gives ample time to the devotee to meditate on the mystery in question, mysteries which all relate to the lives of *Jesus and Mary*.

Fifth objection: “*The Rosary is a legacy of Paganism, therefore the Catholic Church is pagan for promoting it.*”

⁵ St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, Ch. 1, # 14.

This type of objection is often raised by those who habitually oppose Catholic practices not because there is anything intrinsically wrong with them, but simply because they are distinctly Catholic. Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) showed that many pagan practices have entered both Catholic and Protestant cultures—such as the use of wedding rings in marriage—without bringing with them elements of the pagan religion that begot them. The use of beads in prayer is also found in Islam and in Buddhism, for example, but there is no connection between such usage and the use of Rosary beads in Catholicism. Even if there were any connection, it could not be shown that any peculiar Islamic or Buddhist beliefs have thereby been incorporated into Catholicism. The claim that the Holy Rosary has pagan origins and is simply a mask to bring about the paganization of Christendom is utterly unfounded. In any case, the Holy Rosary is not based on the beads, but upon the prayers said and the mysteries meditated upon.

St. Louis de Montfort relates the real origin of the Holy Rosary in his book *The Secret of the Rosary*:

“It was only in the year 1214, however, that the Church received the Rosary in its present form and according to the method we use today. It was given to the Church by St. Dominic, who had received it from the Blessed Virgin as a means of converting the Albigensians and other sinners.”⁶

The Albigensians were Gnostic heretics who believed in the existence of two Gods—one good God who created the spiritual world and one equally powerful evil God who created the physical world. The Albigensians were extremely violent and possessed a distinct hatred for Catholicism.

Saint Louis de Montfort continues:

“I will tell you the story of how he received it, which is found in the very well-known book *De Dignitate Psalterii*, by

⁶ *The Secret of the Rosary*, Second Rose.

Blessed Alan de la Roche. Saint Dominic, seeing that the gravity of people's sins was hindering the conversion of the Albigensians, withdrew into a forest near Toulouse, where he prayed continuously for three days and three nights. During this time he did nothing but weep and do harsh penances in order to appease the anger of God. He used his discipline so much that his body was lacerated, and finally he fell into a coma...

“At this point our Lady appeared to him, accompanied by three angels, and she said, ‘Dear Dominic, do you know which weapon the Blessed Trinity wants to use to reform the world?’ ‘Oh, my Lady,’ answered Saint Dominic, ‘you know far better than I do, because next to your Son Jesus Christ you have always been the chief instrument of our salvation’...

“Then our Lady replied, ‘I want you to know that, in this kind of warfare, the principal weapon has always been the Angelic Psalter, which is the foundation-stone of the New Testament. Therefore, if you want to reach these hardened souls and win them over to God, preach my Psalter (Rosary)’.”⁷

St. Dominic then proceeded to preach the Holy Rosary and its popularity spread rapidly. However, due to the subsequent laxity of the people, it slowly fell out of popular use. It was not until the fifteenth century after Blessed Alan de la Roche received a heavenly vision, that the use of the Holy Rosary was revived. In two separate revelations from Our Lord and Our Lady, Blessed Alan was told of the great power that the Holy Rosary possessed to convert people and cultivate virtue. Our Lord clearly teaches that a tree is known by its fruit (St. Luke 6:44). Nobody can deny that the greatest Catholic saints since then were those who faithfully recited the Holy Rosary.

Sixth objection: *“The Catholic Church admits that the Rosary was invented by St. Dominic in the thirteenth century. However, how is this consistent with the Church’s teaching that there cannot be any new revelation after the death of the last Apostle?”*

⁷ Ibid.

In answering this objection one must first make clear the Church's distinction between *public* and *private* revelation. The Catholic Church certainly admits that public revelation ended with the death of the last Apostle, St. John. Nothing can be added to the Deposit of Faith finally delivered once and for all by Christ to the Apostles. All Christians without exception must accept and believe entirely what is contained in public revelation. What is allowed, however, is a legitimate "development of doctrine," that is, a deeper and greater understanding of truths already revealed and believed. One finds an example of this in the history of the doctrines of the Blessed Trinity and the divinity of Christ. It was not until centuries after the Apostolic age that clear and unequivocal formal solemn definitions were made by the Church, delineating the precise parameters of these beliefs. None of these formal pronouncements, however, contradicted the implicit and explicit statements found in the Scriptures. The same is the case with regards the Marian dogmas.

Private revelation is another matter. Many apparitions of Our Lord, Our Lady, and so on, are alleged to have occurred over the centuries. Often one or more individuals also claim to receive messages meant either for them or for the world. Such is the case with the apparitions of the Sacred Heart (1673), Rue du Bac (1830), Lourdes (1858) and Fatima (1917), for example. Whether an apparition is from God or otherwise is a matter for the Church to determine. Even if the Church looks favorably upon an alleged apparition it will simply declare that it is "worthy of belief." This does not constitute a formal positive declaration that the apparition did occur and that it is from God, but rather a negative declaration that the apparition and its alleged messages contain nothing contrary to formal Church teachings, and that the evidence for it has been carefully investigated. Consequently, there is no obligation on Catholics to believe in private apparitions even when approved.

Such is the case with the apparition of Our Lady to St. Dominic and the Holy Rosary. The Catholic Church does not regard the Holy Rosary and its recitation as being a part of or required by public revelation. The Church recommends the praying of it as worthy and beneficial for her children; she does not insist on its recitation as

necessary for salvation. In any case, the Holy Rosary is a pious practice, not a doctrine.

The Fathers⁸

St. Ephrem of Edessa, *Prayers to the God-Bearer* (ante 373 AD)

“Most holy Lady, Mother of God, alone most pure in soul and body, alone exceeding all perfection of purity ... my Lady most holy, all-pure, all-immaculate, all-stainless, all-undefiled, all-incorrupt, all-inviolate.”

St. Ephrem of Edessa, *Songs of Praise* 1, 1; 1, 2 (ante 373 AD)

“Awake, my harp, your songs
in praise of the Virgin Mary!
Lift up your voice and sing
the wonderful history
of the Virgin, the daughter of David,
who gave birth to the Life of the World.
Who loves you is amazed

and who would understand

is silent and confused,
because he cannot probe the Mother
who gave birth in her virginity.
If it is too great to be clarified
with words the disputants
ought not on that account
cross swords with your Son.”

⁸ Being a development of medieval piety, the Holy Rosary was unknown to the Fathers. Nevertheless, the Fathers make countless references to the Blessed Virgin Mary and composed prayers praising her and invoking her intercession.

St. Athanasius, *Homily of the Papyrus of Turin* (ante 373 AD)

“O noble Virgin, truly you are greater than any other greatness. For who is your equal in greatness, O dwelling place of God the Word? To whom among all creatures shall I compare you, O Virgin? You are greater than them all, O Covenant, clothed with purity instead of gold! You are the Ark in which is found the golden vessel containing the true manna, that is, the flesh in which divinity resides.”

St. Ambrose of Milan, *The Consecration of a Virgin and the Perpetual Virginity of Mary* 33 (391-392 AD)

“Come then, O Eve, who now are called Mary; you not only received an incentive to virginity but also gave us God.”

***Liturgy of St. James the Less* (ante 5th century AD)**

“Our most holy, immaculate, and most glorious Lady, Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary.”

St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Prayers in Praise of Mary* (ante 440 AD)

“God alone excepted, she was superior to all ... to Cherubim and Seraphim, and the whole angelic host ... Hail full of grace, who satisfies the thirsty with the sweetness of the eternal fountain. Hail most holy Mother Immaculate, who didst bring forth Jesus.”

The *Akathist Hymn I, Oikos, Alpha* (inter 5th–6th Century AD)

Hail! by whom true hap had dawned.

Hail! by whom mishap has waned.

Hail! sinful Adam’s recalling.

Hail! Eve’s tears redeeming.

Hail! height untrodden by thought of men.

Hail! depth unscanned by angel’s ken.

Hail! for the kingly throne thou art.

Defend the Faith!

Hail! for who beareth all that thou bearest?

Hail! O star that bore the Sun.

Hail! the womb of God enfleshed.

Hail! through whom things made are all new made.

Hail! through whom becomes a Babe their Maker.

Hail! through whom the Maker is adorned.

HAIL ! BRIDE UNBRIDED.

St. Germain I of Constantinople, *Sermon on the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary 2 (ante 733AD)*

“Let death pass you by, O Mother of God, because you have brought life to men. Let the tomb pass you by, because you have been made the foundation stone of inexplicable sublimity. Let dust pass you by; for you are a new kind of formation, so that you may be mistress over those who have been corrupted in the very stuff of their potter’s clay.”

St. John Damascene, *First Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin 14 (inter 725-749 AD)*

“We today also remain near you, O Lady. Yes, I repeat, O Lady, Mother of God and Virgin. We bind our souls to your hope, as to a most firm and totally unbreakable anchor, consecrating to you mind, soul, body, and all our being and honoring you, as much as we can, with psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)⁹

Pt. IV, Ch. VI: To this sort of prayer belongs the first part of the Angelic Salutation, when used by us as a prayer: *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women.* For in these words we render to God the highest praise and return Him gracious thanks, because He has bestowed all His heavenly gifts on the most holy Virgin; and at the same time we congratulate the Virgin herself on her singular privileges.

To this form of thanksgiving the Church of God has wisely added prayers and an invocation addressed to the most holy Mother of God, by which we piously and humbly fly to her patronage, in order that, by her intercession, she may reconcile God to us sinners and may obtain for us those blessings which we stand in need of in this life and in the life to come. We, therefore, exiled children of Eve, who dwell in this vale of tears, should constantly beseech the Mother of mercy, the advocate of the faithful, to pray for us sinners. In this prayer we should earnestly implore her help and assistance; for that she is most desirous to assist us by her prayers, no one can doubt without impiety and wickedness.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 971: “All generations will call me blessed”: “The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship.” The Church rightly honours “the Blessed Virgin with special devotion. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honoured with the title of ‘Mother of God’, to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs... This very special devotion ... differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word

⁹ The Catechism of the Council of Trent made no particular reference to the Holy Rosary, but it did refer to the *Hail Mary* and highly extolled the value of Marian prayers.

and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration.” The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the rosary, an “epitome of the whole Gospel,” express this devotion to the Virgin Mary.

No. 2678: Medieval piety in the West developed the prayer of the rosary as a popular substitute for the Liturgy of the Hours. In the East, the litany called the *Akathistos* and the *Paraclesis* remained closer to the choral office in the Byzantine churches, while the Armenian, Coptic and Syriac traditions preferred popular hymns and songs to the Mother of God. But in the *Ave Maria*, the *theotokia*, the hymns of St. Ephrem or St. Gregory of Narek, the tradition of prayer is basically the same.

No. 2708: “Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilisation of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the Rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.”

Our Lady - the Immaculate Conception

Objection: “*St. Paul clearly states that ‘None is righteous, no, not one’ (Rom. 3:10). How can Catholics therefore claim that Mary was sinless?*”

The word “immaculate” comes from the Latin word *macula*, meaning “stain.” The Immaculate Conception is the Blessed Virgin Mary’s glorious privilege of being preserved by a special grace of God from all stain of original sin through the future merits of Jesus Christ.

The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was solemnly defined and proclaimed by Pope Bl. Pius IX on 8th December, 1854:

“The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.”¹

Original sin itself is the deprivation of sanctifying grace—and the concomitant infused virtues and gifts—from our souls. It also involves the loss of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity and thus spiritual death and separation from God. Furthermore, original sin “wounded” our natural powers, leaving ignorance in the intellect, malice in the will, concupiscence in the concupiscible appetite, and debility in the irascible appetite. These wounds result in disordered desires and cravings that cause us to commit actual, personal sins.

¹ *Ineffabilis Deus*, 1854.

Original sin is removed when we are “born again” by baptism (St. John 3:5). The soul is re-generated through the infusion of sanctifying grace which elevates it to the supernatural order so as to share in the divine life, or “participation in the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4-5). However, the disordered desires and cravings remain, only to be finally vanquished by death and the glorious resurrection of the body. At the end of the world, therefore, all the Just will be rendered not only immaculate and free from original sin but also possessed of the gifts of the glorified body.

By being immaculately conceived, the Virgin Mary simply received in advance the full fruits of redemption and a participation in the wonderful gifts all the Just will enjoy one day. Why was such a grace bestowed upon the Virgin Mary in advance? It comes down to *appropriateness*. It was not fitting that she, who was to co-operate in the defeat of Satan, should ever be infected by his breath or be a slave to his kingdom of sin. St. Bernardine of Siena (+1444) says, “we cannot think that the Son of God would have willed to be born of the Virgin Mary, or to have clothed Himself with her flesh, if she had been stained with original sin.”

That God should have created the Virgin Mary in a state of holiness as He had formed Eve and the angels is also befitting the honor of God: of the Father, whose daughter she is; of the Son, whose mother she is; and of the Holy Spirit, who, in the incarnation, took Mary to be His spouse. Furthermore, as the “new Eve” and mother of the new Adam, the Virgin Mary cannot appropriately be anything less than the original Eve; on the contrary, as Christ excelled Adam, so the Virgin Mary (though to a lesser degree) should excel Eve.

