

# IN DEFENSE OF GRACE

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# Table of Contents

<b>Welcome</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction to Reformed Theology</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Five Principles of Reformed Faith</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Sola Gratia</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Sola Fide</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>The Result of Solas Gratia and Fide</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Solus Christus</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Soli Deo Gloria</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Sola Scriptura</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>What is the Gospel?</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>The Nature of Salvation</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Regeneration and Sanctification</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Remaining in Jesus</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Prayer</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Confession</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Baptism</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Communion</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Refutation of Transubstantiation</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Rejection of Roman Catholicism: An Introduction</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Rejection of the Papacy</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>The Church was not Founded on Peter</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Peter was not Pre-Eminent Over Other Apostles</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Peter Never Founded the Church in Rome</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>The Papal Office Never Existed Biblically</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Peter was not Inerrant in Spiritual Matters after Ordination</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Jesus Chose Paul over Peter to Deliver the Gospel</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>The Keys Were not Peter's Alone</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Peter Did not Establish an Eternal Line of Spiritually Distinguished and Doctrinally Infallible Successors</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>Apostolic Succession does not Belong to Roman Catholics Alone</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>The Early Church was Never Unified Under Roman Catholic Doctrine</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>The Papacy is a Fabrication of Men</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>The Papacy has Been a Source of Relentless Evil for Centuries</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>The Bible is Not a Roman Catholic Book</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>Refutation of Roman Catholic Marian Doctrines</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>Rejection of Roman Catholicism's Different Gospel</b>	<b>285</b>

# Welcome

## What is it About?

In Defense of Grace is first and foremost, a statement of faith and a tribute to God. The site is designed to be a premier resource on the beliefs and practices of Reformed Christianity. To those unfamiliar with the term, Reformed Christianity is a "denomination" that professes the scriptures to be the sole and preeminent authority on theology and Christianity. It rejects extra-biblical traditions and rites and does not accept any alterations to Gospel truths. Foundational beliefs of Reformed Christianity include:

- Reserving worship, exaltation, and reverence for the Triune God alone.
- The total sufficiency of Jesus' sacrifice in absolving men of their sins, as a function of grace.
- Elevation of the Bible as the highest doctrinal authority.
- The assertion of good works being the manifestation of a transformative faith.
- The sovereignty of Jesus Christ as our Lord, Savior, and High Priest.

## How is the Site Meant to be Read?

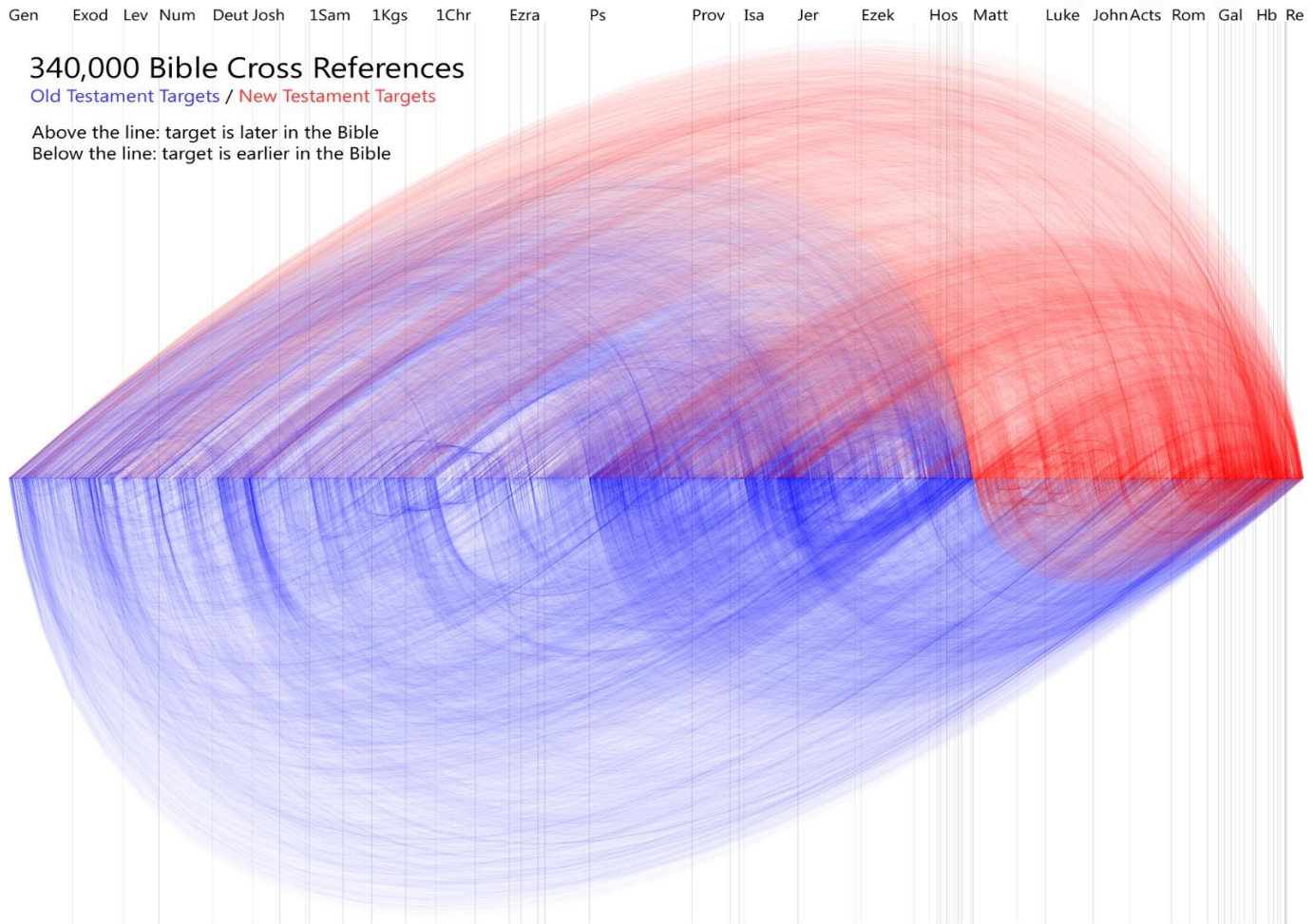
The content of this site used to be in the form of a written statement of faith. The statement can be neatly divided into two halves. The first half is an expatiation on Reformed theology and biblical doctrine. The second half is a refutation of extra-biblical practices of Roman Catholicism. I suppose, given the context of the Reformation, that could probably fall under Reformed theology, too.

The original statement was structured in a largely climactic order and was meant to be read in the sequence in which it was written. In spite of the nifty directories at the side and bottom of the page, the statement is still meant to be read in order. Each chapter gradually introduces new concepts, while building upon the foundation of prior chapters in escalating complexity. In that regard, some arguments are repeated in various contexts throughout the statement, but in more comprehensive forms.

This is because the ever-aggregating body of scriptures compiled in the text add additional meaning and narrative weight. In short, even if the first few chapters are a little slow for your speed, I would recommend reading through them all the same, so you don't lose track of the narrative when it escalates in later chapters.

# Why All of The Scripture? Why the Repetition and Escalating Arguments?

Well, because the Bible is the single most important book you'll ever read. The Bible was written for you, but it was orchestrated by God. His thoughts are much higher than our thoughts. Because of this, the world often grievously underestimates how intelligent, cohesive, and nuanced the scriptures are. Look at this [graphic from Open Bible](#):



Mere men are not intelligent enough to compose works that cohesive. The Bible has well over 30 writers whose backgrounds are sourced from a pool of incredible variance. Kings, priests, laborers, fishermen, physicians, and warriors over literal millennia put together a book with 340,000 references, both prophetic and referential. That cohesion is only possible because of God, who sees the whole picture. For us to approach His book with reason, we must strive to see the whole picture, too.

The Bible, broken down into topical preaching and cherry-picked verses, is a formless and abusable tool that can be twisted to parrot the ignorance of any fool with a few minutes to hunt for a verse that reaffirms their pre-decided belief. Used that way, the Bible becomes a yes-man instead of a teacher. But, when read all the way through and taken as a whole, the true, singular, and divine narrative of the Bible is revealed. Once this greater context of the scriptures is applied, all the verses have their meanings perfectly aligned under God's singular truth. The Bible then becomes a sword that eviscerates heresy and cuts loose people ensnared by deceit and perversions in religion.

## **Why Did You Write This? Where Does Roman Catholicism Come In?**

Alright, I'll tell you, but you have to promise not to laugh first, okay? *So, there was this girl...* I was in a relationship with a Roman Catholic woman. It started off well enough, but as we learned more about each other's beliefs, the relationship became strained. I followed a faith rooted in scripture as the sole authority of Christian doctrine; she followed one largely engineered through traditions. While we were both committed Christians, that difference was more than enough to substantially skew the yoke over time.

What really kicked this off for me though, was that it was only after entering into their denomination and culture did I hear that the Bible was not the pre-eminent source of Christian truths, and that elevation of the scriptures over church doctrine was foolish. I wasn't fully ignorant on Roman Catholicism at the time; I've been to Mass before and I was aware of the separation between scripture and tradition. But, it was the explicit and vindictive nature of that statement that really lifted the blinders off my eyes.

From there, the inconsistencies in their doctrine and practices took on a more insidious tone. Depending on the denominational literacy of the Roman Catholic in question, even from the level of the clergy, Roman Catholicism presented very different beliefs. People disagreed as to whether or not Mary was to be worshipped, whether or not the transubstantiation was literal or figurative, whether or not Christians can be saved outside of the Roman Catholic church, and whether or not the Pope was sovereign.

In all of these cases, it was traditions and Roman Catholic culture that was the backbone of their arguments. More concerning, was that these sources of Roman Catholic doctrine, the writings of Early Church fathers, or even the Bible itself,

was never encouraged to be critically studied during my time there. All of these "truths" were to be asked of their Clergy or read from their non-doctrinal publications.

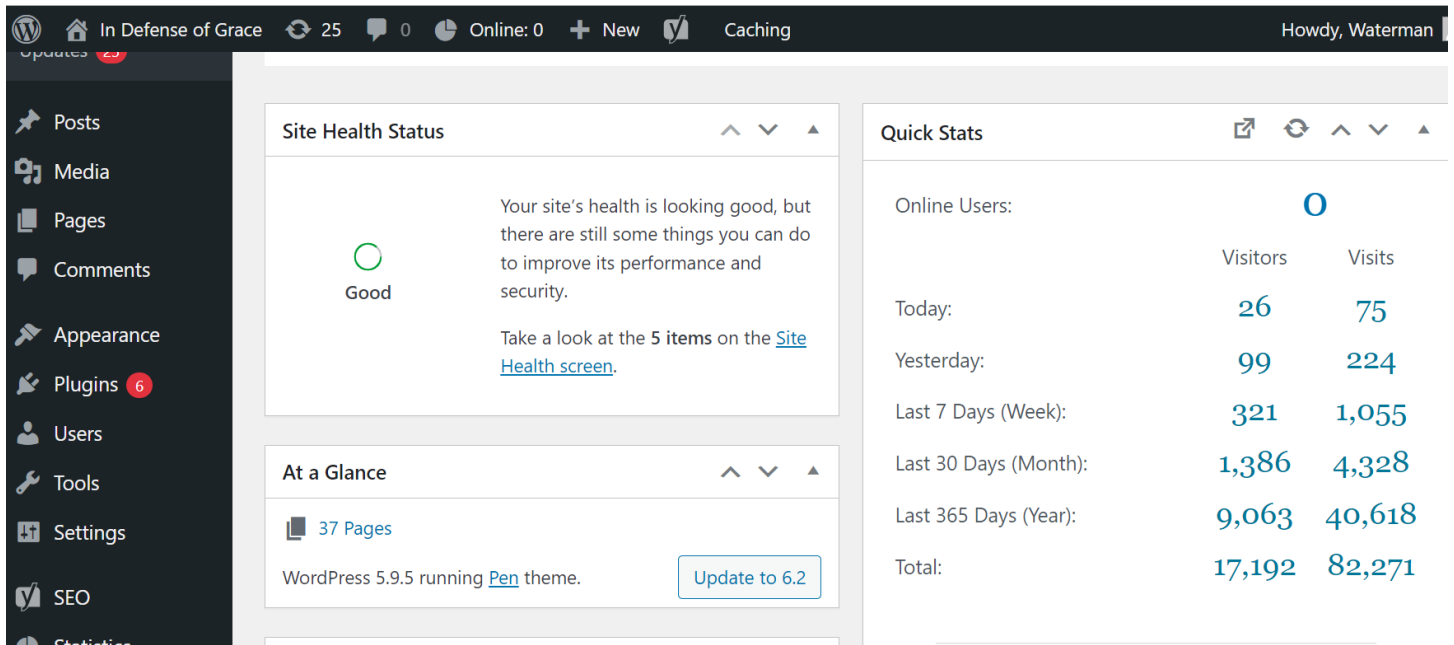
So, as my concern grew, I began investigating their history, their doctrine, and their writings. I began writing the faith statement to prove that Christianity outside of Roman Catholicism was valid and could even be pleasing to God. However, as I learned more about their coercive and controlling doctrines, I saw that Roman Catholic leaders were aggregating power for their church by limiting the Sovereignty and Lordship of God, even to the point of having the Pope replace Jesus as the Chief Shepherd. Then my statement of faith became an ardent defense of the Bible and the Gospel itself.

Fulfilling the will of God, Jesus had literally offered Himself as a sacrifice. He shed His blood to absolve men of their sins and to relieve them of the limitations of the Old Law, as long as they would believe in Him and repent. Yet Roman Catholic tradition buries this Gospel under a mountain of caveats, which I now know are spiritually dangerous to the practitioner.

Over time, my originally humble twenty-page pamphlet on the Reformation and the sufficiency of the fundamental biblical doctrines, grew into a nearly year long project that saw me buried in scriptures, early church writings, history books, Jewish cultural practices, and apologetics resources, ultimately culminating in a (roughly) 110,000 word long manuscript. This new statement covers a vast breadth of topics, but every narrative thread can ultimately be traced back to two purposes: proclaiming the overwhelming Sovereignty of God and emphasizing the sheer magnitude of His grace.

## **What Happened Once You Finished This?**

Well, to be honest, all of the Roman Catholics in my life had disappeared by the time I was roughly two-thirds of the way through. Challenging their church, especially using scripture, was an irreconcilable wedge. To this day, I still don't know if any of them have even read this. I don't blame or resent them, though. I made my choice, and I would make it again in a heartbeat. Without the stakes of these relationships on me, this site became a pure passion project for God, and I am very pleased with how it turned out.



Within the last three years of this site being published, it has reached over *17,000 people*. Without purchasing any ads, it climbed to the top spot of the Google search engine under “In Defense of Grace”, and has reached people all over the world, including China, Russia, and Germany. I am not versed in search engine optimization; I know this is all by the grace of God.

My favorite part of this story though, is that a year after publishing In Defense of Grace, I met a pretty Baptist woman... by the name of Grace. On our first date, we passionately discussed theology in a small board game café. Last month, we just celebrated our first Anniversary. Even though this site was built on trials and hardships, God has showered me in kindness and blessings.

Make no mistake though, I am not important in this. God facilitates all good things for His people, and His Word is the foundation of all of this. As you read through this statement, remember that every “good” thing written there is only good because it speaks of God.

# Introduction to Reformed Theology

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Eph 2:8-9)*

Reformed theology is not a departure from (nor an aberration of) Christianity, but a refined focus on Christianity itself through embracing of the scriptures as the only necessary and sufficient authority on the word of God. Reformed theology is both catholic and orthodox, in that it is formed from the teaching of both Jesus and His designated apostles. Like many denominations, Reformed theology believes:

## **There is a Sovereign and Triune God**

God is eternally existent in three distinct entities: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Even though they are separate in consciousness, they are the same in essence. Jesus existed before the foundation of the Earth, he was firstborn of every creature (Col 1:15) and is the very essence of God (John 1:1).

*Matt. 3:16–17: As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”*

*Matthew 28:19: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

*1 John 5:6-8: It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

## **Jesus Christ was the Word of God who had Become Flesh**

With Him He brought the Gospel, ushering in and fulfilling the New Covenant by His death on the cross. Once Christ had ascended, the Holy Spirit revealed itself to men, the Spirit of Truth.

*John 1:1-14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the*



*right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*John 14:17: "If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

## **The Church is the Body of Christ:**

These are the people who were saved through faith in Jesus and blessed with the Holy Spirit. These Christians are God's chosen people, who He foreknew, and His Law is written on their hearts.

*Romans 12:4-5: For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

*1 Corinthians 12:13: For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

*Hebrews 10:15-17: And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."*

*Ephesians 1:4-6: For He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His presence. In love He predestined us for adoption as His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the Beloved One.*

## **The Existence of Sacraments**

Reformed theology accepts and practices sacraments, such as confession and baptism. Although the scriptural process of regeneration differs from those oft established in orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions, there are still acts of faith specifically wanted by God.

*James 5:16: Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

*Peter 3:21-22: And this water symbolizes the baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

# The Inerrancy and Divine Authorship of the Original Scriptures:

The New Testament books in the Protestant Bibles were those that were verifiably written by the apostles, and/or considered to be legitimate sources by foundational leaders of the Early Church. Much of the cohesion of the criteria of acceptance of the above two metrics come from the fact that prominent Early Church leaders included the apostles themselves. They are also the same books as those held in the Roman Catholic's New Testament due to both denominations sharing forerunners.

The Old Testament, of course, was already verified and codified scripture in the time of Christ. The Apocryphal books, which do not claim divine authorship, are not included. Notably they were also rejected by the original compiler of the Latin Vulgate, Saint Jerome on the same grounds ([a](#)).

*2 Tim. 3:16: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

*1 Cor. 4:6: Brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us not to go beyond what is written.*

*1 Peter 1:25: But the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*

## The Purpose of the Reformation

The Reformation was born out of dissatisfaction with the extra-biblical teachings that progressively grew within the Catholic denomination. If the original scripture, especially the Word spoken by Jesus in the Gospel and expatiated by His chosen apostles was inerrant and sufficient, then any new traditions and laws were unnecessary at best or confounding at worst. The Reformation was a separation from extra-biblical laws and traditions, not the scriptures. It was not born out of ignorance to scripture, but of increased understanding and dedication to them.

*Acts 20:26-30: Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

*Matthew 15:8-9: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules." (Jesus to the Pharisees)*

*Hebrews 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

*Colossians 2:8: See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*

In this regard, Reformed Theology elevates the original scripture as the sovereign authority on salvation and Christian living. This isn't to say all other insight from other people is to be rejected, only that is never to be equal or capable of amending the scriptures. Reformed Christianity does not have any extra-biblical traditions, their Catechism is the Bible itself.

### Sources

(a) A Brief History of the Apocrypha: <https://faculty.wts.edu/posts/a-brief-history-of-the-apocrypha/>

# Five Principles of Reformed Faith

With regard to this focused determination on God and scripture, Reformed Theology is built around 5 core principles:

## **Sola Gratia (Grace Alone):**

Salvation is the wholly unmerited gift from God to man. It is a product of faith alone, it cannot be gained through works alone.

*Ephesians 2:4-5: But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved.*

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

*1 Peter 1:3-5: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

*2 Corinthians 12:9-10: And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

## **Sola Fide (Faith Alone):**

Christians are justified, ie. their salvation is verified, by faith alone. This is not to say that works are not vital (James certainly had something to say about that), but works are a manifestation of faith, they are not the dominant means for salvation or justification. Even works mandated by the Law itself were not enough to merit a salvation that was not already given by God through Jesus' sacrifice.

*Galatians 3:11: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith."*

*Philippians 3:8-9: For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.*

*Romans 4 1-3; 9-10: "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God". What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." "Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!"*

*Galatians 3:10-14: For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*

*Galatians 2:19: For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not set aside the grace of God. For if righteousness comes through the law, Christ died for nothing.*

## **Solus Christus (Christ Alone):**

Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation and the sole mediator between man and God. No other authority is it necessary for one to be saved. Jesus is also the High Priest to His people. So, if someone needs something ordained or conferred by a priest, Jesus is already there. Just as the might and grace of God was not contained or limited to Mosaic Law in the Old Testament, the salvation brought to man through Jesus is not constrained by laws and orders in the New Testament. Just as God is sufficient in all things, so is Jesus.

*1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*

*John 14:6: Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

*Acts 4:11-12: This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

*Hebrews 4:14-16: Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

*Matthew 4:10: Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."*

*Revelation 15:4: Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."*

*1 Colossians 3:17: And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

## **Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone)**

Scripture alone is the only infallible source of divine revelation and the final authority for matters of faith and practice. *Sola Scriptura* does not mean that all truth is contained in the Bible, but rather that all mankind needs to know pertaining to salvation and doing what is pleasing to God is contained within its pages. A secondary assertion of equal importance, is that scriptures cannot be superseded in manners of doctrinal truth.

This is why Reformed Christians do not view traditions as extensions to the Word and thus additions from tradition are not necessary for salvation. The most powerful argument for this is the High Priestly Prayer spoken by Jesus in John 17 (1-26), where He states that He accomplished God's work by teaching people the Word and seeing that they kept it. He follows this with the important distinction that He had preached the Truth and people had received it, so that scripture would be fulfilled. All of this He set up before He returned to God, effectively closing the book on any argument for additional practices being necessary for salvation. Apart from that, here are other verses attesting to the sufficiency of the scripture alone:

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

*Psalms 19:7: The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*

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

*Acts 20: 26-27: Therefor, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.*

The Apostles, particularly John and Luke, did not talk much of successors or the divine powers instated in church offices, but they spoke at length about false doctrines coming from those who followed after them.

*Acts 20:28-30: Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

*John 2: 18-20: Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.*

## **Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God Alone):**

God's glory is the highest good and therefore is the purpose for which we were created. We were made to glorify Him, to reflect His glory, and to proclaim it to all creation. Salvation must be sola fide, sola gratia, and solus Christus — through faith alone, by grace alone, and on account of Christ alone —

Attributing redemption to our efforts, or those of another authority in any way is to rob God of His full glory. If God and God alone is not the one who saves, then He shares His glory with creatures. But as the prophet Isaiah tells us, God will share His glory with no one.

*Isaiah 42:8: "I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols.*

*1 Peter 4:11: Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20: Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

*Revelation 15:4 Who will not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed. "*

Each of these tenets will be described exegetically at length in following chapters. For now, this simply serves as an introduction and framework for future arguments. The purpose of this framework is to establish grounds for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the consistency of God's actions and rationale in scripture.

The Bible may have been physically written by over 30 different men, but they profess a single divine author. Not just inspired, *but in part authored*, God was always direct with His chosen. If the Bible is the word of God, it must be inerrant and its tone unchanging. Anyone can take a verse out of context and mold it to fit their narrative, but taken in context of the whole book, there can only be one true narrative of the Bible.



# Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)

## What is Salvation by Grace?

Salvation being a product of grace, is the assertion that God is ultimately the arbiter of our salvation. This does not mean that good works are fruitless, but rather that the totality of our good works (no matter how numerous) are insufficient for our sanctification. Therefore, it's God who forgives our shortcomings and leads us in our process of sanctification. In that regard, there is no "points" system that requires continuous rites and sacrifices for sanctification; a Christian simply needs to submit to Jesus and do their best to repent from their sinful nature.

## Is it Congruent with the Old Testament?

Salvation being given by grace is not an alien concept. As we've covered in the prior chapter, God was already known for granting grace and mercy to sinners outside the Law long before the New Covenant. The Psalmist was forgiven not because of a sacrifice or a sacrament, but because he had asked for forgiveness. God kept His covenants with the Israelites, even though they had repeatedly rejected Him, because he had compassion on His people. Receiving salvation through mercy and grace is congruent with both God's actions and His nature:

Deuteronomy 4:37: For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

Exodus 34:7: who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

Isaiah 55:7: Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

Hosea 6:6: For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Why is this important? Because understanding that salvation is given as grace exalts God not only as being merciful, but as having absolute moral and spiritual power over the world He created. Men have failed God consistently, it is why Jesus states there is no one good but God and why Paul asserts that there are none truly righteous. Therefore, God gave a salvation that is foremost a merit of His mercy,

not the merit of man's righteousness. How does this appear in the New Testament? First, let's listen to Jesus testify to the scribes:

Mark 12:28: Now one of the scribes had come up and heard their debate. Noticing how well Jesus had answered them, he asked Him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"<sup>29</sup> Jesus replied, "This is the most important: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these."

32"Right, Teacher," the scribe replied. "You have stated correctly that God is One and there is no other but Him, 33and to love Him with all your heart and with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, which is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."34 When Jesus saw that the man had answered wisely, He said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

There were no apostles then, no established Christian church. Jesus had not yet fully revealed himself as the Messiah. These scribes deduced the will and love of God through those Old Testament scriptures alone. God truly operates in mercy, and He desires mercy from His creation. He desires it so much that He elevated it over the very sacrificial system instated in Leviticus to pay for men's sins.

## **Salvation by Grace as Foretold in the Old Testament**

The blueprint for the New Covenant and its tenets of Salvation by Grace are actually very specifically laid out in the latter half of the Old Testament. While not its first mention, Ezekiel provides some excellent background on why God provided this system. I am including the entirety of the passage so that its purpose cannot be mistaken or twisted by ignorance or preexisting bias born of tradition:

Ezekiel 36:16 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 17 "Son of man, when the people of Israel lived in their land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds. Their behavior before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman's impurity. 18 So I poured out My wrath upon them because of the blood they had shed on the land, and because they had defiled it with their idols. 19 I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered throughout the lands. I judged them according to their ways and deeds.

God opens His statement through Ezekiel by recounting the complete insufficiency and impurity of the Israelites. Even as His chosen people they failed both themselves and God repeatedly, and they justly suffered God's wrath because of it.

20 And wherever they went among the nations, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD, yet they had to leave His land.' 21 But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they had gone.

Once again, the Israelites were God's chosen people. They had a relationship with God no other nation had at the time. Not only that, but God directly manifested Himself plainly through His words, miracles, and judgements to them in a way that He had never done with any group before, and by the time Christ's ascension, never again. He revealed Himself to few, and spoke through Jesus or angels, but only the OT Israelites had this level of guidance and exposure to God the Father. Somehow, they were still completely hopeless. So hopeless, that God was actively ashamed of them.

22 Therefore tell the house of Israel that this is what the Lord GOD says: It is not for your sake that I will act, O house of Israel, but for My holy name, which you profaned among the nations to which you went. 23 I will show the holiness of My great name, which has been profaned among the nations—the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when I show My holiness in you before their eyes.

Don't forget, the Israelites were still defined by their religion. They still followed Mosaic Law, Hebrew Traditions, and the Sacrificial System, just only to the ends of attaining righteousness for themselves to cancel out their sins. God was not impressed; without a good heart, their traditions, sacrifices, feasts, ceremonies, even the Sabbath, was tainted for Him by the Israelites sin:

Isaiah 1:11 "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?" says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.

<sup>12</sup> "When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts?"  
<sup>13</sup> Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me.

New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. <sup>14</sup> Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

So, for the sake of His honor and glory, God stated that He will sanctify the Israelites so that other nations would see God's holiness manifest in them (thus, the Israelites righteousness is not their own). Notice how the Israelites didn't get a choice in the matter, not even an ultimatum. God is strong arming them in sanctification in spite of their wickedness.

24 For I will take you from among the nations and gather you out of all the countries, and I will bring you back into your own land. 25 I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and to carefully observe My ordinances.

Notice how God first says that He will cleanse the Israelites of all impurities. He then goes on to state that He will give them a new heart and put His spirit in them. Thus, it is not the Israelites heart or spirit that have become righteous by their own means, God put righteousness in them. This Spirit will cause His people to walk in His statutes and observe His commandments. None of this ascribes any merit to the Israelites themselves, it is all God's work, the people are just fortunate enough to vessels of a righteousness they never deserved and never earned.

28 Then you will live in the land that I gave your forefathers; you will be My people, and I will be your God. 29 I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will summon the grain and make it plentiful, and I will not bring famine upon you. 30 I will also make the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field plentiful, so that you will no longer bear reproach among the nations on account of famine.

Then God makes the powerful claim that would become part of the foundation of the scriptural tenet of *salvation by grace through faith*: He states that He will save them from all uncleanness. God's chosen will no longer be separated from Him by their sin, they will be His people, who He won't be ashamed of, and thus He proclaims that He will be their God.

31 Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and abominations. 32 It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD—let it be known to you. Be ashamed and disgraced for your ways, O house of Israel!

Just to make clear that no one is logically or ethically capable of claiming that people could merit His grace or increase their own righteousness, God emphasizes the new duality between the still impure man and the cleanliness of His Spirit. The goodness God has placed in man will make them ashamed of their own sinful actions, so they will repent. God is already known for judging men by their heart beyond just their deeds (Prov 16:2; Jer 17:10), so God cut to the root of the problem by giving men righteousness from the heart instead of righteousness by works.

Once again, the Israelites did nothing to deserve this, this was to the end of God's glory. Not only that, but also to the end that God will get His sanctified people, who He can take pleasure in.

Where else in the Old Testament can we see this? If you did not immediately defer to Isaiah or Jeremiah, raise your hand. If you raised your hand, smack yourself in the face with it, for both of our sakes. If you did not raise your hand, thank you for paying attention and forgive me for repeating myself for the benefit of the *sore-faced ones*.

Jeremiah 31: <sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

God will write the law on the hearts of His chosen people so they will be intrinsically (even though by exogenous means) driven to follow God, so that they can be God's people and God will not be ashamed to be their God. Because God put His righteousness in them, because He chose remember their sins no more and forgive their inequities, He has justified them Himself. *Soli Deo Gloria*. How will God do this? Well process of elimination leaves us Isaiah; so you can keep your hands where they are.

Isaiah 53:4: Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

So, Jesus died to pay the price for all of men's sins. Now there is no need for sacrifice to remain forgiven, and thus justified. Coupled with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the Spirit God placed in His Elect will drive them to good works, making them pleasurable in His eyes.

<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. <sup>11</sup> Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors, yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

## **Salvation by Grace as Overseen by Jesus and Guided by the Holy Spirit**

Let's affix to something important here: God specifies that beyond Jesus' sacrifice, it is by His knowledge that many people are to be accounted as righteousness. Jesus' sacrifice paid for men's iniquities, but His knowledge made them righteous. Note, not a ritual, not a sacrament, not submission to any other entity, just the knowledge Jesus specifically imparted. What knowledge did Jesus specifically bring? The Gospel.

This is why when Jesus explained His sacrifice on the cross and belief in Him as savior were the prerequisites to being saved using the analogy of flesh and blood in Capernaum, He explained to the disciples that it was only the words of Trust and the Spirit that brought salvation. As many of Jesus' followers left, Peter explained why he remained by stating:

“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.” (John 6:68-69).

For those who are still concerned about the meaning and implementation of those "words of eternal life", Jesus announces the coming of the Holy Spirit. He specifically describes the Holy Spirit as the Helper, or Advocate, who He will personally send after He ascends in John 16:7:

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

He affirms the Spirit's role in verse 26:

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

The Holy Spirit will guide those who God has saved as an act of grace through their path toward righteousness. In this way, the yoke on the growing Christian is still predominantly carried by God. John the Baptist prophesizes this in Judea, saying:

Matthew 3:11 “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

The Apostles are the first to receive the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. The Spirit is now granted to Elect who truly believe in Jesus to be the Messiah and the Son of God. This is seen in action in Acts 10, where Cornelius receives the Holy Spirit as Peter preaches the Gospel, but before being baptized.

Note how this is also consistent with Jesus saving the thief crucified next to Him. The thief believed Him to be the Messiah, in spite of trinitarian baptisms not yet being revealed. Through his belief, the thief was saved. Peter later recounts his own experience with Cornelius to the more traditionalist Christians (whom Luke and Paul amusingly refer to as the Circumcision Party) up in Jerusalem:

Acts 11; ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; 14 he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ 15 As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them

just as on us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ 17 If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?” 18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

Paul reaffirms the reception of the Holy Spirit by hearing the Gospel in Galatians 3:5:

So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

So does John the Baptist:

John 3:31 He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. 33 Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. 34 For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.

To wrap this long topic up:

- Jesus died to pay the debt of the sins for God's people.
- Salvation is imparted by submission to Jesus and the Gospel, whom God determines who is or is not susceptible to it.
- The Holy Spirit, given by Jesus, teaches Christians to live by Christian principals and helps them understand the Gospel.

In that regard, God has still done absolutely everything, just as He stated He would in the Old Testament prophesies.

## **Salvation by Grace Further Elaborated on in the Pauline Epistles**

Keeping the prior mentioned scriptures in mind, listen to Paul:

Ephesians 2:2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by

grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Jesus died for us to redeem us while we were still sinners. God loved us even though we were considered “dead in our transgressions.” We were made alive in Christ by grace and we receive that blessing of salvation through faith, not through our own righteousness. Now, we perform good works not to merit us some personal grace or righteousness, but because we have been transformed by the overwhelming grace and mercy of God. All boasting, all righteousness, and all veneration is credited to the triune God alone.