As for the quote from St. Paul in Romans 3:10-11, the full text of it reads as follows:

“There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.”

To say that this verse is a proof-text for the universal sinfulness of mankind is a gross misuse of Scripture. St. Paul is quoting from Psalm 14 which draws a distinction between the wicked and the “generation of the righteous” (v. 5) The wicked are those who say in their hearts “There is no God.” They are the corrupt who do abominable deeds, who seek not after God and have gone astray. The words quoted by St. Paul refer exclusively to them. On the other hand, God is with the righteous and is their refuge (v. 6).

In the context of his letter to the Romans, St. Paul is quoting Psalm 14 to make the point that the Jews are no better off simply because they received the knowledge of the truth before the Gentiles. In saying that “None is righteous, no, not one” St. Paul is telling his readers that the Jews as well as the Gentiles labor under the power of sin (v. 9). He is not speaking of all *individuals* being in sin but of all *races* and gives the specific example of Greeks as well (ibid.). Though collectively, races may be estranged from God that does not preclude the possibility of individuals within those races being exceptions.

Second objection: “*There is nothing in the Bible about the Immaculate Conception, so why should I believe it?*”

The Church finds support for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in the words of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary: “Hail, *full of grace*, the Lord is with thee”; and of St. Elizabeth: “Blessed art thou among women” (St. Luke 1:28, 42). Most Protestants would prefer to render the Greek *kecharitomene* as “highly favored” rather than “full of grace.” *Kecharitomene* certainly relates to “grace” as its root word *charis* literally means “grace.”² In fact, a strict translation of *kecharitomene* is “you who have been graced.” Of the two options, “full of grace” is the more clear and definite rendering of the Angel’s words and expressive of a characteristic quality. She, who was to conceive the Incarnate Word, the Holy of Holies, must herself be supremely holy and therefore be preserved not only from actual sin, but also from all stain of original sin. The

² The King James Version of the Bible translates the word *charis* 129 times as “grace.”

Angel's words would not have been fully truthful had the Virgin Mary, for even one moment, been deprived of grace.

The Church, furthermore, asserts that God, immediately after Adam's sin, cursed Satan and said: "*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head*" (Gen. 3:15). It was by the seed of the Virgin Mary, that is, Jesus Christ, that the kingdom of Satan was demolished. The source of the *enmity* between the Virgin Mary and the serpent placed by God was her triumph over sin, her Immaculate Conception. Satan would for all time hate the one creature who would never be within his grasp. Conversely, the Virgin Mary's purity would have imbued her with the most intense hatred of sin and its author.

Third objection: "*Mary could not have been immaculately conceived for then she would not have needed redemption. Yet, she herself proclaims in the Magnificat that 'my spirit rejoices in God my Savior' (St. Luke 1:47).*"

The Catholic Church does not deny that the Virgin Mary required salvation, for she was a child of Adam like the rest of humanity. However, her redemption was effected in another, more perfect manner, namely, *redemption by pre-emption*. One can be cured of a disease after having contracted it, or one can be spared of that same disease by being inoculated against it in advance. The Virgin Mary's redemption was effected in this latter manner, sparing her from ever being under the dominion of Satan.

Fourth objection: "*But Mary herself admitted that she was a sinner when she presented herself in the Temple for purification in accordance with the Law of Moses: 'she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean' (Lev. 12:8).*"

The Virgin Mary observed this Law, not because she believed herself to be a sinner or defiled by giving birth to Christ, but to give an example of humility and obedience in the fulfillment of all outward

observances. Jesus Himself was presented in the Temple to fulfil the Law of Moses as stated in Exodus 13:2: “Consecrate to me all the first-born; whatever is first to open the womb among the people of Israel”—although He, the divine Son of God, had no need to be consecrated. In any case, the Virgin Mary was strictly exempt from the rule of purification by virtue of what God Himself had laid down in prefacing it: “If a woman having *received seed* shall bear a man child, she shall be unclean seven days” (v. 2). The conception and birth of Christ was not due to the reception of male seed but rather to the power of the Holy Spirit. In no way can it be claimed that in conceiving, bearing and delivering Christ, the Virgin Mary was made “unclean.” In fact, the opposite would have occurred, that is, she would have received an augmentation of grace. Also, by presenting herself and her Son in the Temple, the Virgin Mary was avoiding any future opportunity for Christ’s enemies to calumniate Him after the beginning of His public mission.

Fifth objection: “*Even St. Thomas Aquinas, who Catholics claim as their greatest theologian, did not believe in the Immaculate Conception!*”

The opinion of St. Thomas against the Immaculate Conception is contained in his *Summa Theologica* (III, q. 27, a. 2, ad 3). There, he specifically says that “the time of her sanctification is unknown.” No theologian, no matter how great, is the Church. If St. Thomas were alive in 1854 he would have been the first to submit his views to the infallible definition of Pope Bl. Pius IX, so humble and faithful was he to the Church.

During the time of St. Thomas it was not yet established exactly when the human soul was infused into the body. Different views abounded. One of the most common was that the soul was infused some time after conception. Holding this opinion, it followed for St. Thomas that it was impossible for a person to be sanctified at conception when he had not yet received a soul. If a soul were to be sanctified it had to occur when or after it was infused, and therefore *after conception*.

Nevertheless, St. Thomas in the same *Summa Theologica* certainly did express his belief in the personal sinlessness of the Virgin Mary based on her being sanctified *before her birth*:

“We must therefore confess simply that the Blessed Virgin committed no actual sin, neither mortal or venial; so that what is written (Cant. 4:7) is fulfilled: ‘Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee’.”³

Finally, writing near the end of his life, St. Thomas expressed himself thus:

“For she was most pure in the matter of fault and incurred neither original nor mental nor venial sin.”⁴

Interestingly, Martin Luther, who Protestants claim as their founder, certainly did believe in the Immaculate Conception:

“It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary’s soul was effected without Original Sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from Original Sin and adorned with God’s gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live, she was free from all sin.”⁵

Sixth objection: “*The Immaculate Conception is another recent invention of Rome. It was not believed before 1854.*”

The Immaculate Conception has always been the belief of the Church, being *implicitly* contained in the Church’s teaching of the Virgin Mary’s absolute purity and sinlessness. Just as Our Lord “grew in grace and wisdom,” that is, manifested increasing signs of wisdom as He increased in years, so the Church, which possesses the wisdom of God from her origin, manifests it only according to the order of providence and her children’s needs. If the Church did not believe in the Immaculate Conception before 1854, how was it that Popes and

³ *Summa Theologica* III, q. 27, a. 4.

⁴ *Expositio super Salutatione Angelica* (c. 1272-1273).

⁵ Sermon, *On the Day of the Conception of Mary, the Mother of God* (Dec. 8, 1527): quoted in Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. 4, p. 238.

Councils over centuries made continuous and explicit references to the doctrine in their pronouncements:

- (i) Pope Sixtus IV, Constitution *Cum Praeexcelsa* (1477); *Grave Nimis* (1483).
- (ii) Council of Trent, *Decree on Original Sin* (1546).
- (iii) Pope St. Pius V, Bull *Ex Omnibus Afflictionibus* (1567).
- (iv) Pope Alexander VII, Brief *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum* (1661).

Finally, the Virgin Mary herself gave the infallible pronouncement of Pope Bl. Pius IX heavenly ratification when she appeared at Lourdes in France in 1858 and announced to St. Bernadette Soubirous that she was “*the Immaculate Conception.*” The subsequent flow of numerous miracles stemming from the waters of the Lourdes grotto attests to the authenticity of the Virgin Mary’s apparitions and are a matter of public record for all the world to examine.

The Fathers

Epitaph of Bishop Abercius (inter 180-216 AD)

“I am a disciple of the chaste shepherd ... He taught me ... faithful writings. He sent me to Rome, to behold a kingdom and to see a queen with golden robe and golden shoes. There I saw a people bearing the splendid seal ... Having Paul as a companion, everywhere faith led the way and set before me for food the fish from the spring, mighty and pure, whom a spotless Virgin caught, and gave this to friends to eat, always having sweet wine and giving the mixed cup with bread.”

St. Ephrem of Edessa, *Prayers to the God-Bearer (ante 373 AD)*⁶

“Most holy Lady, Mother of God, alone most pure in soul and body, alone exceeding all perfection of purity ... my Lady most holy, all-

⁶ *Enchiridion Patristicum*, M. J. R. de Journal, SJ, no. 745.

pure, all-immaculate, all-stainless, all-undefiled, all-incorrupt, all-inviolable.”

St. Gregory Nazianzus, *Sermons 38, 13* (inter 379-381 AD)

“He was conceived by the Virgin, who had first been purified by the Spirit in soul and body; for as it was fitting that childbearing should receive its share of honor, so it was necessary that virginity should receive even greater honor.”

St. Ambrose of Milan, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 2, 7* (c. 389 AD)

“Well: married but a virgin: because she is the type of the Church, which is also married but remains immaculate.”

***Liturgy of St. James the Less* (ante 5th century AD)**

“Our most holy, immaculate, and most glorious Lady, Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Nature and Grace 36, 42* (415 AD)

“With the exception therefore of the Holy Virgin Mary, in whose case, out of respect for the Lord, I do not wish there to be any further question as far as sin is concerned, since how can we know what great abundance of grace was conferred on her to conquer sin in every way, seeing that she merited to conceive and bear him who certainly had no sin at all?”

St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Prayers in Praise of Mary* (ante 440 AD)

“God alone excepted, she was superior to all ... to Cherubim and Seraphim, and the whole angelic host ... Hail full of grace, who satisfies the thirsty with the sweetness of the eternal fountain. Hail most holy Mother Immaculate, who brought forth Jesus.”

Romanos the Melodist, *On the Birth of Mary 1* (ante 560 AD)

“Then the tribes of Israel heard that Anna had conceived the immaculate one. So everyone took part in the rejoicing. Joachim gave a banquet, and great was the merriment in the garden. He invited the

priests and Levites to prayer: then he called Mary into the center of the crowd, that she might be magnified.”

St. Andrew of Crete, *Homilies on Mary’s Nativity 4* (ante 740 AD)

“This is Mary the Theotokos, the common refuge of all Christians, the first to be liberated from the original fall of our first parents.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. I, Ch. IV: This immaculate and perpetual virginity forms, therefore, the just theme of our eulogy. Such was the work of the Holy Ghost, who at the Conception and birth of the Son so favored the Virgin Mother as to impart to her fecundity while preserving inviolate her perpetual virginity.

...The Virgin Mother we may also compare to Eve, making the second Eve, that is, Mary, correspond to the first, as we have already shown that the second Adam, that is, Christ, corresponds to the first Adam. By believing the serpent, Eve brought malediction and death on mankind, and Mary, by believing the Angel, became the instrument of the divine goodness in bringing life and benediction to the human race. From Eve we are born *children of wrath*; from Mary we have received Jesus Christ, and through Him are regenerated children of grace.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 491: Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.

No. 492: The “splendor of an entirely unique holiness” by which Mary is “enriched from the first instant of her conception” comes wholly from Christ: she is “redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son.” The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person “in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” and chose her “in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love.”

No. 493: The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God “the All-Holy” (*Panagia*) and celebrate her as “free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature.” By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.

The Inquisition

Objection: *“Ninety-five million people were killed by the Catholic Church through inquisitions because they believed in Jesus and the Bible. Therefore, it is anti-Christ!”*

When most people today hear the word “Inquisition” images of unjust trials, torture, persecution and burnings at the stake are automatically conjured up. Not only is the Inquisition attacked for its various abuses, but also the very concept of inquisition itself is lampooned as contrary to the modern, democratic and indifferent attitude towards religion that characterizes our era.

It can be said that the first religious inquisition was conducted by Moses after he descended from Mount Sinai and found that the Hebrews had made to themselves a golden calf to which they sacrificed and bowed in adoration. Moses, illuminated by God, shattered the tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments, destroyed the calf and beat it to powder, and then made the Hebrews drink water containing the dust of it. Afterwards, he assembled the sons of Levi and said to them, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword on his side, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor” (Exod. 32:27-28). In his zeal to preserve the true religion of God and prevent all the Hebrews falling into the degradation of idolatry, Moses had 23,000 of his own race killed that day.

Furthermore, God specifically authorized Moses to act as an inquisitor continually among the Jewish people and punish severely offenses against the law of God:

“If there is found among you, within any of your towns which the Lord your God gives you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, in transgressing his covenant, and has

gone and served other gods and worshipped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden, and it is told you and you hear of it; then you shall inquire diligently, and if it is true and certain that such an abominable thing has been done in Israel, then you shall bring forth to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones. On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses he that is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness” (Deut. 17:2-6).

To understand the various Catholic inquisitions, it is necessary to place them in their historic contexts. It is still universally recognized that the State has the right to protect itself and its citizens from external and internal enemies that seek to either undermine or destroy it. Therefore, no reasonable person questions the need for any State to maintain an appropriate army, police force, or civil emergency force. Nor is it questioned when a State erects and maintains a just court system to enforce the law of the land in order to secure public order and protect the common good. Parliaments often erect special tribunals or committees of investigation. All of these are forms of inquisition.