Titus 3:4-7: “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Now, salvation by grace is not wholly complete without justification by faith, which will be addressed in the chapter, Sola Fide. Together, Sola Fide and Sola Gratia are integral to the fulfillment of God’s New Covenant to the Israelites. In this covenant, mentioned prior in our excerpt from Jeremiah, God told Israelites that He would make them His people, put His law on their hearts, and remember their sins no more. As man clearly did not evolve in the couple of centuries following His prophecies in Isaiah and Jeremiah (see Malachi for a gut check), the gap between men’s righteousness and salvation could then only be filled by God’s grace.



# Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

## What is Sola Fide?

Sola Fide is the assertion that sanctification (the process of becoming spiritually purified) is predominantly the product of faith in Jesus. Of equal importance is that a person cannot brute force their way to righteousness by good works, sacraments, or rites, as it must be preceded and enabled by that faith in Jesus. In that regard, it is the Triune God (we'll talk more about the foundation laid by God and the guidance provided by the Holy Spirit later on) that makes men righteous, not men themselves.

## Why is Sola Fide Contentious? Is it Scripturally Sound?

Sola Fide, though alluded to and even blatantly stated throughout the scriptures, remains one of the most contested tenets of biblical Christianity. If through God's grace, the Gospel is sufficient for salvation and men cannot credit themselves salvation through works and traditions, what power can any specific man or church denomination wield?

That is the larger point of Gospel and the New Covenant. The system of law and sacrifices the Israelites were given so they could reconcile their sins before God has long since ceased to be pleasing to Him. Why? Because matters of the heart were more important than rites or extrinsic propitiation for sin.

Isaiah 1:10: Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! 11“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.

Hosea 6:6: For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Sacrifices for sin were not enough. Both God and Jesus have already stated their desire for mercy over sacrifice in Hosea and Mark. There is a reason Jesus died as a sacrifice for sins once and for all (Hebrews 10). Once Jesus' work was finished, there was no longer any need for any form of offering for sin. If that is so, how are people actually justified? Through faith in the Jesus, as is detailed by the Gospel.

Remember the passage in 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul preaches the Gospel? Here are the two verses preceding it:

1 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, and in which you stand firm. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

Men were not capable of justifying themselves before God through their own righteousness. Neither Jesus nor Paul count any man as good. This is why Jesus had to come in the first place. Jesus had to die to reconcile the sins of man in a way that men themselves could not. Righteousness is now not dependent on works and traditions, but faith in Jesus and His Gospel.

Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; 10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

Look at that again, these verses are direct proof of both the sufficiency and definitiveness of the Gospel for salvation. Note how no mention is made of submission to a church or to a specific rite. There is no room for a system of sacrifices or deeds to continuously renew a man's grace from God. Jesus is the beginning and end of salvation, all man needs to do is remain in Him.

Galatians 2:16: Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

Romans 11:6: "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."

Romans 3:28 "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one."

## **Does Sola Fide Exclude Works from Sanctification?**

So, let's address the elephant in the room, the letter of James. James claims faith without works is dead.

James 2:17: So too, faith by itself, if it is not complemented by action, is dead.

James is right. Of course he is, divinely inspired scripture is perfect. That also means Paul is right when he says that men are justified by faith. By cherry picking scriptures, anyone can construct a narrative fitting to their preconceived notions.

But, if the scriptures are divinely inspired, they all share the same greater author, the infallible God. In that regard, the only true interpretation is the one that is both cohesive and congruent with Scripture as a whole. With that in mind, we can look to Jesus for clarification.

During His ministry, Jesus certainly does outline a necessity of good works for salvation. James is clearly speaking truth when he states that “faith without works is dead.”

Matthew 7:16: By their fruit you will recognize them. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, by their fruit you will recognize them.

So then, what about the words of John and Paul, who assert that faith in Jesus is what brings salvation? Well, Jesus goes on to explain that works are a byproduct and manifestation of faith. The Christian must be justified by faith to bear those good fruits:

Matthew 12:33: Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.

Jesus talks about this in length in John, stating that He made people clean through the word He has spoken to them. Those who heard the truth and remained with Him can consequently bear good fruit, which is a way that people will show themselves to be His disciples:

John 15:1: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Notice how Jesus explicitly states people are already clean because of the words He had spoken to them. The functional agent of this spiritual cleansing is still the reception and belief in the Gospel (with the help of the Holy Spirit, of course). John and Paul are now justified as well. With that in mind, scroll back up to Romans 10:9, where Paul claims that righteousness is explicitly the product of believing in Jesus. So, where do works actually come in?

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me

and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

The fruits of “good works” are established in those who remain with Jesus, maintaining acceptance and submission to his Gospel. The works themselves did not make the man righteous, rather, the man did the works because he was being made righteous through his faith in Jesus. This is conceptually the exact same point Paul was making in Romans 10. This distinction by Jesus here is the rational basis of why Paul can attest that faith without works is dead, and why James can say works without faith are dead. Faith precedes works and will bear works, if it does not, then the faith was never valid in the place.

Matthew 27:21: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

## **Our Good Works are Not Our Own, They are Planned and Owned by God**

Do remember that even our own good works are preplanned and owned by God. I've even used a different verse to stress the scriptural congruence of this tenet:

John 15:16: You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

But, here is the original again for additional context:

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life.

Jesus already knew who would remain in Him and bear good fruit and who wouldn't. He knew this because He, as of the Triune God, already appointed them. Thus, nothing we do, not sacraments, self-sacrifice, or “good works” merit us any salvation that God has not already given us.

Jesus knew this, but we did not. In our own perspective, we are wholly autonomous. In some way, we do have a choice in how we conduct ourselves, but God ultimately establishes our paths. Thus, even though Jesus knows His flock, He still makes the call.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

Speaking of established paths, notice how in Ephesians 2 Paul asserts that we were already made to do these good works. We do them because the Lord has moved us to love Him, to love others, and to manifest His mercy and glory. Jesus already stated we were consecrated by His word, and all of our good works are already owned by Him. This is why justification cannot be founded on a basis of works, even though faith must be proven by them.

Hebrews 11:6: And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.

## It is by Faith in Jesus That Our Good Works are Cultivated

So, faith in Jesus and the Gospel is what justifies men, and those who truly believe will perform works bearing good fruit. Both are required, but faith is pre-eminent. Why is this distinction important?

Romans 9:30: What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 as it is written: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

This distinction is literally a deciding factor on righteousness and justification. Justification based on faith means that only God is attaining and meting out any form of goodness. Justification based on works means that man is in some part working for and earning that grace through their own good works. That is clearly not the case. According to Paul, belief in the former, and not the latter, was literally the bane of the Israelite's attempts at securing righteousness.

Here is a second Parable from Jesus for emphasis:

Luke 18:9-14: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Both men believed in God, but only the one who placed his faith in the mercy of God went home *justified*. The righteousness of the Law-abiding Pharisee was not

enough to please God. Listen to Paul tie my assertion together by stating that by his justification through faith, he is merited with the righteousness not of himself, but of God.

Philippians 3:8: Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

## **Faith Facilitating Good Works Reconciles the False Conflict Between Paul and James**

Keeping the prior mentioned verses in mind, listen as James goes on to profess:

James 2:18: But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Works were the manifestation of faith, just as Jesus had said. By using the scriptures as a whole for the context, and not cherry-picking verses to fit a narrative, the false conflict between justification by faith vs. works is reconciled.

What about Abraham? Paul says Abraham was justified by faith; James says works. How can the same event be justified in two different ways? Easy, it’s not the same event.

Here’s Paul’s:

Romans 4: What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.

Paul directly quotes Genesis 15, the beginning of Abraham’s relationship with God. Abraham established faith first and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Now here’s James:

James 2:21: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she

received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”

Abraham offered Isaac up on the alter far after the passage quoted by Paul, we’re looking at Genesis 22 now. Abraham’s faith was already established (he was already credited as righteous) but through faith he performed the good work of offering up his beloved son in obedience to the Lord. Those familiar with the history of Abraham know that he wasn't exactly a paragon of virtue. The man struggled a lot during his life, but he always kept a steadfast obedience to God. He was certainly more faithful than he was righteous, but God loved Him dearly.

Through faith Abraham completed his good work. If Abraham simply professed to believe God, but did not have that transformative faith, he would have disobeyed God to protect his son and thus that faith would have never been true. Just as Paul and Jesus had asserted, Abraham’s faith preceded and enabled his good works.

James was not rebuking Paul or rewriting the Gospel; he was worried about the hypocrites who profess God in name only. People who thought believing in Jesus as Lord was enough to the extent that they did not love Him or repent. James compares them to demons, he tells them that their faith is not real if they do not live it:

James 2:14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! 20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

James closes with this:

James 2:26: For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

For those reading this who still don’t believe, let me provide you with the words of God, speaking not to, *but through*, Isaiah on the matter:

Isaiah 53: Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him, he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

God explicitly states that Jesus is the offering for the sins of God's people. He then expatiates that with His knowledge, the righteous one (Jesus) will bear the inequities of His people so that they will be counted righteous. Notice there is no room for righteousness from works, traditions, or rites for reconciling sin. Pleasing to God or not, it was only by Jesus' death and subsequent faith in the Gospel (His Knowledge) that men are justified. Here is how the passage ends.

12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

From God Himself, Jesus is the justifier. By this revelation, justification must be by faith in what Jesus has done, rather than by the works done by men. Thus, the true equation of salvation must be:

*Faith = Works + Salvation (Faith precedes both)*

*Not:*

*Faith + Works = Salvation (ie, salvation is not given freely by grace, but as a payment for works)*

Knowing people would struggle with this, Paul expatiates on the concept thoroughly:

Ephesians 1:5 In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight.

Paul explains that we are pre-destined for grace.

Romans 5:15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many! 16 Again, the gift is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment that followed one sin brought condemnation, but the gift that followed many trespasses brought justification.

17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive an abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Not only grace, but righteousness is granted to these pre-destined Christians by Jesus.



1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

As he was pre-destined for good works by the grace of God, Paul did wonderful things in His name. As the works did not originate from his own righteousness, they were rightly credited as the grace of God. The works were not Paul's, Paul knew that righteousness and grace were only from God.

Romans 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

People who do not fully accept the Gospel, nor submit themselves to Jesus, believe that their own works credit themselves righteousness. In doing so, they reject God's gift and Jesus' sacrifice, though they profess to be Christians.

## **Summarizing the Role of Sola Fide, Election, and Works in the New Covenant**

In summary, the Elect does good deeds because he has been born again by the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift was provide by the grace of God, and this gift is cultivated in men by their faith. The consequent righteousness he exhibits is not of his own, but it is product of the Holy Spirit. This is an evolution of and a successor to the older sacrificial system, which allowed men to pronounce themselves righteous by paying for their sins, even though their heart was still impure.

God replaced this system with the New Covenant through Jesus, who died so that the Elect where no longer condemned by their sins and that the Holy Spirit would grant them a pure heart (once again, exogenously. Man is still impure, but the heart and spirit God put in them is righteous). Paul explains this at length:

Titus 3:5: He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 7:6 But now, having died to what bound us, we have been released from the Law, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Romans 8:11 And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices, 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there

is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free, but Christ is all and is in all.

## **Refusing to Treat Salvation as an Unmerited Gift From God is a Noted Spiritual Stumbling Block**

Even though Paul is explicit in his explanations of how salvation is not ultimately attained by works, not every Christian denomination professes this. In fact, some actively and vehemently condemn it, such as the Roman Catholic church:

**“If anyone says, that by faith alone the impious is justified; let him be anathema” (Council of Trent #9)**

**“If anyone says that the justice [or justification] received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of the increase, let him be anathema.” (Council of Trent, 24).**

The assertion made by the Council of Trent, is scripturally and logically tenuous at best. Rejecting that faith precedes works and is the primary mechanism for sanctification also rejects the congruence and equilibrium of the teachings of Jesus, Paul, John, and James. Salvation cannot be given by grace and justified through faith, if it must be increased (ie. purchased) through good works. Grace, by definition, is not earned.

The idea that it must be earned is foolish and rejects God’s mercy. Righteousness was already merited to the man of faith prior to his works, just as men were cleansed by Jesus before they bore good fruit. Does God not say that He will remember the sins of His People no more? Did Jesus not die on the cross to pay for the sins of God’s people once and for all? Does Paul not clearly say that men are saved by faith apart from both the law and works?

The Council of Trent just damned the very apostle Jesus chose to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles and they’ve ignored the full role of Jesus’ sacrifice and God’s covenant to do so. This false message has now made grace a limited quantity that must be actively complied by the works of men instead of being graciously given by God without measure. They are tripping over the stumbling block of Zion:

Romans 9:30: What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; <sup>31</sup> but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. <sup>32</sup> Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, <sup>33</sup> as it is written,

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

People weaker in faith need to believe that they are meriting themselves righteousness so that they have some modicum of control over their own salvation. Belief in justification by faith is difficult to reconcile because it requires complete humility of oneself and total submission to God. Don't be swayed by pride or willful ignorance. Perform good works because Jesus is making you righteous, not because you yourself are seeking righteousness. Even if the physical outcome of the two perspectives are the same, the difference in your intentions and faith are disastrous. The latter puts faith in yourself, so pursue the former and put all faith and exaltation toward God. Otherwise, you are tripping over the stumbling block of Zion, just like the Pharisees and the Israelites.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

# The Result of Solas Gratia and Fide

What is the end product of Sola Gratia and Sola Fide? A new and more pure relationship with God. Under Mosaic Law, and with the dogmas of certain denominations, Christians perform good works not simply out of love for God, but also out of fear of condemnation and death. In this, men are considered to be “enslaved under sin.”

Romans 6:20: For when you were slaves to sin, you were free of obligation to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you reap at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?

The curse of this sin is death; to avoid it, one traditionally had to become enslaved to the Law:

1 Corinthians 15:6: The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Another issue stemming from the perversion of Mosaic law was the dysfunctional relationship many men had developed with "works-based" sanctification. Following God's law and performing good works had become a tool to escape hell and to further acquire righteousness for themselves, the relationship with God became superfluous. Isaiah and Malachi provide good examples of this folly: people technically following sacraments and making sacrifices, but not respecting God or His values:

Isaiah 1:11: “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.

Malachi 1:6 “A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’ 7 By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’

By saying that the Lord's table may be despised. 8 When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the Lord of hosts. 9 And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the Lord of hosts. 10 Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand.

This problem of course, continued on with the Pharisees:

Luke 18:10 “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men,

extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Of course, men were all incapable of perfectly fulfilling the Law, so men were constantly afflicted with the fear and sting of death. Note that this fear is not to be conflated with the just fear of an omnipotent and Sovereign God, but rather the fear of consequences of sin itself.

Romans 3:20: Therefore no one will be justified in His sight by works of the Law. For the Law merely brings awareness of sin.

Aware of this, instead of rightfully condemning us and starting anew, God sent His only son, Jesus, to die on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice. He paid for the sins of God's Elect, freeing them from the curse of the law.

Romans 8:3: For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we can now set aside the fear of our own mortality and serve God, not to fearfully ensure our spiritual survival, but entirely because we love Him. Sin is no longer our master, only God:

Romans 6:14: For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

Romans 7:4: Through our union with Christ, we have died to the law so that we are free to bear fruit for God in the Spirit.

The Christian who professes to Sola Fide and Sola Gratia still submits to God and strives for good works, but they do so without fear or enslavement to sin and Law. The reformed Christian walks according to Spirit purely because they love God. What does this look like under Jesus' Gospel?

Galatians 5:13-14: "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but *through love serve one another*. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Galatians 5:16: But I say, *walk by the Spirit*, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

This fulfills the relationship God had always wanted with us; on based in love and respect:

Matthew 22:37-40: Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

John 14:21: Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

Jeremiah 31:34: And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

# Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

## What is Solus Christus?

Solus Christus is the assertion that the works and lordship of Jesus Christ is the basis of our salvation. An important ramification of Jesus' lordship is that His influence also forms the boundaries of salvation. Nothing outside of Jesus can bring salvation and nothing can remove the salvation that has been imparted by Jesus:

John 10:28: I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."

The first assertion is Christianity 101. Many aberrant forms of Christianity, including Roman Catholicism, can agree with this. The second sentence, which is every bit as important as the first, is what separates true Christian doctrine from false Tradition.

In a truly biblical Christianity, Jesus plays no less than four roles. Each role further defines His Sovereignty, and as a direct consequence, limits the amount of power and influence any other entity, church, or person can have on spiritual matters. In order of this statement, Jesus is the Messiah, our Chief Shepherd, our High Priest, and our Lord.

## Jesus is the Messiah

The first role of Jesus is our Messiah. Jesus accomplishes several things as our Messiah:

**First**, Jesus brings salvific knowledge, which we know as the Gospel:

Isaiah 53:<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. <sup>11</sup> Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Romans 1:6: For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

John 6:45: It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

What this means is that there is no room for extra-biblical knowledge, laws, precepts, or traditions that are necessary for salvation. Commitment to the Gospel itself is salvific for God's Elect.

**Second**, Jesus sacrifices Himself as a sin offering to permanently cover the sins of the Elect:

Isaiah 53:<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Galatians 1:3: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 10:11: And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup> waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

What this means is that people do not require any sacrifices or rites to be forgiven of their sins. Jesus already paid for them. This is why reconciliation with each other and the church is so important, because it exemplifies the forgiveness God has already given us (the parable of the [Unforgiving Servant](#))

**Third**, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit in His place, to teach Christians how to live by God's precepts:

John 14:15: "If you love me, keep my commands. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— <sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

Isaiah 11:2: The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him. The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

John 16:13: When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.

1 Peter 1:3: He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

What this means is that people do not need hidden knowledge, divine revelations from clergy, or special denomination specific practices to learn about God and how to live according to the Gospel. Nor do Christians need rites and



sacraments to be sanctified. If they are of God's flock, the Holy Spirit will be doing that Himself.

## Jesus is the Chief Shepherd

To start, it is important to understand that people are not spontaneously generated. People are purposefully and intelligently made by God.

Psalm 139:16 You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

Jeremiah 1:4-5 The LORD gave me this message: "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.

Isaiah 45:9: "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'? 10 Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' or to a woman, 'With what are you in labor?'" 11 Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: "Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?"

Some people are inclined toward righteousness, and some are not.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Romans 9:6: But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, 7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

Prior to the creation of the world, God had already chosen a subset of people for Himself. He kept record of those people in the **Book of Life**.

Ephesians 1:4: For He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His presence. In love He predestined us for adoption as His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Exodus 32:31: Then Moses returned to the Lord, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!" The Lord said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

Daniel 12:1: "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

God would guide, strengthen, and bless His chosen people. In essence, God was their shepherd:

Proverbs 16:9: The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

Psalms 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. 3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Matthew 10:29: Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

When Jesus took His role as the Messiah, God gave Him ownership of those people.

John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."

John 17:6, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

Jesus is now our Chief Shepherd, which is the logical progression of being our messiah.

John 10:14: I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Note that at the end of Revelation, the Elect are still referred to as belonging to Jesus. He never "gave" them to anyone else.

Revelation 13:8: And all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

The importance of Jesus being your Chief Shepherd, as opposed to it being some spiritual leader, Pope, or guru, is that Jesus' oversight on our spiritual regeneration continues the trend of God's sovereignty. Why would God have a human replace Jesus as Chief Shepherd? That would just be worse re-enactment of Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

## Jesus is the High Priest (and the Sole Mediator Between Us and God)

When Jesus ascends to Heaven after His resurrection, He takes the role of High Priest. For those not familiar with the fundamentals of the Levitical priesthood, priests are liaisons between men and God. Priests ministered, taught God's law, consecrated objects, conferred with God on behalf of the people, and made sin and guilt offerings (sacrifices) to cover their sins. Not all priests were created equal, rather, only the high priest was able to enter the innermost sanctum of the tabernacle (the Holy Place) and speak with God.

Hebrews 9:6: When everything had been prepared in this way, the priests entered regularly into the first room to perform their sacred duties. 7But only the high priest entered the second room, and then only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

Furthermore, it was only the high priest who could make a sacrifice that could cover the sins of their entire nation. The most prolific of high priests would probably be Aaron, who was the only person aside from Moses who could enter the inner sanctum and speak with God. For those interested in learning more, Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9 are good places to start. Preserving this system, Jesus eternally takes on the role of High Priest:

Hebrews 6:20: Where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus is the only one who can make concession for us to God and Jesus is the only one who can make a sin/guilt offering for His flock:

Hebrews 7:25: Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

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

Jesus' role is the ultimate fulfillment of the Levitical priesthood and He makes any other form of theocratic priestly offices or intercessory mediators obsolete. This was of course, by design:

Hebrews 7:11: Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?

This why when we pray to God, we specifically (and only) pray in Jesus' name:

James 5:14: Is anyone 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.

John 14:13: Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

Colossians 3:17: And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Once again, this is by design:

John 14:6: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

1 Timothy 2:5: For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

## Jesus is Lord

Let's talk a little more about the Order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was the priest who blessed Abraham back in Genesis 14. Interestingly enough, they dined on bread and wine beforehand (it's hard not to marvel at God's consistency). What made Melchizedek unique to the other priests and set him apart from the Levitical priesthood that was to follow, was that he was also a king:

Genesis 14:18: And Melchizedek, king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High).

Jesus is the only other one to simultaneously hold the offices of priest and king. Or at least, that is the case from the point the Levitical Priesthood was established onward. This makes him the second, and last, in the "Order of Melchizedek".

[Note that that there are other significances to the Order of Melchizedek, covering them all here would be a little much]

John 17:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

This gives Jesus complete, unshared, and uncontested authority over every aspect of His people:

Matthew 28:18: And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

1 Peter 3:22: Who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

Daniel 7:13: "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.

In that regard, there is no one who can be elevated above Jesus. There is no one to exalted but Jesus (the obvious exception being the remainder of the Triune Godhead). Lastly, there is no authority or name other than Jesus to be submitted to:

Philippians 2: 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

Acts 4:12: And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

## **Jesus can only Fulfill All These Roles Because He is God**

Only Jesus can do these things because God gave Him authority over the world, allowing Jesus to rule both as High Priest and as King. But, Jesus takes this a step further by being God. This means He is omniscient, omnipotent, and eternal.

Hebrews 1:3-4: He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Hebrews 7:25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

Daniel 7:13-14: I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

No one but Jesus was given this power and dominion. No one but Jesus died for the consecration of God's people. No one but Jesus did God render an eternal high priest. In that regard, these verses actively reject the idea that anyone or anything else on top of Jesus and His gospel be necessary for salvation.

Not Mary, not the Pope, not the clergy, not an eternal congregation of saints, nor a specific denominational doctrine. Just as God's mercy transcended Law and Tradition in the time of the Old Testament, Jesus's mercy transcends it in the New Testament. Both God and Jesus are bigger than religion. To suggest otherwise is to deny the sovereignty and autonomy of the Triune God. Jesus' sovereignty leaves no room for a Pope or other religious liaison:

Hebrews 7:28: "For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever."

## **Jesus as a Member of the Triune God Head, is Holy, Exalting Him Above All Falsely Asserted Replacement Mediators or Co-Mediators**

Another reason Jesus wields this specific and ultimate office of Divine Priesthood and Lordship is because He is holy. In fact, Revelation makes sure that every scripturally competent Christian knows that the Triune God **alone** is Holy.

Revelation 15:4: Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

Let me just emphasize here. **Only God is holy.** Not the Pope, not Mary, not the clergy, and not the saints. Many are called to be holy, many find themselves some form of righteousness that is pleasing to God, but only God alone is holy. No impure human has any ability to exceed or supplant the divine authority of Jesus.

While we can certainly benefit from the guidance of priest and elders, they are not necessary in the process of salvation. They are not needed to consecrate trinkets, to dispense righteousness, or to forgive sins. Through Jesus, Christians already have a holy priest immeasurably higher than any man or church office already interceding for them in Heaven.

# Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God Alone)

## Why is Only the Triune God to be Prayed to and Venerated?

Why is glory and worship only to be given to God? Because only the Triune God is good. The only entity in the entirety of Bible that is said to be holy is God.

Revelation 15:4: Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

I would like to make the concession that about half of the modern translations of Matthew 25:31 refer to angels as holy, but even the angels refuse veneration because God is greater than them.

Revelation 22:8-9: And I am John, who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had shown me these things. But he said to me, "Do not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

## The Triune God is the Only Source of Goodness and Salvation

I would like to posit that in the entire history of mankind, no one was able to claim the state of holiness other than God. Even the people that God specifically set aside to be His own, were still ubiquitously sinful. But even when Israelites failed God consistently, God still honored the covenants He made with them. The Israelites' inability to attain holiness is why they could not justify themselves to God through the sacrificial system or through observance of Mosaic Law.

This is why God had to introduce a new system of sanctification based on mercy and faith instead. Due to man's insufficiency, God wrote the law on the hearts of His people and forgave their sin so He could pull the weight for us.

Hebrews 10:16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord. I will put My Laws in their hearts and inscribe them on their minds." 17 Then He adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.

Mark 10:18 "Why do you call Me good?" Jesus replied. "No one is good except God alone.

When Jesus articulated that no one was good but God, that was to be taken literally. Even forgiven of our sins we are still, by nature, tilted away from God and toward selfishness. This is why Jesus left us with the Holy Spirit, which regenerates and cleanses men as long as they submit to His lordship and repent.

John 14:26: But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Titus 3:5: He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

Romans 8:11: If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Not to beat a dead horse, but it really does bear repeating that Jesus did this because men could not justify themselves with either works or rites.

Hebrews 10:5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired 6 but a body have you prepared for me; 6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. 7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"

What does this mean now that our sins are forgiven and the Holy Spirit is turning the heart's of God's chosen toward Him? It means the Triune God has literally done practically everything. Through Jesus, God provides us the only definitive means for sanctification as a product of His mercy and grace. Humans by nature, religious or not, are still kind of lousy.

Titus 3:4-7: "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

## **God is Glorified Through His Mercy, as He has Always Been**

God chooses who He has mercy on toward the ends to His own glory.

Romans 9:17: For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 Therefore God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden.

Isaiah 43:25: I, yes I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake and remembers your sins no more.

God knows the fates of all men and orchestrates the path of those He calls. This means that He further presides over their sanctification as their facilitator.

Jeremiah 10:23 I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. 24 Correct me, O LORD, but in justice; not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing.



Romans 8:28: And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

Not only does God know and guide their path, but God specifically predestines those He claims for good works.

Ephesians 2:10: For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life.

## **God Does Literally Everything Good so He Demands Undivided Worship**

Literally every aspect of goodness and salvation in this world is from God alone. In that regard, when God says that He will share His glory with no one, it is because no one else deserves any part of it. There's a reason why Jesus, being of the Godhead, became the sole mediator of our salvation. If anyone else became necessary for salvation, God's glory would be divided.

Isaiah 48:11: For My own sake, My very own sake, I will act; for how can I let Myself be defamed? I will not yield My glory to another.

When Jesus says that only God is the subject of worship and servitude, it is because no one else is worthy.

Luke 4:8: And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."

God alone must be venerated and worshiped. This is reinforced both in the Old Testament and the Apostolic Letters:

Isaiah 44:8 Do not tremble or fear. Have I not told you and declared it long ago? You are My witnesses! Is there any God but Me? There is no other Rock; I know not one."

1 Corinthians 7:35: And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

# Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone)

*“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and 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. (1 Timothy 3:2-17)”*

## What is Sola Scriptura?

Sola Scriptura is the principle of the scriptures being the highest possible authority on the Christian faith; it is a nonnegotiable tenet of Christian doctrine. When paired with guidance from the Holy Spirit they are also wholly sufficient for equipping men with a righteousness and wisdom that comes from having salvation in Jesus Christ. Why are these assertions so important?

Because wolves in sheep’s clothing, professing the name of the Lord in word only, would distort the true teachings of God and lead others astray. To follow scriptures only is the surest way to remove oneself for the confounding foolishness of men who would twist and add to scripture to aggregate themselves power, wealth, or veneration. All of this is cleanly summarized in Paul’s letter to Timothy.

## Why is Sola Scriptura Contentious?

Sola Scriptura entirely refutes any assertion that additional traditions and rites are required outside the scriptures. It also rejects any possibility of future prophets adding or overwriting scripture, and it disarms heretical churches that have elevated their own offices as having necessary knowledge or sacraments for salvation. In that regard, this is the most dangerous tenet to any organized religion looking to aggregate power or wealth for themselves.

Now, people who argue against Sola Scriptura typically do so because they hold the incorrect assumption that Sola Scriptura is never explicitly spelled out for them in the Bible. Of course, the prior mentioned verse from Timothy pretty conclusively shuts that down. If scripture is God breathed, then clearly scripture is the highest authority on spiritual matters.

If these God breathed scriptures have declared a true, fruit bearing, faith in Jesus and the Gospel as sufficient for salvation, then nothing else outside the

scriptures can be necessary for salvation or Christian practice. Which person can speak or write a precept with higher authority than something that was *God breathed*?

People a little more actualized in their arguments will argue against Sola Scriptura on the basis that the Bible as we know it was not assembled until hundreds of years following the Early Church. Why should we trust the veracity of the scriptures without the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, who claim to wield exclusive forms of righteousness and authority in their traditions?

Well, because the Roman Catholic Church did not breath the scriptures, God did. The Roman Catholic Church did not choose the original canon either.

Roman Catholic history cannot be ethically or intelligently conflated with Christian history. Christianity did not begin with Roman Catholicism and Roman Catholicism certainly does not definitively embody or encompass Christianity on the whole. In fact, the Old Testament was already canonized and quoted in Jesus' time (in the form of the *Septuagint*) and the apostles were already differentiating between their own writings as what was and was not scripture in the New Testament:

[2 Peter 3:15-16: And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.](#)

Note that the entire purpose of being an apostle, and why the “office” does not exist today, is that they have seen and “walked” with Jesus. They are not removed from God the same way the Popes, clergy, preachers, and pastors are. Of these, only the apostles have spoken with the Jesus.

## **The Assembling and Vetting of the Scriptural Canon Has Existed Before and Outside of Roman Catholicism**

Every book within the current Bible was at some point verified to be written by a prophet, leader of Israel, disciple, scribe, or apostle. Even the rare books with contested authors have been evaluated for scriptural and logical cohesion and can reliably be cross referenced with other books with verified authors.

Unlike the Greek, Middle-Eastern, and African mythologies that were melded together and absorbed into Roman culture at the time, Judeo-Christian literature

and law would not be swayed by the inspirations of the myths of other cultures, nor by whims of common men with entertaining stories.

By these higher standards, standards set by God Himself, the scriptures carried an authority on righteousness and truth that the philosophers and theologians of other predominant cultures could never claim.

These Scriptures are wielded authoritatively within the Bible both in the Old Testament and within the New. Verifications typically relied on analyzing signatures, writing styles, and congruence with other verified writings. These verifications have existed long before the Roman Catholic Church and the Councils of Nicaea and Trent and have continued well after.

## **The Inerrancy of the Scriptures Were Actually Used to Fact Check Errors from Proto-Catholic Meddling**

If you own a Bible, Catholic or not, it was actually compared to the standards and translations set by the Reformer, William Tyndale. Prior to the translations from the Reformation movement, was the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, the latter of which is favored by the Roman Catholic Church. William Tyndale, noticing significant errors in Roman Catholics' translations made edits and corrections to the Latin Vulgate using original Greek and Hebrew transcriptions near the time of the Reformation. The scriptures were not wrong, the Roman Catholic Church was. We'll cover this in significantly greater detail in later chapters.

Also note that both the author of the Latin Vulgate (Saint Jerome) and William Tyndale believed the Apocryphal books did not meet their standards of divine inspiration and scriptural congruence, which is why they are not used in Bibles outside the Roman Catholic denomination. The Word of God was always greater than the machinations of men, and to suggest otherwise is to detract from His power and glory.

Source: <https://overviewbible.com/william-tyndale/>

Source 2: <https://christiantruth.com/articles/articles-roman-catholicism/apocryphainroduction/apocrypha3/>

## How do We Know we can Trust the Veracity of Bible After all of These Centuries and Translations?

To the Christian who is genuinely asking this question, I like to posit another question to you: Do you believe God is Sovereign and is in control of everything? If you are not sure, or believe otherwise, I believe you need to check your heart and re-evaluate the depth of your faith.

Let me walk through this with you: We know God wants a people for Himself, we know the Gospel is God's chosen mechanism for salvific belief, and that the scriptures are the basis for knowledge of God and His will. If God is Sovereign, no amount of human meddling could suppress or destroy the scriptures, just as no amount of human meddling was able to suppress or destroy Jesus.

Using the scriptures to find and teach the truth of God was sufficient for David, Solomon, the Prophets, and the Apostles. The scriptures, even while still being written, were Paul's chosen tool of choice to bring Jesus to all of Berea, who would not believe him until they read the scriptures for themselves:

[Acts 17:10: As soon as night had fallen, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now the Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if these teachings were true. As a result, many of them believed, along with quite a few prominent Greek women and men.](#)

## How Well Preserved is the Bible? Well Check for Yourself

The Bible, while first and foremost a Holy Book, is also an incredible historical document. Scripture writings from various times and in various languages, over literal millennia, have been unearthed, translated, verified, and catalogued. Today, we have access to the original Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament, the original Greek translation of the Old Testament written dated back to 3rd century B.C., the Septuagint, the original translations of the Gospels and the epistles published within the 1st century A.D., the erroneous Latin translation of the scriptures (the Latin vulgate), and the current reigning translations originating with William Tyndale, who used the older translations to correct the Vulgate.