Medieval European societies were Christian societies. They were, despite their deficiencies, wonderful fruits of the redemption of Our Lord Jesus Christ. To quote Pope Leo XIII, the Medieval age was “a time when the philosophy of the Gospel governed the states ... The influence of Christian wisdom and its divine virtue penetrated the laws, institutions and the customs of the people. Then the religion instituted by Jesus Christ ... flourished everywhere, thanks to the favour of princes ... Then the Priesthood and the Empire were united by a happy concord.”¹

Therefore, unlike today, Medieval European states were not indifferent to religion, but, like individuals, possessed a religion themselves. They saw it as their duty to promote the common good by supporting the true religion of God both within and without their

¹ *Immortale Dei*, 1885.

borders. In such societies, to promote a religion contrary to the State religion was considered not only an offense against God but also treason against the State. The creeds of certain heretical groups, if put into practice, would have undone the whole feudal and hierarchical fabric of society. Laws were put into place prohibiting proselytism and propaganda in favor of such religions and these laws were enforced and offenders punished. Thus came about the establishment of either religious or secular courts of inquiry, or inquisitions.

The Medieval Inquisition

During the 12th and 13th centuries, violent Gnostic sects appeared in southern Europe, attacking the Church and encouraging revolt against civil authorities. These sectarians claimed to possess a secret source of religious knowledge, considered the material world to have been created by an Evil Principle and so believed all matter to be evil, scorned marriage, encouraged suicide, and forbade the taking of oaths which bound the fabric of Feudal society.

Modern Fundamentalists claim an affinity with these Gnostics simply because they possessed a vernacular translation of the Scriptures. They conclude from this fact that the Catholic Church was persecuting them because they were “Bible-Believers.” One such person is Dave Hunt, who in recent years, has written: “It is quite clear that the Vaudois, Albigenses, Waldenses, and other similar groups were heretics to Rome only. In fact, their beliefs were much like those of the Reformers, of whom they were, in a sense, the forerunners.”² Yet, even Henry C. Lea, the most anti-Catholic writer on the Inquisition had to admit that “the cause of orthodoxy was the cause of progress and civilization. Had Catharism become dominant, or even had it been allowed to exist on equal terms, its influence would have been disastrous.”

The Church, together with secular governments, established the Medieval Inquisition in 1184. Its object was to try charges of heresy. If the person charged was prepared to recant his errors, a public

² Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, Harvest House, 1994, p. 257.

penance was imposed on him; if he remained obdurate, he was declared guilty of heresy and handed over to the State for punishment. Its punishments were severe and ranged from loss of property, to imprisonment or death. The Church approved the severe repression of heresy and believed that, under the circumstances, it was justified in her approval.

In 1232, Pope Gregory IX appointed the newly formed Dominicans and Franciscans as specialist and permanent inquisitors. These religious were dispassionate, unselfish, highly popular, fearless, beyond corruption, and desired solely to serve the interests of the Church and the salvation of souls. In appointing such men, Pope Gregory was motivated by various factors, including stemming the encroachment of secular courts into religious affairs. However, his chief desire was to protect the children of God from error while insisting that the misguided heretic be brought back into the grace of God. Court procedures and rules were also improved and unjust inquisitors removed and punished.³

It was deemed a failure for an inquisitor if he could not convert a heretic and had to hand him over to the secular arm to be executed. One popular myth is that the vast majority of those who appeared before the Inquisition were sentenced to death. In fact, extant records indicate otherwise. For example, out of the 930 cases that appeared before the tribunal in Toulouse, France only 42 were abandoned to the secular arm to be executed, 307 imprisoned, while 271 were released from punishments.⁴ Other penalties included the confiscation or destruction of property, to hear Mass and religious services, to abstain from manual labor, to receive Communion, to forsake soothsaying and usury, to give alms, or to go on pilgrimage or crusade.

Torture was sanctioned by Popes Innocent IV, Alexander IV and Clement IV, not as punishment but to elicit the truth. It was to be used only once and with the consent of the local Bishop. It was not to cause "loss of limb or imperil life." It is true, however, that restrictions were

³ William Thomas Walsh, *Characters of the Inquisition*, TAN Books, 1987, pp. 47-48.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

not always heeded and its application was in many cases extreme. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “Torture which uses physical or moral violence to extract confessions ... frighten opponents, or satisfy hatred is contrary to respect for the person and for human dignity ... In recent times it has become evident that these cruel practices were neither necessary for public order, nor in conformity with the legitimate rights of the human person” (CCC # 2297-8).

The activity of the Medieval Inquisition contributed greatly to the restoration of order and repression of violence that had plagued Europe for over two hundred years.

The Spanish Inquisition

The Spanish Inquisition was established in 1478 and is the most famous, or infamous, of all Inquisitions, depending on which version of history one reads.

In 1492, Spain was finally united as a single country after nearly eight centuries of struggle against the Moors. Queen Isabella knew that Spain’s unity depended upon a strong Church. She set about halting many abuses, and reforming the Church by raising educational and moral standards.

One of the more serious problems faced by Isabella was the number of Jews and Moors who had pretended to convert to the Catholic religion without really believing in it. These false converts had risen to high positions in government and Church, and many were secretly plotting the downfall of Isabella, Spain and the Church.

The method chosen by Isabella to find these agents was the Inquisition. What is often overlooked is that the Spanish Inquisition was instituted for persons who professed to be Catholics and not for practising Jews or Moslems. It also aimed to unearth and bring to penance bigamists, adulterers, heretics, blasphemers and other baptized men and women who violated the teachings of the Church.

At first there were abuses, with many people being falsely accused, tortured and imprisoned. Popes Leo X, Paul III, Paul IV and Sixtus IV condemned these abuses. Pope Leo X, for example, excommunicated the Catholic tribunal at Toledo and ordered the arrest of the witnesses who appeared before it for perjury. New judges were appointed, headed by the Dominican friar Thomas de Torquemada. He reformed procedures, making them more lenient, improved prison conditions and personally heard appeals. Torquemada was pious and just, and certainly does not deserve the reputation foisted upon him by slanderers who have an “axe to grind” against all things Catholic.

The 16th Century was a brutal period. The use of torture and execution by burning at the stake was common in Catholic and Protestant Europe. In the Elizabethan courts of Protestant England, people were hung, drawn and quartered for hearing Mass in their own homes. Contemporary English propaganda would have us believe that Elizabeth I was “good Queen Bess” and that Mary Tudor was “Bloody Mary” for executing Protestant leaders after she became Queen. In fact, Elizabeth’s reign of 44 years and 4 months was one of repression and persecution. The Protestant historian Hallam asserts that “the rack seldom stood idle in the Tower for all the latter part of Elizabeth’s reign.”

Furthermore, not only was the Mass illegal in Elizabethan England but anyone who did not attend Anglican services was fined. Anyone who refused to take the Oath of Supremacy after two refusals was executed. Bringing Catholic religious items into the country was punished by confiscation of property. To convert to Catholicism was high treason; priests could be executed if caught; informers roamed the country reporting on priests and Catholic activity.

The Spanish Inquisition, in fact, was perhaps the most just court system established before the modern period. Only 3,000 of the 100,000 put on trial were executed in the Inquisition’s 340-year history. By keeping Spain Catholic, that country avoided the religious wars that racked the rest of Europe. In addition, the witchcraft hysteria that swept through Protestant Germany, England, Scotland and America (which saw thousands of women executed on little or no

evidence) was found to be baseless by the Inquisition, saving many innocent lives.

The Roman Inquisition

The Roman Inquisition was established in 1542 and was the least active of the three Inquisitions, yet this fact has not spared it from criticism—mainly for the celebrated case of Galileo Galilei. Since this case, the Church has had to suffer the accusation of being anti-scientific and bent on keeping mankind in the darkness of superstition.

Galileo was born in 1564 and was an Italian Catholic working in physics, mathematics and astronomy. In 1610, Galileo published his book *Siderius Nuncius* in which he attempted to defend the ‘Copernican System.’ Copernicus had decades earlier proposed a heliocentric solar system with the sun rather than the earth at its center. When still a student in Rome, Copernicus defended his thesis with the approval of ecclesiastical authorities. He even had permission to dedicate his book to Pope Paul III. Copernicus later became a highly respected clergyman.

In 1616, Galileo drew attention from the Roman Inquisition. The opinion of theological experts working for the Holy Office was that the heliocentric view of the Solar System was dangerous and that the assertion of the immobility of the sun was formally heretical, being at least apparently inconsistent with Joshua 10:12-13 which infers the motion of the sun: “Sun, stand thou still at Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Aijalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.” Galileo asserted that it was “a fatal and very common mistake to stop always at the literal sense.” In this he was correct, but where he erred was in his scientific proofs in support of the Copernican system, which were demonstrably wrong and inadequate. The Church authorities, in disagreeing with Galileo, found support in the works of other scientists such as Clavius and Francis Bacon. In light of the opinion of consulting theologians, the Pope directed Cardinal Bellarmine to convince Galileo to cease holding and supporting the heliocentric system.

In 1632, Galileo was brought before the Inquisition again for publishing his *Dialogue on the Two Great World Systems*. The 1616 theological opinions were reiterated and Galileo was condemned as a heretic. Galileo again renounced his views, the sale of his book was stopped and he was placed under house arrest. It is patently untrue that he was ever tortured or placed in prison. He was confined to the castle of a cardinal, one of the better residences in Europe! The Pope at the time remained friendly towards him and actually granted him a lifetime pension from 1632 and his blessing on his deathbed in 1642.

Since neither the Pope nor any Church Congregation promulgated the theological opinions of the Holy Office experts as official Church teaching, the infallibility of the Pope or the Ordinary Magisterium cannot be impugned. Neither should the Catholic Church be attacked for being unscientific, especially by Protestants, for their forefathers were even more radically opposed to the Copernican System:

Martin Luther:

“People gave ear to an upstart astrologer who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon...This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy, but sacred Scripture tells us (Joshua 10:13) that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth.”⁵

“Some think it a distinguished achievement to construct such a crazy thing as that Prussian astronomer who moves the earth and fixes the sun.

⁵ Table Talk (ed. William Hazlitt, London, 1884), p. 69 (June 4, 1539) quoted in Thomas Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution*, NY: Vintage Books, 1959, p. 191.

Verily, wise rulers should tame the unrestraint of men's minds."⁶

Philip Melanchthon:

“Certain men, either from the love of novelty, or to make a display of ingenuity, have concluded that the earth moves ... Now, it is a want of honesty and decency to assert such notions publicly and the example is pernicious. It is the part of a good mind to accept the truth as revealed by God and to acquiesce in it ... The earth can be nowhere if not in the center of the universe.”⁷

John Calvin answered Copernicus with a line from Psalm 93:1:

“The world also is stabilized, that it cannot be moved”—and asked, “who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?”⁸

As a final point, it is noteworthy that supporting arguments for the Copernican System were actually developed by Jesuit scientists such as Frs. Grimaldi and Kochansky, free from any form of harassment or discouragement from the Church. The significance of such is more evident when we recall that Jesuits make a special vow of obedience to the Pope and were then his most conspicuous defenders.

⁶ Letter of October 16, 1541, quoted in Hermann Kesten, *Copernicus and His World*, NY: 1945, p.309. Also in Will Durant, *The Reformation* (vol. 6, *The Story of Civilization*, 1967), NY: Simon & Schuster, 1957, p. 859.

⁷ Melanchthon, *Initia Doctrinae Physicae* (Elements of Physics), 1549, quoted in Kuhn, *ibid.*, p. 191.

⁸ Will Durant, *ibid.*, p. 849.

The Priesthood

Objection: *“We are all priests. There is no distinct ordained priesthood separate and apart from the laity.”*

According to most Protestants, the early Church of the pre-Constantinian era was not characterized by any essential distinction between laity and clergy. There was no hierarchical structure of bishop, priest or deacon, let alone any “pope” claiming universal jurisdiction over the whole Church. Rather, the Church was egalitarian and democratic with the members of local independent churches conferring their spiritual authority upon their own elected leaders.

Those who advocate such views normally rely on 1 Peter 2:5-9, which reads as follows: “...and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness.” It is contended that Christ is not only the High Priest of the New Testament but the *sole* priest as well. His passion and death on the Cross is the only sacrifice of Christianity. Therefore, any other so-called priest offering material sacrifices such as the Eucharist is unnecessary. The only admissible sacrifices of Christians are the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise. All Christians without exception can offer these sacrifices, therefore all Christians are priests—the “universal priesthood of all believers.”

The above objection is reminiscent of the story of Korah’s rebellion: “and they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, ‘You have gone too far! For all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?’” (Num. 16:3). Korah, Dathan and Abiram and two hundred and fifty followers then sought to offer incense before the Lord but the

earth opened up and fire came forth from the Tabernacle to swallow and consume them. God showed that these men were not to offer incense even though all the people of Israel according to Exodus 19:6 were priests. St. Jude tells us that some Christians in his day (despite 1 Pet. 2:5-9) were guilty of the same sin when he states, “Woe to them! For they walk in the way of Cain, and abandon themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error, *and perish in Korah’s rebellion*” (Jude 1:11).

In Old Testament Israel there were three levels of priests: the people of Israel as a whole (Exod. 19:6); the ministerial priests chosen from the tribe of Levi (Num. 3:5); and the High Priest (Exod. 31:30). This three-tiered model of the priesthood was carried over and reflected in the people of God of the New Testament: the universal priests are now the entire body of the baptized (1 Pet. 2:5-9); the ministerial priests the ordained successors to the Apostles (Rom. 15:16); and the High Priest is Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1). In both the Old and New Testaments, therefore, the fact that the entire body of believers were regarded as priests was no obstacle to the existence of a separate ministerial priesthood.

It is in the Catholic Church with her ordained hierarchical priesthood that the laity can be truly a “priesthood of all believers.” It is the Catholic Church that encourages its membership to “take up their cross,” to “drink His cup,” to offer up their sufferings as a victim, to help orphans and widows, to abstain from the defilements of the world, and to give alms. These are regarded as acts of true worship and as sacrifices “acceptable and pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18). A Christianity that does not demand moral change or good works to be justified, insisting simply on the sufficiency of fiducial faith, is more a denial of the common priesthood than the ministerial priesthood.

According to Catholic teaching, a man becomes a minister or priest through the imposition of hands made by a bishop who at the same time recites the solemn words of consecration as contained in the respective rites of ordination for deacon, priest and bishop. One ordained as a bishop receives the power to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to forgive sins, to confirm and to ordain. The episcopate is

not a sacrament distinct from the priesthood, but rather its full expression. A bishop also has authority to teach and guarantee the continuity of the Catholic Faith in his diocese and to decide on questions relating to faith and morals: “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers” (Acts 20:28). The bishops of the world together with the Pope form the *Hierarchy*, with jurisdiction to teach and govern. The Pope is the successor to St. Peter; the bishops, the other Apostles.

In spiritual power, the priesthood incorporates the diaconate; the episcopate incorporates the priesthood and diaconate. In fact, episcopal ordination is the norm of Orders as established by Christ, while priesthood and diaconate are lesser degrees of the same sacrament of the Church. All three degrees were possessed by the Apostles and later, in conformity with the direction of Christ, were passed on by them wholly or in part to others as the requirements of the growing Church dictated. Thus we see in Scripture the Apostles, by a visible rite involving prayer and the laying of hands, ordaining assistants and successors separate and apart from the rest of the laity:

“Select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task...They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them” (Acts 6:3-6).

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus...” (Acts 13:2-4).

“And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe...” (Acts 14:23).

“I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands...” (2 Tim. 1:6).

“I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you” (Tit. 1:5).¹

The above verses testify to the fulfillment of a prophecy uttered by Isaiah centuries earlier concerning the conversion of the Gentiles, when he said, “And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their cereal offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. *And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord*” (Is. 66:20-21).

Second objection: “It appears that specific men were set apart and ordained to perform specialist functions but these functions were not of a sacrificial nature to qualify them as priests. They were simply ministers of the word of God and their sacrifices were prayer and praise.”

In all fairness it must be recognized that the Greek word ‘*Hiereus*’, used to describe the Jewish High Priest, is only used in the New Testament with respect to Christ. It is for this reason that Protestants hold that Christ is the only New Testament priest and that those who are elders or overseers hold no priestly office.

The question as to whether the ordained Christian clergy in the New Testament constituted a priesthood hinges on whether the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass is a part of authentic Christian worship. This was recognized by the Council of Trent:

“Sacrifice and priesthood are, by the ordinance of God, so conjoined, that both have existed in every law. Therefore, whereas in the New Testament, the Catholic Church has received, from the institution of Christ, the holy visible

¹ The Catholic priesthood is identical with this office of elder. In fact, the word “priest” is simply an abbreviated English rendering of the Latin transliteration (presbyter) of the Greek word for elder—*presbuteros*.

sacrifice of the Eucharist, it must also be confessed that there is, in that Church, a new, visible and external priesthood into which the old has been translated.”²

The Prophet Malachi in the Old Testament predicted that the Jewish priesthood and sacrifices would be replaced by Gentile ones:

“I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts: and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For from the rising of the sun, even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 1:10-11).

This Gentile sacrifice of a ‘clean oblation’ was inaugurated at the Last Supper when Christ consecrated bread and wine into His Body and Blood and then told His Apostles to “Do this in remembrance of me” (St. Luke 22:19). The language of ‘body’ and ‘blood’ is the language of sacrifice and presupposes a slaying that has separated them. In other words, Christ speaks of Himself as a sacrifice. This is reinforced by the separate displaying of the bread and wine. The ex-Protestant convert James Akin makes this further point:

“This is true regardless of whether Christ is literally present in the sacrament or whether he is only symbolically present. Even if he is only symbolically present, then the Eucharist symbolizes a sacrifice. It is a symbolic sacrifice. Because elders have the duty of performing the sacraments, they have the duty of performing this sacrifice, again indicating the priestly character of their office.”³

Furthermore, by the words “Do this in remembrance of me”, Christ commanded His Apostles to perform continually a liturgical action that would recall as a memorial before the Father the unique sacrifice of the Son, and make Him present in this memorial. In this sense they

² *Decree on the Sacrament of Order*, Ch. I, (1563).

³ *The Office of New Testament Priest*, website 7/31/99, p. 4.

and their successors were to act as priestly “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1) and did so as recorded in the following verses: *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”* (Acts 2:42).

“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts” (Acts 2:46).

By being present at the Mass and partaking in the Body and Blood of Christ, the common priesthood of all ages are enabled to offer the same sacrifice that Christ as High Priest offered to God the Father. But this is only possible through the ministry of a separate and validly ordained Catholic priesthood.

The following verse of St. Paul is also significant:

“But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister (Leitourgon) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service (hierorgounta) of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:16).

Leitourgon is the Greek parent from which is derived the modern word liturgy, understood as public religious worship or service. Protestants claim that *Leitourgon* here only refers to the public service of preaching the word of God. However, such an argument runs into difficulty in the light of Hebrews 8:1-2 which uses the same word to describe the very priesthood of Christ: “Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister (*Leitourgon*) in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord.” Furthermore, the term *hierorgounta* (from *hierous* meaning priest) used to describe St. Paul’s Gospel work implies a work which is more than simple preaching, for the office of priest, as understood by the Jews, always involved the carrying out of material sacrifices.

However, the Sacrifice of the Mass shows only one side of the priesthood. The other side is the power of forgiving sin. That Christ solemnly bestowed the power and authority on the Apostles to remit and retain sins is evident from St. John 20:21-23:

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you ... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

In this verse we see that Christ bestowed upon His Apostles the following: (i) mission (*“As the Father has sent me, so I send you...”*); (ii) power (*“Receive the Holy Spirit”*), and (iii) discretion whether or not to exercise this power (*“If you forgive...; if you retain.”*). This verse cannot be explained away by claiming that the Apostles were simply authorized to go out and preach forgiveness according to the following injunction: *“that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations”* (St. Luke 24:47). If such were the case, verse 23 would be utterly devoid of purpose.

In claiming that her priests have the power to forgive sins, the Catholic Church is criticized and accused of carrying out a function that is proper to God alone. It is the same accusation Christ the High Priest had to endure: *“This man is blaspheming”* (St. Matt. 9:3). In forgiving sins, priests and bishops act as Christ’s ministers and instruments; the fact that they may be sinners themselves does not inhibit the exercise or effectiveness of this power.

Furthermore, we see a ministerial priesthood also operating in the administration of other sacraments. In Acts 8:14-17 we read that Sts. Peter and John went to the Samaritans and *“laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.”* Since time immemorial the ordinary Minister of Confirmation has been only a Bishop (or at least one ordained to the priesthood as in the Eastern Rites), who places his hand on the candidate and anoints the forehead with Holy Oil mixed with balsam while saying the words *“Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Finally, St. James advises his readers to call upon the elders (presbyters) of the Church in times of life-threatening illness: “Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (St. Jas. 5:14-15).

Far from being a usurpation of Divine power and the role of the laity, the ministerial priesthood forms a foundational part of the whole structure of Christianity, the removal of which would result in the collapse of the whole edifice.

The Fathers

St. Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians* 40, 5 (c. 98 AD) “To the high priest, indeed, proper ministrations are allotted, to the priests a proper place is appointed, and upon the levites their proper services are imposed. The layman is bound by the ordinances for the laity.”

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Trallians* 7, 2 (c. 110 AD) “He that is within the sanctuary is pure; but he that is outside the sanctuary is not pure. In other words, anyone who acts without the bishop and the presbytery and the deacons does not have a clean conscience.”

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 8, 1 (c. 110 AD) “You must all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the presbytery as you would the Apostles. Reverence the deacons as you would the command of God. Let no one do anything of concern to the Church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop, or by one whom he appoints. Wherever the bishop appears, let the people be there...Nor is it permitted without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate the agape; but whatever he approve, this too is pleasing to God, so that whatever is done will be secure and valid.”

Tertullian, *The Demurrer Against the Heretics 2* (c. 200 AD)

[Criticizing heretical bodies]: “Their ordinations are casual, capricious, and changeable. Now they put neophytes in office, and again, men who are attached to the world ... So it is that today one man is bishop, tomorrow another; today, a deacon, and tomorrow he is a lector; today, a priest, who is tomorrow a layman. For even on laymen do they enjoin the functions of the priesthood.”

Tertullian, *An Exhortation to Chastity 7, 3 & 5* (inter 208-212 AD)

“The authority of the Church and the dignity which pertains to those sanctified by God in the assembly of order has established a difference between those in orders and the laity ... So true is this, that unless the laity also observe the rules which pertain to those who are chosen as priests, how will there be any priests, since they are chosen from among laymen?”

St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermon on the Baptism of Christ* (c. 383 AD)

“This same power of the word also makes the priest venerable and honorable, separated from the generality of men by the new blessing bestowed upon him. Yesterday he was but one of the multitude, one of the people; suddenly he is made a guide, a president, a teacher of piety, an instructor in hidden mysteries.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. II, Ch. VII: Regarding the internal priesthood, all the faithful are said to be priests, once they have been washed in the saving waters of Baptism. Especially is this name given to the just who have the spirit of God, and who, by the help of divine grace, have been made living members of the great High-priest, Jesus Christ; for, enlightened by faith which is inflamed by charity, they offer up spiritual sacrifices to God on the altar of their hearts. Among such sacrifices must be reckoned every good and virtuous action done for the glory of God... The external priesthood, on the contrary, does not pertain to the

faithful at large, but only to certain men who have been ordained and consecrated to God by the lawful imposition of hands and by the solemn ceremonies of holy Church, and who are thereby devoted to a particular sacred ministry.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1545: The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, accomplished once for all; yet it is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. The same is true of the one priesthood of Christ; it is made present through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood: "Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers."

No. 1546: Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church "a kingdom, priests for his God and Father." The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are "consecrated to be ... a holy priesthood."

No. 1547: The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, "each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ." While being "ordered one to another," they differ essentially. In what sense? While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace—a life of faith, hope and charity, a life according to the Spirit—the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. The ministerial priesthood is a means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church. For this reason it is transmitted by its own sacrament, the sacrament of Holy Orders.

The Real Presence

Objection: *“As for the Eucharist, no one in the early Church believed that the bread and wine changed into the real body and blood of Christ!”*

The sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ under the appearances, or accidents, of bread and wine. Unlike the other sacraments, it not only bestows grace but contains the Author of Grace Himself. So, by giving us His Body and Blood to drink, Christ has left us the legacy of His very self: “He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the Lord is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear him” (Ps. 111 [110]:4-5).

Christ fulfilled His promise to give us His Flesh and Blood at the Last Supper:

“Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (St. Matt. 26:26; cf. St. Mark 14:22; St. Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 10:4-21).

The Church calls this mysterious change of the bread and wine into Christ’s Body and Blood *Transubstantiation* (Lateran IV, 1215). The substances of the bread and the wine are changed respectively into the substances of Christ’s Body and Blood, while the accidents (i.e., color, shape, taste, etc.) of the bread and the wine remain unchanged.

In St. John’s Gospel chapter 6 we find the great discourse of Our Lord concerning the future promise of the Eucharist. For our purposes it is best to outline the principal verses in full:

“Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst ... For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day... The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. They said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? Jesus answered them, Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day ... I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh. The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? So Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever. This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, This is a hard saying; who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you that do not believe. For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. And he said, This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, Do you also wish to go away?

Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God. Jesus answered them, Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him” (vv. 35-71).

Our Lord used words either literally or figuratively. The issue surrounding verses 35-71 is how to determine what meaning He intended to give.

Our Lord Himself gives us two basic rules to resolve this dilemma.

Rule number one: When Our Lord spoke figuratively but was taken literally, He usually corrected the mistake of His listeners immediately.

Example (a): *“Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees”* (St. Matt. 16:5).

The Apostles took these words literally and began to argue among themselves about the fact that they had no bread. Then Our Lord said, “How is it that you fail to perceive that I did not speak about bread...Then they understood that he did not tell them to be aware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (vv. 11-12).

Example (b): *“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep”* (St. John 11:11).