We have access to all of these at any time, from our fingertips, thanks to the internet. From the [Blue Letter Bible](#), you can pit every prevalent translation of the Bible against each other, the newer translations, against the older, and you can see

for yourself just how incredibly well-preserved modern Protestant bibles are (ESV, KJV, NKJV, NIV, etc).

## **Sola Scriptura Protects the Christian Church From Corruption**

The importance of the canonization and protection of scripture is precisely because of the dangers of new traditions. Both Jesus and the apostles knew the early church would be corrupted almost immediately. This why the apostles instructed to preserve pre-existing traditions only in congruence with Jesus's teachings, and why they warned of "going beyond what is written".

2 Thessalonians 2:15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."

Notice the tense denoted by the term "have been." It is not ongoing, it is done. This is not a red herring, cherry pick or stretch, Paul uses past tense again in another epistle when speaking of tradition:

1 Corinthians 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

Which brings us to this:

1 Corinthians 4:6 Brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us not to go beyond what is written. Then you will not take pride in one man over another.

Jesus fulfilled the Gospel when He died on the cross. Jesus both fulfilled and rendered obsolete the old covenants when He paid for the new one, His death was sufficient.

Hebrews 8:13: In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

He abolished the old Mosaic laws of sacrifices when He sacrificed Himself. By this, He fulfilled the Mosaic law by making a payment of divine blood, one great enough to pay for the sins of all of His followers forever. God set the wages of sin as death, He grew weary of the sacrificial system solidified in old covenants, so Jesus died to pay those wages forever. Now there are no more sacrifices in payment of sin.

Jesus pronounced this intention in the High Priestly Prayer. Knowing this, John justified his abbreviated Gospel, where he did not record all of the acts of Jesus, with the belief that Jesus' Gospel was complete:

John 20:30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

The apostles knew the Gospel was complete, which why Paul pronounces that he spoke the whole counsel of God long before any religious Roman Catholic hierarchy was ever established.

Acts 20:26-30: Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

It is also why John, Paul, and Luke warned the early church extensively of people who would make the new traditions, writings, and raise up religious leaders that would lead the church astray.

Acts 20: 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

1 John 2 18: Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

Colossians 2:8: See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

These heretics would profess to be Christian, but would preach a different gospel. Not only that, but the weaker people in the Early Church wanted this. The false gospel and its leaders that would arise in the church made them feel good, there aberrant theology was preferable to the truth of the real Gospel.

2 Timothy 4:1: I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

3 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 passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Not only that, but these false gospels and fake apostles were already corrupting the church in the apostles' time. Listen to Paul's exasperation and grief concerning the foolishness of the legalistic Galatians, who asserted Jewish rites as necessary for Christianity:

Galatians 1:6 I am amazed how quickly you are deserting the One who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is not even a gospel. Evidently some people are troubling you and trying to distort the gospel of Christ.

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be under a curse! 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be under a curse!

10 Am I now seeking the approval of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. 11 For I certify to you, brothers, that the gospel I preached was not devised by man. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

Paul admonished them with this assertion:

15 We who are Jews by birth and not Gentile 'sinners' 16 know that a man is not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Paul justified that assertion with this logic:

19 For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God. For if righteousness comes through the law, Christ died for nothing.

## **Jesus Pronounced the Gospel as Complete, so no Scriptural Additions or Amendments are Necessary**

Paul justified his assertion not with new teachings, traditions, or rites, but with the sufficiency of the Gospel professed in the scriptures. The Gospel was already preached in its fullness and Paul was willing to bet his apostolic authority on it in 2 Timothy 4:8. Can we find evidence that Christ would die for the forgiveness of sins in the pre-existing scriptures of Paul's time? Of course we can.

Here it is in the Old Testament:

Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they



broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.

And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

**Need more OT evidence that Jesus Christ's sacrifice was a payment for the sins of God's people? How about Isaiah 53?**

1 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows<sup>3</sup> and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces

6 he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

**How about the in the New Testament, preceding Paul's epistles?**

John 1:29: The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

The Scriptures were already sufficient long before the Roman Catholic church. It's not as if Paul didn't have access to these writings. Was Luke the Evangelist not compiling his historical book of Christ's ministry and teachings at this time? In fact, look at the how closely Paul comes to quoting Luke:

Luke 10:7: And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house.

1 Timothy 5:18 For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”

Paul first refers to Deuteronomy 25:4, and then he expounds on that verse by directly quoting Luke’s underlined passage. Luke’s words were scripture, he was called by God.

How were people to protect themselves from the wolves with false gospels? The apostles wouldn’t be around to dispel these lies forever; the Roman Catholic idea of the doctrinally infallible apostolic succession was not a thing they believed nor had confidence in.

Acts 20: 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

John 2: 18: Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

2 Peter 1:12 "So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.”

Look at the passage in Peter. What was that effort he made to ensure people remembered Christ’s teachings? It wasn’t naming a successor, it was writing another letter:

2 Peter 3: 1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

The Apostles weren’t to last forever, the scriptures and their writings were. This was clearly as intended by Jesus:

Matthew 24:15: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Peter, having walked with Christ, understood and believed that:

1 Peter 1:25 But the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

The way the true path of Jesus would be preserved was to be by reading the scriptures and with the strengthening of the apostolic letters. Read this passage in Acts where Paul preaches Jesus’ gospel to the Thessalonians using scripture, and how by them many believed:

Acts 17:2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

What about the Bereans, who tested what Paul had told them using scriptures and then they too believed:

Acts 17:10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

Note that many new traditions that are supposedly from God directly contradict scriptures. The words of men, seizing themselves power and authority by proclaiming holiness, preach things against the scriptures. The following is only a small beginning of a long list of doctrinal errors and conflicts that would have been avoided if the scriptures were really considered the word of God.

## **Amendments to Scripture From Extraneous Traditions Are Nonsensical When Compared to the Cohesion of the Bible**

Due to limitations of the site editor, the below table may not be properly formatted for everyone. For a full sized version of the table, which has now been updated with even MORE content, go here: [Scripture vs Tradition.pptx](#)

# SCRIPTURE VS. TRADITION

BY ETHAN WATERMAN

## JUSTIFICATION

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>For by grace are you saved through faith; not of yourself, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)</p> <p>Titus 3:4-7: "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."</p>	<p>CCC 2036, "The specific precepts of the natural law, because their observance, demanded by the creator, is necessary for salvation."</p> <p>CCC 2080, "The Decalogue contains a privileged expression of the natural law. It is made known to us by divine revelation and by human reason."</p> <p>CCC 2068, "so that all men may attain salvation through faith, Baptism and the observance of the Commandments,"</p>	<p>Tradition asserts that salvation is not freely granted to the faithful by grace. Salvation can be lost by sin and must continuously be reattained and maintained by laws and sacraments.</p> <p>Keep in mind that in the Roman Catholic Worldview, mortal sins include not submitting to the Pope, purposefully not attending Mass, and using contraception: <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortal_sin">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortal_sin</a></p>

# SALVATION THROUGH JESUS ALONE

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)</p> <p>12 Salvation exists in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)</p>	<p>"For it is only through Christ's Catholic Church, which is "the all-embracing means of salvation," that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation," (Vatican 2, Decree on Ecumenism, 3).</p> <p>"We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff" (Unam Sanctam, 1302).</p> <p>"It is impossible to save one's soul without devotion to Mary and without her protection." -Saint Anselm, Archbishop and Doctor of the Church, 1033-1109 AD</p> <p>-</p>	<p>According to Catholic theology, Jesus is not sufficient as the only way, truth, and life. He is not the sole mediator. His salvation and sacrifice, and God's mercies, are in part dependent, restrained, or confined to the Catholic denomination and Mary.</p>

# INDULGENCES

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money. Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.</p> <p>But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. (Acts 8:18-25)</p> <p>Ezekiel 18:20 "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself."</p>	<p>CCC 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 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.</p> <p>CCC 1498, "Through indulgences the faithful can obtain the remission of temporal punishment resulting from sin for themselves and also for the souls in Purgatory."</p>	<p>Saving grace cannot only be merited by men's deeds, but it can be effectively purchased with money directly or through donations. People can also purchase grace and relieve the burden of other's people's sins, even if they are already dead.</p> <p>Thus, God is not concerned with hearts of His people above of all, appropriating for sins by any means is good enough.</p>

# DIVINE INTERCESSION

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>Hebrews 5:24 But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.</p> <p>1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.</p>	<p>"If anyone says that it is a deception to celebrate masses in honor of the saints and in order to obtain their intercession with God, as the Church intends, let him be anathema." (Council of Trent)</p> <p>"No man is delivered or preserved from the worldwide snares of Satan except through Mary; and God grants His graces to no one except through her alone." StGermanus of Constantinople</p>	<p>According to tradition, Jesus is not the only mediator, nor is He the sole way to God. His sacrifice was not the whole propitiation for the sins of the Elect.</p> <p>Jesus is also not sufficient as high priest, nor is He emotionally or spiritually approachable enough to mediate between man and God without other appealingsto Him on their behalf.</p>

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# WORSHIP AND DEVOTION TO GOD ALONE

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>1 Corinthians 7:35: And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.</p> <p>Isaiah 48:11: "For My own sake for My own sake, I will act; For how can my name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another"</p> <p>Luke 4:8: Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.</p> <p>Psalms 148:13: Let them praise the name of the Lord. For His name alone is exalted. His glory is above earth and heaven.</p>	<p>Woe to those who despise devotion to Mary! . . . The soul cannot live without having recourse to Mary and recommending itself to her. He falls and is lost who does not have recourse to Mary. St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori</p> <p>(Source: <a href="http://www.catholictradition.org/Mary/mary18c.htm">http://www.catholictradition.org/Mary/mary18c.htm</a>)</p> <p>"We, therefore, who, though unworthy, hold the place of Vicar of Christ upon earth, shall never cease to promote the glory of so great a Mother, as long as life endures." (Pope Leo XIII, AUGUSTISSIMAE VIRGINIS MARIAE)</p> <p>"It is impossible to save one's soul without devotion to Mary and without her protection."-Saint Anselm</p>	<p>God is not the only entity to venerated or glorified. God does not mind the worship of other entities, and in fact, requires it for salvation, faith in Jesus means nothing without recourse to Mary.</p> <p>In that regard, the Psalmist was not to be taken literally when they said to exalt God alone, they were either lying or ignorant. Of course, this means that Jesus was wrong to quote them authoritatively.</p> <p>Not only that, but apparently Paul was purposefully misleading the early church by not ever venerating Mary. In fact, Mary is not glorified in even a single epistle. All of the Apostles were ignorant to this.</p>

# ICONOGRAPHY AND IDOLATRY

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>Exodus 20:2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.</p> <p>3 "You shall have no other gods before me.</p> <p>4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved 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.</p> <p>5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,</p> <p>6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.</p>	<p>The holy Synod enjoins on all bishops, and others who sustain the office and charge of teaching, that, agreeably to the usage of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the intercession and invocation of (dead) saints; the honor to relics; and the legitimate use of images..</p> <p>But that they think impiously who deny that the [dead] saints...are to be invoked; or who assert either that they do not pray for men; or that the invocation of them...is idolatry; or that it repugnant to the Word of God, and is opposed to the honor of the one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus; or that it is foolish to supplicate, vocally or mentally, those who reign in heaven. (Council of Trent)</p> <p>The images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of other saints, are to be had and retained particularly in temples, and that due honor and veneration are to be given them. (Council of Trent)</p>	<p>God, through multiple commandments, established that NOTHING was to be venerated but Him directly.</p> <p>He even specified that images and statues of things representing things of heaven were clearly wrong.</p> <p>However, at some point He completely changed His mind without telling the Incarnate of His Word, Jesus, or any of the apostles, about it.</p>

## Believing in the Inerrancy of God's Scriptures is More Logical Than Believing in the Inerrancy of a Corrupt Church

Now that you've squinted your way through that extensive table of doctrinal errors introduced and endorsed by the Roman Catholic Church, I would like to present to you this statement from them on why they are infallible:

“Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they can nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly. This is so, even when they are dispersed around the world, provided that while maintaining the bond of unity among themselves and with Peter’s successor, and while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or morals, they concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held conclusively. This authority is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an ecumenical council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church. Their definitions must then be adhered to with the submission of faith” (*Lumen Gentium* 25).

In this regard, Sola Scriptura is not only the most intelligent route for a Christian, since it is the only principle to solely follow the infallible word of God. Sola Scriptura is also the most just assertion, as it only accepts God as the higher teacher and authority. According to Tradition, the Roman Catholic councils and their saints are supposed to have divine understanding of Christian doctrine. They try to garner themselves an underserved power by asserting that only the clergy can properly interpret scripture, and the Pope is supposed to be inerrant when speaking of doctrinal matters.

They only need to be wrong once for all of that Tradition to be exposed as lies and foolishness. This presents a problem for Roman Catholicism, as there are multiple instances where scripture and Catholic tradition are in irreconcilable conflict. Note that most of the arguments in the above table are covered in much more detail in other portions of the statement.

To reiterate, only a single one of my scripture-based arguments has to stand in order to depose Roman Catholicism as God’s one true church. How much more reasonable it is then to side with scripture, professed as “God breathed” when it comes to actual Christian doctrine?



# What is the Gospel?

## The Background of the Gospel

Breaking this biblical theology down into the simplest terms, the Gospel is the "truth" of salvation. Roughly translated as "good news" from the Greek word *euangelion*, the Gospel details both the description and the mechanism of the New Covenant established in the various Old Testament passages (ex. [Isaiah](#), [Jeremiah](#), and [Ezekiel](#)). In that regard, we can't truly understand the purpose and gravity of the Gospel without paying Old Testament a visit to learn about the New Covenant.

## Background on the New Covenant

[Exodus 6:6](#): Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

<sup>7</sup>I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.'"

For millennia, God led the Israelites under human liaisons: there was Moses and Aaron, Joshua, the Judges, Kings, and the prophets both major and minor. God wanted a people who walked alongside Him in His values and statutes, but the Israelites continuously rebelled against all of them.

[Leviticus 26:45](#): I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord."

<sup>46</sup>These are the statutes and rules and laws that the Lord made between himself and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai.

God instituted laws in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. These laws were partly to establish righteousness and partly to establish an ideal culture for His people. If the Israelites would not possess His values naturally, perhaps they could learn them through legality. Of course, this didn't pan out either.

[Daniel 9:11](#): "All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him."

So, why all of the struggle? Well, the Lord wanted a holy people to Himself, and He purchased that right through His covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 17:8: And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

The Israelites were never able to live up to His standard of holiness, and God was willing to shepherd them anyway. However, many of them became tilted against God within their hearts, and that was something God knew was unreconcilable.

Isaiah 29:13: "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:"

The Israelites, both those who loved God and those who did not, were incapable of being His holy people. They could not do it by their character or by Mosaic law. This brought a lot of suffering both to God and the Israelites. This suffering was necessary though, as it established the consequences of sin and it established the incredible gravity behind what it meant to be holy.

The history of the Israelites made it very clear than only God Himself was capable of holiness. This presents a bit of a problem for us, because God's resting place is Heaven, and nothing unclean can dwell there:

Revelation 21:<sup>22</sup> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup> But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

So, God announced His decision to make His people holy Himself, consecrating them personally by His own will and works. The Israelites would finally have eternal deliverance and God would finally have His Holy people. Listen to how He describes this New Covenant in Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 36:22: "Therefore say to the Israelites, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them.

Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes. "24 " 'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the

countries and bring you back into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

## The Price of the New Covenant

These gifts, the gift of forgiveness and the gift of righteousness from God Himself, is an incredible blessing. But, God is a God of justice, and a God of Covenants. Payment must first be made for the atrocity of sin, and the offering must be proportional to the cost.

Leviticus 4:1: And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If anyone sins unintentionally in any of the Lord's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them, <sup>3</sup>if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull from the herd without blemish to the Lord for a sin offering.

<sup>4</sup>He shall bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord and lay his hand on the head of the bull and kill the bull before the Lord. <sup>5</sup>And the anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull and bring it into the tent of meeting, <sup>6</sup>and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle part of the blood seven times before the Lord in front of the veil of the sanctuary.”

If the wages of sin are death (Romans 6:23), then the covenant must be sealed with a sacrifice. If the life force of men is contained in blood, then blood must be spilled and sprinkled upon the altar (Leviticus 17:11). If this pact was to eternally pardon the sins of His people, then someone without sin would have to be offering (Hebrews 10:4-10). You can't scrub clean a dirty slate with dirty tools, after all.

Well, the only person who could possibly possess an excess of Holiness that could exceed the totality of unrighteousness from the Israelites would have to be one "born" of God, since God was the only one who was holy.

1 Samuel 2:2: “There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.

This brings us to Jesus. Jesus was with God eternally, and was of God's essence. So, Jesus was of God, and Jesus then must be perfect and holy. So, Jesus descended from Heaven and took up the husk of a man. Though Jesus valiantly maintained His holiness in this form, He now had blood that could be shed on the proverbial altar.

Jesus was a sacrificial lamb, just like the ones sacrificed on the altar by the Levites and their contemporaries to pay for the wages of sin. God would describe this in grisly, but also beautiful, detail in Isaiah 53:

Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? <sup>2</sup> For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

Jesus would be raised up on Earth a common man, not possessing God's majesty. But, God would reveal Jesus to be the Messiah, the same one prophesized by the late prophets.

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

Jesus truly became human, He experienced the allure of sin and temptation just like we do. But through all of that, He maintained His holiness. Jesus may have been revered by His disciples, but He was despised and disrespected by the world, especially those in power.

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

To reiterate: Jesus lived and died without any sin to His name. He wasn't crucified for His sins, He had none. Jesus was crucified for our sins. In fact, God poured the price for all of the sins of His people directly onto to Jesus.

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. <sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? <sup>9</sup> And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Jesus' crucifixion was not justice from the Roman empire, it was a unjust trial. Jesus truly was oppressed and tried wickedly by the Roman empire and the Jewish leaders. The true justice done here was from God, for Jesus had become a sacrificial lamb for God's people:

<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. <sup>11</sup> Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Jesus paid the wages for our sins eternally, and God was satisfied by that offering. Not only did Jesus die for our sins, but the knowledge of this transaction and the New Covenant would further make many people righteous. This of course, being a significant part of our Gospel.

## **What is the Functional Purpose of All of This?**

In short, Jesus died for you. Jesus specifically died for you because God wants to spend eternity with you. God loves you so much, that specifically instated a process to make you holy (because you are unworthy yourself) so that you could reside in Heaven with Him.

Jesus gave up the comfort and power of His divinity for over thirty years. He lived and suffered as a man and willingly gave Himself up to be tortured and killed in one of the most brutal and painful punishments of all time, even going to Hell for three days, just so that the ledger of your sin can be wiped clean. That is the backbone of the Gospel.

## **Jesus is the Bridge Between Old Testament Prophecy and New Testament Doctrine**

Even though the doctrines on attaining righteousness in Christianity are different from the Mosaic law, the shared purpose of finding salvation in God allows the Gospel to fulfill the order and prophesy of past covenants. Blood sacrifice for sin is not needed anymore, Jesus paid for it all. Now His Lordship makes us righteous. Each tenet of this statement is readily found in John, chapter 1, which you might notice shares more a few parallels with Isaiah and Ezekiel:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

To start, the Word is the knowledge that would make men righteous. This is a good tie in with Isaiah right off the bat. We know that Jesus possesses this knowledge, equating Him with the Word. Since we know that Jesus is of God, than the Word can be logically equated to God as well.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

John the Baptist prophesized about the coming of Jesus. Even though Jesus, being of God, was around from the beginning, the world had no idea of His true identity. Also of note is Jesus being equated with light, this is a stark contrast to sin, which is equated to darkness. These parallels between the Old and New Testament are still holding strong.

11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Look closely at verse 12. Just like in Isaiah 53, the knowledge of Jesus makes men righteous. Not just that righteous, but it specifically grants people the ability to become children of God. Just as prophesized, it is by Jesus that God will attain His holy people.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John 1:17 confirms this concept. Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic law. Sanctification would be ultimately obtained by grace, rather than sacrifice and law.

## **So, How Do We Receive This Salvific Grace From Jesus?**

The stressed importance of the Gospel is that this salvation is given as grace from God. Men themselves are incapable of attaining this by their own righteousness. In that regard, belief and submission to the Gospel of Jesus is the operative medium of grace, which in turn is the operative mechanism of receiving salvation:

John 3:16-18: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

The belief of Jesus' messianic role and His Lordship is specifically the knowledge that makes men righteous. Keep in mind that Him being the Son of God, is necessary for both. An important condition is added on to this salvific belief, in order for it to be valid this belief must be one that results in submission and repentance, only then will one be spared God's wrath and have eternal life.

John 3:33-36: Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Let's expand even more on this often mentioned knowledge: The words of God that Jesus utters grant the Spirit (which will later often be associated with truth and life) without measure.

John 6:66-69: After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" 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."

The Holy Spirit, a benevolent emissary and extension of God, will later be entrusted with guiding His chosen people to understand and live by the Gospel. This is how God will put His laws on the hearts of His people:

Jeremiah 31:33: For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Here it is again in Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:16: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"

## **What is the Gospel, Scripturally Speaking?**

So, now we know in detail about what the Gospel is, but how is it actually professed in scripture? My personal favorite expression of the Gospel comes from Peter:

Acts 10:36-43: As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.

He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree,

40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the

living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Now, while there are many verses offering elaboration of various aspects of the Gospel, Paul explains a more concise and concrete version in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 15:1-6: “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you – unless you believed in vain.

For I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep”.

Let’s break these two proclamations of the Gospel down into four steps:

1. Jesus Christ died for payment of our sins.
2. Jesus was buried; He truly died a mortal death. His blood sealed this New covenant made back in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel between God and the Israelites.
3. Jesus was raised back to life after three days, proving He is the Son of God, who has mastery over life and death.
4. Those who believe in Him (and repent) will be sanctified so that may be consecrated for God. Jesus appeared to the many of His believers, so that they would believe He had done this.

Why is this specific (and very literalist) interpretation so important? Because no glory is counted to man, and all glory is counted to God. Jesus could resurrect Himself only because He is God. Following God the Father’s intentions, Jesus died for our sins so that God would obtain a righteous people for Himself, in which He would manifest His glory.

## **How Does the Gospel Glorify God? Is The Gospel Congruent with the Old Testament?**

Man did not become righteous themselves and they certainly did not attain perfect lives free from sin, but they received this grace by God’s mercy. This is why Jesus can authoritatively state there are no good men on earth, while at the same time He prepares a place for them in Heaven. We know that this is not a strictly New Testament concept.

To reiterate, God sparing people on the basis of mercy is something that glorifies Himself, and He does so throughout the Old Testament.



Isaiah 43:25: I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Exodus 33:19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

Psalms 32:5: Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Psalms 103:8-11: The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Psalms 51:1: Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness. According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

Even back in the days of the Old Testament, God was granting mercy and forgiving sins for the unrighteous. Notably in Psalms, God shows steadfast love and mercy toward those who fear Him and acknowledge their sins. He was not judging them on a sin-by-sin basis. Man did not make themselves righteous purely through obedience to the Law, God Himself was providing them mercy they did not deserve. Look at how this had exalted God both in Exodus and Psalms.

Jesus's life, the Gospel He brought, and His death are a continuation and fulfillment of God's mercy and power that He had demonstrated then. Let's look at Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 31-34: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.

And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Jesus is the messiah, the Son of God, and our Lord. God states that He remembers the sins of those who know the Lord no more. He writes a Law on their hearts, so that they may seek and recognize God and His laws intrinsically. The just and merciful God of the Old Testament is reflected in the sacrifice and teaches of Jesus in the New Testament.

## Is Acceptance and Observance of the Gospel Sufficient for Salvation?

For some background, many denominations of Christianity do not treat the Gospel truths as sufficient for salvation. They introduce new practices and new offices beyond Jesus that must be submitted to for salvation. This is heresy, because the Gospel was given completely by Jesus Himself.

The fulfillment of the New Covenant outlined is demonstrated when Jesus, the Word of God incarnated as man, manifested the truths and will of God to the people. After ministering to the people, Jesus died and rose again so people would believe and be saved. This Gospel is complete and sufficient. Jesus Himself summarizes this in the High Priestly Prayer:

John 17:1-5: When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Jesus' purpose here on Earth was to bring salvation to God's people. He did so by dying to eternal pay for their sins and by teaching Gospel truths that the Holy Spirit would use to guide Christians to walk by God's precepts. Look at the underlined passage, Jesus already accomplished this role. All knowledge and tools pertaining to salvation have already been established in their entirety.

Jesus also reaffirms John 1 when He states that God had given Him authority over all flesh and the sufficient power to give eternal life. No new offices, like the Papacy, have any right or power to challenge Jesus' assertion or authority. If you believe in Jesus' Lordship, then you must accept that He delivered a complete Gospel and that He provided all the necessary tool for God to have His holy people.

Notice what follows in reference to this:

John 17:6-10: "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

Jesus fulfilled God's task by manifesting God's name and preaching the words God has given Him. He did so in a way that these people would know that Jesus and His Word came directly from God. To argue the Gospel is insufficient, that new practices and leaders are needed, is now to reject both Jesus *and* God.

John 17:11-14: And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Jesus has since then left the world to reside with God. The High Priestly prayer was made with the context that He was to be crucified shortly after. In His absence, the Word Jesus had spoken of during His ministry keeps His people oriented toward God with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Most notably, Jesus specified that He had "given" them God's Word, the same one He intended to impart among His people all the way back in Isaiah and Jeremiah. The Gospel is complete and sufficient, not just for salvation, but even for the joy of Jesus.

John 15-23: I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Jesus reaffirms that the words He had spoken, God's Word, is truth. This truth consecrates people, as in, it imputes them with sacredness or holiness. People themselves are not holy, they do not make themselves holy. Our righteousness is the product Jesus' actions and the dispensation of the Holy Spirit that would soon follow.

Jesus fulfilled the New Covenant through his sacrifices and the provision of the Gospel so that in the time of judgement God would have a righteous people who could walk with Him. Jesus then re-emphasizes the importance of Christians to believe in Him, and that He was sent by the Father.

24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Jesus resides in Heaven with God the Father, and as stated in Revelation 21:27. Nothing impure can enter Heaven. Jesus died so His blood would once and forever pay for the sins of God's chosen people (we will cover more of this later).

## **For God's Chosen, the Gospel Itself Is Immediately Salvific**

Notice how the Gospel is announced as complete and sufficient for salvation long before the establishment of any legalistic Christian denomination. There is no need for anything to be added. People certainly need to seek Jesus and live for Him, but this is explicitly because they've accepted the Gospel with a belief that comes from the heart rather than just through words and rites. This topic will be further expanded upon in following chapters.

But for now, here is our biblical example of the total sufficiency of the Gospel for realizing salvation:

Acts 11:34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

39 And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Look at the underlined passage, this is salvation by the grace of God, provided through faith in Jesus. No rites, traditions, or theocratic offices were needed. You want to know what irrefutable evidence of a saved man is? Imputation of the Holy Spirit is pretty good example. Look at what happens below at Pentecost, after these people heard the Gospel from Peter:

44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and

extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

Peter would later recount to the Early Church, situated in Jerusalem, how it was specifically the receipt of the Gospel that facilitated the imputation of the Holy Spirit onto Cornelius and his household:

Acts 11:12 And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. 13 And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; 14 he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ 15 As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning.

16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ 17 If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?”

## **In Closing**

I opened this chapter with the argument that the belief and adherence to the Gospel was the complete truth for salvation. 6,000 words of scriptural arguments later and I have now closed it that way. Thousands of years of Old Testament prophecy and New Testament doctrine are all in flawless accordance with this.

So, make no mistake, the truth of the Gospel and submission to Jesus' Lordship is the beginning and end of salvation. Anything added to that assertion is heresy. God wants you, so Jesus died for you. Let's take a moment to appreciate it.

# The Nature of Salvation

*“Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” John 5:10-13*

## Salvation is a Structured Process

The Scriptures speak of an outline, or an order, to salvation. First, the Lord possesses foreknowledge of all of those who are saved. Then He calls them to Him in the Christian faith. These chosen have the Law written on their hearts and receive the Holy Spirit by accepting the Gospel and submitting to Jesus. By faith, their salvation (which is an unmerited gift from God) is justified.

Paul outlines this for us very plainly in Romans 8:30:

*And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”*

So, looking at this verse, we have at least four tenets in God’s plan for salvation: Predestination, Calling of His Elect, Justification, and Glorification.

Of course, something as vital to Christian belief as salvation is not left to the devices of a single man, nor verse. God is unchanging, so this order of salvation was orchestrated throughout the Bible and spoken by many under Him. Let’s break this down together from the top, piece by piece.

## Step 1: Predestination

First, God knows who is saved and who is not, long before they were born. He keeps a record known as “The Book of Life.” This book is the basis of **Predestination**, where God predetermined, and personally called those who He will save.

*Revelation 13:8: And all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.*

This is a reference to the first mention of the Book of Life, which was in Exodus. Note how the condition for keeping one’s name in the book of life was originally determined on the basis of sin.

Exodus 32: <sup>31</sup> So Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. <sup>32</sup> But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.” <sup>33</sup> But the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.

A cursory glance at the New Covenant in Jeremiah explains why God had planned on sending Jesus Christ to the world to grant salvation by grace. No mere human was capable of remaining sinless. Given that everyone has sinned, salvation through faith must be elevated above works to consecrate a people for God and a proverbial bride for Christ. This is where election from Jesus Christ comes in.

Ephesians 1:3: <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Notice how tightly this passage in Ephesians continues what had God has proclaimed in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 31: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord.

<sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Later, Jesus Himself makes it clear that God has given these chosen people to Him. God chose them, and Jesus gave them salvation so that their place in the Book of Life is justified.

John 10: 25-30: “I already told you,” Jesus replied, “but you did not believe. The works I do in My Father’s name testify on My behalf. But because you are not My sheep, you refuse to believe. My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.

Jesus’s assertion is clearly maintained in Revelation:

Rev. 21:27: But nothing unclean will ever enter it [the New Jerusalem on the New Earth], nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life”.

Now that we've established this book of life and foreknowledge, Romans 8:30 next asserts that Christ **calls his Elect** to Him for the purpose of receiving salvation. The above mentioned verses from John 10 already testify that His Elect, the sheep, will follow His voice and that He will save them. Where else can we find this?

John 6:37: All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

John 17:2-6: Even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

Even before Jesus's coming to earth, God still enacted this election. Consider what Paul teaches concerning Isaac's sons:

Romans 9:10-16: And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."

Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

Now think back to our prior passage in Romans about God's dealings with Ramses II in Exodus:

Romans 9:17: For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 Therefore God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden.

Predestination works both ways: Jacob and Moses were made mighty and loved, Ramses II and Esau (initially) were hated and brought low. Both of these situations serve to glorify God by demonstrating His sovereignty and control. In Romans 11, Paul delves further into the process and ramifications of election, both in choosing those who are saved, and those who are hardened:

<sup>2</sup> Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? <sup>3</sup> "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my



life.”<sup>4</sup> But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”<sup>5</sup> So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.<sup>6</sup> But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

<sup>7</sup> What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,<sup>8</sup> as it is written,

“God gave them a spirit of stupor,  
eyes that would not see  
and ears that would not hear,  
down to this very day.”

<sup>9</sup> And David says,

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,  
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;  
<sup>10</sup> let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,  
and bend their backs forever.”

## Step 2: Calling the Elect

God knows how all things play out, but men don't. From their perspective, they are wholly autonomous. The scripture does not state that God controls every action of every man eternally, but it does state that God knows and even orchestrates the paths of His Elect (and others) toward what is pleasing or glorifying to Him. From this, we can deduce that though God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, people still possess a degree of free will unless God impresses on them otherwise.

This is the logical conclusion we can come to when God asks the Israelites to reason with Him, why He agrees with Lucifer to test Job, and why Jesus was able to marvel at the wisdom of the roman centurion who knew that He could heal his daughter with mere words.

For a more concrete example, Paul states that we have been pre-ordained toward good works.

Ephesians 2:10: For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life.

Solomon also explains the orchestrating hand of God:

Proverbs 16:9 “The mind of the man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”

So, when Jesus spreads the word, He knows some will follow and that some will not. Those who would are those whose names are written in the Book of Life. Jesus speaks in parables and analogies, declaring at the end: “those with ears, let them hear.”

This why He referred to the Gospel as flesh and blood at Capernaum, only to explain to His disciples immediately after that it was His words that bore the eternal life, not the flesh. It's why Jesus speaks of following Him as vital to salvation, even alluding to the possibility of salvation being made available to the Gentiles with an allegory of a wedding filling its forsaken seats with everymen instead of honored guests. It's also why He explicitly states that not every person who hears His word will remain in Him. This is the most apparent in the parable of the sower:

Mark 4:2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil.

6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” 9 And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Why did He know there would be people who would at first follow His word and then fall away? Because they were not Elect. Thus, they were never truly saved to begin with. God is perfect, and leaves nothing unfinished.