The Apostles again took Our Lord literally and said, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover” (v. 12). Immediately came the correction, “Lazarus is dead” (v. 14).

Example (c): *“...unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (St. John 3:3).

Nicodemus automatically took these words literally and replied, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” (3:4). Our Lord’s answer immediately dispelled Nicodemus’ error, showing that He meant a spiritual, not physical, rebirth: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (3:5).

Rule number two: When Our Lord spoke literally, and those who heard Him understood Him correctly but refused to accept what He said, He reasserted the literal meaning again more forcibly.

Example (a): *“Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven”* (St. Matt. 9:2).

The Scribes at hearing these words were greatly disturbed and said among themselves, “This man is blaspheming” (9:3). However, Christ did not try to water down or explain away His words but reasserted His claim to forgive sins by miraculously healing the paralytic before all.

Example (b): *“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day”* (St. John 8:56).

The Jews correctly understood Our Lord literally but rejected Him asserting, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” (8:57). Our Lord’s solemn reply, which brought forth the immediate wrath of the Jews and the risk of being stoned to death, was, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (8, 58-59).

Keeping in mind these two rules, let us examine Our Lord’s discourse in St. John 6.

Our Lord proclaims “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh” (vv. 48-51). The Jews present

understood Christ literally but could not accept what He said: “The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (v. 52). But Christ reinforced His literal meaning saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (vv. 53-56).

Not satisfied with this, Our Lord went further and solemnly invoked His Father’s Name to confirm His meaning: “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever” (vv. 57-58). Nevertheless, the Jews continued in their disbelief, seeing in Christ’s words a literal meaning that contradicted the Mosaic prohibition against the consumption of blood (Lev. 17:14): “Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” (v. 60). But knowing their murmuring, Christ again did not retreat or explain away His words, rather He implicitly asserted His own divine authority and future glorification: “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?” (v. 62).

By now this was too much for the Jews who “drew back and no longer went about with him” (v. 66). Christ had now lost most of His long-time and closest followers but he allowed them to go even though He had earlier declared “that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me” (v. 39). Is it reasonable to believe that He would have allowed such a catastrophe over a simple misunderstanding, particularly in light of His established habit of correcting past misunderstandings? He went further still and challenged the Apostles themselves: “Do you also wish to go away?” (v. 67). Christ was prepared to lose all human support rather than deny the literal truth of His words.

This was the first apostasy from the Body of Christ recorded in history, an apostasy which even claimed one of the Apostles: “For

Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him” (v. 64). This apostasy continues in the denials of Protestantism, which since the sixteenth century has repeatedly said of Catholic belief in the Real Presence, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” Catholics, on the other hand, profess the faith of Simon Peter who, though not having full understanding himself, answered “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life” (v. 68).

Most Fundamentalist authors claim that they can prove that Christ was speaking only metaphorically by comparing His words in St. John 6:35 (“I am the bread of life”) to verses such as St. John 10:9 (“I am the door”) and St. John 15:1 (“I am the true vine”). The problem with such an argument, however, is that there is no connection between St. John 6:35 and these latter verses. Furthermore, St. John 10:9 and 15:1 make sense as metaphors while, as we shall see, St. John 6:35 does not. In addition, Our Lord Himself takes St. John 6:35 beyond symbolism by repeating four times the injunction “to eat my flesh and drink my blood” and saying “for my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed” (v. 55).

Another Protestant objection revolves around the claim that Christ’s phrase “to eat his flesh and drink his blood” was a figurative way of saying to believe and have faith in Him. There is some truth in the assertion that such a phrase had a figurative meaning. However, in the cultures of the Middle East it meant to calumniate, revile, attack or insult someone unjustly. It is, therefore, nonsense to argue that Christ would have used this phrase in the popular figurative sense, for that would have been tantamount to Christ asking His followers to sin against Him in order to inherit eternal life! It should also be noted that the Greek word used for “eat” in St. John literally means “to gnaw.” This is not the language of figuration.

A final Protestant appeal is also made to St. John 6:63: “It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” We are told that these words mean that the eating of flesh is of no spiritual value, and only faith can profit one unto eternal life. So, Christ could not have meant to eat His flesh in

order to have life. The Catholic response is that Christ was, in reality, making an appeal to His listeners to trust Him on faith rather than try to rationalize His words in order to find their true meaning. In the previous verse (v. 62) Christ infers that His listeners would have had no difficulty accepting His words if they had seen Him in His original glory, that is, as the Son of God equal to the Father, for then His words would obviously be the words of God rather than the words of man—words of “spirit and life.”

To conclude, it is also necessary to examine the words of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians, chapters 10 and 11. In these chapters he sternly chastises the Corinthians for their idolatry and their poor attitude towards reception of the Eucharist. His language is remarkably literal and blunt:

“I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ (10:1-4) ... Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols ... The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (10:14-17) ... You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons (10:21-22)...”

In verses 1-4, St. Paul is regarding the manna, the water and the rock as types of things to come. This ties in with the words of Christ in St. John, outlined earlier, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die” (vv. 48-50). The early Christians saw the Eucharist as a fulfillment of the promised manna, but unlike those who ate the manna, he who eats the bread of the Eucharist will “live forever” (v. 51).

The language of verses 14-17 again is the type that excludes all sense of the figurative or symbolic. St. Paul speaks directly of “participation in the blood and body of Christ.” St. Paul uses even more striking language in chapter 11:

“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (vv. 23-31).

Some scholars believe this written account of the institution of the Eucharist predates all the Gospel accounts. Stephen Ray, a recent convert to Catholicism from Evangelical Christianity, comments on vv. 23-31 as follows:

“Being guilty of someone’s ‘body and blood’ was to be guilty of murder. How could one be guilty of murder if the body (bread) was only a symbol? The Real Presence of Christ’s Body is necessary for an offense to be committed against it. How could one be guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ by simply eating a little bread and drinking a little wine?...St. Paul’s words are meaningless without the dogma of the Real Presence.”¹

The Fathers

¹ Stephen K. Ray, *Crossing the Tiber—Evangelical Protestants Discover the Historic Church*, Ignatius Press, 1997, p. 211.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 7, 1 (c. 110 AD)

“They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, Flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes.”

St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 66 (c. 155 AD)

“For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by Him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnate Jesus...The Apostles, in the Memoirs which they produced, which are called Gospels, have thus passed on that which was enjoined upon them: that Jesus took bread and, having given thanks, said, ‘Do this in remembrance of Me; this is My Body.’ And in like manner, taking the cup, and having given thanks, He said, ‘This is My Blood.’ And He imparted this to them only.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 4, 33, 2 (c. 180 AD)

“If the Lord were from other than the Father, how could He rightly take bread, which is of the same creation as our own, and confess it to be His Body, and affirm that the mixture in the cup is His Blood?”

Origen, *Homilies on Exodus* 13, 3 (post 244 AD)

“You who are wont to assist in the Divine Mysteries, know how, when you receive the body of the Lord you take reverent care, lest any particle of it should fall to the ground and a portion of the consecrated gift escape you. You consider it a crime—and rightly so—if any particle thereof fall down through negligence.”

Origen, *Against Celsus* 8, 33 (c. 248 AD)

“We give thanks to the Creator of all, and, along with thanksgiving and prayer for the blessings we have received, we also eat the bread

presented to us; and this bread becomes by prayer a sacred body, which sanctifies those who sincerely partake of it.”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 23, 15 (c. 350 AD)

“Give us this day our supersubstantial bread. The bread which is of the common sort is not supersubstantial. But the Bread which is holy, that Bread is supersubstantial, as if to say, directed toward the substance of the soul. This Bread does not go into the belly, to be cast out into the privy. Rather, it is distributed through your whole system, for the benefit of body and soul.”

St. Ephrem of Edessa, *Homilies* 4, 4 (ante 373 AD)

“And extending His hand, He gave them the Bread which His right hand had made holy: ‘Take all of you eat of this, which my word has made holy. Do not now regard as bread that which I have given you; but take, eat this Bread, and do not scatter the crumbs; for what I have called My Body, that it is indeed. One particle from its crumbs is able to sanctify thousands and thousands, and is sufficient to afford life to those who eat of it. Take, eat, entertaining no doubt of faith, because this is My Body, and whoever eats it in belief eats in it Fire and Spirit.’”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Explanation of the Psalms* 33, 1 (c. 392-418 AD)

“‘And he was carried in his own hands.’ But, brethren, how is it possible for a man to do this? Who can understand it? Who is it that is carried in his own hands? A man can be carried in the hands of another; but no one can be carried in his own hands. How this should be understood literally of David, we cannot discover; but we can discover how it is meant of Christ. For Christ was carried in His own hands, when, referring to His own Body, He said: ‘This is My Body’ for He carried that Body in His hands.”

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Explanation of the Psalms* 98, 9 (c. 392-418 AD)

“He took flesh from the flesh of Mary. He walked here in the same flesh, and gave us the same flesh to be eaten unto salvation. But no

one eats that flesh unless first he adores it ... and not only do we not sin by adoring, we do sin by not adoring.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. II, Ch. IV: When instituting this Sacrament, our Lord Himself said: *This is my body*. The word *this* expresses the entire substance of the thing present; and therefore if the substance of the bread remained, our Lord could not have truly said: *This is my body* ... In St. John, Christ the Lord also says: *The bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world*. The bread which He promises to give, He here declares to be His flesh. A little after He adds: *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you*. And again: *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed*. Since, therefore, in terms so clear and so explicit, He calls His flesh bread and *meat indeed*, He gives us sufficiently to understand that none of the substance of the bread and wine remains in the Sacrament.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 1336: The first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Passion scandalized them: “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” The Eucharist and the Cross are stumbling blocks. It is the same mystery and it never ceases to be an occasion of division. “Will you also go away?”: the Lord’s question echoes through the ages, as a loving invitation to discover that only he has “the words of eternal life” and that to receive in faith the gift of his Eucharist is to receive the Lord himself.

No. 1339: Jesus chose the time of Passover to fulfil what he had announced at Capernaum: giving his disciples his Body and his Blood:

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the passover meal for us, that we may eat it...”. They went ... and prepared the passover. And

when the hour came, he sat at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ... And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood."

No. 1345: As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin Martyr for the basic lines of the order of the Eucharistic celebration. They have stayed the same until our own day for all the great liturgical families. St. Justin wrote to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) around the year 155, explaining what Christians did:

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things.

Then we all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves...and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation. When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss.

Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren. He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks that we have been judged worthy of these gifts. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: 'Amen.' When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those who we call deacons give to those present the "eucharisted" bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.

Your Sins are Forgiven

Objection: *“Why do Catholics go to a man to have their sins forgiven. Only God can forgive sins!”*

This is another common accusation directed against Catholics because of their well-known practice of confessing sins to priests. The insinuation is that Catholics are really committing a form of idolatry by ignoring God and preferring instead to go to a man for forgiveness. At the same time, the Catholic Church is accused of carrying out a function that is proper to God alone. It is a similar accusation to that which Christ Himself had to endure: “This man is blaspheming” (St. Matt. 9:3).

No person claiming to be Christian doubts that Christ had the power to forgive sins. The following incident in the Gospels testifies to this power:

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven. Then some of the scribes said to themselves, This man is blaspheming. But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Stand up and walk? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins—he then said to the paralytic—Stand up, take your bed and go to your home. And he stood up and went to his home” (St. Matt. 9:2-7).

For those who recognize that the Church is a divine institution founded by Christ to continue His work of redemption in the world, there is no difficulty believing that she has the power to forgive sins. It follows that whatever Christ the Head possesses, His Mystical Body, the Church, likewise possesses. We see recorded in the Acts of the

Apostles the Church forgiving sins through the administration of Baptism to converts:

“Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

“Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16).

In addition, after His resurrection, Our Lord appeared to the Apostles in the Upper Room and breathed on them saying:

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you ... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (St. John 20:21-23).

Pope John Paul II has commented on St. John 20:23 as follows:

“Now this power to ‘forgive sins’ Jesus confers through the Holy Spirit upon ordinary men, themselves subject to the snare of sin, namely the Apostles ... This is one of the most awe-inspiring innovations of the Gospel! He confers this power on the Apostles also as something which they can transmit—as the Church has understood it from the beginning—to their successors, charged by the same Apostles with the mission and responsibility of continuing their work as proclaimers of the Gospel and ministers of Christ’s redemptive work.”¹

The power given to the Apostles in St. John 20:23 is reinforced by Our Lord’s following promise:

“Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (St. Matt. 18:18).

¹ *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 1984, # 29.

It is interesting to note that the only other time God breathed on man was when he first created Adam and “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen. 2:7). The first breathing was to empower man with life; the second breathing was to empower man to restore life.

Second objection: *“But St. John 20:23 really means that the Apostles were simply authorized to go out and preach forgiveness only according to the following injunction: ‘that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations’ (St. Luke 24:47).”*

St. John 20:23 is an uncomfortable verse for most Protestants. Some try to explain it away as follows: “Christ in John 20:23 was effectively commissioning the Apostles to go out and preach the Gospel to all creation. Those who believed in the Gospel would have their sins forgiven; those who did not would have their sins retained.” Unfortunately, St. John 20:23 mentions nothing about preaching, nor of God forgiving sins directly Himself. Rather, Christ speaks of the Apostles forgiving and retaining sins and empowers them to do so.

Another tactic is to try and ‘smother’ St. John 20:23 by quoting numerous other verses that speak of God or Christ forgiving sins directly without the intermediary of any Apostle or priest. Allegedly, the aim of this is to interpret St. John 20:23 in its proper context and conclude that God could not have appointed the Apostles as agents of forgiveness. However, none of these other verses relate directly to St. John 20:23, nor do they aim to interpret it or contradict it. To accept this approach would render St. John 20:23 utterly useless.

Third objection: *“Catholics believe they can commit any sins and then simply go to confession whenever they like to have them forgiven. What an abuse!”*

Such would certainly be an abuse if it were true. However, in all cases we must make the clear distinction between use and abuse, remembering that abuse should never abolish use. If there have been or are Catholics who approach the sacrament of Penance with the above attitude they can never have any of their sins forgiven. Only

those who approach the sacrament with true sorrow for their sins and the intention never to commit them again are eligible for forgiveness. For a valid reception of the sacrament, the penitent must perform three acts: *contrition*, *confession* and *satisfaction*.

Contrition is the most important condition for forgiveness. As stated, without true sorrow for sin there can be no possibility of pardon. Sorrow must be interior and genuine, not merely a hypocritical outward display. It must cover all mortal sins of which the penitent is aware. Sorrow for sin may be perfect, that is, out of charity, or love of God: “her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much” (St. Luke 7:47); or imperfect *attrition*, based on less perfect motives such as fear of hell, loss of heaven or the horror and ugliness of sin. Though imperfect, attrition is still regarded as true sorrow and pleasing to God.

With respect to confession, the penitent must declare to the Priest all mortal sins he or she can sincerely remember. The precise nature of the sin must be stated, not merely an evasive or generic reference. The exact number of times each sin has been committed must also be given (as far as memory serves). To the penitent who deliberately fails with regard to any of these, the sacrament will be of no avail.

Satisfaction is the voluntary acceptance by the penitent of the penance imposed by the priest. Usually, the priest imposes either prayers, acts of charity or other good works. The aim is to remit, in whole or in part, the debt of temporal punishment that often remains after the sin has been forgiven. Again, any person who has no intention during Confession to carry out the satisfaction imposed fails to receive the sacrament validly.

Fourth objection: *“According to the Presbyterian minister Loraine Boettner the practice of auricular confession was instituted only in 1215 by the Fourth Lateran Council.”*

In his book *Roman Catholicism* Loraine Boettner claims many things, most of which are inaccurate, distorted or outrightly untrue. The Patristic evidence testifying to the practice of auricular confession in

the early Church, even in the pre-Constantinian era, is indisputable. Origen, St. Cyprian, Firmilian and Lactantius are but a few examples of this. These writers were not fringe figures in the early Church but—in the case of Origen and St. Cyprian in particular—were outstanding leaders, apologists and martyrs. If the practice of auricular confession they had written about was merely an unbiblical invention imposed on faithful Christians against their will, then there should be records of protest and opposition dating from the same period. On the contrary, we find numerous other writers of even greater sanctity and intellect in the post-Nicene era writing about and promoting the same practice—for example, St. Hilary, St. Basil and St. Jerome (see below).

Far from inventing the sacrament, what the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 did was regulate the age-old practice of confession by requiring all Catholics to confess their sins *at least once a year* to an approved priest.

Fifth objection: *“Confession was invented by priests to have control of the people. And what about all the scandals associated with confession!”*

As shown above, the sacrament of Penance was ‘invented’ by no one except Christ Himself. Far from binding the people under a form of oppressive control, the sacrament of Penance has the real intention and effect of freeing them from the bonds of sin and the slavery of the Devil. In addition to the wonderful spiritual benefits for the soul, frequent use of the sacrament of Penance can also give penitents genuine peace of mind by alleviating many of the mental difficulties arising from the subconscious fear of death and judgment. As multitudes discovered through St. John Vianney in France last century, the sacrament of Penance is also an excellent means of obtaining sound spiritual advice from one experienced in the direction of souls.

In the history of the Church there have been cases when the seal of confession has been broken and information obtained from the penitent used for improper purposes—but this has occurred through eavesdropping by outsiders. St. Joan of Arc was a victim of such an

abuse. Nevertheless, even these cases are very rare. Attention should be given to examples such as St. John Nepomucene (+1393), who preferred to die a horrible death rather than reveal what was said to him in confession. The Church's law, aimed at preserving the seal of confession, is perhaps one of its most rigorous: "A confessor who directly violates the sacramental seal incurs a *latae sententiae* [automatic] excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See."² This seal applies not only to the priest, but also to anyone who overhears or learns of confessional sins in any way.³

Concerning alleged scandals, again one must avoid the trap of abolishing use simply because of abuse. The theme of abuse and the sacrament of Penance seems to be an obsessive pre-occupation of those who produce tracts and pamphlets attacking this sacrament, perhaps in the hope of distracting the ignorant and gullible from realizing and appreciating its positive benefits. Loraine Boettner and other professional anti-Catholics of his ilk seem to take delight in republishing the salacious charges of the nineteenth-century former Catholic priest, Father Charles Chiniquy.

Chiniquy called auricular confession "the modern Sodom," amid many other things. Any Catholic who has attended the sacrament of Penance faithfully for years would recognize his words as the sensationalist ravings of a revengeful man who had been disciplined by the Church for his own misdemeanors.

No reasonable person advocates the abolition of schools simply because there have been teachers who molest children, or of marriage because there are bad husbands who abuse their wives. Likewise, the legitimacy of the sacrament of Penance does not evaporate because some have used it for illicit purposes. Again, the Church's law here is severe: priests guilty of soliciting a penitent to commit a sin against the sixth commandment are liable to suspension, prohibitions and

² *Code of Canon Law* # 1388; *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* # 728.

³ Canons # 983; # 984.

deprivations, and in more serious cases to dismissal from the clerical state.⁴

Finally, it should always be kept clearly in mind that as priests forgive sins “in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” it is in reality God Himself who forgives the sins. The priest does not forgive sins in his own name or through his own power, but rather solely through the power of God. Hence, even if the priest himself is the most hideous sinner, this will not affect the validity of the sacrament and prevent the penitent’s sins from being forgiven. This is a comforting thought for Catholics and gives them total confidence and certitude every time they approach the sacrament.

The Fathers

St. Cyprian of Carthage, *The Lapsed* 29 (251 AD)

“I beseech you, brethren, let everyone who has sinned confess his sin while he is still in this world, while his confession is still admissible, while satisfaction and remission made through the priests are pleasing before the Lord.”

Firmilian of Caesarea, *Letter to Cyprian* 75, 16 (c. 258 AD)

“Receive the Holy Spirit: if you forgive any man his sins, they shall be forgiven; and if you retain any man’s sins, they shall be retained.” Therefore, the power of forgiving sins was given to the Apostles and to the Churches which these men, sent by Christ, established; and to the bishops who succeeded them by being ordained in their place.”

Lactantius, *The Divine Institutions* 4, 30, 1 (inter 304-310 AD)

“...let it be known: that is the true Church, in which there is confession and penance, and which takes a salubrious care of the sins and wounds to which the weak flesh is subject.”

⁴ Ibid. # 1387; # 728.

St. Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* 18, 8 (c. 354 AD)

“In our present condition we are all subdued by the terror of that greatest dread. And now, out in front of that terror, He sets the irrevocable apostolic judgment, however severe, so that those whom they shall bind on earth, that is, whomsoever they leave bound in the knots of their sins; and those whom they loose, which is to say, those who by their confession receive grace unto salvation—these, in accord with the apostolic sentence, are bound or loosed also in heaven.”

St. Basil the Great, *Rules Briefly Treated* 229 & 288 (post 370 AD)

“Just as the diseases of the body are not divulged to all, nor haphazardly, but to those who are skilled in curing them, so too our declaration of our sins should be made to those empowered to cure them”.

“It is necessary to confess our sins to those to whom the dispensation of God’s mysteries is entrusted. Those doing penance of old are found to have done it before the saints. It is written in the Gospel that they confessed their sins to John the Baptist; but in Acts they confessed to the Apostles, by whom also all were baptized.”

St. Pacian of Barcelona, *Letters to Sympronian* 1, 6 (inter 375-392 AD)

“God never threatens the repentant, rather He pardons the penitent. You will say that it is God alone who can do this. True enough, but it is likewise true that He does it through His priests, who exercise His power.”

St. Jerome, *Commentaries on Ecclesiastes* 4, 4 (c. 388-389 AD)

“If the serpent, the devil, bites someone secretly, he infects that person with the venom of sin. And if the one who has been bitten keeps silence and does not do penance, and does not want to confess his wound to his brother and to his master, who have the word that will cure him, they cannot very well assist him. For if the sick man is ashamed to confess his wound to the physician, medicine will not cure that to which it is not applied.”

Pope St. Leo I, *Letter to the Bishops of Campania, Samnium and Picenum* 168, 2 (459 AD)

“I decree also that the presumption contrary to the apostolic regulation, which I recently learned is being committed by some in an illegal usurpation, is by all means to cease. With regard to penance, certainly what is required of the faithful is not that the nature of individual sins be written in a document and recited in a public profession, since it is sufficient that the guilt of consciences be indicated to priests alone in a secret confession.”

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Pt. II, Ch. V: After His Resurrection He breathed on the Apostles, assembled together, saying: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.* Now in giving to priests the power to retain and forgive sins, it is evident that our Lord made them also judges in this matter...

This doctrine the pastors should teach as defined by the holy Council of Trent, and handed down by the uniform doctrine of the Catholic Church. An attentive perusal of the Fathers will present passages throughout their works, proving in the clearest terms that this Sacrament was instituted by our Lord, and that the law of sacramental confession, which, from the Greek, they call *exomologesis*, and *exagoreusis*, is to be received as true Gospel teaching.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

No. 980: It is through the sacrament of Penance that the baptized can be reconciled with God and with the Church:

Penance has rightly been called by the holy Fathers “a laborious kind of baptism.” This sacrament of Penance is necessary for salvation for those who have fallen after Baptism,

just as Baptism is necessary for salvation for those who have not yet been reborn.

No. 1441: Only God forgives sins. Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, “The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins” and exercises this divine power: “Your sins are forgiven.” Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name.

No. 1444: In imparting to his apostles his own power to forgive sins the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. This ecclesial dimension of their task is expressed most notably in Christ’s solemn words to Simon Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of the apostles united to its head.”

Further Reading

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Appendices

A. ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Nicaea I	325
Constantinople I	381
Ephesus	431
Chalcedon	451
Constantinople II	553
Constantinople III	680
Nicaea II	787
Constantinople IV	869–70
Lateran I	1123
Lateran II	1139
Lateran III	1179
Lateran IV	1215
Lyons I	1245
Lyons II	1274
Vienne	1311–12
Constance	1414–18
Florence-Basel-Ferrara	1431–45
Lateran V	1512–17
Trent	1545–63
Vatican I	1869–70
Vatican II	1962–65

B. DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

St. Hilary of Poitiers	+368
St. Ephrem	+373
St. Athanasius	+373
St. Basil the Great	+379
St. Cyril of Jerusalem	+386
St. Gregory of Nazianzus	+c.390
St. Ambrose of Milan	+397
St. John Chrysostom	+407
St. Jerome	+420
St. Augustine of Hippo	+430
St. Cyril of Alexandria	+444
St. Peter Chrysologus	+450
St. Leo I the Great	+461
St. Gregory I the Great	+604
St. Isidore of Seville	+636
St. Bede the Venerable	+735
St. John Damascene	+c.749
St. Peter Damian	+1072
St. Anselm	+1109
St. Bernard of Clairvaux	+1153
St. Anthony of Padua	+1231
St. Thomas Aquinas	+1274
St. Bonaventure	+1274
St. Albert the Great	+1280
St. Catherine of Siena	+1380
St. Teresa of Avila	+1582
St. John of the Cross	+1591
St. Peter Canisius	+1597
St. Lawrence of Brindisi	+1619
St. Robert Bellarmine	+1621
St. Francis de Sales	+1622
St. Alphonsus de Liguori	+1787
St. Therese of the Infant Jesus	+1897

C. FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

Greek

St. Anastasius Sinaita +700
St. Andrew of Crete +740
St. Archelaus +282
St. Athanasius +373
Athenagoras +2nd c.
St. Basil the Great +379
St. Caesarius of Nazianzus +369
Clement of Alexandria +217
Pope St. Clement I of Rome +97
St. Cyril of Alexandria +444
St. Cyril of Jerusalem +386
Didymus the Blind +c. 398
Diodore of Tarsus +392
St. Dionysius the Great +c. 264
St. Epiphanius of Salamis +403
Eusebius of Caesarea +340
St. Eustathius of Antioch +4th c.
St. Firmilian +268
Gennadius I of Constantinople +5th c.
St. Germanus +732
St. Gregory of Nazianzus +390
St. Gregory of Nyssa +395
St. Gregory Thaumaturgus +268
Hermas +2nd Century
St. Hippolytus of Rome +236
St. Ignatius of Antioch +c. 110
St. Isidore of Pelusium +c. 450
St. John Chrysostom +407
St. John Climacus +649
St. John Damascene +749
Pope St. Julius I +352

St. Justin Martyr +165
St. Leontius of Byzantium +6th c.
St. Macarius +c. 390
St. Maximus the Confessor +662
St. Melito of Sardes +c. 180
St. Methodius of Olympus +311
St. Nilus the Elder +c. 430
Origen + 254
St. Polycarp +c. 155
St. Proclus +c. 446
Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite +6th c.
St. Serapion +c. 370
St. Sophronius +638
Tatian the Syrian +2nd c.
Theodore of Mopsuestia +428
Theodoret of Cyrrhus +c. 458
St. Theophilus of Antioch +2nd c.