Philippians 1:3: I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our Shepherd and will not lose a single sheep. So therefore, those people who followed Jesus' words for a small while and then fell off the path were never Elected in the first place. They were always going to wither along the path. These people may have received the comfort of the Gospel, but they would not fight for it when matters of the world pulled them away from it. Jesus's disciples struggled with this parable, just as they did at Capernaum, so Jesus elaborated for them:

Mark 4:13 And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.

16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. 17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

18 And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 20 But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

How does Jesus preface this?

Mark 4:11 And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, 12 so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.”

The words bear the eternal salvation. To reiterate, those who hear and accept are the ones who repent and are the ones who are forgiven. There are plenty people of people who receive the Gospel, but are overwhelmed by worldliness and were able to truly understand, commit, and repent. This is because salvation was meant for the Elect, which is why Jesus refers to them as His flock:

John 10:26 But because you are not My sheep, you refuse to believe. 27 My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.

### Step 3: Justification

Justification is God’s declaration that He has pardoned the sins of His elect. This justification comes from hearing and accepting the Gospel, the payment of their sin was the sacrifice Jesus had willing become on their behalf. As we’ve discussed ad nauseum in prior chapters, this was granted by grace alone, without the purchase or merit of “good works” of men.

Romans 3:21 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

In this passage, which once again, even Peter himself considers scripture, we can draw several pertinent assertions:

- Righteousness in God’s eyes is now established apart from the Law.
- Righteousness is now imparted on the basis on the belief and faith in Jesus Christ.

- This righteousness was imparted as a gift, as all people are incapable of attaining their own salvation through their own righteousness.
- This state righteousness, particularly the forgiveness of sins, was a purchased through Jesus' sacrifice.
- This purchased righteousness is received by genuine faith in Jesus Christ.

Given that Paul had to contend with the stubbornness of the Jews, Galatians, and the Philippians, he made sure to emphasize this point repeatedly, *almost as if it were an extremely important principle to Christian faith that shouldn't be altered to suit traditions or empower religious hierarchal structures.*

Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

Human traditions and spiritualism are not important, for Christ is the only foundation. This is why Paul saw fit to warn the Colossians of the man-made philosophy and traditions that could potentially twist this message.

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

### **3.1: Rationalizing Justification of the Elect Against Roman Catholicism**

People are no longer ruled by flesh, but by Christ. Christ alone is head of the church. Much like how Peter and James did not count themselves heads of the church, the current Pope today is no head either, in spite of the Catechism's claim to the Pope's supreme and full authority (882). Paul also reiterates that that the Christian is raised from spiritual death through faith, not through a system of sacraments.

13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

God forgave His Elect of all of their sins through the sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus' work has already been fulfilled, hence why His last words were "it is finished." (John 19:30) There is nothing new to be added that would be necessary to salvation.

Romans 5:18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For 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.*

Notice the emphasis on **one man's obedience granting righteousness to many.**

What this means is that continuous sacraments, rites, and works are not needed to cleanse sins in the present or future. God has specifically stated, in His own covenant, that He remembers the sins of His people no longer (Hebrews 8:12).

If the validity of faith is determined by the manifestation of "good works", then why is the distinction of justification by faith important? Because it is contingent to the Gospel; justification by faith is the fulfillment of the New Covenant that Jesus paid for with His blood. If you believe your own works actually merit you grace and salvation, then by definition that grace is not true grace, but it is favor that comes and goes.

This would relegate God to a petty sin accountant who is constantly tallying up and judging us on a sin by sin basis. He becomes a god who exists in a short sighted and intrinsic state of petty wrath who must constantly be appeased by meager shows of artificial piety by humans, like a pagan god. If this is true, then Jesus died for nothing.

Galatians 2:19: 19 For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God. For if righteousness comes through the law, Christ died for nothing.

Just to reiterate, the idea of a god who judges men on a sin-by-sin basis whose graces come and go on a whim was never biblical. Not even in the Old Testament. Even during the sacrificial systems and Mosaic law God was still renowned for His patience and mercy.

Psalms 103:8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. 9 He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. 10 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

This is a powerful refutation of even the very concept of salvation being through Catholic specific sacraments and submission to church clergy. Don't forget that the thief on the cross was saved before trinitarian baptisms were even established and that Cornelius received the Holy Spirit upon hearing the Gospel from Peter, even

before receiving a single sacrament (Acts 10). God is the only rock, Jesus is the only way.

Why would God specifically grant salvation as through grace and faith rather than sacrifice and rites? Because it makes Him the sole justifier and rightfully exalts Him as the only source of objective goodness. This takes the glory of righteousness from humans and gives it all to God.

Romans 3:22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

In case Paul is not enough, here is God explaining His mercy to Israelites:

Isaiah 43:25 You have not bought Me sweet cane with your silver, nor satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened Me with your sins; you have wearied Me with your iniquities. 25 I, yes I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake and remembers your sins no more.

Not to be misunderstood, God very explicitly made sure explain on how He alone redeemed them. He then calls the Israelites to celebrate and return to Him and that through His mercy His glory has been revealed. This brings us to glorification.

## Step 4: Glorification

Christians were put on earth to glorify God. By humbling themselves and glorifying God, God will later exalt them in Heaven. Note that the emphasis on glorifying God is to the sole end of glorifying God. The purpose of glorifying God is certainly not to receive exaltations or rewards for oneself, rather it is to the completion of the Christian's greater prerogative of glorifying Him.

Of utmost importance is that no man, idea, or entity is to be considered good or holy except for God. Reverence and worship are to God alone. Now, I have included a salvo of verses for this from all over the scriptures. Read them all and please give time to ponder the ramifications of what they mean in context.

Isaiah 43:21: The people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.

Isaiah 48:11: For My own sake, My very own sake, I will act; for how can I let Myself be defamed? I will not yield My glory to another.

Luke 4:8: Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.

Psalms 148:13: Let them praise the name of the Lord. For His name alone is exalted. His glory is above earth and heaven.

Romans 16:27: ... to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:11: Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 7:35: And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

The above scriptures make it abundantly clear that no one is to be worshipped, venerated, or glorified but the Triune God. In fact, God formed His people to declare His praises. As a natural consequence to this, if God alone is exalted, then all men are to be humbled.

Matthew 23: 11 The greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. 13 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let in those who wish to enter.

Romans 3:10: As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one.

Mark 10:8 "Why do you call Me good? Jesus replied. "No one is good except God alone.

No man is good, no human is holy. Not Peter, not Mary. Even God's chosen herald for Jesus, John the Baptist, is considered the least in comparison with those in Heaven, even though in Luke 7, Jesus declares him to be the greatest among those born of women on earth (thus, higher than Mary and Peter). John still does not count himself even worthy to strap Jesus' sandals, let alone baptize Him. Much in this vein, while in the form of a man, Jesus would not even count Himself good, but continuously glorified God alone.

Samuel 2:2: There is no one holy like the LORD. Indeed, there is no one besides You! And there is no rock like our God.

Isaiah 44:8 Do not tremble or fear. Have I not told you and declared it long ago? You are My witnesses! Is there any God but Me? There is no other Rock; I know not one."

As the Triune God is the one who forgave His elect of their sins, He is the sole foundation for salvation. Not Peter, not the Catholic Church, not Mary. God alone. Thus, all glory should be counted to God and God alone.

Looking at all these verses as a whole, a pretty clear picture of glorification is established. Throughout the entirety of the Bible not one person was counted as Holy, not one person was good. There were plenty of people who had pleased God by the fruits they bore, but God never pronounced a single one Holy, even those he counted righteousness to. Even in the letters of the apostles, neither John the Baptist, Peter, nor Mary were ever professed as good, Holy, nor integral to salvation.

The verse in Isaiah, where there is no other Rock than God, was boldly spoken by God Himself. Paul stresses in Corinthians the sheer importance of undivided devotion to the Lord and once again reaffirms that there is no other foundation than Jesus Christ. No one is revered but God. In Heaven, there will come a time where God's elect will be made glorious, and only then they themselves will be exalted.

Philippians 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. 4 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.



# Regeneration and Sanctification

## What is Regeneration and Sanctification?

So far, we've talked quite a bit about salvation by grace through faith, election, and justification. Understanding of these concepts is integral to understanding the concepts of regeneration and sanctification, for they are the biblical intersection of works, faith, and salvation. The last chapter covered the process of salvation, this one will focus on the mechanism.

Regeneration and sanctification, depending on denominational background, can take a variety of different meanings. Sometimes they may be explained as concurrent, or even interchangeable processes. For the purpose of this chapter, we are going to refer to regeneration as the spiritually guided process of repentance. As a Christian turns away from his past sinful nature and strives to live by Christian principals, their spirit is regenerated. Sanctification is the end goal of this process, which is the process of a regenerating Christian being made holy. Two quick notes before we begin to break this down:

1. Regeneration and repentance are lifelong endeavors. Even with a heart tilted toward God we are still sinners by nature.
2. No one is going to attain sanctification until they are glorified by God. This is a process that occurs after death, so don't worry about being perfect. Just keep doing your best to live by Christian principals and to love God. God will handle the rest:

[Philippians 1:6 ESV: "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."](#)

## Regeneration in the Bible

Regeneration is the new birth that Jesus speaks of when talking to Nicodemus. Nicodemus is a Pharisee, a distinguished "holy man" of a Jewish sect that professed that righteousness and sanctification were products of strict observance to Mosaic Law and traditions. Jesus spoke harshly with the Pharisees, as they frequently attributed righteousness to themselves and their traditions as opposed to the work of God.

Nicodemus was a special case, in that he approached Jesus with humility. Even though Jesus initially maintained His adherence to metaphorical speech, for His

time was not yet here, He ultimately chose to speak very plainly in His conclusion, much like He did with His disciples.

John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old?

Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Let’s break this down:

Jesus begins by saying that no one will see Heaven unless they are born again. The prerequisite for being born again is to be born of “water and spirit.” Note how in all of Jesus’ metaphors for salvation, such as bread, water, blood, and flesh, the one constant is the spirit. The spirit is the functional arm of salvation, and as we will soon cover, it is the vessel of regeneration. Now, while the idea of forgiveness of sins by grace is something I’ve demonstrated to be extant in the Old Testament, salvation by grace and regeneration are very strongly concepts of the New Covenant. Nicodemus reasonably does not understand, so Jesus elaborates:

John 3:9 Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” 10 Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Becoming born again (repenting and receiving the Spirit) is a consequence of true faith in Jesus. This is a severe blow to the traditional sanctification process of sacrifices and adherence to Mosaic law, which is integral to the Pharisee worldview. This is a salvation that is not of earthly men, but that of a heavenly God. Jesus explains that those who believe in the Son of Man will have eternal life.

Not convinced? Well, Jesus expected that, which is why he expounds on the *reasoning* behind this salvation by grace through faith:

16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in

order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

This passage contains an incredible amount of insight, all of which is entirely coherent with pre-existing scriptural concepts of predestination, justification by faith, grace, and the sufficiency of the Christ for salvation. God sacrificed Jesus to save His people not because they impressed Him through works or sanctified themselves, but because He loved them. It was an act of grace. Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but so that it would be saved through Him. Notice the lack of caveats there. This establishes a dichotomy between those who believe in Him (and are consequently saved) and those who do not believe in Him (thus are already condemned due to their lack of belief).

So, with this prefaced, the receipt of the Holy Spirit facilitates regeneration, which is responsible for a man's ability to discern the scripture and produce good fruits in God. The Spirit supplants and resists the sinful intrinsic nature of men. Because it is not inherent or endogenous to men, it is both the gift and work of God.

## **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Regeneration**

John 16:7: But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

In John 16, Jesus introduces the Holy Spirit to His disciples. Jesus preached the Gospel throughout His ministry and would soon willingly sacrifice Himself to pay for the New Covenant. Though He would resurrect after three days, He would ultimately ascend to His throne in Heaven. On the behalf of Jesus, God would send the Holy Spirit in His absence. The Spirit would continue the cultivation of these Gospel truths in Jesus' flock:

John 16:26: But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Ephesians 1:17: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

With the Holy Spirit affixing the believer's mind on the Gospel and God's teachings, the believer effectively has God's law written on their heart. The solidifying knowledge and intentional servitude toward God from the Holy Spirit

competes with and gradually overwhelms our inherently sinful nature. In this respect, throughout our journey of regeneration and sanctification God is effectively replacing our old sinful hearts with new pure ones.

Jeremiah 31:33: For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ezekiel 36:26: And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Titus 3:4-7: “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

## **What Does the Process of Regeneration Itself Look Like? (-And can We Make it More Complicated, Theologically Speaking?)**

Now, to specify, it is not just hearing the Gospel that saves people. They need to be God’s Elect, who have been pre-ordained for good works. The Elect hear and accept the Gospel, and being God’s people, they in turn love God. This love manifests as obedience and good works. We can break this process down into four steps, for simplicity’s sake:

Predestination: People may only receive the Gospel if it is God's will for us. This not only extends to salvific belief and repentance, but to also to the very understand and sentiment of the nature of God and Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:5: Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

John 6: <sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup>It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— <sup>46</sup>not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.

John 8:42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me.

Belief: The receipt of the Gospel, regeneration, sanctification, and all matters pertaining toward walking with God are wholly contingent on believing and submitting to Jesus as the Son of God and our Lord.

John 16:27 No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 11:40 Jesus replied, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

**Ordination:** This is the reorientation of the believer's soul to walk in a manner that is pleasing to God. Because of their submission and belief in Jesus, Christians are not only able to please God with their works and character, but are actively inclined to follow God's word and to do His works.

John 12:46: For I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes may not remain in darkness.

Titus 2:14: [Jesus], who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Ephesians 2:8-10: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Galatians 5:22–23: 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

**Obedience:** Once the person's heart is oriented toward God, it manifests as obedience to God's law and in good works. This is the functional metric for discerning which Christians have a genuine faith or not. A non-salvific faith does not manifest anything beyond basic knowledge and occasional lip-service. Only the salvific faith of the Elect produces a heart that is zealous for God and is full of an active love both for Him and for others that influence both their words and their actions.

John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

John 14:23 Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

Matthew 7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

## Regeneration Imputes us With a Righteousness That is the Product of God and Will Lead to Sanctification

All of this leads us to sanctification, whereby the Holy Spirit makes us pleasing to God, bearing good works, entraining righteousness, and giving men the knowledge to work out Gods ordinances, including the nature of salvation itself:

Philippians 2: 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Of course, since we're not glorified until after death, this a life-long process to say the least. Even though we are steadily being made more righteous, it is important to remember that this growth is a product (and exaltation) of God, not of our ability. In fact, Paul counts his own righteousness from observing laws and traditions as a Pharisee as loss, stating that he now puts no confidence in the flesh and that he gives all glory to God. He then specifies that true righteousness was not his own, but that it is from faith in Christ:

Philippians 3:2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also.

If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

# Remaining in Jesus

## What Does God Want from His People?

I'm pretty sure my argument for salvation by grace through faith has transcended thoroughness and into sheer tedium now. Thank you for bearing with me, I cannot guarantee that I am done with this topic, but I can afford you a small reprieve. Let's step away from the *how* and put some attention into the *why*. Why did God establish the New Covenant, why salvation by grace, and why follow Jesus' commandments after the fulfillment of Mosaic law? In more succinct and practical terms, what does God specifically desire from His people?

Once we understand that, the mechanics of grace, regeneration, and sanctification are not just rationalized, but are actually rather obvious. The framework for God's intended vision for His people, and how He would achieve that with the New Covenant, are actually laid out all the way in the very beginning of the Old Testament.

## Exploring God's Will Through the Old Testament

Reading through the Old Testament after learning about the Gospel is one of the most enlightening things a Christian can do, as it provides a lot of insight into the New Covenant. In scriptural ignorance, many people are quick to paint God in the Old Testament as cold, distant, and spiteful. The reality could not be further from the truth. The kindness and mercy espoused by Jesus is very congruent with the character of God in the Old Testament, as are Jesus' condemnations and warnings.

One of most important aspects of the Old Testament can be found between God and the Israelites, a relationship that is ultimately a testament to God's patience, mercy, and compassion. This relationship began when God made a covenant with Abraham (then Abram). The story of Abram directly follows the Tower of Babel. To frame the scene, this occurred shortly after God flooded the Earth in disgust of the sinful humans who rebelled against Him, and then subsequently re-established humanity from Noah. This newer cohort God had cultivated from Noah's family had already began to stray from Him. So, God scattered them, changing their languages and spreading them across the earth to enforce an artificial obedience from them, so they would uphold His call to go forth and multiply.

## Exploring God's Relationship with Abraham

Immediately after this the fallout from the tower of Babel (not so immediately in years, but so climactically), God singles out Abram and promises to make him into a mighty nation. Even after this new people already rebelled against Him, He still sought to establish a relationship with them. Now I can't stress this enough, Abram is not introduced with any fanfare or feats. He's just a man. This important because God literally introduces Himself to Abram with this:

Genesis 12:1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Remember, Abram had done literally nothing of note as of then. Abram, as we hopefully all know, took God up on this nifty deal and went to Canaan. In Morah, Abram built an altar to God and God told him that He would give this land to his offspring. Even though Abram had not established a righteousness of his own, he was readily obedient to God. God beckoned, and Abram followed.

Now, Abram was hardly sanctified in heart then and there. Shortly after cultivating his land, a famine occurred and Abram sought refuge in Egypt. There, the Pharaoh took a fancy to Abram's wife. Fearing for his own welfare, rather than trusting God, Abram lied and claimed that Sarai was just his sister and let Pharaoh take her as his wife. Now, we all know how God feels about adultery. Naturally, He responded with plagues, not to Abram, but Pharaoh. Understandably terrified, Pharaoh rebuked Abram, loaded him with parting gifts, and was quick to send him out of his country.

In spite of Abram's sin, God remained with him. In fact, God promised him even more land and drove out the corrupt natives there, such as the Sodomites, the Gomerites, and the Chaldeans. With God's empowerment, Abram joined in on the already ensuing wars to rescue Lot's tribe and he was celebrated by Melchizedek. The priest-king praised Abram and explained that God had blessed him. Abram in turn would soon exalt God before the King of Sodom:

Genesis 14:22 Abram replied to the king of Sodom, "I raise my hand to the Lord, the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth, and vow..."

Through faith and submission, Abram was pleasing to God, and so He promised Abram an even greater nation. But Abram was still a sinner; he and his wife decided he should impregnate his servant because they didn't believe God could



make Sarai conceive. When God explicitly told Abram that Sarai would bear him a son, Abram still questioned Him and asked for proof. God gave him proof and Sarai would later conceive just as God promised. In spite of their weakness, God solidified His covenant with Abram, christening him a prophet, Abraham, and changing Sarai's name to Sarah.

Not long after, Abraham would once again claim Sarah as his sister and pawn her off to a foreign king in order to protect himself. God would have been more than justified in killing Abraham, but He didn't. Instead, He divinely intervened to spare the king from the lethal sin of adultery by preventing him from sleeping with Sarah and then dragged Abram out of Gerar.

Over time, God's involvement with Abram bore obvious fruit. Abram readily submitted to God, kept peace with the same king he feared enough to offer his wife to, and had even appealed to God's compassion toward the Sodomites, an enemy nation.

In spite of Abraham's growth, neither he nor his wife could exactly be called righteous. When Sarah bore Isaac, she turned on the servant, Hagar, who bore Abraham's first child, and demanded Abraham drive her out. Abraham did not rebuke Sarah, rather he was simply displeased and resigned himself to do as he was told.

Instead of beating some additional decency into the two of them, God told Abraham to do as Sarah says and that He would take care of the rest. Abraham gave Hagar some meager rations and sent her away in the wilderness. Hagar parted with so little, she thought her, and her son would die of dehydration before they could even reach a town. True to His word, God personally intervened and saved them both.

Genesis 21:<sup>17</sup> And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. <sup>18</sup> Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation." <sup>19</sup> Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. <sup>20</sup> And God was with the boy, and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. <sup>21</sup> He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

## **Abraham was a Model Citizen for God's Kingdom**

Why did God not curse Abraham? Because God sees past the actions and into the heart. Just as how God spared the King of Gerar, who intended to commit a sin

in spite of innocence of intent, He spared Abraham. In spite of Abraham's struggling character, he had a genuine love and obedience to God.

Abraham would ultimately demonstrate this when God tested him, asking him to sacrifice his son. As Paul would later state, Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham himself wasn't exactly a paragon of virtue, but God justified him due to his faith. The product of this faith would manifest when it was God's turn to demand proof. In a test of faith, God asked Abraham to sacrifice his remaining son, Isaac.

In complete obedience and submission, Abraham took Isaac to the altar with the intent on sacrificing him. Abraham's pleasing faith was the mechanism for this historic work. Pleased, God stopped Abraham and procured a ram for him to sacrifice instead. God multiplied Abraham's blessings and from him God raises the Israelites. God ultimately wanted Abraham's heart.

So, to recap, Abram was not an inherently righteous man. God chose Abram even though Abram struggled repeatedly to maintain his own righteousness. This was because, in spite of Abram's humanity, he still followed and exalted God whole heartedly. God sees past a man's deeds and shortcomings, evaluating the content of their heart first.

1 Samuel 16:7: But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

## God's Desire for Israel

Let's fast forward a little bit to Exodus. The people God had raised up from Abraham's lineage were enslaved by Egypt, just as God had forewarned Abraham back in Genesis 15. Even though they were oppressed by the Pharaoh, they were God's people. Just like Abraham, God wanted their hearts.

So, God singled another fallible man who would have a submissive and obedient heart toward Him, Moses. Through Moses, God reveals His intentions to seize the hearts of Israel:

Exodus 6:7: I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

God did exactly as He promised, with an awe-inspiring display of miracles and justice God freed the Israelites from the Egyptians and appointed Moses and Aaron

as His liaison to them. For a very, very, veeeeery short amount of time, God had the hearts and minds of His people.

When the Israelites proved to be unruly and of little faith (which took not even a matter of days), God would not be deterred. He provided Moses with laws they could sanctify themselves by. When the Israelites ignored Gods laws, chased idols, and rejected God's offer to the promised land, God did give up. God punished the most disobedient of the cohorts, but gave the promised land to their children.

When the children rebelled against God, God scattered them through enemy nations, only to save them later. No matter how terrible the Israelites were, God kept the nation alive and sought heroes and righteous men among them, such as Aaron and Joshua. God would have His sanctified people, no matter how long it took, and no matter how difficult it was.

## **God Raised Up Judges for His People to Cultivate Righteousness and Submission to Him**

When the Israelites showed that they required constant guidance to maintain any remote form of submission, God raised up for them Judges. Though divinely ordained, the Judges were still very human. Gideon was timid and initially lacking in faith, Samson was vain and wrathful, Jephthah was a whoreson handpicked from a band of thugs.

But through each Judge God saved Israel from the hands of an enemy nation, an enemy nation God fed them to because they rejected Him as soon as the preceding Judge had died. After decades of this pattern, God would have been more than justified in abandoning them all, but here is an excerpt on why He returned to Israelites to elect the eighth Judge\* (thus, the **eighth** time God saved Israelites from the consequences of their own rebellion, in just the era of Judges alone).

Judges 10:10 And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, saying, "We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals! 11 So the Lord said to the children of Israel, "Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? 12 Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. 13 Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore, I will deliver you no more.

14 "Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress." 15 And the children of Israel said to the Lord, "We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray." 16 So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

Eight times since the era of Judges began, the Israelites turned their backs on God and were punished justly. Eight times the Israelites pled for mercy and repented. **Eight times God had compassion on them.** The parable of Prodigal Son was just a glimpse of God's incredible patience and mercy. The Israelites behavior in the rest of Judges didn't become peerless, they were struggling under and after Samson, the final judge of that era.

Pattern recognition did not stop God from having mercy on them again. He kept His covenant with Abraham, despite the fact that the Israelites disrespected all of the laws and covenants that followed. God did not abandon the Israelites after centuries of being rejected; His compassion was every bit as much a part of His divine character as was His justice.

Of course, Judges weren't enough to permanently cultivate righteousness in the Israelites, neither were the divinely ordained kings (who couldn't even keep themselves righteous), not even the prophets, the godliest of all of them. In both rebellion and servitude, Israel's heart was still corrupt.

## **The Israelites Would Not Pursue God Under Their Own Power, So God Would Bolster Them With His Own**

So, when God spoke to the Israelites through the later prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, He promised them a different covenant. Their sacrifices, celebrations, and legalistic works meant nothing to Him, their hearts were not with Him. Here's a refresher:

Isaiah 1:10 Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! 11 "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.

12 "When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? 13 Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, 17 learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

18 "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. 19 If you are willing and

obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

So, the basis of God’s New Covenant was that instead of justification through works and obedience, He would cut straight to the root of the problem, the unjust heart itself. God would put a new heart in Israel, He would make them righteous Himself, and they would serve Him genuinely.

Why cultivate goodness through works when the heart was still foul? Justification through works was clearly possible, God Himself implemented it, Jesus proved it in His own sinless life, but the Israelites were consistently not capable of this themselves.

God was also quite aware of this, hence all of the above mercies and compromises He provided in the Old Testament. This of course, did nothing but prove God’s own righteousness, the Israelites were still shameful and rebellious. So, this time, God would instead attain His obedient, faithful, and productive people from the inside out, by changing their hearts with a righteousness not of their own. Only then would God have His people.

Jeremiah 31:31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord.

33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

By this New Covenant, God would secure the hearts of His people. Through His own mercy and power God would have just, compassionate, and obedient people who would walk in His statutes and exemplify His values. God would remind the Israelites of this New Covenant again in Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 36: 22 Therefore tell the house of Israel that this is what the Lord GOD says: It is not for your sake that I will act, O house of Israel, but for My holy name, which you profaned among the nations to which you went. 23 I will show the holiness of My great name, which has been profaned among the nations—the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when I show My holiness in you before their eyes.

24 For I will take you from among the nations and gather you out of all the countries, and I will bring you back into your own land. 25 I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit

within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and to carefully observe My ordinances.

So, what does this have to do with salvation in the New Testament? Everything. People were no longer doing good works to merit themselves righteousness or a salvation they never really deserved, they were now doing good works solely for the pleasure and glory of God. This New Covenant was established and conducted on the basis of love and mercy, thus, it was both the culmination and fulfillment of everything God both sought and implemented in the Old Testament. God was focused on their hearts back then, as He still is now.

## **Pursuing God in the New Covenant Through Submission to Jesus**

This is why in Jesus' parables, the tax collector was justified, but not the Pharisee. This is why the prodigal son was forgiven and celebrated upon his return. It's why the unrepentant servant was forgiven as soon as he pled for mercy, but castigated when he failed to show that mercy to others. Above all, it's why Jesus' two greatest commandments, the commandments that would fulfill all of the Law in God's eyes, were to love God and to love others. God is specifically invested in men's hearts.

Now, instead of relying on sacrifices and rites to be justified, the Elect are already forgiven. The heart within them, regenerated through the Holy Spirit, is already good. The Holy Spirit now guides men to walk in God's ordinances, so all righteousness and boasting belongs to God alone. Now, the only purpose of good works is to please God, the only mechanisms are a love of Him and the guidance of the Spirit.

Let's take a look at Jesus' parable of the vine again:

John 15:1: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Even though the Elect have already been cleared of their sins, they are told that they can bear no good fruit unless they remain in Jesus. Several verses later, Jesus would specify that God would cut off the branches that bore no fruit. This begs the question, if salvation is not strictly dependent on works, why do them?

More importantly, if salvation is a gift and those who are saved are predestined, how would people discern true Christians from false ones? The answer lies in devotion to God. This why fallible men such as David, Solomon, Abraham and Moses were regarded as righteous in spite of their flaws, because they loved the Lord.

Much of the ire God expressed in the Old Testament was over how the Israelites were rebellious toward Him. Their sacrifices and ceremonies were of no merit to them because they were turned against Him in their hearts. Centuries of Old Testament rapport between the Israelites and God was neatly summed up by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews:

Hebrews 3:7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. 10 That is why I was angry with that generation;

I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” 12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

Remember in 1 Samuel 16 where God explains how He looks at men’s hearts. As shown by Hebrews 3, God was directly angered by the Israelites corrupt hearts. So in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, when He speaks about making the Israelites His people, the mechanism is God changing their hearts and spirits. God wants a people who follow Him in their hearts, first and foremost, which is why Jesus so strongly rebukes the Pharisees, who are known for strict dedication to Jewish laws and traditions:

Matthew 23: 25 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, so that the outside may become clean as well.

27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and every kind of impurity. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to be righteous, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

This why men are justified by their faith rather than their works. Their faith in God is a matter of the heart, whereas deeds that seem good can be done with ill intentions. This is why Jesus says that without abiding in Him they cannot produce good fruits. So, with this in mind, let’s look at the rest of the vine parable:

John 15:9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Jesus wants His followers to love God above all, the same as God desired from Abraham and Israelites back in the Old Testament. Jesus explains that if they love God, they will hold to His commandments, just as God envisioned when He described His will for His people in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Love is the metric of the person's devotion to God.

The Pharisees fell because even though they kept God's commandments, they did so without a love for Him. The clear fruits of love were obedience and faith, as expressed in Old and New Testaments respectively. This is why Jesus would specify:

Matthew 22:36: "Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in the Law?" 37 Jesus declared, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Now look at these other verses in this context:

Psalms 147:10-11: His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of the warrior; the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Mark 12: 32: "Right, Teacher," the scribe replied. "You have stated correctly that God is One and there is no other but Him, 33 and to love Him with all your heart and with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, which is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

1 Timothy 1:5 The goal of our instruction is the love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith.



## **With the Knowledge That God Wants Our Hearts Above All, His Will and Commandments Throughout the Bible are Perfectly Cohesive**

So, when we look at the things we are traditionally commanded within the bible through the framework of developing a heart toward God, we can properly interpret its context and purpose. This is based not just only on centuries of God inspired literature, but by His words themselves. Now we can ascend past the stumbling block of Zion (Romans 9:30) and serve God in love and grace, instead of seeking our own righteousness. How does this tie in with other acts and traits desired by God?

Though strong in symbolism, the functional mechanism of baptism is the pledge of devotion to God.

1 Peter 3:21 And this water symbolizes the baptism that now saves you— not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Humility is the fulfillment of glorifying God alone.

2 Chronicles 7:14 : If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Ephesians 2:8 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Mark 10: 18 “Why do you call Me good?” Jesus replied. “No one is good except God alone.

Confession involves admitting sin, justifying the need for God’s mercy before others.

1 John 1: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Forgiving others is emulating God’s mercy.

Colossians 3:13: Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Communion is the proclamation of God's power and mercy through observing Jesus' sacrifice.

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, 24 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." 25 In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

## Applying the These Concepts to Christian Living

In context, all of these important Christian precepts are unified by devotion to God alone, just as He had always intended. This leaves no room for glorifying men or anything else of the world. This also leaves no room for dividing one's devotions toward exalting or submitting to anything else of the world, including themselves.

The Elect, upon accepting Jesus, will abide in Him. Those who abide in Jesus are the ones the Father will save.

John 15:1: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.

To abide in Christ is to follow Him in faith and obedience. Only those who abide in Christ can bear good fruit.

John 14:15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

2 John 1:9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

Jesus' greatest commandment is to love God.

Matthew 22:36: "Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in the Law?" 37 Jesus declared, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

The fruits born of the Elect by the Holy Spirit are the product of the changed heart God had promised to His people.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

It is this by the pure heart that God is pleased.

1 Thessalonians 2:4 But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.

1 Chronicles 29:17 Since I know, O my God, that You try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You.

Psalms 51:16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by me.

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**Correction 2/10/2023: In the original version of the section regarding the era of Judges, I cited the wrong passage, chapter 14 instead of chapter 10. Not only did this lead to my reference being incorrect, but it also threw off the timeline of the Judges I had presented in my original argument. This error has been corrected, apologies to anyone who has been inconvenienced or confused by my mistake. #JudgeGate**

# Prayer

## Defining Prayer as Worship

Prayer is communication with God, primarily to petition for something, to glorify Him, or for thanksgiving. Prayer is unique to God, as it is an expression of faith. You pray to an entity you cannot see, one you can not concretely verify exists through naturalistic means. When a person prays to God, they must exercise their faith to believe that God exists, cares about them, and is willing and capable of interceding for them. In that regard, prayer itself is a form of worship. This is why in the entirety of the scriptures written with divine authority no person of good faith has ever prayed to another entity but the Triune God.

## Excluding the Apocryphal Books

*When I mentioned divine authority, I am intentionally excluding apocryphal books such as Macabees. These books make additions or amendment to common Christian practices, including prayer, that are typically not congruent with the established scriptures. In fact, both the original compiler of the Latin vulgate, Saint Jerome, and all of the Reformers responsible for bringing the bible to the common man considered them [nonscriptural](#). I would like to further note that the specific doctrines of the apocryphal books are never quoted by Jesus or the Apostles, or even any of the OT prophets outside of the Apocrypha itself. Thus, we are going to stick to strictly to canonical scripture here.*

## Prayer in Practice: As Instructed by Jesus

Back on topic, Jesus provides us with our model of prayer in Matthew, using the Lord's prayer. Keep in mind that it is the Lord's prayer because He gave it to us, not because Jesus Himself needed to use it. Jesus had no need to ask God to forgive Him of His trespasses, nor did He need to ask God not to lead Him into temptation. The prayer is expressly a model for Christians, hence His distinction of the term, "like." Let's break down Matthew 6 to address the prayer in parts.

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

First note how Jesus immediately instructs His disciples to pray to God. Next, these verses insinuate that both God and Jesus place a higher value on prayer, at

least in some capacity of worship, when it is done alone and in secret. This is scripturally reasonable, seeing how much of Matthew Jesus spent rebuking people who used religious dress, speech, and traditions to elevate themselves as righteous and as having religious authority over others, Matthew 23 is a prime example.

7 “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

More literalist translations of the Bible, like NKJV and Berean, translate Matthew 6:7 as this:

And praying, do not use vain repetitions like the pagans, for they think that in their many words they will be heard.

The whole functional purpose of prayer is as a medium of communication between man and God. You praise God, you thank God, you ask of, and confess to God. There is no purpose in reciting long, pre-written, repetitious prayers. God knows what you want and what you need.

9 Pray then like this:

Notice the choice of “like.” This would hardly be the last of Jesus’ concise and purposeful prayers in the gospel books, but even His longest, the High Priestly Prayer, is only a few minutes long and without repetition.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Veneration is given to God first and God alone.

10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

God and God alone is exalted.

11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

God is asked to care for the needs of the one praying: sustenance and forgiveness.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Notice how concise, purposeful, and non-repetitive Jesus’ following model of prayer is. The prayers in the Bible are spoken from the perspective of a man having a conversation with God. Also note how in the **entirety** of the written scriptures proceeding, this prayer is never repeated.

I understand there are translations in Luke where Jesus tells His disciples to “pray in the way”, which is why I would also like to point out no written prayer is repeated within the Bible. We pray like Jesus instructed, but we don’t recite the same prayer ad infinitum. The New Testament is full of instances of people praying repeatedly, but not once is a prayer stated to be specifically repeated either in instruction nor practice.

## Prayer for Forgiveness

Let’s focus more on prayer’s role in forgiveness, which Jesus speaks of immediately following the model prayer:

*14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

God makes clear that salvation is entirely an act of His forgiveness and mercy. In that regard, He expects it of others. This is clearly explained in Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18). The King had already forgiven the servant **completely** out of compassion, in part due to the fact that the servant could not pay him back. The servant then went out to his fellow servant and battered him, demanding that he in turn pay him what he owed him. When the co-servant asked for patience and mercy, the forgiven servant gave none. When the king found out, he imprisoned the servant he had forgiven because he in turn would not show that same mercy to others.

## Approaching the Throne of Grace: Praying to God Alone

I’ve chosen to expand on this segment because important facets of prayer, such as confession and petitioning, are routine locked away behind unnecessary administrative mediators in some more "Orthodox" denominations. A good example of this is the process of confession in Roman Catholicism.

Confession in itself has a very strong component in prayer. However, there is no scriptural mandate that asserts that confession must be reconciled through a priest to receive absolution/forgiveness. In fact, Jesus often instructs prayer to Him and God in a manner that completely contradicts and excludes any form of additional mediator. At least, in that the scriptures encourage us to seek forgiveness through prayer to God in terms of our sin, and then to forgive others of their sins in a way to pass on His mercy.

Reason with me, for a bit. In Matthew 18, the unrepentant servant was already forgiven when he pleaded to God, the king. He was forgiven purely on God's mercy.

26 "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

However, when the man rejected Jesus' greatest commandment of loving others as He had loved them, only then was the servant condemned. Just how God forgave David of sins in Psalms (even though David would go on to sin again, because *of course he did*), Jesus also wants Christians to be able to approach God directly for the forgiveness of sins:

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

I would like to address this more in the following chapter on confession, with more numerous and pertinent examples. But for now, I would like to assert that even if priests actually held the power to absolve sin through their priestly office, that would in no way would deprive God of doing so, nor could it ever reduce Jesus' purpose as High Priest.

How else are we instructed to pray to God?

Psalms 102:17: "He regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer."

1 John 5:14: This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

John 14:13-14: Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

John 16:23: In that day you will no longer ask Me anything. Truly, truly, I tell you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you.

Philippians 4:6: Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Psalms 32:5: Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the guilt of my sin."

Look at these verses, in every single one, we are instructed to petition our prayers to God alone. Even prayers for forgiveness of sins. Not a priest, not a saint,

not Mary, every prayer is made to God and God alone. I genuinely believe there is a specific reason why it is that way.

## **Why Prayer to Other Entities is Inherently Foolish and Disrespectful to God**

You cannot ask something of an entity that is dead or not obviously existing on earth without exercising that same faith in that they have autonomy, volition, and power in some divine manner. There is no exception that to this reasoning, including intercessory prayers practiced by Roman Catholicism. The rejection of Jesus' mediating office as High Priest is often belittled by saying that praying to the dead is no different than praying with a friend, or asking them to pray on your behalf. That is not a logical or valid excuse.

Asking a saint or Mary to pray on your behalf is entirely different than asking a friend to. The friend receives your request and both of you exercise your faith to God, so no faith is required to acknowledge your friend and no divinity is attributed to them. However, you cannot posit an intercession from a saint or Mary without praying to them first, as they are dead. This requires you to characterize them with authority and divinity, which is worship. And why would the scriptures, Jesus, or the apostles command you to such a thing?

I know some Roman Catholics get rather defensive of being accused of confusing worship and prayer to the saints or Mary, but I already see a blurring a line, a slippery slope, if you will, between praying and worshipping Mary in Roman Catholicism:

"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," (CCC. 971).

"We, therefore, who, though unworthy, hold the place of Vicar of Christ upon earth, shall never cease to promote the glory of so great a Mother, as long as life endures." (Pope Leo XIII, AUGUSTISSIMAE VIRGINIS MARIAE)

"For God, having given her power over his only-begotten and natural Son, also gave her power over his adopted children – not only in what concerns their body – which would be of little account – but also in what concerns their soul." -Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, 1673-1716 AD

"All praise to you, holy Mother of God! . . . Through you the heavens exult, the Angels and Archangels rejoice, the demons flee, and man himself is once more admitted to Heaven. Through you, souls bound by the chains of idolatry have been brought to know the truth and led to Holy Baptism . . . By your help nations have come to repentance. Through you, the prophets have spoken and the Apostles have preached



salvation to all nations. Mary, Virgin and Mother, who can worthily proclaim the praises of your power?"  
St. Cyril of Alexandria

"Not only do they offend thee, O Lady, who outrage thee, but thou art also offended by those who neglect to ask thy favors . . . He who neglects the service of the Blessed Virgin will die in his sins . . . He who does not invoke thee, O Lady, will never get to Heaven . . . Not only will those from whom Mary turns her countenance not be saved, but there will be no hope of their salvation . . . No one can be saved without the protection of Mary." St. Bonaventure

Do you see how this progressed from simple veneration to actual blasphemy? Why are we giving all praise to Mary when God stated He will share His glory with no one? Why are canonized Catholic Saints professing Mary to have power over Jesus, even in the realm of spiritual matters? Most damning of all, which an Archbishop claiming that invocation of Mary is absolutely necessary for salvation? Did God not state that we were created to glorify Him?

Is Jesus not the sole mediator and spiritual high priest between man and God? How can devotion to Mary be required for salvation when Jesus states that by no other name under Heaven must anyone be saved? Was Jesus the son of God, or Mary? Which one died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins? Which one sits at the right hand of the Father? Not only are these Catholic statements not congruent with scripture, but they are actively rejected by them.

So, if prayer is an expression of faith, which in turn denotes worship, where's the harm in praying to someone else other than God?

Isaiah 42: 8 I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

Paul summarizes these sentiments concisely. Even in the Early Church, there was no form of prayer or worship meant to be given to anyone but the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:35: And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

And now the words of a Bishop, who was canonized a Catholic Saint:

Woe to those who despise devotion to Mary! . . . The soul cannot live without having recourse to Mary and recommending itself to her. He falls and is lost who does not have recourse to Mary. - St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori (Source: <http://www.catholictradition.org/Mary/mary18c.htm>)

Not once does Paul (or any apostle, or even Jesus) speak of devotion to Mary in the entirety of the apostolic letters. According to Archbishop Bonaventure, they must all be in hell. This will not be the last time in my faith statement where I or Paul will be condemned by the Catholic Church for disagreeing with their

tradition. I hope you can sympathize with my position here. It is not out of scriptural ignorance that I reject Catholic dogma, but out of direct observance to them.

## As of High Priest, Jesus is Already Our Mediator

Jesus is the sole mediator between man and God. Think about it, could one honestly believe that Mary and Saints can hear and petition for millions of prayers directed to them from hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world without possessing some form of omniscience themselves? They are being exalted to a level in Roman Catholic literature that is never even remotely alluded to in the entirety of Bible.

The closest biblical allusion to dead saints interceding for prayers is found in the mention of 24 Elders in Revelation and that doesn't even hold up for a second. The 24 elders in Revelation were never specifically ascribed as carrying the prayers of the Elect on earth, their primary purpose of institution is simply to worship God, and their ranks are so limited in number that they clearly are not indicative of the massive divine office of intercessory saints posited by Catholicism. Apart from the 24 elders, there is no other scripture even remotely alluding to a divine and intercessory office of saints.

Let's not forget the what the Council of Trent decreed about the Saints:

*"If anyone says that it is a deception to celebrate masses in honor of the saints and in order to obtain their intercession with God, as the Church intends, let him be anathema."*

Nowhere in the Bible does Jesus or the Apostles **ever** state that saints should be used to obtain intercession for God. Literally nowhere. You what is frequently instructed in the Bible? Praying to Jesus for intercession:

[James 5:14](#): Is anyone 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.

[John 14:13](#): Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

[Colossians 3:17](#): And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Intercessory prayer to Mary and saints is an entirely new medium between man, Jesus, and God the Father that is wholly abiblical. Not only that, but it attributes praise and even some modicum of divinity to someone other than God

Himself, so I reject prayer to Mary and Saints in its entirety out of singular devotion to the Triune God. Better to be cursed by the Catholic Church than to reject the Word of God.

To be honest, we shouldn't even need to go this far. God himself says this to Isaiah concerning speaking to the dead and enquiring on their behalf:

Isaiah 8:19: And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?  
20 To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

Furthermore, Paul literally states that Jesus is the **only** mediator between man and God:

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

In regard to this scriptural narrative, I genuinely believe the only form of prayer and veneration pleasing and acceptable to God is the prayer directly to Him.

# Confession

*1 John 1: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

## Confession's Role in the Forgiveness of Sins

Previously in this Faith Statement, I had confessed my belief in justification by faith, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and forgiveness of sins through belief in Jesus, particularly toward the ends of God's statement that He would remember the sins of His consecrated people no more in Jeremiah. So then, where does confession fit into this biblically?

Well, the first letter of John is pretty descriptive on the Early Church's teachings on salvation and forgiveness in respect to confession. I noticed immediately that John begins by stating Jesus had already cleansed men of their sin. This is in congruence with Jesus's parable of the unrepentant servant, where the King had forgiven the servant of his debt out of mercy, rather the merits of servant himself.

John then explains that men must acknowledge that they still have sin. This is much in line with Paul's profession that there is no man who is just or righteous (Romans 3:10). God states He would remember our sins no more, but this was explicitly because Jesus died to redeem us by His blood. This is why Jesus was stated as constantly interceding for us, first in Hebrews and then again in Romans:

*Hebrews 7:23: Now there have been many other priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office. 24 But because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore He is able to save completely those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them.*

*Romans 8:33: Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is there to condemn us? For Christ Jesus, who died, and more than that was raised to life, is at the right hand of God— and He is interceding for us.*

So, if confession does not cleanse us of our sin by God, why do it? I believe it to be because confession is integral to repentance, and that confession enables us to mend the wounds and entail the forgiveness of those people we wronged on earth. 1 John 8 makes it clear that if we do not acknowledge our sin, the truth is not in us.

## Confession is a Necessary Form of Worship

We must confess our sins because it humbles us as sinners and justifies Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We can't appreciate God's mercy if we don't acknowledge that we needed it in the first place. How deep does this narrative go? Well, how about we skip my beloved New Covenant passage in Jeremiah, collect \$200, and proceed (precede?) directly to Isaiah?

Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Isaiah 43:25: "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

In this regard, this confession of sin is humbling oneself and in turn exalting Jesus as the Messiah. In this way it is integral to acceptance of the Gospel. Looking back to the Lord's Prayer, God's covenant in Jeremiah, and the parable of the unrepentant sinner, it appears that one of the deeper themes of God's plan for salvation was it established on an economy of mercy.

Matthew 6:11: Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Just as God has forgiven our sins through the payment of blood by Jesus Christ, we are not only expected to forgive others, but that it is integral to realizing our faith:

Jesus's prelude to the unforgiving servant:

Matthew 18:21: Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Jesus's conclusion to the unforgiving servant:

Matthew 18:32: You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

I have additional support for this scriptural assertion from both the Old and New Testament to emphasize its scriptural congruence:

Colossians 3:13: Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

2 Chronicles 7:14 : If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

## **Confession Does Not Require Priestly Mediators Outside of Jesus**

Notice how literally none of this requires a priest, at all. In all of those verses the singular mechanic of grace and forgiveness of sins, was God. Confessing to those you've wrong bears value in that it publicly glorifies God. Confessing your sins directly to Him bears value because it is a declaration of your unrighteousness and a exalts Him for His mercy. No church administrators are needed to validate an honest confession and you won't find such a practice mandated for Christians in the scriptures.

I'm not saying there is no benefit to confessing to a priest, the added layer of accountability can certainly be a boon. But, what I am saying is that non-Roman Catholics are losing nothing when they directly confess their sins to God for forgiveness from Him, and their sins to others so that they are humbled and in a position for the wronged brethren to reconcile their transgression on earth. Jesus is wholly sufficient as our eternal High Priest.

Hebrews 4:14: Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

# Baptism

## Hebrew Origins of Baptism

Water has been used as a symbol of cleanliness all throughout the Bible, not only cleansing of the body, but of the mind as well. For example:

- God cleansed the Earth of the Nephilim and the corrupt early generations of man with the great flood (Genesis 7).
- The skin diseases of Levites (14) and King Naaman (2 Kings 5) were healed by immersion in water.
- Priests consecrated themselves by dipping their hands and feet in water before entering temples (Exodus 29)
- Even as Jesus walked the Earth, the Pool of Bethesda was frequented by an angel who cured disease (John 5).

The term baptism is derived from the Greek word, *baptizo*, which in turn was translated from the Hebrew word *tevila*. The primary definition of both these terms was “immersion.” Notably, sometimes *baptizo* was also linked to the Hebrew word, *Mikveh*, which is also traditionally used to describe: a hope for things to come, a body of water, and to “bind together.”

In Jewish culture, baptism was specifically used as symbolism for cleansing a past sinful life to be in closer communion to God. A person would wash away their old sinful self, becoming “purified”, and then dedicate themselves to God as a practicing Jew. By this process, both symbolic and legalistic, a Gentile could enter the Jewish community. At its heart, baptism was putting away an old identity and accepting a new one, toward the end to dedication to God. As such, baptism was traditionally used in citizenship acquisition and wedding ceremonies.

Traditionally, should a foreigner want to join the nation of Israel, they would go through a citizenship process where they would renounce the beliefs, practices, and identity to their original country. They would then learn the cultural and religious practices of Judaism, where they were then submerged in a ritual pool as a symbolic process of dying and becoming born again.

Even the ritual pool itself was symbolic, being emblematic of the Israelites crossing the Jordan river to reach the promised land. In doing so, these foreigners would be accepted as an adopted sons and considered heirs of the promise made to Israel. This ceremony was also applied to this rebirth to the bride as consecration

prior to marriage, where she would be seen as new creation, no longer held to the sins of her past life.

Sources for Jewish origins of baptism:

- <http://www.remnant.net/baptism.htm>
- <https://free.messianicbible.com/feature/mikvah-baptism-the-connection-between-immersion-conversion-and-being-born-again/>
- <http://www.wildolive.co.uk/baptism.htm>

## **Baptism in the New Testament**

So, what does baptism mean to Christians in the New Testament? baptism represents repentance and is further symbolic of God's justification and redemption of His people. Through immersion, the Christian washes away his old sinful life so that he may be born again as new being before God.

Thus, baptism is also the induction to being children of God, much in the same way baptism was used by the Israelites to induct foreigners into being Jewish citizens. As Paul explains, by the Holy Spirit we are all baptized into the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12: For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Thus:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

## **Baptism of the Spirit Supersedes the Baptism of Tradition**

Apart from men becoming a new creature within the body of Christ, an important thing to note is the specific emphasis on the Holy Spirit in these verses regarding baptism. The baptism professed by Jesus is different and far more powerful than just the tradition itself. John the Baptist alluded to this superior spiritual baptism as he completed his earthly ones:

Matthew 3:11 As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.



John's baptisms, being cohesive with Judaism's cultural baptisms, signified washing away of sinful man and repenting. But his baptisms were incomplete; even if a man repented, his past and future sins still not wholly washed away because these men were still sinners at heart. Thus, John warned of the limitations of his water baptism and proclaimed the fullness of Jesus' spiritual baptism.

This baptism of Jesus is different than that of traditional Jewish water baptism. By this baptism, men rejected their sinful natures and dedicated themselves to God by being washed and regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:4-7: "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Being purified by the Spirit is analogous to having the new heart, as prophesied by later prophets. By this, Christians hearts are tilted toward God, providing them the means to reject their sinful natures. Furthermore, having been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, these people have been forgiven of their sins.

Taken together, those baptized with the Spirit are primed to become sons of God and citizens of Heaven. Not only do Paul and John separate baptism of the spirit and water, but so does Jesus:

Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.....But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

This separation is cohesive with Jesus' many earlier narratives on the separation of flesh and spirit. One of the more pertinent ones could be found again with Jesus' conversation with the Pharisee Nicodemus:

John 3: 3 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Being born of water could be taken in two ways:

Biologically (literally), water likely referring to the amniotic fluid that immerses a fetus and is released shortly prior to birth.

or

Traditional (alliteratively), referring to cultural significance behind baptism, by which Jews signify purification toward God.

Of course, Nicodemus was focused on the biological aspect. In a literal and biological context, being born twice is completely ludicrous, so Nicodemus asks him to explain. Jesus elaborates:

John 3: 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.

12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

## **The Apostles Knew that Repentance and the Receipt of the Holy Spirit were the Predominant Means of Salvation, not Baptism Itself**

Even though baptism is extremely important as a rite, in that it symbolizes being born again as a Christian, it is not the mechanism for salvation. Instead, it is the reception of the Holy Spirit through belief in Jesus. Which brings us to Peter:

1 Peter 3:18-22: For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of

Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

Peter knew that the act of baptism itself wasn't responsible for salvation or forgiveness of sins. Jesus died so men were forgiven of their sins, allowing them community with God. Thus, baptism is now a rite where men proclaim their dedication toward Christ and appeal to God for a good conscience (ie. The new heart and spirit mentioned in Ezekiel).

Why would Peter, who professed to thousands at Pentecost to "repent and be baptized for forgiveness of sins" profess this? Because God showed him both the purposes and limitation of baptism itself. First, Cornelius and his fellow Gentiles received the Holy Spirit explicitly by hearing the Gospel:

Acts 10:43-48: Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

Second, they themselves were spontaneously baptized with the Holy Spirit, without reperforming the rite, leading up to the Pentecost:

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Finally, and of excruciating importance, are the Samaritans. The Samaritans believed Philip's testimony of Jesus and were baptized in His name, but they did not receive the Holy Spirit. Among them was Simon, a sorcerer, who was believed and baptized, but never repented in his heart. When Peter and John later came to impart the Holy Spirit they refused it to Simon, telling him to repent. Repentance, ie. rejection of sin and turning to Jesus Christ, was what carried power, not the act of baptism itself.

"But when they believed Philip as he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed and was baptized. He followed Philip closely and was astounded by the great signs and miracles he observed.

14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 On their arrival, they prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money. 19 "Give me this power as well," he said, "so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter replied, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! 21 You have no part or share in our ministry, because your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent, therefore, of your wickedness, and pray to the Lord. Perhaps He will forgive you for the intent of your heart. 23 For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and captive to iniquity."

The same could be said for Saul, who received the Holy Spirit when he was ordained through the laying of hands by Ananias:

Acts 9: 17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

Laying of hands was a traditional practice among Jews both for ordaining priests and (at times) for channeling the power of God for healing afflictions. Saul, who had seen Jesus, had excessive evidence for submitting to Him as Lord. Consequently, when Saul, now Paul, was writing his letters to guide the Early Church, he elevated preaching the gospel over baptism in importance to growing the Church:

1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with words of wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

## In Closing

So, when you are baptized, just as Jesus had commanded His disciples, you do so with intention of rejecting your sinful nature and fixing your eyes on Jesus Christ. As a sacrament, becoming baptized:

- Demonstrates obedience to God and Jesus by following their commandment.
- Pleases God by formally dedicating one's life to Him
- Represents the repentance that is bolstered from the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

As Paul would put it:

Ephesians 4:7 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, 6 which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

# Communion

Luke 22:15 And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” 17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. 18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

19 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.” 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

## Establishing the Context of Communion

Communion is both a celebration of the fulfillment of the New Covenant, and a somber reminder of the price Jesus willingly paid to enact it. Jesus instated communion during the first day of Passover (Pasch), a weeklong Jewish celebration of God’s deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. At the beginning of Passover, Jews would remove all leavened food from their homes; these would be avoided for the entire week.

The first two nights of Passover, families or friends would gather for religious feasts known as Seder, where the history of Exodus was to be recited and discussed aloud. Foods specific to Passover, such as Matzo, bitter herbs, and charoset were prominent. What was notable about this Passover was that it was to be the last before Jesus’ death, which of course, would be the mechanism by which God would deliver the Elect from sin.

Source: <https://toriavev.com/what-is-pasover/>

Knowing His time was soon coming, Jesus chose to sit and explain the specifics of how He was to fulfill this New covenant to His disciples. As the ultimate offering for sin, Jesus would have to sacrifice. So, taking the unleavened bread, He stated this would be His body, and He broke it in front of the disciples and passed it around, stating that His body would be broken for them.

Next, Jesus took the cup of wine and stated that this is His blood, which would be poured out them as the basis of the New Covenant. Jesus told His disciples that He would not partake of bread nor wine again until the Kingdom of God comes, but He commanded His disciples to continuously observe this “communion” in remembrance of Him.

## Communion is the Representation of the Covenant Purchased by Jesus' Death

How do we know that it was Jesus' sacrifice specifically that would purchase the redemption of men? Because God explicitly spelled it out to the Israelites in Isaiah:

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus would be pierced for the sins of God's people, He would be crushed for our wrongs against God. By Jesus' wounds, His flock are *healed*.

10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

By God's will, Jesus was killed as an offering for guilt, which was very much in alignment with the sacrifices outlined in Mosaic/Levitical law. Not only by His death, but by His knowledge (ie. words of the Spirit/Gospel), Jesus would make many men righteous by bearing their transgressions. It is specifically by Jesus' death, as a guilt offering, that the sins of men are forgiven, just as God had promised the Israelites in both Isaiah and Jeremiah. Jesus of course, would be the one to make intercession for His people.

## The Consumption of His Flesh and Blood is Metaphorical, Literal Consumption of Flesh and Blood is Evil

Jesus first alluded to his sacrifice this in His sermon at Capernaum:

John 6:52: The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 53 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. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. 58 This

is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” 59 Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

If we were to take this literally, as Nicodemus had done with spiritual baptism, this presents some problems. You see, Jesus is God manifested as man, and He comes fulfilling His Laws. The Jews and disciples, like Jesus, were aware of the original scriptures of the Old Testament, where God condemned the consumption of human flesh and blood.

Deuteronomy 18:10: There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer.

Ezekiel 36: <sup>13</sup> Thus says the Lord God: Because they say to you, ‘You devour people, and you bereave your nation of children, <sup>14</sup> therefore you shall no longer devour people and no longer bereave your nation of children, declares the Lord God. <sup>15</sup> And I will not let you hear anymore the reproach of the nations, and you shall no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble, declares the Lord God.”

Leviticus 17: <sup>10</sup> “And if any native Israelite or foreigner living among you eats or drinks blood in any form, I will turn against that person and cut him off from the community of your people, <sup>11</sup> for the life of the body is in its blood. I have given you the blood on the altar to purify you, making you right with the Lord.

It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible. <sup>12</sup> That is why I have said to the people of Israel, ‘You must never eat or drink blood—neither you nor the foreigners living among you.’ <sup>14</sup> “For as for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.”

Well, of course, Jesus was not speaking literally. Consumption of blood is a repulsive sin against God; Jesus would never condone that. We know this to be because His apostles later still assert that consumption of blood is evil. They make no mention or concession of consuming Jesus’ blood. They directly reference what God told Moses in the books of the Pentateuch.

Acts 15:19 It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not cause trouble for the Gentiles who are turning to God. **20** Instead, we should write and tell them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals, and from blood. **21** For Moses has been proclaimed in every city from ancient times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

So, no wonder this was hard for both the Jews and Jesus’s own disciples to understand, cannibalizing Jesus is clearly wrong. It is not surprising that Jesus, in spite of His proclivity for metaphors, corrects the disciples immediately:



John 6:60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” 61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?”

63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

In the context of John 6, the conflict that arose from interpreting Jesus literally is resolved.

Please remember that Jesus spoke in metaphors frequently and has referred to Himself as not only being bread, but as a shepherd (John 10:11), a gate (John 10:9), a vine (John 15:5), and the cornerstone (Matt 21:42). Eating Jesus was not the mechanism for forgiveness, but the destruction of his body and spilling of his blood would. This imagery is necessary as this is an alliterative reference to the sacrifices in Mosaic Law.

Once corrected, the remaining disciples then began to understand that the bread of life is the Word of God, more specifically, the light that the Word of God brings as truth and salvation to those that believe in Jesus:

John 6: 66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

Remember back in Isaiah 53 that by Jesus’ death the transgression of many would be paid for, and by Jesus’s knowledge many would be made righteous? We know the knowledge Jesus specifically brought with Him was the Gospel, hence the words of Spirit and Truth. This also makes sense in that Jesus also refers to this truth as water when he speaks to the Samaritan woman, stating:

John 4:14: But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

1 John 5:6: This is he who came by water and **blood**—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the **blood**. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

Taken literally, these are contradictions. It is either Jesus’ flesh and blood that give eternal life, or this water that He gives. It can’t be both, that is contradictory. What is the one thing that binds the flesh, water, and even bread together? It's the

assertion that they are metaphor for the truth of the Gospel He speaks to them, which can impart the Spirit.

This would leave the blood as being His sacrifice on the cross for our sins, which is then followed by the Holy Spirit, which continues to instruct truth in His chosen people.

What does Jesus say about these metaphors and the Holy Spirit well after His preaching at Capernaum and just following the last supper?

John 16: 25“ I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. 26 In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; 27 for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. 28 I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

29 His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! 30 Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” 31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?”

## **Communion Potentially Holds an Even Deeper Layer of Symbolism**

I know I’ve likely rubbed some people the wrong way by disregarding transubstantiation through metaphorical (but scriptural) reconciliations. Well, this is something I will again do in much more detail later in the following chapter. However, I ask you to bear with me just a little longer first, because Jesus’ metaphors of communion extend far past that of flesh, blood, and sacrifices.

You see, while Jesus was God by essence, He was still a Jew both by blood and by culture. More specifically, Jesus, and all of His disciples were Galilean. As a culture heavily steeped in tradition, Jews have many fascinating cultural practices for various religious and societal functions. Among them, the Jews of Galilee have a set of rituals that are incredibly intertwined with Jesus’s own metaphors.

## **Galilean Marriage Rites in Christ’s Day**

Throughout the bible, God is often referred to as the Husband of His people, especially throughout the Old Testament. His people are referred to as His bride.

Isaiah 54:5: For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

Jeremiah 2:1: The word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the Lord, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the firstfruits of his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the Lord.”

Revelation 19:7: Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

The first step of Jewish marriage was betrothal, where a man who has come of age would have his father select for him someone to marry. The father would send a servant out with the best gifts he could afford to present to the woman’s father. If the woman’s father was impressed by the offering he would accept it and offer his daughter to the bridegroom.

1 Corinthians’s 6:20: “For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

The son and daughter are then introduced to each other. The son offers the daughter both a monetary gift, as well as a cup of wine. Here the daughter may choose to accept the gift and wine and become betrothed to him. Should she accept the gift and wine a marriage contract would be signed as an agreement for the marriage and that the groom was to provide for the needs of his daughter.

The accepting of the cup was viewed as a symbolic covenant for the marriage. Once the contract is signed and the payment is made, the groom declares in a loud voice either “it is finished,” or “I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until I drink it with you in my father’s house.”

Luke 22:17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. 18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

Here they would enter the betrothal period (typically lasting a year), where they were considered married, but they would not live together. Instead, the groom’s father would take him back home, where the groom was to prepare a place for his bride. This would involve the son building an extension on his father’s house to accommodate her.

John: 16:16: “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.

John 14: 1-4: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”

The son could not return for the bride until his father granted him approval. Meanwhile, the bride would focus on getting prepared for the wedding, readying wedding garments and utilities such as lamps and blankets. Neither her nor the son would know when the wedding be, as the final approval would come from the father. Thus, she would have to live in a state of constant preparedness and vigilance for her groom's return.

Mark 13:32-37 : "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Once the son had prepared an appropriate place for his fiancé, the father would grant him approval to retrieve her for the wedding. The son would return for her with friends and family during the night, announcing his coming with the blare of a trumpet.

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

The bride, hearing the trumpet, would prepare her oil lamp so he could readily see her in the night. He would come and take her away with him back to his house, where they would have the wedding party.

Matthew 25: 1 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. 5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

6 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

9 "No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

11 "Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!'

<sup>12</sup> “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

<sup>13</sup> “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Now, Jewish weddings were typically arranged between people within the same nation. Should a foreigner want to become a Jew (especially for familial adoption), they would go through a citizenship process where they would renounce the beliefs, practices, and identity of their original country and learn Judaism, where they were then submerged in a ritual pool as a symbolic process of dying and becoming born again. The symbolism further being derived from the Israelites crossing the Jordan river to reach the promised land.

In doing so, the baptized "foreigner" would be accepted as an adopted son and heir of the promise made to Israel. This ceremony was also applied to this rebirth to the bride as consecration prior to marriage, where she would be seen as new creation, no longer held to the sins of her past life.

In this, consider Ephesians 5:

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to Himself as a glorious church, without stain or wrinkle or any such blemish, but holy and blameless.

<sup>28</sup> In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> Indeed, no one ever hated his own body, but he nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church. <sup>30</sup> For we are members of His body.

<sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, but I am speaking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Keep in mind that this is, once again, not a distinguished church. The church is those where called as followers of Christ:

1 Corinthians 12:12: For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

In these marriage metaphors, accepting the wine is accepting the payment of blood from Jesus Christ in symbolic marriage to Him under the Father.

Breaking it down,

God the Father chose a nation of people of whom He wrote His Law on their hearts. He gave these people to Jesus Christ, but they needed to be consecrated to reside in Heaven with Him and they were incapable of doing so themselves.

Jesus offered His life to His collective bride, sanctifying them in forgiveness of sins, this payment being sealed with the acceptance of the wine. Those who heard the Gospel and dedicated themselves to Him were baptized into His body, the spiritual church, which was to be His bride.

When Jesus died on the cross and later ascended, He went up to Heaven to be with His Father. Here, He has prepared a place for His bride, body, and church. In the end times, Jesus will return amidst the blowing of horns and to take His people back to His Father to be with Him forever.

Jesus refers to Himself as the bridegroom in all four Gospels, most notably in regard to the Pharisees:

Matthew 9:14-15: “Then the disciples of John \*came to Him, asking, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

This is why communion has such significance in spite of not being consecrated by a priest or required for forgiveness of sins. It is also an expression of that personal pledge to Jesus and God as accepting the *gift of salvation* to be in “communion” with Christ. Without a necessary priestly body or being required for forgiveness of sins, this communion spares no glory, attention, or reverence to anyone but Jesus and God.

Sources for Jewish Tradition:

<https://biblexfiles.com/ancient-hebrew-marriage-customs-and-how-they-correspond-to-the-actions-of-yeshua-the-messiah-as-described-in-the-scriptures/>

<https://free.messianicbible.com/feature/ancient-jewish-wedding-customs-and-yeshuas-second-coming/>

<https://tasc-creationscience.org/article/ancient-jewish-wedding-missing-link-christianity>

<https://firescholars.seu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=mats>

## Communion in The Early Church

So, with the context and history of the communion thoroughly explored, how would it applied to Christians? We can look to Paul in the early church:

1 Corinthians 11:23 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, 24 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." 25 In the same way also he took 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." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Just as Jesus commanded His disciples to observe communion in remembrance of Him, Paul teaches the Corinthians to celebrate communion to proclaim Jesus' death. Of course, Paul, being the only non-Galilean of Jesus' apostles, took a much direct approach to communion by focusing on its purpose in glorifying God.

It was by God's will and mercy that Jesus was crucified for our sins, it was only by death could Jesus resurrect and ascend to Heaven before men, proving His divinity, lastly it was by Jesus' promise to return that gave the early Christians hope for the future.