Latin

St. Ambrose of Milan +397
Arnobius +330
St. Augustine of Hippo +430
St. Benedict of Nursia +550
St. Caesarius of Arles +542
St. John Cassian +435
Pope St. Celestine I +432
Pope St. Cornelius +253
St. Cyprian of Carthage +258
Pope St. Damasus I +384
Pope St. Dionysius +268
St. Ennodius +521

St. Eucherius of Lyons +450
St. Fulgentius +533
St. Gregory of Elvira +c. 392
Pope Gregory the Great +604
St. Hilary of Poitiers +367
Pope St. Innocent I +417
St. Irenaeus +c. 202
St. Isidore of Seville +636
St. Jerome +420
Lactantius +323
Pope St. Leo the Great +461
Marius Mercator +451
Marius Victorinus +4th c.
Minucius Felix +2nd c.
Novatian +257
St. Optatus Milevi +4th c.
St. Pacian of Barcelona +390
St. Pamphilus +309
St. Paulinus of Nola +431
St. Peter Chrysologus +450
St. Phoebadius Agen +4th c.
St. Rufinus of Aquileia +410
Salvian +5th c.
Pope St. Siricius +399
Tertullian +c. 220
St. Vincent of Lerins +c. 450
St. Nilus the Elder +c. 430

Syriac

Aphraates +4th c.
St. Ephrem of Edessa +373

D. POPES

- St. Peter (+c. 67)
St. Linus (67–76)
St. Anacletus (76–88)
St. Clement (88–97)
St. Evaristus (97–105)
St. Alexander I (105–115)
St. Sixtus I (115–125)
St. Telesphorus (125–136)
St. Hyginus (136–140)
St. Pius I (140–155)
St. Anicetus (155–166)
St. Soter (166–175)
St. Eleutherius (175–189)
St. Victor I (189–199)
St. Zephyrinus (199–217)
St. Callistus (217–222)
St. Urban I (222–230)
St. Pontian (230–235)
St. Anterus (235–236)
St. Fabian (236–250)
St. Cornelius (251–253)
St. Lucius I (253–254)
St. Stephen I (254–257)
St. Sixtus II (257–258)
St. Dionysius (259–268)
St. Felix I (269–274)
St. Eutychian (275–283)
St. Caius (283–296)
St. Marcellinus (296–304)
St. Marcellus I (308–309)
St. Eusebius (309)
St. Melchiades (311–314)
St. Sylvester I (314–335)
St. Marcus (336)
St. Julius I (337–352)
Liberius (352–366)
St. Damasus I (366–384)
St. Siricius (384–399)
St. Anastasius I (399–401)
St. Innocent I (401–417)
St. Zozimus (417–418)
St. Boniface I (418–422)
St. Celestine (422–432)
St. Sixtus III (432–440)
St. Leo I the Great (440–461)
St. Hilary (461–468)
St. Simplicius (468–483)
St. Felix III (II) (483–492)
St. Gelasius I (492–496)
St. Anastasius II (496–498)
St. Symmachus (498–514)
St. Hormisdas (514–523)
St. John I (523–526)
St. Felix IV (III) (526–530)
Boniface II (530–532)
John II (533–535)
St. Agapetus I (535–536)
St. Silverius (536–537)
Vigilius (537–555)
Pelagius I (556–561)
John III (561–574)
Benedict I (575–579)
Pelagius II (579–590)
St. Gregory the Great (590–604)
Sabinian (604–606)
Boniface III (607)
St. Boniface IV (608–615)
St. Adeodatus I (615–618)
Boniface V (619–625)
Honorius I (625–638)
Severinus (640)

John IV (640–642)
Theodore I (642–649)
St. Martin I (649–655)
St. Eugenius I (654–657)
St. Vitalian (657–672)
Adeodatus II (672–676)
Donus (676–678)
St. Agatho (678–681)
St. Leo II (682–683)
St. Benedict II (684–685)
John V (685–686)
Conon (686–687)
St. Sergius I (687–701)
John VI (701–705)
John VII (705–707)
Sisinnius (708)
Constantine (708–715)
St. Gregory II (715–731)
St. Gregory III (731–741)
St. Zachary (741–752)
Stephen II (III) (752–757)
St. Paul I (757–767)
Stephen III (IV) (768–772)
Adrian I (772–795) St. Leo
III (795–816) Stephen IV
(V) (816–817) St. Paschal
I (817–824) Eugene II
(824–827) Valentine (827)
Gregory IV (827–844)
Sergius II (844–847)
St. Leo IV (847–855)
Benedict III (855–858)
St. Nicholas I (858–867)
Adrian II (867–872)
John VIII (872–882)
Marinus I (882–884)
St. Adrian III (884–885)
Stephen V (VI) (885–891)
Formosus (891–896)
Stephen VI (VII) (896–897)
Boniface VI (896)
Romanus (897)
Theodore II (897)
John IX (898–900)
Benedict IV (900–903)
Leo V (903)
Sergius III (904–911)
Anastasius III (911–913)
Landus (913–914)
John X (914–928)
Leo VI (928)
Stephen VII (VIII) (928–931)
John XI (931–935)
Leo VII (936–939)
Stephen VIII (IX) (939–942)
Marinus II (942–946)
Agapetus II (946–955)
John XII (955–964) Leo
VIII (963–965) Benedict
V (964–966) John XIII
(965–972) Benedict VI
(973–974) Benedict VII
(974–983) John XIV
(983–984) John XV
(985–996) Gregory V
(996–999) Sylvester II
(999–1003) John XVII
(1003)
John XVIII (1004–1009)
Sergius IV (1009–1012)
Benedict VIII (1012–1024)
John XIX (1024–1032)
Benedict IX (1032–1044)
Sylvester III (1045)
Benedict IX (1045)

Gregory VI (1045–1046)
Clement II (1046–1047)
Benedict IX (1047–1048)
Damasus II (1048)
St. Leo IX (1049–1054)
Victor II (1055–1057)
Stephen IX (X) (1057–1058)
Nicholas II (1059–1061)
Alexander II (1061–1073)
St. Gregory VII (1073–1085)
Bl. Victor III (1086–1087)
Bl. Urban II (1088–1099)
Paschal II (1099–1118)
Gelasius II (1118–1119)
Callistus II (1119–1124)
Honorius II (1124–1130)
Innocent II (1130–1143)
Celestine II (1143–1144)
Lucius II (1144–1145)
Bl. Eugene III (1145–1153)
Anastasius IV (1153–1154)
Adrian IV (1154–1159)
Alexander III (1159–1181)
Lucius III (1181–1185)
Urban III (1185–1187)
Gregory VIII (1187)
Clement III (1187–1191)
Celestine III (1191–1198)
Innocent III (1198–1216)
Honorius III (1216–1227)
Gregory IX (1227–1241)
Celestine IV (1241)
Innocent IV (1243–1254)
Alexander IV (1254–1261)
Urban IV (1261–1264)
Clement IV (1265–1268)
Bl. Gregory X (1271–1276)
Bl. Innocent IV (1276)
Adrian V (1276)
John XXI (1276–1277)
Nicholas III (1277–1280)
Martin IV (1281–1285)
Honorius IV (1285–1287)
Nicholas IV (1288–1292)
St. Celestine V (1294)
Boniface VIII (1294–1303)
Bl. Benedict XI (1303–1304)
Clement V (1305–1314)
John XXII (1316–1334)
Benedict XII (1334–1342)
Clement VI (1342–1352)
Innocent VI (1352–1362)
Bl. Urban V (1362–1370)
Gregory XI (1370–1378)
Urban VI (1378–1379)
Boniface IX (1389–1404)
Innocent VII (1404–1406)
Gregory XII (1406–1415)
Martin V (1417–1431)
Eugene IV (1431–1447)
Nicholas V (1447–1455)
Callistus III (1455–1458)
Pius II (1458–1464)
Paul II (1464–1471) Sixtus
IV (1471–1484) Innocent
VIII (1484–1492)
Alexander VI (1492–1503)
Pius III (1503)
Julius II (1503–1513)
Leo X (1513–1521)
Adrian VI (1522–1523)
Clement VII (1523–1534)
Paul III (1534–1549)
Julius III (1550–1555)
Marcellus II (1555)
Paul IV (1555–1559)

Pius IV (1559–1565)
St. Pius V (1566–1572)
Gregory XIII (1572–1585)
Sixtus V (1585–1590)
Urban VII (1590)
Gregory XIV (1590–1591)
Innocent IX (1591)
Clement VIII (1592–1605)
Leo XI (1605)
Paul V (1605–1621)
Gregory XV (1621–1623)
Urban VIII (1623–1644)
Innocent X (1644–1655)
Alexander VII (1655–1667)
Clement IX (1667–1669)
Clement X (1670–1676)
Bl. Innocent XI (1676–1689)
Alexander VIII (1689–1691)
Innocent XII (1691–1700)
Clement XI (1700–1721)
Innocent XIII (1721–1724)
Benedict XIII (1724–1730)
Clement XII (1730–1740)
Benedict XIV (1740–1758)
Clement XIII (1758–1769)
Clement XIV (1769–1774)
Pius VI (1775–1799)
Pius VII (1800–1823)
Leo XII (1823–1829)
Pius VIII (1829–1830)
Gregory XVI (1831–1846)
Bl. Pius IX (1846–1878)
Leo XIII (1878–1903)
St. Pius X (1903–1914)
Benedict XV (1914–1922)
Pius XI (1922–1939)
Pius XII (1939–1958)
Bl. John XXIII (1958–1963)
Paul VI (1963–1978)
John Paul I (1978)
John Paul II (1978–present).

E. ALLUSIONS AND PARALLELS TO THE DEUTEROCANONICALS FOUND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The list below is taken from pp. 800-804 of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, 27th edition (Novum Testamentum: Graece et Latine, published by Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft).

St. Matthew

Matthew 4:4 Wisdom 16:26
Matthew 4:15 1 Macc. 5:15
Matthew 5:18 Baruch 4:1
Matthew 5:28 Sirach 9:8
Matthew 5:2 Sirach 25:7-12
Matthew 5:4 Sirach 48:24
Matthew 6:7 Sirach 7:14
Matthew 6:9 Sirach 23:1 & 4
Matthew 6:10 1 Macc. 3:60
Matthew 6:12 Sirach 28:2
Matthew 6:13 Sirach 33:1
Matthew 6:20 Sirach 29:10
Matthew 6:23 Sirach 14:10
Matthew 6:33 Wisdom 7:11
Matthew 7:12 Tobit 4:15
Matthew 7:12 Sirach 31:15
Matthew 7:16 Sirach 27:6
Matthew 8:11 Baruch 4:37
Matthew 8:21 Tobit 4:3
Matthew 9:36 Judith 11:19
Matthew 9:38 1 Macc. 12:17
Matthew 10:16 Sirach 13:17
Matthew 11:14 Sirach 48:10
Matthew 11:22 Judith 16:17
Matthew 11:25 Tobit 7:17
Matthew 11:25 Sirach 51:1
Matthew 11:28 Sirach 24:19
Matthew 11:28 Sirach 51:23
Matthew 11:29 Sirach 6:24
Matthew 11:29 Sirach 6:28
Matthew 11:29 Sirach 51:26

Matthew 12:4 2 Macc. 10:3
Matthew 12:5 Sirach 40:15
Matthew 13:44 Sirach 20:30
Matthew 16:18 Wisdom 16:13
Matthew 16:22 1 Macc. 2:21
Matthew 16:27 Sirach 35:22
Matthew 17:11 Sirach 48:10
Matthew 18:10 Tobit 12:15
Matthew 20:2 Tobit 5:15
Matthew 22:13 Wisdom 17:2
Matthew 23:38 Tobit 14:4
Matthew 24:15 1 Macc. 1:54
Matthew 24:15 2 Macc. 8:17
Matthew 24:16 1 Macc. 2:28
Matthew 25:35 Tobit 4:17
Matthew 25:36 Sirach 7:32-35
Matthew 26:38 Sirach 37:2
Matthew 27:24 Daniel 13:46
Matthew 27:43 Wisdom 2:13
Matthew 27:43 Wisdom 2:18-20

St. Mark

Mark 1:15 Tobit 14:5
Mark 4:5 Sirach 40:15
Mark 4:11 Wisdom 2:22
Mark 5:34 Judith 8:35
Mark 6:49 Wisdom 17:15
Mark 8:37 Sirach 26:14
Mark 9:31 Sirach 2:18
Mark 9:48 Judith 16:17
Mark 10:18 Sirach 4:1
Mark 14:34 Sirach 37:2