Of course, just like any tradition, the Early Church would find some way to confound its meaning and squabble with each other anyway. So, Paul would lay down some ground rules that are still very pertinent to Christians today. Two issues were particularly present in communion.

There were differences in how the Early Church were practicing their faiths. These differences were deep enough to divide the church into factions, threatening the "community" aspect of communion.

1 Corinthians 11:17 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, 19 for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

On top of this, there were people were disrespecting the Communion with gluttonous intentions. Instead of remembering Jesus' sacrifice and proclaiming His resurrection, people were more concerned with gorging themselves on complimentary food.

1 Corinthians 11:20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

So, Paul demanded Christians examined their intentions prior to taking communion. Were they coming together as a community to proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Or were their hearts preoccupied with judgements against each other? Were they eating the bread and drinking from the cup with reverence to Jesus's broken body and spilled blood on the cross and in hope of His return? Or were they preoccupied with getting free food?

1 Corinthians 11:27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— 34 if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

In a biblical Christian faith, the beginning and end of communion is solemn remembrance of Jesus' death on the cross, which redeemed us of our sins, and a joyous proclamation of Jesus' imminent return, where He would come back for His church and establish the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. In Galilean tradition, communion takes on additional meaning as the acceptance of Jesus' gift of salvation, becoming symbolically married to Him and thus a child of God.

Jesus would leave them and ascend to Heaven, where He would reside to intercede for men's sins and to prepare a place for them. Christians would remain in earth, proclaiming His name and eagerly awaiting His return.

With or without the Galilean tradition, the narratives of communion are neatly unified in their sole end of glorifying God. Neither by scripture or Galilean tradition is communion a ritual, sacrifice, or consecration for forgiveness of sins. Jesus already accomplished this by His death on the cross and the subsequent commission of the Holy Spirit. He asked us to do this in remembrance of Him, because His work is already done:



John 19: 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” 29 A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

# Refutation of Transubstantiation

## The Background on the Eucharist

The Catholic Church firmly believes and professes that in this Sacrament the words of consecration accomplish three wondrous and admirable effects. The first is that the true body of Christ the Lord, the same that was born of the Virgin, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, is contained in this Sacrament. The second, however repugnant it may appear to the senses, is that none of the substance of the elements remains in the Sacrament.

148 The third, which may be deduced from the two preceding, although the words of consecration themselves clearly express it, is that the accidents which present themselves to the eyes or other senses exist in a wonderful and ineffable manner without a subject. All the accidents of bread and wine we can see, but they inhere in no substance, and exist independently of any; for the substance of the bread and wine is so changed into the body and blood of our Lord that they altogether cease to be the substance of bread and wine. (Catechism of Trent, pg. 147)

The Roman Catholic Church, in their Catechism, make several assertions about the Eucharist (their version of communion) that I see contradictory to what is spoken both by Jesus recorded in Gospels and by His Apostles in the latter books of the New Testament. Each of these contradictory statements, if sided with the Catechism, make the Roman Catholic Church the only functional arm of salvation and forgiveness of sins, rather than God's grace and Jesus' intercession.

If a Christian is not Roman Catholic, even if they deeply believe and dedicate in their hearts that Jesus is their messiah and the Son of God, are baptized with that belief, and undergo a true spiritual repentance, they will never see heaven.

This is because by the Roman Catholic's literal interpretation (CCC 1413) of Christ's metaphor about flesh and blood, only those who consume Jesus will be saved. Both conveniently and vindictively, only validly ordained Roman Catholic priests can transmute the bread and wine in flesh and blood (1411). Furthermore, the Eucharist itself is another sacrifice for forgiveness of sins (1414).

What is CCC? CCC is shorthand for Catechism of the (Roman) Catholic Church, which may be found here: [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_INDEX.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM)

So, all other followers of Christ, (and I can't stress this enough) even though they accepted Jesus, were baptized, confessed their sins, and repented, are all going to Hell. In that regard, I ask that you keep an open heart and a discerning mind for my following scripture rooted arguments. I know this is sacred to Roman Catholics, but it damns everyone else and limits the grace of God to a single denomination and through the hands of a select few.

My scriptural arguments against the assertion of transubstantiation are these:

1. The elements remain bread and wine.
2. Communion is done in remembrance rather than as a sacrifice for sins
3. Jesus is the only necessary mediator, not men. Jesus' sacrifice was once and for all, no continuous sacrificial offering for sin is needed for salvation.

## The elements remain bread and wine

As I've argued this extensively earlier in the paired "communion" chapter, so I'm going to use two new arguments. First, is that Jesus becoming the elements would require Him, in some form, physically returning to earth. According to the proto-Catechism of Trent, the elements become the **literal** body and blood of Jesus:

"The Catholic Church firmly believes and professes that in this Sacrament the words of consecration accomplish three wondrous and admirable effects. The first is that the true body of Christ the Lord, the same that was born of the Virgin, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, is contained in this Sacrament. The second, however repugnant it may appear to the senses, is that none of the substance of the elements remains in the Sacrament.

148 The third, which may be deduced from the two preceding. although the words of consecration themselves clearly express it, is that the accidents which present themselves to the eyes or other senses exist in a wonderful and ineffable manner without a subject. All the accidents of bread and wine we can see, but they inhere in no substance, and exist independently of any; for the substance of the bread and wine is so changed into the body and blood of our Lord that they altogether cease to be the substance of bread and wine."

Source: <http://www.saintsbooks.net/books/The%20Roman%20Catechism.pdf>

This is in direct conflict to Hebrews 10:

11 Day after day every priest stands to minister and to offer again and again the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time, He waits for His enemies to be made a footstool for His feet, 14 because by a single offering He has made perfect for all time those who are being sanctified.

Jesus' sacrifice is complete, hence why He stated "it is finished" on the cross. Jesus now remains in Heaven, not to return until His enemies are to be conquered. There is no room for any reality where Jesus returns earth in the form of millions of portions bread and wine every week. The last time Jesus was incarnated on Earth, He held to the physical and spatial constraints of His human form. Thus, transubstantiation is not described in this way anywhere in Bible, because it is a wholly irrational assertion.

## **Communion is done in remembrance rather than as a sacrifice for sins**

This brings me to my next argument, which is against that the Eucharist is meant to be a sacrifice rather than an act of reverence. Jesus explicitly states to have communion in remembrance of Him.

Luke 22:19 And He took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.

Without the literal interpretation of consuming His physical body and blood for salvation, there is now no ground for claiming that bread and wine must be consumed as a sacrifice for forgiveness of sins. Why would Jesus come back to sacrifice Himself again every week for sins already repaid for His chosen when He died on the cross? Scripture makes a fantastic argument against sacrificial Eucharist.

*Hebrews 9:25-26 : Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."*

Hebrews 10: <sup>5</sup>Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; <sup>6</sup>with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. <sup>7</sup>Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.'"

<sup>8</sup>First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law. <sup>9</sup>Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. <sup>10</sup>And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

## **Jesus' sacrifice was once and for all, no continuous sacrificial offering for sin is needed for salvation**

Why would Jesus have to repeatedly sacrifice Himself for sins when God stated in the New Covenant that He would remember them no more? Jesus died on the cross, paid for the sins of His people with rent flesh and spilled blood, and then sealed His chosen people as His flock with the Holy Spirit. The frequent sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary:

<sup>1</sup>Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. <sup>14</sup>For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

<sup>15</sup> The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

<sup>16</sup> “This is the covenant I will make with them

after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts,

and I will write them on their minds.” <sup>17</sup> Then he adds:

“Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” <sup>18</sup> And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.

Note how this is in direct contrast with the Catechism:

“1413 By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1640; 1651).

1414 As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God.”

The Council of Trent (chapter 13), help by magistrates who felt threatened by the Reformers, doubled down on this assertion of the Eucharist as a literal sacrifice. This sacrifice is of the literal body and blood of Christ, which they in turn physically consume, for the practical end of the forgiveness of sins:

If any one saith that in the Mass a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God; or, that to be offered is nothing else but that Christ is given us to eat; let him be anathema.”

“And He would also that this sacrament should be received as the spiritual food of souls, whereby may be fed and strengthened those who live with His life who said, He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me; and as an antidote, whereby we may be freed from daily faults, and be preserved from mortal sins.”

“And because that Christ, our Redeemer, declared that which He offered under the species of bread to be truly His own body, therefore has it ever been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this holy Synod doth now declare it anew, that, by the consecration of the bread and of the wine, a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood; which conversion is, by the holy Catholic Church, suitably and properly called Transubstantiation.”

Canon 3. If anyone says that the sacrifice of the mass is one only of praise and thanksgiving; or that it is a mere commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross but not a propitiatory one; or that it profits him only who receives, and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities, let him be anathema.

CANON 4.-If any one saith, that, after the consecration is completed, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not in the admirable sacrament of the Eucharist, but (are there) only during the use, whilst it is being taken, and not either before or after; and that, in the hosts, or consecrated particles, which are reserved or which remain after communion, the true Body of the Lord remaineth not; let him be anathema.

This interpretation of the Eucharist cannot be reconciled with the scriptural assertion that Jesus constantly intercedes for us all and made a single and permanent sacrifice to redeem our sins. It can also not coexist with God's proclamation that He will remember the sins of His chosen people no more.

Please understand how it is becoming increasingly difficult for me to reconcile the love and mercy of God and Jesus with the shameless salvo of vindictive curses Catholic doctrine slathers me for simply questioning traditions that are not in clear congruence with scriptures.

## **Communion Only Becomes Logically Cohesive When Removed From Roman Catholic Tradition**

If we are following this cohesive narrative for Jesus' singular sacrifice for forgiveness of sins, then what would be the competing meaning and purpose behind communion? Let's look at the Last Supper again in Luke, without the presupposition of a sacrificial eucharist and transubstantiation:

Luke 22: 14 When the hour had come, Jesus reclined at the table with His apostles. 15And He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before My suffering. 16For I tell you that I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Notice how Jesus says He will not eat the unleavened bread and drink the wine again. As in, this instance is the last time He will do this until while on Earth.

17 After taking the cup, He gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves. 18 For I tell you that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."

My assertion holds true in all three detailed recordings of the Passover. Jesus metaphorically addresses the wine as the blood He would spill for the covenant. Then He hands the cup to His disciples and immediately addresses it as the fruit of the vine, wine.

Matt 26: <sup>26</sup> Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." <sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Mark 14: <sup>22</sup> And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." <sup>23</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. <sup>24</sup> And he said to them, "This is my blood of the<sup>e</sup> covenant, which is poured out for many. <sup>25</sup> Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Also notice that not in a single account did any disciple state that the bread became flesh and the wine became blood. When Jesus said that water would become wine at the wedding in Galilee, did John not make sure to detail that it tasted like wine (John 2:9)? Did Jesus ever speak a miracle in the four Gospels that did not physically manifest itself? Why would His most important one at this time be the first exception? If the last supper was not to introduce a weekly series of human sacrifices of Himself, what was the purpose? Once again:

Luke 12: 19 And He took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

Here it is again from Paul in 1 Corinthians, chapter 11:

23 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, 24 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." 25 In the same way also he took 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." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

What about Paul's warning against consuming the bread and wine in an unworthy manner in verse 27? I present verses 19-20 and 33-34 for context before and after the verse in question:

"20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not."

And

"33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— 34 if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come."

The communion is a community act of reverence in remembrance to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and a community-wide proclamation of devotion to Him and His promise of salvation. Jesus spilled His blood to fulfill the New Covenant, ushering in an era of that salvation for His people. It was not to be treated as a bread and wine buffet.

Pardon my glibness, but people can't get drunk off of blood, it does not contain any substantial amount of alcohol. Certainly not Jesus' blood, who wasn't sporting a destructive blood alcohol content the Passover prior to His death.

## Exclusivity of Roman Catholic Doctrine is Challenged by Other Denominations

Now, let's say transubstantiation was not a transfiguration into the literal body and blood of Christ, but just a spiritual approximation to it. There are Lutherans believe such a tenet as well, is theirs not valid due to a claimed lack of apostolic succession? In that regard, what about the Greek Orthodoxy, who can purportedly trace their line back to the original apostles as well, and believe in Christ's real presence in the species?

## The Salvific Nature of the Eucharist is Not Cohesive or Respected in Roman Catholicism

Even more damning is that the Roman Catholic church had actually decreed the common priesthood (the laity) being church attendees, do not drink the wine, which is only reserved for the celebrating priests.

“There is no Divine precept binding the laity or non-celebrating priests to receive the sacrament under both kinds (Trent, sess. XXI, c. i.) (c) By reason of the hypostatic union and of the indivisibility of His glorified humanity, Christ is really present and is received whole and entire, body and blood, soul and Divinity, under either species alone; nor, as regards the fruits of the sacrament, is the communicant under one kind deprived of any grace necessary for salvation (Council of Trent, Sess. XXI).”

They have the impudence to quote Paul, using the vernacular “or” in reference to partaking in the bread and wine.

1 Corinthians 11:24-27: 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 he took 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 concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Playing with semantics to this extent is short-sighted. This interpretation of Paul's intention does not hold up at all unless you explicitly reject Jesus:

John 6:52: The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” 53 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.

Jesus clearly states you must consume **both**. So, either one must acknowledge that Jesus was speaking in metaphor to the Truth and the Holy Spirit, or one must accept that Paul was lying or making a mistake when he said “or” concerning the



elements. If it's the latter case then the Roman Catholic council invoking Magisterium is committing heresy by denying people the ability to share in the drinking of the blood/wine, in reverence to the Lord.

In fact, given the Roman Catholic interpretation of the Eucharist for being necessary sacrament for forgiveness of sins and full communion with God, they are effectively obfuscating people's spiritual regeneration for God by denying the saving blood to the common priesthood of Christians.

How fortunate it is that neither Jesus Christ nor the apostles have ever described transubstantiation, communion for the forgiveness of sins, nor the necessity of consecration from ordained priests.

In the Bible, communion does not need a priest to have significance. It is not necessary for continuous forgiveness of sins. Without extrabiblical tradition it is only for in remembrance and hope of Jesus Christ.

## **Bonus Round: The Post Apostolic Early Church didn't Uniformly Believe in Transubstantiation**

To the defense of modern Roman Catholics, the Catechism liberally references the writings of Early Church fathers for their narrative of transubstantiation. Reading those writings initially, I actually did begin to believe that following the end of the Apostolic age the Early Church had quickly fallen into this aberrant doctrine.

I was forced to second guess my initial assertion when I came upon a writing called *The Didache*, which was considered to be the authoritative doctrinal guide to Apostolic teachings. Compiled before the turn of the third century, the Didache would be the definitive proto-catechism of the Early Church. Look at what I found concerning communion:

*“Chapter 9: The Eucharist: Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks this way. First, concerning the cup:*

*We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which You madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever..*

*And concerning the broken bread:*

*We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which You madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was*

*gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.*

*But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, unless they have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs."*

**Chapter 10: Prayer after Communion.** *But after you are filled, give thanks this way:*

*We thank Thee, holy Father, for Thy holy name which You didst cause to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which You modest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Thou, Master almighty, didst create all things for Thy name's sake; You gavest food and drink to men for enjoyment, that they might give thanks to Thee; but to us You didst freely give spiritual food and drink and life eternal through Thy Servant.*

*Before all things we thank Thee that You are mighty; to Thee be the glory for ever. Remember, Lord, Thy Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in Thy love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for Thy kingdom which Thou have prepared for it; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever. Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God (Son) of David! If any one is holy, let him come; if any one is not so, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen."*

Source: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>

The Didache presents communion exactly as the apostles did in the Bible! There is no mention of a manifested sacrifice for forgiveness of sins. The bread and wine also remain bread and wine. The name of Jesus is proclaimed just as He commanded in Luke, and the rightness of heart necessary to partake in the communion was not dependent on confession of sins to a priest or belief in transubstantiation, but in being a baptized member of the church.

Looking back at many of the references oft quoted for transubstantiation, I found that many of them were in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, which was where Gnosticism was on the rise. Thus, it was wholly possible the Early Church favored stronger allegorical imagery to combat the Gnostic denial of Jesus' mortal (flesh and blood) existence.

So, with renewed vigor, I went back into the writings of the Early Church fathers. With some diligence, I found that the idea of purely symbolic elements was indeed admitted by multiple Early Church giants:

**Tertullian (Against Marcion):** *"When He so earnestly expressed His desire to eat the passover, He considered it His own feast; for it would have been unworthy of God to desire to partake of what was not His own. Then, having taken the bread and given it to His disciples, He made it His own body, by saying, This is my body, that is, the figure of my body. A figure, however, there could not have been, unless there were first a veritable body."*

And

*"In order, however, that you may discover how anciently wine is used as a figure for blood, turn to Isaiah, who asks, Who is this that comes from Edom, from Bosor with garments dyed in red, so glorious in His apparel, in the greatness of his might? Why are your garments red, and your raiment as his who comes from the treading of the full winepress? The prophetic Spirit contemplates the Lord as if He were already on His way to His passion, clad in His fleshly nature; and as He was to suffer therein, He represents the bleeding condition of His flesh under the metaphor of garments dyed in red, as if reddened in the treading and crushing process of the wine-press, from which the labourers descend reddened with the wine-juice, like men stained in blood.*

*Much more clearly still does the book of Genesis foretell this, when (in the blessing of Judah, out of whose tribe Christ was to come according to the flesh) it even then delineated Christ in the person of that patriarch, saying, He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes Genesis 49:11 — in His garments and clothes the prophecy pointed out his flesh, and His blood in the wine. Thus did He now consecrate His blood in wine, who then (by the patriarch) used the figure of wine to describe His blood."*

Source: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/03124.htm>

**Justin Martyr (Dialogue with Trypho):** *Now it is evident, that in this prophecy [allusion is made] to the bread which our Christ gave us to eat, in remembrance of His being made flesh for the sake of His believers, for whom also He suffered; and to the cup which He gave us to drink, in remembrance of His own blood, with giving of thanks. And this prophecy proves that we shall behold this very King with glory; and the very terms of the prophecy declare loudly, that the people foreknown to believe in Him were fore-known to pursue diligently the fear of the Lord.*

Source: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-dialoguetrypho.html>

**Clement of Alexandria (Instruction of Clement):** *"Further, the Word declares Himself to be the bread of heaven. "For Moses," He says, "gave you not that bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world. And the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Here is to be noted the mystery of the bread, inasmuch as He speaks of it as flesh, and as flesh, consequently, that has risen through fire, as the wheat springs up from decay and germination; and, in truth, it has risen through fire for the joy of the Church, as bread baked. But this will be shown by and by more clearly in the chapter on the resurrection.*

*But since He said, "And the bread which I will give is My flesh," and since flesh is moistened with blood, and blood is figuratively termed wine, we are bidden to know that, as bread, crumbled into a mixture of wine and water, seizes on the wine and leaves the watery portion, so also the flesh of Christ, the bread of heaven absorbs the blood; that is, those among men who are heavenly, nourishing them up to immortality, and leaving only to destruction the lusts of the flesh.*

*Thus, in many ways the Word is figuratively described, as meat, and flesh, and food, and bread, and blood, and milk. The Lord is all these, to give enjoyment to us who have believed on Him. Let no one then think it strange, when we say that the Lord's blood is figuratively represented as milk. For is it not figuratively represented as wine? "Who washes," it is said, "His garment in wine, His robe in the blood of the grape." In His Own Spirit He says He will deck the body of the Word; as certainly by His own Spirit He will nourish those who hunger for the Word."*

Source <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-instructor-book1.html>

In that regard, the Roman Catholic Eucharist is explicitly and undeniably **not** the preserved product of scripture or apostolic tradition. Transubstantiation is a doctrinal aberration that grew in influence and implied spiritual necessity thanks to an unhealthy church culture that vehemently anathematizes anyone who questions their practices.

# Rejection of Roman Catholicism: An Introduction

According to the Roman Catholic Church, submission to Jesus, acceptance of the Gospel, and following His commandments are not sufficient for salvation. God can work only through the Roman Catholic Church, the Bible can only be interpreted by the Roman Catholic Clergy, and Roman Catholic Tradition is equal to scripture, making it necessary to be in congruence with God's will.

"Believing" is an ecclesial act. The Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers. "No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother" (St. Cyprian, *De unit.* 6: PL 4, 519). (CCC 181)

"There is indeed one universal church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved, in which Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice." (Fourth Lateran Council)

"The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him." (CCC, 100)

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 honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence." (CCC, 82)

I take issue with this, because the Roman Catholic tradition is overwhelmingly unbiblical, and at times, flagrantly anti-biblical. Because of the divine power the Roman Catholic church has falsely assigned itself, using scriptures (be they the instruction of the apostles or the actual word of God Himself) to pull their church back into Christian practices is generally meritless.

This practice is especially predatory toward their congregation. Roman Catholics are purposefully conditioned from the moment they enter the church, often from infancy, to believe that only the Roman Catholic clergy has the ability to interpret scripture and represent the will of Jesus. The church makes Roman Catholics take an oath to raise their kids in their church during their wedding rites, giving rise to "Cradle Catholics." The Roman Catholic church is so dogmatically controlling that they even to claim that their offices are replacements for Christ on earth:

Let everyone revere the deacons as Jesus Christ, the bishop as the image of the Father, and the presbyters as the senate of God and the assembly of the apostles. For without them one cannot speak of the Church. (CCC, 1554).

It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (virtute ac persona ipsius Christi) (CCC, 1548).

“We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff” (Unam Sanctam, 1302).

The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, "supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls" (CCC 937)

Therefore, if the scripture refutes Roman Catholic teaching, a Catholic is conditioned to becoming unconsciously averse not only to criticism, but even any sort of honest analysis of anything that threatens the integrity of their church and its dogma.

I used to find this incredibly frustrating, often blaming the individuals themselves. However, after becoming more deeply immersed in Roman Catholic readings and literature, I've come to realize this incredible feat of social engineering within the Roman Catholic church. All of this is precisely toward the end of fostering the belief that the Roman Catholic Church must be infallible and sovereign.

"The holy Roman Church believes, professes, and preaches that no one remaining outside the Catholic Church, not just pagans, but also Jews or heretics or schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life; but they will go to the 'everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels' (Matt. 25:41), unless before the end of life they are joined to the Church.

For the union with the body of the Church is of such importance that the sacraments of the Church are helpful to salvation only for those remaining in it; and fasts, almsgiving, other works of piety, and the exercise of Christian warfare bear eternal rewards for them alone. And no one can be saved, no matter how much alms he has given, even if he sheds his blood for the name of Christ, unless he remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church. (Pope Eugene IV; Session 11 — Feb. 4, 1442)"

Source: <https://www.catholic.com/qa/the-council-of-florence-on-hell>

Additional arguments for Roman Catholic sovereignty usually come in the form of only Roman Catholicism possessing the Pope, apostolic succession, the power of Magisterium, and the “Real Presence” of the Eucharist. By their claim, only the Roman Catholic church is historically congruent with the early church and only the Roman Catholic church possesses authority on Christian specific history. The conditioning is so severe, that even to question the tradition of the Catholic church is worthy of condemnation in their very own religion:

If anyone rejects any written or unwritten tradition of the church, let him be anathema (Second Council of Nicaea).

Source: <http://www.catholictradition.org/Tradition/catholic-tradition.htm>

This is problematic, because as we have discussed prior in the statement, the Roman Catholic Church preaches a lot of heretical teachings. Their heresy is subtle enough that they can defend it through consistent twisting of scripture. However, these cumulative perversions of scripture are often so severe, that without assurance of the divine support of the Roman Catholic clergy and the inerrancy of the Magisterium, they would be deemed not just foolish, but actively dangerous.

With salvation being professed as unobtainable without the Roman Catholic Church, submission to the Pope, literal worship of Mary, and their dedication to overwriting scripture in ways that are solely empowering to the Roman Catholic Church, I believe that Roman Catholicism preaches a wholly different Gospel from Jesus Christ. I also strongly believe that they have become a fulfillment of the wolves in sheep's clothing the founding apostles often preached about.

In that regard, I have constructed an additional set of foundational arguments in climactic order against these Roman Catholic practices, as I believe I can conclusively prove that many of them are historically and scripturally unsound and that all of them are constructed to aggregate power for the Roman Catholic Church, rather than to magnify devotion to God.

I know this statement will find its way into the hands of several Catholics, and I know how tempting it is to write me off as a heretic or a malicious fool. I've witnessed both assumptions quite a bit. I am also aware that my above observations of your church culture are quite inflammatory. However, it is not for my sake, but as a service to God, that I ask that you to give this a chance and to continue to read this statement.

I promise that in the following arguments I will treat you with more honesty and dignity than what had previously been afforded to myself. We still profess to worship the same God and I am arguing for practices congruent with His divinely breathed scriptures. To my Roman Catholic brethren, I truly believe you are being preyed upon.

All I ask is that you give it a chance, as a Christian nothing should come between you and God, He is all that matters. In that regard, knowledge of Him and

true obedience to His Word is of utmost importance in Christian life. When presented with evidence that contradicted the teachings of my church and beliefs, I studied, learned, and grew, even to the ends of leaving multiple churches and entire denominations.

After years of such growth, I have found my peace attending a "Bible Church" and practicing a doctrine that is founded solely in scripture and a life lived with an undivided spiritual submission to the Triune God. I simply ask you to consider a reality where you may need to follow a similar path.



# Rejection of the Papacy

## The Claim of the Papacy

One of the eldest claims to the Roman Catholic Church's sovereignty is that has been founded on Peter, who was stated by Jesus to be the foundation of the church He would build. They further argue, that by Jesus Christ's commission, Peter is divinely protected from doctrinal error, is the new chief Shepherd, and the church that Peter would establish in Rome would be divinely blessed and protected from failure.

Because Roman Catholics have co-opted Christian history as their specific history, this means that the Roman Catholic Church is the only church of Jesus Christ. As the leader of Christ's divine church, the office of the vicar of Christ possesses the authority of Christ Himself:

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."(CCC, 882)

"The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head." As such, this college has "supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff." (CCC, 883)

We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff" (Unam Sanctam, 1302).

The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, "supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls" (CCC, 937)

## The Papacy Rejects Jesus' Role of Messiah and High Priest

As we can see from the above Roman Catholic principles, the Pope replaces (or even supersedes Jesus) in matters of the spirit. Jesus alone cannot gift you salvation, a Christian must submit themselves to the Pope. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not even the dominant mechanisms for regenerating souls, the **full and supreme** power in caring for souls belongs to the Pope.

As you will soon see, even just the argument for the Pope deriving his power from Christ will become void by their very own decrees. The Pope is so very much the sole authority in Roman Catholicism, to where no bishops or Christian offices have any power without his approval.

Now if any of the above sounds a little excessive, or even heretical, remember that these passages come from both the Catechism and the Unam Sanctum. These are byproducts of Magisterium, meaning that these doctrines must be infallible. The Pope is considered so divine, that He is instructed to be referred to as “Holy Father”, Summus Pontifex (Highest Priest), His Holiness, and of course, the Chief Shepherd.

Source: <https://aleteia.org/2019/08/17/here-are-10-official-titles-of-pope-francis-and-their-meaning/>  
Source: [https://www.cathdal.org/Resources-Grades-3-5-English\\_cathdal.pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Resources-Grades-3-5-English_cathdal.pdf)

If we are to believe the Roman Catholic Church, there is no possible way any person can be saved without being a Roman Catholic. The Pope has the supreme authority over men’s souls and only those teachers approved by the Pope are valid.

Since the Roman Catholic Church has conflated their denomination with Christianity itself, hence the brazen use of the term “universal church,” there are no other valid Christian denominations and all other Christians are going to Hell. In case someone thought there would be some room for centrist apologetics here, I would assert that there very bluntly is not:

St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote: "Be not deceived, my brethren; if anyone follows a maker of schism, he does not inherit the kingdom of God" (Letter to the Philadelphians 3:3).

St. Cyprian of Carthage wrote, "whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress [a schismatic church] is separated from the promises of the Church, nor will he that forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is an alien, a worldling, and an enemy" (The Unity of the Catholic Church 6, 1).

In the fourth century, St. Jerome wrote, "Heretics bring sentence upon themselves since they by their own choice withdraw from the Church, a withdrawal which, since they are aware of it, constitutes damnation" (Commentary on Titus 3:10-11).

Saint Augustine and the Council of Cirta (412 A.D.): "He who is separated from the body of the Catholic Church, however laudable his conduct may otherwise seem, will never enjoy eternal life, and the

anger of God remains on him by reason of the crime of which he is guilty in living separated from Christ." [Epist. 141 (CH 158)].

Saint Gregory the Great: "The holy universal Church teaches that God cannot be truly adored except within its fold; she affirms that all those who are separated from her will not be saved." [Moral. in Job. XIV,5 (CH 158)].

Source: [https://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/Catholic\\_Doctrine/Is-there-no-salvation-outside-the-Catholic-Church.htm](https://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/Catholic_Doctrine/Is-there-no-salvation-outside-the-Catholic-Church.htm)

You would think that something so overwhelmingly vital to salvation, even superseding Jesus' saving grace, would have been mentioned at least once by Jesus, Peter, or any of the apostles. However, a divine papal office never existed within the New Testament, apostles founded various independent churches outside of Peter, Peter never named a Papal successor, and in Revelation Jesus never mentions a Roman Catholic Church. In fact, most of the men I had just quoted existed before the "doctrines" of the Papacy and Magisterium, themselves. So, these are some pretty substantial claims to make without any sort of direct biblical evidence. Only through circumstantial evidence, historical revisionism, and twisting of scripture can these arguments be made, but they don't quite hold under scrutiny.

This is a serious problem, since if the Roman Catholic church has lied, Roman Catholics have effectively ascribed Holiness, authority, and the very power of Christ onto a mere man. This is, of course, flagrant heresy and idol worship, so these assertions must be taken very seriously. Thus, I have assembled a list of ethical, scriptural, and logical refutations of common claims on the Papacy in the following chapters.

# The Church was not Founded on Peter

## The Commissioning of the Papal Office was Obtained by Misconstruing Matthew 16

The origin of the Papal Office lies in Matthew, where Jesus christens Simon as Peter. Let's take a look at the original passage here:

Matthew 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The assertion that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God (which is of course, the integral part of the Gospel) is clearly what Jesus was looking for. This was the first time one of His disciples confessed Him to specifically be the Christ, although Peter did get pretty close in the sermon of Capernaum when he understood the allegorical flesh and blood of Jesus to be the saving words of the Gospel.

17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 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." 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Looking at this, the logical and scripturally congruent explanation of this situation is that Jesus exhorted Peter for recognizing him as the Messiah, and it was by this revelation the Christian church would be founded. The Roman Catholic Church argues that it was Peter himself who Jesus would build the Christian church on. This interpretation is the origin of a long line of arguments that assert that Peter and his apostolic line are protected from fallibility and are the eternal leaders of the church on Earth.

## Peter Being the Cornerstone of the Church Isn't Supported by Jesus' Language

Notice how Jesus immediately follows His statement of establishing a church on the rock with a command to His disciples to keep this revelation secret. The revelation was not concerning Peter's primacy, but of course, Jesus' identity as the Christ. While Jesus certainly did name Cephas, Petros (rock), He did not appear to refer to him as the rock of the Church, otherwise, the verse would look like this instead:

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on YOU I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Furthermore, why would Jesus place further emphasis on Himself being the Messiah, immediately after divinely ordaining his successor? If Peter has all of this alleged Papal power and authorities vested on him, Jesus being the Messiah is irrelevant.

Now, Peter's identity as the sovereign ruler of the Christian state would become a far more important secret since Peter was meant to be his successor and thus a threat to the Pharisees and the Roman Empire. It just doesn't hold up to scrutiny when you consider how little attention is afforded to Peter's supposed succession by Jesus, the apostles, Jewish leaders, or Roman officers. That's because Peter being the rock is a non-concept to all of them, the Gospel and Jesus' role of the Messiah are the only concepts given any heed.

## **Peter Being the Cornerstone of the Church Isn't Supported by the Scriptures, Which Detail God as the Sole Rock**

Semantics aside, it still would not make sense at all for Jesus to make Peter the rock that He would build the church on. When considering the context of other scriptures, this is contradictory to God being the cornerstone and God being the sole rock for salvation:

Isaiah 44:8 Do not tremble or fear. Have I not told you and declared it long ago? You are My witnesses! Is there any God but Me? There is no other Rock; I know not one."

Psalms 118:22: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Matthew 7:24 Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

1 Corinthians 10:4: And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

It is not a coincidence that only the Roman Catholic Church believes that Peter is the rock that Christ would build the church on. Scripturally, the only true Rock is that of the Triune God, therefore biblical Christians have taken this passage to its logical conclusion that it was specifically Peter's confession as Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God to be the Rock Jesus would build the church on.

## **Peter Being the Cornerstone of the Church Isn't Supported by the Early Church Fathers**

I actually found this interpretation to be stated exactly by the Early Church from the pen of Origen of Alexandria, a prominent Early Church scholar in the third century:

*“And perhaps that which Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” if we say it as Peter, not by flesh and blood revealing it unto us, but by the light from the Father in heaven shining in our heart, we too become as Peter, being pronounced blessed as he was, because that the grounds on which he was pronounced blessed apply also to us, by reason of the fact that flesh and blood have not revealed to us with regard to Jesus that He is Christ, the Son of the living God, but the Father in heaven, from the very heavens, that our citizenship may be in heaven, revealing to us the revelation which carries up to heaven those who take away every veil from the heart, and receive “the spirit of the wisdom and revelation” of God.*

*And if we too have said like Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” not as if flesh and blood had revealed it unto us, but by light from the Father in heaven having shone in our heart, we become a Peter, and to us there might be said by the Word, “Thou art Peter,” etc. For a rock is every disciple of Christ of whom those drank who drank of the spiritual rock which followed them, and upon every such rock is built every word of the church, and the polity in accordance with it; for in each of the perfect, who have the combination of words and deeds and thoughts which fill up the blessedness, is the church built by God.”*

Origen: Commentary on Matthew: <https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/ecf/009/0090407.htm>

## **Peter Being the Cornerstone of the Church Isn't Logically Consistent with the Character of God, Jesus, and Peter**

If the rock is meant to be the confession of Jesus as the Messiah, then the christening of Petros was simply an exhortation of Peter. This is sensible. Peter was the first disciple to confess this, much in the way that Peter was also the first disciple to understand that Jesus' metaphor of saving flesh and blood to be His words of “spirit and truth” back in His sermon at Capernaum.

Looking at the above verses, God establishes Himself as the only Rock of salvation in Isaiah. He also is referred to as the as the cornerstone of salvation in Psalms. In Matthew, Jesus confirms that His words are the rock of salvation. Then, well after Jesus christened Cephas as Petros, Paul confirms that once again the spiritual Rock is Christ. Literally nowhere in the epistles do any of the Apostles confess Peter to be the leader or foundation of the church, the only foundation is that of Jesus Himself.

1 Corinthians 3:10: According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

This also makes Jesus rebuking Peter as Satan (written literally directly after his confession in Matthew), Peter denying Him three times, and Jesus singling Peter out as a potential weak link amongst the disciples over the next few days far more reasonable if Peter were just a mere man.

I would not ever see Jesus, who lived His life preaching abject humility under God, naming anyone the Rock of the church, Holy Father, or Summus Pontifex. If anything, it is clear that Jesus still considered Peter to be just as weak in faith and humanly fallible as everyone else.

Matthew 16:21: From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Luke 22:31 - "Simon, Simon, pay attention! Satan has demanded to have you all, to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

So, not only is it logical that Jesus does not consider Peter the specific foundation of the church, but this view is further bolstered by Peter himself. Peter continues to refer to Jesus as the foundation of the church and as still being the chief shepherd of the flock:

1 Peter 5:1: So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Keep in mind that Jesus explicitly stated He Himself was the one shepherd in John, *emphasis on one*.

John 10:16: And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Considering that Jesus referred to Himself as **the one shepherd** then, and Peter referred to Jesus as the chief shepherd in his own letters, this leaves exactly zero room for the Roman Catholic claim as the Pope being the Chief Shepherd of the Catholic Church.

This makes the following passages literal blasphemy, as it attributes to man what is specific to Jesus Christ:

“The Pope preaches the Gospel to all people and ensures that the faith is authentically taught throughout the world. This is done through his encyclicals, apostolic letters, exhortations, addresses and homilies. He is the chief shepherd and all are entrusted to his care” (Catechesis on The Papacy) Source: [https://www.cathdal.org/Resources-Grades\\_3-5\\_English\\_cathdal.pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Resources-Grades_3-5_English_cathdal.pdf)

Blasphemy is a pretty strong word. Surely, I am reading too much into this. Pretty sure some expatiation straight from the Papal Office itself will clear things up, right?

"The Saviour Himself is the door of the sheepfold: 'I am the door of the sheep.' Into this fold of Jesus Christ, no man may enter unless he be led by the Sovereign Pontiff; and only if they be united to him can men be saved, for the Roman Pontiff is the Vicar of Christ and His personal representative on earth." (Pope John XXIII, homily to the Bishops assisting at his coronation on November 4, 1958 Papal Teachings: The Church, Benedictine Monks of Solesmes, Boston, St. Paul Editions, 1962, par. 1556.)"

Here's Pope John claiming that Jesus is not even the shepherd, but the simply the gatekeeper of the sheepfold. The Pope is shepherd, and he is only ***absolutely necessary*** to lead men to Jesus. Jesus isn't even playing an active role in the calling of the Elect anymore, the Pope is. This is a direct contradiction to both the words of Peter and Jesus, it's almost as if these men *want* to be an antichrist.



# Peter was not Pre-Eminent Over Other Apostles

“We teach and declare that, according to the gospel evidence, a primacy of jurisdiction over the whole church of God was immediately and directly promised to the blessed apostle Peter and conferred on him by Christ the Lord.”

"Therefore, if anyone says that blessed Peter the apostle was not appointed by Christ the lord as prince of all the apostles and visible head of the whole Church militant; or that it was a primacy of honor only and not one of true and proper jurisdiction that he directly and immediately received from our lord Jesus Christ himself: let him be anathema." ([The First Vatican Council, chapter 1](#))

## Peter's Primacy Over the Apostles is not Logically Supported in the Scripture

The idea that Peter is pre-eminent over the apostles isn't something that is directly supported at all in scripture. Jesus, the other apostles, and even Peter considered himself to be undistinguished from the other apostles. This would make sense, as Jesus embodied and instructed humility in His life and impressed on His disciples to do the same.

Luke 22:24: A dispute also started among them over which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. 25 So Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in authority over them are called 'benefactors.' 26 Not so with you; instead the one who is greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is seated at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

This is pretty late into Jesus' ministry, chronologically speaking, it is right after the Lord's Supper if we take Luke's account. Now, Luke is largely considered to be written in chronological order and so is Matthew. So, reason with me for a bit.

Jesus' christening of Peter (Mat 16) occurred well before the Lord's Supper (Mat 26). This is also the same in Mark, where Peter confesses in Mark 8 and the last supper occurs in Mark 14. Let's cut the pretense, in all three synoptic Gospels, the question of who "is the greatest" is after Peter's confession (Mat 16, Mark 9, Luke 22). So, if Peter is already the Rock of the Church who alone possess the keys to heaven, why are the other disciples bickering over who is the greatest? More important than

that, why did Jesus not exalt Peter? Instead, Jesus preaches humility under God, and offers them all equal thrones.

Luke 22: “You are the ones who have remained with me in my trials. Thus I grant to you a kingdom, just as my Father granted to me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Here it is again in Matthew:

Matthew 19:27: Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Why did Jesus not distinguish Peter or speak of an elevated office? Because He never wanted that, the only way to believe that is to entirely overlook and disrespect His ministry as a humbled servant under God. Which is why when the disciples ask Jesus to name one of them as the greatest, He strikes down any form of legal hierarchy with our opening verse of choice:

Luke 22:25 So Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ 26 Not so with you; instead the one who is greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is seated at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Attaining offices of power is something ascribed to the foolishness of Gentiles. Jesus specifically says that His disciples are not to be like that. Much like when in Matthew 23 when Jesus condemns the Pharisees for flaunting their empty religious positions and titles. Instead, Jesus ascribes His disciples a system of merit based on who humility and service. Of course, who alone is distinguished in this hierarchy? Jesus.

## **Peter (Still) Can't Be the Rock or Cornerstone of the Church... and the Apostles Agree**

We’re not done here yet, because even after Jesus ascended the apostles never insinuated Peter as holding a greater power, either. Peter being the Rock of the church would have certainly been news to Paul,

who was apparently off laying his own foundation. Notice how the true foundation is still Jesus.

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

How could Paul be laying his own foundation if Peter is the foundation of the church? Even if Christ is the foundation Peter is laying, why is Paul laying his own if it was entrusted to Peter specifically? Paul actually refers to all Apostles as building upon the foundation of the church, not just Peter, in Ephesians 2:20:

Ephesians 2:20: You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.

This only makes sense if the discerning Christian comes to the logical conclusion that Jesus built the church on the confession of Him as the Christ instead on Peter. This is why God referred to Himself as the sole Rock in Isaiah, Jesus refers to himself as the cornerstone in Matthew, and why Paul refers to Jesus as the sole foundation in Ephesians. Context matters. Context matters to Peter too, who not only considered the other apostles equal to him, but then explains that laypeople can obtain an equivalent to his faith through the righteousness of Jesus:

2 Peter 1:1: Simeon Peter, a slave and an apostle of Jesus Christ: To those who have obtained a faith of equal privilege with ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

## **Peter Also Rejects this Notion of Primacy**

Peter does not refer to himself as Holy Father, or Chief Shepherd, or High Bishop; he is simply one of the apostles. He refers to himself as a slave, not the representative of Christ, and claims to possess the same righteousness that Christ metes out to all committed Christians. I can do better though, let's take a look at another one of Peter's letters:

1 Peter 5:1: So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Look at that, Peter considers himself a common elder. Why? Because Peter is not a power hungry, dogma addled fool, but instead a dedicated disciple of Jesus. Hence, Peter explains why the Christian church does not have a strict theological hierarchy by echoing Jesus’ words in Matthew. Jesus is still the chief shepherd, the flock is still God’s, and God still opposes the proud. No wonder Peter didn’t call himself Holy Father or Highest Bishop, or Chief Shepherd. Those titles were never his, and to take them would very clearly be displeasing to God.

This is why Peter refused to allow Cornelius to venerate him, he knew he was not to expect any special reverence.

Acts 10:25: So when Peter came in, Cornelius met him, fell at his feet, and worshiped him. But Peter helped him up, saying, “Stand up, I too am only a man.

The same reverence the Pope demands in being labeled as “His Holiness” and the clergy demand by being called titles such as “Father” are clearly not practiced in Peter. Peter refers to himself as a servant, an apostle, and an elder, nothing more. He didn’t consider himself to be doctrinally infallible, he didn’t consider himself elevated among the other apostles, and he didn’t want veneration from men. In this, Peter's living out the teachings during his Discipleship in Christ.

**Roman Catholicism Rejects the Will of Jesus by Propping Up the False Papacy With Pompous Titles and Undeserved Reverence, like Jesus said the Gentiles do**

This Christian humility is lost in the Catholic Magisterium:

Let everyone revere the deacons as Jesus Christ, the bishop as the image of the Father, and the presbyters as the senate of God and the assembly of the apostles. For without them one cannot speak of the Church. (CCC, 1554).

“We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff” (Unam Sanctam, 1302).

I dare you to find me one single instance, in the entirety of the New Testament, where a disciple or apostle asked to be revered or regarded as the image of Christ, literally or metaphorically. I especially implore you to find an instance of Peter stating that subjection to him is necessary for salvation.

Peter doesn't feign humility and then demand glory either, like some hypocrite. He practices what he preaches.

## **If the Apostles Had an Earthly Leader it Would be James**

In the incredibly important Council of Jerusalem, where the church was to decide its relationship with the Gentiles and how Gentiles would conduct themselves as Christians, the apostle James gave the final word on the council, not Peter:

Acts 15:12: The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. 13 When they finished, James spoke up. "Brothers," he said, "listen to me. 14 Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. 15 The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: 16 "After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, 17 that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' 18 things known from long ago."

19 It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. 20 Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. 21 For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

This isn't the first time the scriptures distinguish James amongst the other apostles. When Peter is saved from prison, he explicitly singles out James amongst the apostles:

Acts 12:17: But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell these things to James and to the brothers." Then he departed and went to another place.

This would also be a good place to state that Peter did not preside over the dispensing of the apostles. He himself was actually sent:

Acts 8:14: When the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had welcomed God's message, they sent Peter and John to them. After they went down there, they prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

Why is Luke putting all of this stock in distinguishing James, while not once exalting Peter to any form of headship, if Peter was regarded as the head of the church? Because Peter never was.

# Peter Never Founded the Church in Rome

This conclusion is confirmed by the unanimous voice of tradition which, as early as the second half of the second century, designates the Prince of the Apostles the founder of the Roman Church. (St. Peter Prince of the Apostles, New Advent)

The Profession of faith of the other fathers added: and I pledge and swear true obedience to the Roman pontiff, successor of blessed Peter the prince of the apostles, and vicar of Jesus Christ. (1st Vatican Council, Session 4)

## Peter Never Made a Mission Trip to Rome

This might be a good time to state that Peter was never sent to Rome on a mission, nor did he claim to travel there. Peter had made mission trips to Joppa (Acts 10:31), Samaria (Acts 8:14), Caesarea (Acts 10:23), Jerusalem, and possibly Judea (Acts 1).

Rome is explicitly not included there, so it is not scripturally or historically sound for Peter to be the founding apostle and lead bishop of Rome.

## The Scriptures State Paul Founded the Church in Rome

Contrary to Roman Catholic tradition, Paul actually infers himself to be laying the foundation of Christendom in Rome in his letter to the Romans:

Romans 15:20: And in this way I desire to preach where Christ has not been named, so as not to build on another person's foundation.

He opens the epistle by expressing his intention to minister to the Romans, and closes it by explaining that he chooses not to minister in regions where Jesus is already by being preached. With a bit of deductive reasoning, it's apparent that there wasn't an legitimate church in Rome prior to Paul's arrival. Furthermore, when Paul is later brought to Rome for trial, he writes this to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:16: At my first defense no one appeared in my support; instead they all deserted me—may they not be held accountable for it.

Paul being the founder of the Christian church in Rome is not just scripturally sound, but logically supported, too. Why would Paul claim to

have singled out Rome for never having received the Gospel of Christ if Peter already resided there? Why would Paul later claim to be alone when he was on trial in Rome if Peter had become the head Bishop there?

Not only that, but think back to my explanation of the Galilean wedding for the metaphorical basis for Jesus's promise during the Last Supper. Why did the command to have communion in remembrance of Jesus persist in the Early Roman Catholic church throughout the centuries when the context of the Galilean wedding didn't?

Perhaps it was because Paul, *likely the only non-Galilean apostle*, was the one to bring the Christian church to Rome, where Roman Catholicism originated.

The references Jesus had made to Galilean marriage tradition would not have had the same weight to Paul, who would not have been as immersed in that culture.

## **What About Babylon?**

[1 Peter 5:13: She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.](#)

A common claim is Peter referred to Rome as Babylon, though it is nowhere mentioned in scripture. No other apostle refers to Rome as Babylon, either, complicating this claim. But, Peter using Babylon as a codename for Rome makes a little more sense than Peter actually preaching and writing from Babylon, since the book of 1st Peter was written late in his life and he historically dies in Rome.

So, if we accept this claim at face value, does this mean that Peter did found the church in Rome and was its first and primary Bishop? No, not even remotely. 1 Peter was written in the early-mid 60s A.D., the book of Romans was written in the late 50s A.D.

Sources: [Paul, Apostle of Christ, Chronological Order of the Letters, Who Was Paul?, The Letter to the Romans - Bible Gateway](#) and [When was the letter of 1 Peter written? – Evidence for Christianity](#)

With the proper timeline in context, we know that Paul founded the church in Rome. We also know scripturally that Peter had no power, (religious or political) in



Rome at the time to support Paul during his trials there. That pretty much dashes any claim that Peter presided in Rome as its bishop for decades, too.

## **In Conclusion**

So, the assertion that Peter established a supernatural line of bishops, which he himself never claimed to have done, in Rome, where he never claimed to have built a church, is more than a little ludicrous.

If we judge it by history, the only time Peter may have ever been to Rome was leading up to his execution under Nero's reign, which was recorded as being roughly around the same year he wrote his epistles (64-65 A.D.).

Source: [How Did Peter Die - Was He Crucified Upside-down? \(crosswalk.com\)](http://crosswalk.com)

# The Papal Office Never Existed Biblically

## The Concept of the Papal Office (by any Name) Is Not Established in the Bible

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. (881)

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. (CCC, 882)

Building upon the prior chapter, Peter clearly wasn't present in Rome for the vast majority of his life. Not once during the apostles' recounting of the early Christian church history was Peter claimed to a founding member or head bishop of the Roman church.

Not once, in all of the detailed accounts and letters of the apostles was there any mention of Peter establishing the office of the papacy nor leading as the Vicar of Christ (or even lead bishop). Not only did Peter never claim to do any of those things, but the office never even existed at the time.

Here is a list of pre-existing offices/occupations placed by God in the early church:

1 Corinthians 12:28: And God has placed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, gifts of healing, helps, gifts of leadership, different kinds of tongues. Not all are apostles, are they? Not all are prophets, are they? Not all are teachers, are they? Not all perform miracles, do they? Not all have gifts of healing, do they? Not all speak in tongues, do they? Not all interpret, do they?

If Jesus had intended Peter to hold a distinguished and infallible position of unquestionable leadership, surely God would have made such a thing clear to the early church. However, it there is no high office, greater bishop, or Jesus proxy mentioned in the church structure. In fact, not a single apostle ever even remotely suggests such a thing.

## **Even After the Founding of the Roman Church and Peter's Death, Jesus Pays No Special Heed to the Roman Church or Peter's Apostolic Line**

The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head." As such, this college has "supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff."(883)

Particular Churches are fully catholic through their communion with one of them, the Church of Rome "which presides in charity. "For with this church, by reason of its pre-eminence, the whole Church, that is the faithful everywhere, must necessarily be in accord. Indeed, "from the incarnate Word's descent to us, all Christian churches everywhere have held and hold the great Church that is here at Rome to be their only basis and foundation since, according to the Savior's promise, the gates of hell have never prevailed against her. (CCC, 834)

Not only are the apostles silent on the supposed primacy of Peter and the Roman church, but when Jesus later has John write His letters to the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 1-2), not once does He mention anything even remotely indicative of a single Roman Catholic sacrament or a divine office being required for the health of a church. No mention is made to Peter's primacy or the even the sovereignty of the Roman church.

In fact, Jesus doesn't even use Peter or the Roman church as an ideal to strive for in any of His letters. 6 of the 7 churches Jesus wrote to needed reproof, so why didn't He mention submission to Peter's office even once in all of His edifications?

Considering Revelation was written around 70 A.D., it's not as if Peter didn't have time to found the Roman church, ascend to head bishop, declare his primacy, establish the Roman church as the presiding church, and establish a successor. Revelation would have been written a solid decade after his death, which also gives more than enough time for Peter's proposed divine and authorities legacy to travel to the other churches. So, the Primacy of Peter and the Sovereignty of the Roman church clearly weren't a thing.

## **Neither Jesus or Peter Wanted a Papal Office**

As we've previously discussed, both Jesus and Peter and spoke against a theological hierarchy. Jesus did not want theological hierarchy of rabbis, chief priests, and scribes who boastfully lorded their religious authority over men. Jesus specifically told His disciples to not be that way.

God placed apostles, prophets, and teachers, in the church which take on different names such as bishop, deacon, and overseer based on translation. The common people were priests and people within the church possessed a variety of different gifts that made them complimentary to each other. Notice how there is no position designated as a "prime" leader over the greater church. That position lies to Jesus alone, as was always intended.

Daniel 7:13-14: In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Luke 1:31-33: "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end"

Hebrews 4: 14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Instead, these people God placed in the church would act as Elders, who lead the church not through power, but by being an example to the younger Christians. Notice how the below is written by Peter:

1 Peter 5:1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

These elders specifically did not carry absolute authority because Jesus wanted a humble church, for God opposes the proud.

1 Peter 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

So, just to recap, the scriptures make no mention of:

- Peter's primacy over the apostles
- A papal office
- The sovereignty of the Roman church
- The importance of submitting to Peter's apostolic line

- Establishing the Peter's office would hold the "Supreme Care of Souls", as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church

The scriptures do say that:

- Jesus did not want a power hierarchy in the church
- That the church structure consisted of the common priesthood, apostles, prophets, and teachers
- That Jesus alone has sovereign power and authority over the church
- Paul founded the Roman church
- Peter was still fallible in character and spiritual matters after being christened as the rock

In that regard, the Bible doesn't only omit the concept of a Papal office, but it actively rejects it.

# Peter was not Inerrant in Spiritual Matters after Ordination

## Roman Catholicism's Official Stance on Papal Infallibility

"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. 418 When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed,"419 and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith."420 This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself. (CCC 891)

The Catholic Catechism and the Vatican II writings state that the office of Roman Pontiff (the Pope) has divine revelation and infallibility when it comes to interpretation and proclamation doctrinal matters. Vatican II further explains how the doctrine of infallibility applies to clergy as follows:

“Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they can nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly. This is so, even when they are dispersed around the world, provided that while maintaining the bond of unity among themselves and with Peter’s successor, and while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or morals, they concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held conclusively.

This authority is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an ecumenical council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church. Their definitions must then be adhered to with the submission of faith” (*Lumen Gentium* 25)

While lesser bishops do not have infallibility, they have a higher understanding of spiritual matters by virtue of their priesthood and when gathered together as a council that greater understanding then becomes the same brand infallibility given to the Pope.

## Papal Infallibility is Blatantly and Unequivocally Rejected in the Scripture

Infallibility is a heavy concept. To be infallible is to be without error, so to be infallible is to be perfect. Speaking of infallibility, the clergy wielding the infallibility that comes with Magisterium stated that Peter immediately became infallible in matters of faith, doctrine, and the church, the moment he was christened "Petros" by Jesus in Matthew 16:

"Therefore, if anyone says that blessed Peter the apostle was not appointed by Christ the lord as prince of all the apostles and visible head of the whole Church militant; or that it was a primacy of honor only and not one of true and proper jurisdiction that he directly and immediately received from our lord Jesus Christ himself: let him be anathema." (The First Vatican Council, chapter 1)

I am a little concerned about the biblical literacy of the gentlemen behind this supposedly perfect and unchallengeable proclamation. If Jesus really made Peter the first Pope when He gave him the keys, and the Pope possesses a divinely attuned **and perfect** understanding on spiritual matters, then Peter surely wouldn't have done the following:

1. Tried to prevent Jesus's capture by Judas, which would have effectively obstructed God's plan to have Jesus sacrificed on the cross, nullifying the complete fulfillment of the Gospel:

Matthew 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. 22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. "Far be it from You, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to You!" 23 But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me. For you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

John 18:8 "I told you that I am He," Jesus replied. "So if you are looking for Me, let these men go." 9 This was to fulfill the word He had spoken: "I have not lost one of those You have given Me." 10 Then Simon Peter drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. 11 "Put your sword back in its sheath!" Jesus said to Peter. "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?"

2. Reject Jesus as His Leader **3 times** during His trial, where His position as being the Messiah was being questioned.

Matt 26:69: Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." 70 But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." 71 And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." 72 And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man."

<sup>73</sup> After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." <sup>74</sup> Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. <sup>75</sup> And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

3. Struggled with grasping God's revelation that salvation was to be available to the Gentiles. Peter shied away from his calling and returned to Jewish cliques, to the point where Paul had to openly rebuke him and take his duty to preach to the Gentiles for himself.

This is not an issue of impeccability, the charge was that Gentiles had to follow Jewish rites to be Christians. If Peter was the Pope, his actions would echo God's will, so he would be endorsing the Jewish practices over the Gentiles. In fact, Paul says right there in scripture that Peter is leading the Jews in the church astray.

[Galatians 2:11](#) But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, [because he stood condemned](#). <sup>12</sup> For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they [came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party](#). <sup>13</sup> [And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him](#), so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

Following his christening as "Petros", Peter was obviously still pretty fallible. Peter was a wonderful man, and a wonderful Christian, who did great things for the Church. However, he was still a sinner on a lifelong journey of sanctification and spiritual struggle, just like everyone else. Which makes these decrees of the Vatican Council and Peter's infallibility all the irredeemably foolish:

"Indeed, their apostolic teaching was embraced by all the venerable fathers and revered and followed by all the holy orthodox doctors, for they knew very well that this See of [St. Peter always remains unblemished by any error](#), in accordance with the divine promise of our Lord and Savior to the prince of his disciples: I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren [60].

[This gift of truth and never-failing faith was therefore divinely conferred on Peter](#) and his successors in this See so that they might discharge their exalted office for the salvation of all, and so that the whole flock of Christ might be kept away by them from the poisonous food of error and be nourished with the sustenance of heavenly doctrine. Thus the tendency to schism is removed and the whole Church is preserved in unity, and, resting on its foundation, can stand firm against the gates of hell." ([The First Vatican Council, chapter 4](#))

To recap, Roman Catholicism claims Peter was immediately bestowed the power of the Papal office upon Jesus christening him as Petros. One of the powers of the Papacy is doctrinal infallibility and perfect faith. Above I have three examples of post-christened Peter being fallible in matters of doctrine and faith. This is why Christians boast in God, not in men.

## **If Peter was the Infallible and Undisputed Head of the Church, Why Did He Cede Matters of the Church with James and Paul?**

If Peter was the Sovereign Pope, it would be his legal and spiritual duty to preside over the other apostles (especially during the establishing founding principles of the Church). So why did he allow Paul and James to assert any sort of equality with him or authority over him? Why would Peter speak fourth in the



council Jerusalem and allow James to make the final judgment in a council he was in charge of?

Acts 15:19 It is my [James] judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. 20 Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. 21 For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

As the person who would possess the highest degree of doctrinal infallibility, it would be Peter’s spiritual and ethical obligation to speak for the church. Furthermore, why would he commend Paul’s ministry in 2 Peter when Paul claimed to be laying his own part of the Church’s foundation?

2 Peter 3:14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Paul’s epistles have been the bane of many Catholic arguments for centuries, they were quoted frequently by Luther, Calvin, and Erasmus. Peter could have shut all of this down by himself by asserting authority over Paul. Instead, Peter equates Paul’s letters **with scripture**. Peter was a humble man who knew that Paul was a fellow Apostle who shared his charge of building the church. See how he ends this letter?

18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Peter charges the church to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus. Then he proclaims that **the** glory be to Jesus forever, implying totality. The glory is singular, and that singular glory is going to Jesus. No glory is meted toward himself or the church hierarchy. Peter is not Holy; the church power structure is not to be glorified. Soli Deo Gloria indeed, Peter.

# Jesus Chose Paul over Peter to Deliver the Gospel

## Why Paul Could Box With Peter

Why would Paul, the newest apostle, feel like he had any right to rebuke Peter if he was the vicar of Christ? Well, the reason is two-fold. First, as we have established, Peter was never the High Bishop or Vicar of Christ. The second, is that Paul is an absolute zealot, both in his dark past as Saul the Pharisee, and in his admirable transformation to Paul the apostle.

Paul was not as swayed by fear, which allowed him to stand firm where other apostles stumbled or hesitated. Even in spite of that, Paul could have never challenged Peter, if Peter was the representative of Christ, but that was not the case. It was actually Paul who would be carrying greater divine authority in this situation, as Paul was the one entrusted by Jesus to bring the Gospel to both the Gentiles and the descendants of Israel:

Act 9:15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

## Why Paul was Chosen Over Peter to Deliver the Gospel to Most of the World

There is a reason Jesus prophesized that Paul would bring the Gospel to the Gentiles (and the Kings, **and** the children of Israel) rather than Peter. He knew Peter struggled with weakness, which is why He prayed for Peter’s faith in John. Paul had no such limitations, Paul was proud, assertive, honey-tongued, and extraordinarily zealous in his religion.

Paul would be a far more prodigious servant in spreading the word of God amongst opposing Jews and the pagan Gentiles. Jesus just had to beat some sense into him first. If Peter had received doctrinal infallibility and an indelible character sealing his authority, why would Jesus entrust Paul with anything?

Galatians 2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. <sup>12</sup> For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. <sup>13</sup> And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

Read the New Testament and find me a single instance of Paul turning his back on Jesus out of fear. Peter, fearing death, denied Jesus three times on the day of His trial. Peter, fearing the traditionalist Jews, sided with them rather than standing for the Gentiles. Paul entertains no such weakness, he argued with murderous Jewish mobs, he stood on trial and argued against Roman commanders, King Agrippa, Governor Felix, and the Sanhedrin (Jewish Elders).

Paul preached from jail, on a sinking ship, and right until his last days outlined in Timothy. This not meant as disrespect to Peter, Peter was practically Jesus' first disciple and he spoke the most boldly of any of them at Pentecost. But Peter wasn't enough.

Much like Abraham, Peter truly loved Jesus, and by extension God, but Peter struggled with his character in faith. Peter rejected Jesus three times after he swore to Jesus he wouldn't. Peter nearly drowned in the lake outside Bethsaida because his faith wasn't strong enough to carry him across the water. When Jesus asked Peter to watch with Him the night before His execution, Peter fell asleep with everyone else. Peter knew his limitations, so he carried himself with humility and despite his weakness, he left everything for Jesus.

[Luke 5:8](#) But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." [9](#) For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, [10](#) and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." [11](#) And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Peter was also the first to understand Jesus' parable of flesh and blood, and most famously, the first to declare him the Christ. But when God gave Peter the vision of consecrated animals on the sheet, He knew Peter would not be able to hold strong. He wanted someone with the courage and tenacity of Paul.

[Philippians 4:10](#) I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. [11](#) Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. [12](#) I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. [13](#) I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

## **As Jesus Intended, Paul Worked Harder and Spread the Word Farther than Any of the Other Apostles**

It was Paul who wrote the majority of the epistles:

Romans, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. This makes Paul the most prolific New Testament author, perhaps only challenged by his companion, Luke, who superseded him in word count (Luke and Acts were **long** books).

It was Paul who, at the very least, brought Christianity to Ephesus, Rome, Antioch, Iconium, Lystrum, Derbe, Philippi, and Corinth. It was also Paul who was the most prevalent in providing guidance on how the Christians were to act and how the early church was to operate. Of course, it was Paul who was entrusted to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, Israelites, and their kings alike.

While the New Testament documents Peter writing two letters and preaching at Babylon, Joppa, Lydda, Jerusalem, Samaria, and Caesarea.

Paul wrote over half of the New Testament books and ministered to Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Antioch (city sharing borders with Pisidia and Syria), Antipatris, Appii Forum, Puteoli, Rhegium, Rome, Syracuse, Arabia, Damascus, Assos, Mitylene, Miletus, Samos, Trogyllium, Athens, Corinth, Attalia, Perga, Berea, Caesarea, Ptolemais, Tyre, Cenchrea, Ephesus, Coos, Rhodes, Patara, Cyprus, Seleucia, Salamis, Paphos, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Malta, Myra, Neapolis, Nicopolis, Sidon, Spain, Tarsus, and Troas.

When Peter was taking much deserved time away to spend with his wife, Paul was continuing to toil under God:

1 Corinthians 9:4 Have we no right to food and to drink? 5 Have we no right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? 6 Or are Barnabas and I the only apostles who must work for a living?

If Peter was God's chosen Vicar, why would he have taken the backseat to Paul? Well, clearly it was because Jesus chose Paul to deliver the Gospel to the majority of the world and not Peter.

Acts 9:15 "Go!" said the Lord. "This man is My chosen instrument to carry My name before the Gentiles and their kings, and before the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for My name.

While Paul once considered himself the least of the apostles, he also realized that he had come to have worked harder than any of them. Just as Jesus prophesized, he toiled and suffered immensely in His name and brought the Gospel to an incredible amount of Gentile nations.

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not in vain. No, I worked harder than all of them— yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

## Paul's Total Superseding of Peter's Roles Also Rejects the Concept of the Papal Office

If Peter never claimed to be the Head of the Church, Jesus considered all of the disciples equal, and Paul did most of the work, then there is no reasonable basis for the claim that Peter is the Vicar of Christ. In turn, that is a further refutation that the Papal Office ever existed, let alone was the will of God.

It doesn't matter that Papal titles would be introduced later under Pope Leo, who was the first conventional Pope (i.e.. establishing the Papal office, official titles, and wielding the power of the keys) when the source and wielding of their power and privileges went back to Peter. Peter did not act as a Pope, and certainly did claim to lead Paul or the other Apostles.

Source: <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/plaintexthistories.asp?historyid=ac65>

If Peter never was those things, so neither were the future popes. Also, Peter's first successor, Linus, is never mentioned as being a bishop or as being nominated for succeeding him in the New Testament. The only mention of Linus in the Bible is him being one of four people mentioned as staying with *the Apostle Paul* (2 Timothy 4:21).

2 Timothy 4:19 Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. 21 Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters.

If we were to strip the many (many) heretical attributes from the Papacy, history and scripture makes a much stronger argument for the office to go to Paul, don't you think?

# The Keys Were not Peter's Alone

## Background on Peter's Receipt of the Keys

One thing that is undeniably special about Peter was that Jesus gave him the keys to the kingdom of Heaven.

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.” 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Even though the biblical Peter did not possess any form of indelible character or authoritative preeminence over other disciples, Peter was clearly singled out by Jesus for exhortation. This is quite deserved, as Peter had been incredibly close to Jesus throughout His ministry. In the last chapter I talked about Peter's weakness, so let's now talk about his strength.

## While Never Infallible, Peter Loved Jesus and Thrived Under His Ministry

Peter was the first person not in the loop on Jesus' divine lordship to accept him as Lord in the Gospels. After hours of fruitless fishing, Jesus told Peter to cast his net back into the sea because he claimed it would be fruitful. Why should Peter have listened to Jesus? Peter was the professional fisherman, as far as he knew Jesus was but a Hebrew teacher, and Peter had caught nothing all day. But Peter did listen, he cast his net back into the water and pulled out what was almost certainly the greatest haul of his life. How did he respond?