Mark 15:29 Wisdom 2:17

St. Luke

Luke 1:17 Sirach 48:10
 Luke 1:19 Tobit 12:15
 Luke 1:42 Judith 13:18
 Luke 1:52 Sirach 10:14
 Luke 2:29 Tobit 11:9
 Luke 2:37 Judith 8:6
 Luke 6:35 Wisdom 15:1
 Luke 7:22 Sirach 48:5
 Luke 9:8 Sirach 48:10
 Luke 10:17 Tobit 7:17
 Luke 10:19 Sirach 11:19
 Luke 10:21 Sirach 51:1
 Luke 12:19 Tobit 7:10
 Luke 12:20 Wisdom 15:8
 Luke 13:25 Tobit 14:4
 Luke 13:27 1 Macc. 3:6
 Luke 13:29 Baruch 4:37
 Luke 14:13 Tobit 2:2
 Luke 15:12 1 Macc. 10:29
 Luke 15:12 Tobit 3:17
 Luke 18:7 Sirach 35:22
 Luke 19:44 Wisdom 3:7
 Luke 21:24 Tobit 14:5
 Luke 21:24 Sirach 28:18
 Luke 21:25 Wisdom 5:22
 Luke 24:4 2 Macc. 3:26
 Luke 24:31 2 Macc. 3:34
 Luke 24:50 Sirach 50:20
 Luke 24:53 Sirach 50:22

St. John

John 1:3 Wisdom 9:1
 John 3:8 Sirach 16:21
 John 3:12 Wisdom 9:16
 John 3:12 Wisdom 18:15
 John 3:13 Baruch 3:29
 John 3:28 1 Macc. 9:39
 John 3:32 Tobit 4:6
 John 4:9 Sirach 50:25

John 4:48 Wisdom 8:8
 John 5:18 Wisdom 2:16
 John 6:35 Sirach 24:21
 John 7:38 Sirach 24:40, 43
 John 8:44 Wisdom 2:24
 John 8:53 Sirach 44:19
 John 10:20 Wisdom 5:4
 John 10:22 1 Macc. 4:59
 John 14:15 Wisdom 6:18
 John 15:9 Wisdom 3:9
 John 17:3 Wisdom 15:3
 John 20:22 Wisdom 15:11

Acts

Acts 1:10 2 Macc. 3:26
 Acts 1:18 Wisdom 4:19
 Acts 2:4 Sirach 48:12
 Acts 2:11 Sirach 36:7
 Acts 2:39 Sirach 24:32
 Acts 4:24 Judith 9:12
 Acts 5:2 2 Macc. 4:32
 Acts 5:12 1 Macc. 12:6
 Acts 5:21 2 Macc. 1:10
 Acts 5:39 2 Macc. 7:19
 Acts 9:1-29 2 Macc. 3:24-40
 Acts 9:2 1 Macc. 15:21
 Acts 9:7 Wisdom 18:1
 Acts 10:2 Tobit 12:8
 Acts 10:22 1 Macc. 10:25
 Acts 10:22 1 Mac.11:30, 33
 Acts 10:26 Wisdom 7:1
 Acts 10:30 2 Macc. 11:8
 Acts 10:34 Sirach 35:12
 Acts 10:36 Wisdom 6:7
 Acts 10:36 Wisdom 8:3 etc.
 Acts 11:18 Wisdom 12:19
 Acts 12:5 Judith 4:9
 Acts 12:10 Sirach 19:26
 Acts 12:23 Judith 16:17
 Acts 12:23 Sirach 48:21
 Acts 12:23 1 Macc. 7:41
 Acts 12:23 2 Macc. 9:9

Acts 13:10 Sirach 1:30
 Acts 13:17 Wisdom 19:10
 Acts 14:14 Judith 14:16
 Acts 14:15 Wisdom 7:3
 Acts 15:4 Judith 8:26
 Acts 16:14 2 Macc. 1:4
 Acts 17:23 Wisdom 14:20
 Acts 17:23 Wisdom 15:17
 Acts 17:24, 25 Wisdom 9:1
 Acts 17:24 Tobit 7:17
 Acts 17:24 Wisdom 9:9
 Acts 17:26 Wisdom 7:18
 Acts 17:27 Wisdom 13:6
 Acts 17:29 Wisdom 13:10
 Acts 17:30 Sirach 28:7
 Acts 19:27 Wisdom 3:17
 Acts 19:28 Daniel 14:18,
 41
 Acts 20:26 Daniel 13:46
 Acts 20:32 Wisdom 5:5
 Acts 20:35 Sirach 4:31
 Acts 21:26 1 Macc. 3:49
 Acts 22:9 Wisdom 18,1
 Acts 24:2 2 Macc. 4:6
 Acts 26:18 Wisdom 5:5
 Acts 26:25 Judith 10:13

Romans

Romans 1:19-32 Wisdom 13-15
 Romans 1:21 Wisdom 13:1
 Romans 1:23 Wisdom 11:15
 Romans 1:23 Wisdom 12:24
 Romans 1:28 2 Macc. 6:4
 Romans 2:4 Wisdom 11:23
 Romans 2:11 Sirach 35:12
 Romans 2:15 Wisdom 17:11
 Romans 4:13 Sirach 44:21
 Romans 4:17 Sirach 44:19
 Romans 5:5 Sirach 18:11
 Romans 5:12 Wisdom 2:24
 Romans 9:4 Sirach 44:12
 Romans 9:4 2 Macc. 6:23

Romans 9:19 Wisdom 12:12
 Romans 9:21 Wisdom 15:7
 Romans 9:31 Sirach 27:8
 Romans 9:31 Wisdom 2:11
 Romans 10:7 Wisdom 16,13
 Romans 10:6 Baruch 3:29
 Romans 11:4 2 Macc. 2:4
 Romans 11:15 Sirach 10:20
 Romans 11:33 Wisdom 17:1
 Romans 12:15 Sirach 7:34
 Romans 13:1 Sirach 4:27
 Romans 13:1 Wisdom 6:3
 Romans 13,10 Wisdom 6,18
 Romans 15:41 Macc. 12:9
 Romans 15:8 Sirach 36:20

1 Corinthians

1 Cor. 1:24 Wisdom 7:24
 1 Cor. 2:16 Wisdom 9:13
 1 Cor. 2:9 Sirach 1:10
 1 Cor. 4:13 Tobit 5:19
 1 Cor. 4:14 Wisdom 11:10
 1 Cor. 6:2 Wisdom 3:8
 1 Cor. 6:12 Sirach 37:28
 1 Cor. 6:13 Sirach 36:18
 1 Cor. 6:18 Sirach 23:17
 1 Cor. 7:19 Sirach 32:23
 1 Cor. 9:19 Sirach 6:19
 1 Cor. 9:25 Wisdom 4:2
 1 Cor. 10:1 Wisdom 19:7
 1 Cor. 10:20 Baruch 4:7
 1 Cor. 10:23 Sirach 37:28
 1 Cor. 11:7 Sirach 17:3
 1 Cor. 11:7 Wisdom 2:23
 1 Cor. 11:24 Wisdom 16:6
 1 Cor. 15:29 2 Macc. 12:43
 1 Cor. 15:32 Wisdom 2:5
 1 Cor. 15:34 Wisdom 13:1

2 Corinthians

2 Cor. 5:1, 4 Wisdom 9:15
 2 Cor. 12:12 Wisdom 10:16

Galatians

Galatians 2:6 Sirach 35:13
Galatians 4:4 Tobit 14:5
Galatians 6:1 Wisdom 17:17

Ephesians

Ephesians 1:6 Sirach 45:1
Ephesians 1:6 Sirach 46:13
Ephesians 1:17 Wisdom 7:7
Ephesians 4:14 Sirach 5:9
Ephesians 4:24 Wisdom 9:3
Ephesians 6:12 Wisdom 5:17
Ephesians 6:14 Wisdom 5:18
Ephesians 6:16 Wisdom 5:19,
21

Philippians

Philippians 4:5 Wisdom 2:19
Philippians 4:13 Wisdom 7:23
Philippians 4:18 Sirach 35:6

Colossians

Colossians 2:3 Sirach 1:24

1 Thessalonians

1 Thes. 3:11 Judith 12:8
1 Thes. 4:6 Sirach 5:3
1 Thes. 4:13 Wisdom 3:18
1 Thes. 5:1 Wisdom 8:8
1 Thes. 5:2 Wisdom 18:14
1 Thes. 5:3 Wisdom 17:14
1 Thes. 5:8 Wisdom 5:18

2 Thessalonians

2 Thes. 2:1 2 Macc. 2:7

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 1:17 Tobit 13:7 & 11
1 Timothy 2:2 2 Macc. 3:11
1 Timothy 2:2 Baruch 1:11
1 Timothy 6:15 Sirach 46:5

1 Timothy 6:15 2 Macc. 12:15
1 Timothy 6:15 2 Macc. 13:4

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 2:19 Sirach 17:26
2 Timothy 2:19 Sirach 23:10
2 Timothy 2:19 Sirach 35:3
2 Timothy 4:8 Wisdom 5:16
2 Timothy 4:17 1 Macc. 2:60

Titus

Titus 2:11 2 Macc. 3:30
Titus 3:4 Wisdom 1:6

Hebrews

Hebrews 1:3 Wisdom 7:25
Hebrews 2:5 Sirach 17:17
Hebrews 4:12 Wisdom 18,15
Hebrews 4:12 Wisdom 7:22-30
Hebrews 5:6 1 Macc. 14:41
Hebrews 7:22 Sirach 29:14
Hebrews 11:5 Sirach 44:16
Hebrews 11:5 Wisdom 4:10
Hebrews 11:6 Wisdom 10:17
Hebrews 11:10 Wisdom 13:1
Hebrews 11:10 2 Macc. 4:1
Hebrews 11:17 1 Macc. 2:52
Hebrews 11:17 Sirach 44:20
Hebrews 11:27 Sirach 2:2
Hebrews 11:28 Wisdom 18:25
Hebrews 11:35 2 Macc. 6:18-
7:42

Hebrews 12:4 2 Macc. 13:14
Hebrews 12:9 2 Macc. 3:24
Hebrews 12:12 Sirach 25:23
Hebrews 12:17 Wisdom 12:10
Hebrews 12:21 1 Macc. 13:2
Hebrews 13:7 Sirach 33:19
Hebrews 13:7 Wisdom 2:17

St. James

James 1:1 2 Macc. 1:27
 James 1:13 Sirach 15:11-20
 James 1:19 Sirach 5:11
 James 1:2 Sirach 2:1
 James 1:2 Wisdom 3:4
 James 1:21 Sirach 3:17
 James 2:13 Tobit 4:10
 James 2:23 Wisdom 7:27
 James 3:2 Sirach 14:1
 James 3:6 Sirach 5:13
 James 3:9 Sirach 23:14
 James 3:10 Sirach 5:13
 James 3:10 Sirach 28:12
 James 3:13 Sirach 3:17
 James 4:2 1 Macc. 8:16
 James 4:11 Wisdom 1:11
 James 5:3 Judith 16:17
 James 5:3 Sirach 29:10
 James 5:4 Tobit 4:14
 James 5:6 Wisdom 2:10
 James 5:6 Wisdom 2:12
 James 5:6 Wisdom 2:19

1 Peter

1 Peter 1:3 Sirach 16:12
 1 Peter 1:7 Sirach 2:5
 1 Peter 2:25 Wisdom 1:6
 1 Peter 4:19 2 Macc.
 1:24 etc.
 1 Peter 5:7 Wisdom
 12:13

2 Peter

2 Peter 2:2 Wisdom 5:6
 2 Peter 2:7 Wisdom 10:6
 2 Peter 3:9 Sirach 35:19
 2 Peter 3:18 Sirach 18:10

1 John

1 John 5:21 Baruch 5:72

St. Jude

Jude 13 Wisdom 14:1

Revelation

Rev. 1:18 Sirach 18:1
 Rev. 2:10 2 Macc. 13:14
 Rev. 2:12 Wisdom 18:16
 Rev. 2:17 2 Macc. 2:4-8
 Rev. 4:11 Sirach 18:1
 Rev. 4:11 Wisdom 1:14
 Rev. 5:7 Sirach 1:8
 Rev. 7:9 2 Macc. 10:7
 Rev. 8:1 Wisdom 18:14
 Rev. 8:2 Tobit 12:15
 Rev. 8:3 Tobit 12:12
 Rev. 8:7 Sirach 39:29
 Rev. 8:7 Wisdom 16:22
 Rev. 9:3 Wisdom 16:9
 Rev. 9:4 Sirach
 44:18 etc.
 Rev. 11:19 2 Macc. 2:4-8
 Rev. 17:14 2 Macc. 13:4
 Rev. 18:2 Baruch 4:35
 Rev. 19:1 Tobit 13:18
 Rev. 19:11 2 Macc. 3:25
 Rev. 19:11 2 Macc. 11:8
 Rev. 19:16 2 Macc. 13:4
 Rev. 20:12 Sirach 16:12
 Rev. 21:19 Tobit 13:17