Luke 5:8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees. "Go away from me, Lord," he said, "for I am a sinful man." 9 For he and his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were his partners James and John, the sons of Zebedee. "Do not be afraid," Jesus said to Simon, "from now on you will catch men." 11 And when they had brought their boats ashore, they left everything and followed Him.

Just like God and Abraham, when Jesus beckoned, Peter literally dropped everything and followed Him. I believe the parallel's between Abraham's faith and Peter's faith are important. There was no questions, he just got up and followed, knowing that the matters of God are the highest priority.

Later, at the sermon of Capernaum, Jesus preached what may have very well been the most decisive and controversial allegory of His ministry when He

described the saving power of His sacrifice and the Gospel in the terms of a Mosaic sacrifice, the payment being His flesh and blood.

John 6:59: Jesus said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. 60 On hearing it, many of His disciples said, "This is a difficult teaching. Who can accept it?"

Being hard of heart, these disciples missed Jesus' metaphor at first, much in the same way Nicodemus did, by taking it literally. Now, Jesus had already connected His words to the Spirit multiple times. Jesus had described the Spirit as water, bread, fire, and birth, and even He even stated that the mechanism of being saved was believing in Him just moments before, literally in the same sermon:

39 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of those He has given Me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For it is My Father's will that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

61 Aware that His disciples were grumbling about this teaching, Jesus asked them, "Does this offend you? 62 Then what will happen if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before?"

63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. 64 However, there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him.) 65 Then Jesus said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father has granted it to him."

This is a heavy concept to drop on the layman pre-Holy Spirit. Why? Well, first Jesus claims to be the Son of God, who descended from heaven (35). Second, He states that no one can come to God except through Him. Third, He states that no one will have eternal life unless they believe in Him as the Son of God (40).

Fourth, He states that all of the Elect will be taught by God (45). And fifth, using a metaphor that utilizes imagery of defying one of God's most stringent rules, the consumption of blood, Jesus claims that it is by His words that men will be saved.

This all quite difficult to believe for traditionalist Jews, who spent their entire lives chasing righteousness by studying and following Mosaic Law. But Peter doesn't even skip a beat, he knows he belongs with Jesus.

John 6:67: So Jesus asked the Twelve, "Do you want to leave too?"

68 Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.

It is of no wonder that Peter would go on to become the first to confess Jesus as the Christ. And even though I used Peter's denial of Jesus during His trial to show

weakness of faith, Peter was the only disciple to potentially risk his own life by defending Jesus from the armed soldiers sent to arrest Him.

So, even though Peter was not a paragon of character, a strong leader, nor did he possess the most ironclad faith, he truly loved Jesus and submitted himself to His lordship in a way that clearly separated him from other men. Now, one of these feats of Peter would be the driving force behind Jesus' pronouncement of handing Peter the keys to heaven; the confession of Jesus as the Christ. But, exactly what are the keys of heaven? Did Jesus actually give Peter the definitive and singular authority to allow and disallow people into heaven? Well, no. That's a little ignorant to assume considering the scriptures both before and after this passage.

## **Adding Contextualization to the Keys**

Jesus, being of God, is still very obviously the only true authority over man's salvation. As tempting as it would be to regurgitate the dozen or so verses I've used to argue Sola Christus, I'm going let Peter do the talking instead:

[Acts 8:18](#) Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, **if possible**, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.

If Peter had the literal keys of Heaven and supreme care of people's souls (CCC, 937), he would've pronounced Simon forgiven or denied right then and there. But instead, he told Simon to repent and pray to the Lord so that, *if possible*, he may be forgiven. Peter doesn't know if Simon can make straight his heart or not, so Peter doesn't know if Simon will be forgiven. Peter acts as if it is entirely dependent on God, because it is. Let's not forget Peter being surprised by the receipt of the Holy Spirit in Cornelius prior to baptism. The Holy Spirit is conditional to salvation. Thus, God is still the true authority.

Just as Acts 8 demonstrates the God is pre-eminent in allowing men into Heaven, Acts 10 demonstrates that God is still pre-eminent in dispensing the very Spirit that consecrates men for Heaven as well. The authority of salvation rest solely with God, just how it always has. Why?



Because only God can see men's hearts, and only God is the definitive judge.

Jeremiah 11:20 But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, Who tries the feelings and the heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them, For to You have I committed my cause.

James 4:12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

Acts 17:30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Even James, who received the same authority of binding and loosing Peter did (Matthew 18:18), pronounced that only God is the judge and that only God can save. So, if Peter, James, and Paul all believed God to be the sole and final source of authority on salvation, then, the authority Jesus gave to bind and loose in heaven is clearly more complex than the literalist interpretation.

## **If the Keys to Heaven Weren't Singular and Weren't Indicative of the Ultimate Authority Over Souls, What Were They?**

The Keys of Heaven being allegorical is not an unreasonable claim, as Jesus spoke predominantly in parables. His proclivity for parables was predicted in Psalms 78:2 and 49:4 and confirmed in Matthew 13:35. Thus, if the keys Jesus handed to Peter were not definitive or literal, then there is something else missing in this picture. Time to put down the cherry and return to the bush for more context.

1. The keys of Heaven were stated to bind and loose souls in heaven and Jesus did not immediately hand them to Peter at confession:

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 exact same authority is actually dispersed to Peter and all of the disciples after Jesus resurrects:

John 20:21: Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

3. The disciple's charge of binding and loosing was conditional on their receipt of the Holy Spirit:

“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.”

Despite this conferred ability, the disciples still profess God to be the final authority on forgiveness and judgement, just as how Peter dealt with Simon.

So, what are we missing?

John 15: 12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Jesus told His disciples, conditional on them being His friends, that He would give them what they asked should they continue to abide in Him. Thus, when Simon's...attempt at simony... presents Peter an excellent chance to proclaim his soul bound or loosed, Peter directs him to pray to God so that he *might* be forgiven. Notice, how this isn't dependent on Peter's will, but on God's will? Does Peter not have the Holy Spirit?

Wasn't Peter, like the other disciples, imparted with miraculous power for the purpose of founding God's church? What else is missing here, that Peter, someone who loved Jesus so much that he was ready to defend him from armed soldiers, did not possess the definitive ability to forgive Simon or impart the Holy Spirit upon him?

1 John 5: 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

John just gave a lot of context here. God's fulfillment of Christian's wishes is certainly dependent on the Christian's abiding within Jesus, just like Jesus said. But, there is an additional condition **contingent on whether or not it is His will**. All of a sudden, it makes a lot more sense that in spite of possessing “keys to

Heaven”, precisely none of the disciples are walking around forgiving people of their sins or pronouncing them saved.

16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. 18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

Here is another fascinating bit of context from John. John, addressing the early church, makes it clear the common priesthood can appeal to God for the forgiveness of sins. It’s not locked away behind a specific church office.

So, God is the final authority on forgiveness of sins and admission into Heaven, **and** common Christians can pray that God will strengthen their brethren so that will give them life. Why the ceremony and metaphor of Peter possessing the “keys to heaven”?

Matthew 16: 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 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.” 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

## **Jesus was Celebrating Peter's Understanding of the Gospel, the True Source and Condition for Salvation**

Peter professed the essential Gospel, for the first time, among all of Jesus’ disciples. Peter once professed Jesus to have the words of spirit and life, and Jesus had spoken in great lengths about being the Son of God with the power to forgive sin in His ministry. But, this is the first time that one of His disciples explicitly stated that He was the Son of God and the Messiah (Christ).

Now, both in the Old and New Testament, it is Jesus’ sacrifice that is professed to atone for men’s sins. It is also by God imbuing men with the Holy Spirit that they would become regenerated and pleasing to God. Both of these are contingent on men having an active belief in Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah:

1 John 5:10-13: Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

So, the true keys to heaven are the Gospel, which is what Peter had just confessed. Peter was at the time incapable of coming to this confession by himself, Jesus tells Peter that revealed that truth to him. Why was Peter not capable of coming to that revelation himself, and why were the disciples not yet imbued with this power of binding and loosing then and there? They did not yet have the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything that I have told you.

Now let's go back to Jesus' actual distribution of the ability to bind and loose that of heaven, which, as previously established, was equated to Peter's keys:

John 20: 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.

Thus, just like that, the mystery of the keys has been actually solved with scriptural context and logic. The Holy Spirit, which is part of God in the same way Jesus is, guides the Apostles on the matters of God. So, God is still the ultimate authority on salvation and damnation, and that is the Apostles, being the proverbial keyholders, don't profess or project any sovereign (or independent) authority themselves in saving or damning people. In fact, Origen comes upon a very similar conclusion himself:

*"But if you suppose that upon that one Peter only the whole church is built by God, what would you say about John the son of thunder or each one of the Apostles? Shall we otherwise dare to say, that against Peter in particular the gates of Hades shall not prevail, but that they shall prevail against the other Apostles and the perfect? Does not the saying previously made, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," hold in regard to all and in the case of each of them? And also the saying, "Upon this rock I will build My church"?"*

*Are the keys of the kingdom of heaven given by the Lord to Peter only, and will no other of the blessed receive them? But if this promise, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," be common to the others, how shall not all the things previously spoken of, and the things which are subjoined as having been addressed to Peter, be common to them?*

*For in this place these words seem to be addressed as to Peter only, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," etc.; but in the Gospel of John the Saviour having given the Holy Spirit unto the disciples by breathing upon them said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit."*

Source: <https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/ecf/009/0090408.htm>

## In summary

In that regard, Peter has no sovereign spiritual authority to pass on to his successors, neither to the other disciples. All of the authority has always belonged to God alone. In that regard, the Catholic assertions about the Pope are nothing short of literal blasphemy:

The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, "supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls" (CD 2) (CCC 937)

"We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff" (Unam Sanctam, 1302).

Christ alone is the way, the truth, and life. This is why when Jesus later has John write letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor in Revelation, He makes no mention of any Vicar, High Bishop, apostle, or Roman church. He tells the people of Laodicea that to those who *hear him and repent* (ie, an active belief) He will reside with them and they will sit with Him on His throne.

Revelation 3:19 Those I love, I rebuke and discipline. Therefore, be earnest and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 To the one who overcomes, I will grant the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Also, on behalf of the Early Church, Origen also refutes the claim of Peter possessing a special set of keys, in the prior linked sacred text, literally titled: *The Promise Given to Peter Not Restricted to Him, But Applicable to All Disciples Like Him*.

Source: [https://biblehub.com/library/origen/origens\\_commentary\\_on\\_the\\_gospel\\_of\\_matthew/11\\_the\\_promise\\_given\\_to.htm](https://biblehub.com/library/origen/origens_commentary_on_the_gospel_of_matthew/11_the_promise_given_to.htm)

# Peter Did not Establish an Eternal Line of Spiritually Distinguished and Doctrinally Infallible Successors

## Background on Papal Succession

1. That which our lord Jesus Christ, the prince of shepherds and great shepherd of the sheep, established in the blessed apostle Peter, for the continual salvation and permanent benefit of the Church, must of necessity remain for ever, by Christ's authority, in the Church which, founded as it is upon a rock, will stand firm until the end of time [45].
2. For no one can be in doubt, indeed it was known in every age that the holy and most blessed Peter, prince and head of the apostles, the pillar of faith and the foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our lord Jesus Christ, the savior and redeemer of the human race, and that to this day and for ever he lives and presides and exercises judgment in his successors the bishops of the Holy Roman See, which he founded and consecrated with his blood [46].
3. Therefore whoever succeeds to the chair of Peter obtains by the institution of Christ himself, the primacy of Peter over the whole Church. So what the truth has ordained stands firm, and blessed Peter perseveres in the rock-like strength he was granted, and does not abandon that guidance of the Church which he once received [47].
4. For this reason it has always been necessary for every Church--that is to say the faithful throughout the world--to be in agreement with the Roman Church because of its more effective leadership. In consequence of being joined, as members to head, with that see, from which the rights of sacred communion flow to all, they will grow together into the structure of a single body [48].
5. Therefore, if anyone says that it is not by the institution of Christ the lord himself (that is to say, by divine law) that blessed Peter should have perpetual successors in the primacy over the whole Church; or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of blessed Peter in this primacy: let him be anathema. ([The First Vatican Council, chapter 4](#))

Apostolic succession is a complex topic, both within and outside of the Roman Catholic Church. As I've read through the Catechism and the Vatican Councils, I've noticed that the degree of aggressive declarations on the power and authority of the apostolic lines has varied over time, but has remained reasonably congruent over the centuries. So, I want to establish some ground rules and context for the Roman Catholic doctrines on succession.

First, there are two primary lines of apostolic succession, the greater one from the lineage of Peter, and the lesser one from other apostles and ordinator. In

fairness, please note that greater and lesser are my words and not theirs. Let's take a look at how these lineages interact with each other:

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.<sup>400</sup> "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head."<sup>401</sup> 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. (881, CCC)

### The Papal line:

"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 Pope is inherently infallible by virtue of his Papal Office, which sees him as a direct apostolic "descendent" of Peter.

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."<sup>402</sup> "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."<sup>403</sup>

"The *college or body of bishops* has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head." As such, this college has "supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff."<sup>404</sup> (CCC, 891-893)

The Pope has supreme power over the Roman Catholic Church, but also in part over all other churches. A bishop only has divine support and authority if they are following the Pope.

This gift of truth and never-failing faith was therefore divinely conferred on Peter and his successors in this See so that they might discharge their exalted office for the salvation of all, and so that the whole flock of Christ might be kept away by them from the poisonous food of error and be nourished with the sustenance of heavenly doctrine. Thus the tendency to schism is removed and the whole Church is preserved in unity, and, resting on its foundation, can stand firm against the gates of hell." ([The First Vatican Council, chapter 4](#))

The Pope's divinely unfailing faith and doctrinal infallibility makes him in charge of preserving the entire church from erroneous teachings and protecting the Roman Catholic Church from schism. (*I only laughed a little during the schism piece, I promise*)

"The Saviour Himself is the door of the sheepfold: 'I am the door of the sheep.' Into this fold of Jesus Christ, no man may enter unless he be led by the Sovereign Pontiff; and only if they be united to him can men be saved, for the Roman Pontiff is the Vicar of Christ and His personal representative on earth."

(Pope John XXIII, homily to the Bishops assisting at his coronation on November 4, 1958 Papal Teachings: The Church, Benedictine Monks of Solesmes, Boston, St. Paul Editions, 1962, par. 1556.)”

### Common line of bishops:

"Let everyone revere the deacons as Jesus Christ, the bishop as the image of the Father, and the presbyters as the senate of God and the assembly of the apostles. For without them one cannot speak of the Church. <sup>33</sup>" (1554, CCC)

"The power which they exercise personally in the name of Christ, is proper, ordinary, and immediate, although its exercise is ultimately controlled by the supreme authority of the Church."<sup>427</sup> But the bishops should not be thought of as vicars of the Pope. His ordinary and immediate authority over the whole Church does not annul, but on the contrary confirms and defends that of the bishops. Their authority must be exercised in communion with the whole Church under the guidance of the Pope. (894-895, CCC)

“Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they can nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly. This is so, even when they are dispersed around the world, provided that while maintaining the bond of unity among themselves and with Peter’s successor, and while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or morals, they concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held conclusively.

This authority is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an ecumenical council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church. Their definitions must then be adhered to with the submission of faith” (*Lumen Gentium* 25)

So, what did we learn? The Pope replaces Jesus as the Chief Shepherd, and has individual and intrinsic power of infallibility in matters of faith, morals, and doctrine. The Pope also holds a distinguished and individual set of the keys to heaven, granting him ultimate and supreme authority over people's souls by virtue of his succession from Peter.

The other line of bishops, who share succession either with other apostles or simply through ordination of the Laity, are the image of God, but don't hold any replacement offices from Him. They can proclaim the Word of God infallibly, but they cannot possess the same degree of infallibility as the Pope without gathering under him in a council.

While the Pope's infallibility comes directly from God, the bishop's infallibility is dependent on being in congruence with the Pope. The big takeaway here is that both the Papal and common apostolic lines have a divine blessing that allows them to preach the doctrines of Christianity infallibly.



## Where does Apostolic Succession Come From?

Integration into one of these bodies in the Church was accomplished by a rite called *ordinatio*, a religious and liturgical act which was a consecration, a blessing or a sacrament. Today the word "*ordination*" is reserved for the sacramental act which integrates a man into the order of bishops, presbyters, or deacons, and goes beyond a simple *election, designation, delegation, or institution* by the community, for it confers a gift of the Holy Spirit that permits the exercise of a "sacred power" (*sacra potestas*)<sup>5</sup> which can come only from Christ himself through his Church.

Ordination is also called *consecratio*, for it is a setting apart and an investiture by Christ himself for his Church. The *laying on of hands* by the bishop, with the consecratory prayer, constitutes the visible sign of this ordination. (CCC, 1538)

The laying of hands is the process by which divine power is given to bishops and all other positions in the Roman Catholic offices. Specifically, this is called the sacrament of Ordination, which guarantees the imputation of the Holy Spirit directly from Jesus Himself, using the ordinating bishop as a necessary medium.

Now, to the credit of the Roman Catholic Church, the laying of hands to impart blessings is biblical. It is also used in appointing new apostles and disciples in scripture. It is the mechanics of Ordination and the nature of these conferred blessings that fall out of congruence in scripture. I'll present three greater sets of arguments to demonstrate:

1. The "Office" of Apostle was always intended to be temporary. Once the original apostles passed, there could be no new ones.
2. The laying of hands does not guarantee imputation of the Holy Spirit, even if done by a disciple ordained by an apostle.
3. Apostolic succession does not impart any spiritual strengthening of character or divine doctrinal teaching ability.

These assertions are especially prudent for the apostolic line of Peter and the office of the Papacy. Historically, the Papacy has been rife with evil, incompetence, and weakness, making its legitimacy unsupportable by Roman Catholic tradition.

## Apostolic Succession in the Bible Does Not Support Roman Catholic Tradition

The first and most prominent depiction of apostolic succession is the election of Matthias as the replacement of Judas. This piece of history is actually more harmful to the Roman Catholic assertions of apostolic succession and Peter's primacy than it is helpful.

**First we must consider the pre-established context as the apostles being literal witnesses of Jesus**, which meant that very few people actually had the ability to become an apostle. This is further damaged by Jesus affording equal thrones to the 12 original apostles/disciples as judges in heaven over the tribes of Israel. So not only does this reject Peter's primacy, but it also infers that the office of apostleship is a limited quantity.

Matthew 19:27: “Look,” Peter replied, “we have left everything to follow You. What then will there be for us?” 28 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, in the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

There’s a reason most non-Roman catholic denominations don’t believe in divine offices imbued with special power by unbroken apostolic succession. In fact, let’s take a look at the election of Matthias for context:

Acts 1:20: ...“Let another take his office.’ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”

23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Look at those qualifications: an apostle could only be a man who walked with Jesus, notice the emphasis with the word “must.” This is not some one-off verse either, look at how Paul chooses to argue his apostleship:

1 Corinthians 9: Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you yourselves not my workmanship in the Lord? Even if I am not an apostle to others, surely I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

3This is my defense to those who scrutinize me: Have we no right to food and to drink? Have we no right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas? 6 Or are Barnabas and I the only apostles who must work for a living?

Right after asking the hypothetical question as to whether or not he is an apostle, Paul asserts that he had seen Jesus. As an aside, also notice how he doubles down on apostles being able to have a wife, like Peter.

The Roman Catholic church equates apostolic succession in the Papacy and the clergy with the same authorities afforded to the apostleship of Paul and the original disciples, more specifically as a continuation of the authority of Peter.

This is directly against Peter's and Paul's assertion that apostles must have been witnesses of Christ to become a true apostle. The mandate of clerical celibacy is just another mode of conscious rejection of the will of the apostles.

1 Timothy 3: 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Also, note that the laying of hands won't definitively solve this argument either. When the apostles laid hands on Philip and the other six men to impart the Holy Spirit, they certainly went on to preach the word of God and perform great works, but **Philip could not impute the Holy Spirit to other people by virtue of his ordination**, as was witnessed in Samaria.

The original apostles had to come to where he was and do it for him, in spite of Samaritans being baptized and believing. Apparently, the Holy Spirit afforded special authority to the "original" apostles alone. Thus, the assertion of creating apostles through the laying of hands scripturally dies with the apostles themselves.

Acts 18: 4 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. 6 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was much joy in that city.

9 But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. 10 They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." 11 And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

Philip, who would be a "second generation" apostle, could not impute the Holy Spirit through the laying of hands. In the regard, they had to send Peter and John, who's greater preaching ability and authority as actual apostles were sent instead to remedy the situation:

14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

Philips ordination did not make him equal to the original apostles, they were still special.

Reason with me, in Acts 6 seven men receive laying of hands by the apostles and were filled with grace and power. But they were not denoted as bishops, apostles, nor successors in their teaching of prayer and ministry. Out of the seven, not a single one, not Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, or Nicolas made a new successor with laying of hands or imputation of Holy Spirit that granted a greater power than that available to the common priesthood.

For a later disciple such as Timothy, despite having been personally ordained by laying of hands by Paul himself, he was warned not to be hasty with his own laying of hands, insinuating **that it would not impart doctrinal infallibility**, some indelible character, or guarantee imputation of the Holy Spirit:

1 Timothy 5: 22 "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure. 23 Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. 24 The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. 25 In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever."

Why should Timothy be wary of laying of hands to appoint successors if the ordination guaranteed valid sacraments and divinely attuned doctrinal wisdom? Because it never did biblically.

So, this is just foolish lies:

"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.<sup>418</sup>

When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed,"<sup>419</sup> and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith."<sup>420</sup> This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself.<sup>421</sup> (CCC, 891)

"Episcopal consecration confers, together with the office of sanctifying, also the offices of teaching and ruling. In fact . . . by the imposition of hands and through the words of the consecration, the grace of the

Holy Spirit is given, and a sacred character is impressed in such wise that bishops, in an eminent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself, teacher, shepherd, and priest, and act as his representative (in Eius persona agant)."<sup>37</sup> "By virtue, therefore, of the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, bishops have been constituted true and authentic teachers of the faith and have been made pontiffs and pastors." (CCC 1558)

It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (virtute ac persona ipsius Christi). (CCC 1548)

Perhaps had the Roman Catholic church respected ordination the same way the apostles did, they wouldn't have centuries-long history corrupted by war crimes, pedophilia, heresy, and simony. This is more than a bit of a problem if they are to be the visage of Jesus in character, faith, and authority by virtue of ordination as a sacrament.

## **The Apostles Themselves Didn't Believe in the Divine Power of Ordination**

This brings me back to my next argument, that the apostles themselves did not believe in apostolic succession the same way the Roman Catholic church does. They feared for the health of the church once they left. Not only that, but they all believed that the church would be deceived by false apostles.

2 Corinthians 11: I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. 2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. 3 But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. 5 For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. 6 But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things.

Here, Paul asserts that people would twist the church's mind away from a pure devotion to Christ, effectively preaching another Jesus. Perhaps devotion to Mary and The Pope would fall under this? Protestant churches aren't twisting people's minds away from pure devotion to Jesus. Literally, the entire reason they were persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church was because they would only submit to God alone.

Pope Eugene IV, Papal Bull at Council of Florence ( 1438 – 45): "[The most Holy Roman Church] firmly believes, professes, and proclaims that those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but

also Jews and heretics and schismatics cannot become participants in eternal life. . . No one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.”

I personally find this assertion not only gross, but entirely incompatible with the established principle of salvation being the product in faith in Jesus Christ, as stated directly by Jesus and the apostles themselves. Let’s move on and delve a little deeper into these false apostles:

2 Corinthians 12: 12 And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

These false Christian teachers would still claim to be doing the work of God. They would pervert the Gospel, but do so under the guise of righteousness. Jesus says that anyone who truly believes in His name will be saved. The Roman Catholic Church contradicts Him by teaching that salvation is only attainable through their denomination as their Pope, Clergy, and Sacraments hold a special righteousness other Christians cannot have.

Not so sure? Well, how does the Catholic Church define the antichrist?

675 Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. 574 The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth<sup>575</sup> will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh. (CCC, 675)

Now, where can we see men, who positing under Christian righteousness, are glorifying themselves?

The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, "supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls" (CD 2) (CCC 937)

“We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff” (Unam Sanctam, 1302).

Let everyone revere the deacons as Jesus Christ, the bishop as the image of the Father, and the presbyters as the senate of God and the assembly of the apostles. For without them one cannot speak of the Church. (CCC, 1554).

I really can’t make this any more overt, can I?

2 Corinthians 11:16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. 17 What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool. 18 Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. 19 For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! 20 For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. 21 To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!

The Roman Catholic Church, which has claimed the exclusive ability to impart God's salvation, has been militantly intertwined with Spanish and English governments for centuries. They exerted overwhelming political influence on people who had no reason to obey them unless they believed that the Church had power over their salvation.

As I will cover later on, they would use this influence to torture, kill, rob, and exile fellow Christians who challenged their abuse of political power and claim to spiritual sovereignty. How is that not twisting Christianity to take advantage of other people?

## **Jesus and His Apostles Meant Their Teachings to be Predominantly Carried on by Scriptures, not by Divinely Protected Successors**

For now, let's get back on track with apostolic succession, I will cover the historical abuses of the Church later. Here is Peter explaining that he will die soon and that he will take precautions to ensure his work is carried on:

2 Peter 1: "12 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things."

Here is Peter warning of false teachers disguised of men of God who would blasphemy against the Gospel:

2 Peter 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Here is Peter in his last letter stating that **he had written the letter** so that Christians would remember the words of the Apostles and prophets and the commandments of Jesus.

2 Peter 3: 1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

If Peter was to establish a line of successors that would continually preach an adaptive and inerrant word of God through the rest of history, why would he urge us to remember the words of the apostles and prophets?

Why, in his last letter, which Peter began by stating he knew he would die soon, did Peter never mention his successor, Linus, as replacing him? In fact, why did Peter never share anything about a papal office, or the passing on of his infallibility, or even leave a single shred of evidence concerning the line of bishops or any offices established in Rome at all?

## **Bonus Round: The Scriptures can Reach the Ends of Earth Without the Need of Roman Catholic Clergy**

Well, because when Jesus meant the disciples witnessing to the ends of the earth, He never spoke of an eternal line of doctrinally infallible successors. The mechanism for salvation that Jesus would promise to be eternal would be...

Matthew 24:35: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Just as how it has always been:

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

And just as how Peter had preached:

1 Peter 1:23-25: Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

## **Bonus Round: Part 2; What if I'm Wrong?**

But I'll be fair, my interpretation is not entirely definitive. So, I'm going to be intellectually honest and consider the wholly reasonable reality that Jesus really did also mean that His disciples would go on to spread the Gospel to the very ends of the earth, including Judea, Jerusalem, and Samaria.



Doesn't this mean that Jesus needed apostolic succession to ensure that Christianity was orally preserved until it could be spread throughout the world?

Well, I wonder how many generations of doctrinally infallible bishops would need to be directly imputed with the spiritual character and the visage of Christ to pull that off?

Colossians 1:5 Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.

Apparently only one. But, perhaps Paul misspoke. Surely, he didn't really mean that the word of the Lord had been effectively preached around the whole world:

Romans 10:16-18 "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

Wait, this only two times in the entire Bible. Surely more context will disprove this assertion that completely undermines one of the arguments for the necessity of apostolic succession:

1 Colossians: 21 If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

These verses kind of make it sound like the "ends of the Earth" was an alliterative idiom, you much like in the same vein of the parables Jesus was partial to. Alternatively, it might also be that Jesus' intention was for the major kingdoms and world powers to receive the Gospel, knowing that it would originally spread to the corners of the world from there with or without direct apostolic intervention.

## **We Don't Need Apostolic Succession to Ensure the Word is Authentically Taught**

Okay, well, maybe Jesus needed to establish apostolic succession to ensure the word of God is authentically taught, as asserted in the Catechism. Surely there would be no other mode of communication for Christian teachings:

John 20:30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

It wasn't as if Mark and Luke weren't already compiling their Gospels in 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., so I guess that argument doesn't work too well, either. Well, what about divinely ordained clergy being needed to present revelations that weren't revealed at the time? Like Mary being immaculately conceived, the Pope being necessary for salvation, and venerating images no longer being idolatry?

Romans 15:18 I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, 19 by the power of signs and wonders, and by the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

## **There's an Ulterior Motive for Roman Catholicism's Claim over Apostolic Succession**

So, if Jesus never conferred to the apostles that their ability to bind and loose could be passed on, if none of the apostles proclaimed to transmit doctrinal infallibility, if the disciples had already intended their messages to be preserved through their writings, and if the entire gospel had already been preached and revealed, why must a specifically Catholic apostolic succession be a mandated?

85 "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ."<sup>47</sup> This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome. (CCC, 85)

Ah, of course, so they can hold the exclusive power to tell people the "will" of God. This is definitely the will of Jesus Himself and not a shameless power grab.

For as we all know, the Roman Catholic church has never accumulated political and theocratic power for itself, and they certainly *never* leveraged that power to garner wealth and oppress their detractors.

# Apostolic Succession does not Belong to Roman Catholics Alone

85 "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ."<sup>47</sup> This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome. (CCC, 85)

## Roman Catholicism Uses Apostolic Succession to Shut Down Both Detractors and Competing Heretical Sects

The Roman Catholic Catechism claims to derive special doctrinal authority from their version of apostolic succession. Apostolic succession here being necessary to reinforce their exclusive reign on divine revelation and biblical interpretation through their tradition.

You see, if scripture was not the highest and undisputed authority for Christian practice, then any schismatic church could claim their own revelations were valid as long as they were tenuously tied to scripture just like the Roman Catholic Church.

Much like how Montanus established a religion based on being a new prophet of God and how the Gnostics claimed to have sole possession of secret scriptural teaching from the apostles, the Roman Catholic Church would have to contend with other religions making their own "Tradition."

77 "In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them their own position of teaching authority."<sup>35</sup> Indeed, "the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time."<sup>36</sup>

78 This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it. Through Tradition, "the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes."<sup>37</sup> "The sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of this Tradition, showing how its riches are poured out in the practice and life of the Church, in her belief and her prayer."<sup>38</sup>

"And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching."<sup>43</sup> (Catechism 7-78)

By locking divine revelations and scriptural interpretation behind apostolic succession, the Catholic Church could argue for doctrinal supremacy amongst rival churches. This would later lay the groundwork for the Pope being representative of Christ on earth and the highest religious authority. This of course, would be by virtue of being a successor of Peter, who was retroactively declared to be the first Pope.

Now, I can see the value of apostolic succession in maintaining some sort of standard for Christian practice. If one bishop is directly tutored by the next bishop, it would be sensible that a greater degree of older Christian practices would be preserved. However, Roman Catholic Traditions have directly and indirectly conflicted with scripture numerous times, meaning that this theory did not translate too well into practice.

Even though the Tradition itself is a larger threat to scriptural integrity than apostolic succession is, the Roman Catholic claim of using this succession to assert divine authority for non-biblical teachings is the enabler of much blasphemy and suffering in the Christian body, hence this chapter.

## **Other Orthodox Churches have Competing Claims to Apostolic Succession**

"The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome." (CCC, 85)

Historically, the claim of genealogy equating to authority and authenticity was not the valid claim to church sovereignty that Roman Catholics believe it be. The major problem with this is that **all** Orthodox and Protestant churches share the same founding fathers, such as Irenaeus, Clement, Polycarp, Augustus, etc., meaning that any denomination that claims apostolic succession and can trace their lineage back to the original apostles would share similar power of Magisterium.

Contrary to whatever the Catholic Encyclopedia on New Advent [would like to claim](#), there are at least two other schismatic churches with direct and preserved lines of apostolic succession, the Coptics, and the Greek Orthodoxy.

Notice the Coptics also use the "ONE TRUE APOSTOLIC CHURCH" argument, which is detailed below in this atrociously formatted statement of faith:

## ***Apostolicity of the [Coptic] Church***

*This is the last characteristic of the True Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The True Church has been built upon the foundation of the APOSTLES and prophets, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, being the "Chief Cornerstone." (Ephesians 2:20)*

*The Church is APOSTOLIC because:*

*A) She has her teachings from the Lord Himself and His saintly APOSTLES who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word from the beginning. (Luke 1:2)*

*B) The Church keeps the teachings as received without any change or additions (Romans 16:17 and Galatians 1:8-11). Also these teachings have been built on the foundation of the APOSTLES and prophets. (Ephesians 2:20).*

*C) Her shepherds have APOSTOLIC succession and are connected to the APOSTLES themselves "and how shall they preach unless they are sent." (Romans 10:15) "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things and appoint priests in every city as I commanded you." (Titus 1:5)*

*Truly our beloved Orthodox Church is APOLSTOLIC because it received the teachings from the Lord Himself by St Mark and keeps the teachings as received without any alteration. Her shepherds also have APOSTOLIC succession. This may contradict other denominational faiths, which do not APOSTOLIC succession and the Sacrament of Priesthood.*

*In conclusion, our Coptic Orthodox Church is the True Church of the Lord Jesus Christ because:*

*A) St Mark the APOSTLE took teachings directly from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and set St Ananias as his successor and the first Patriarch on the See of St Mark founded the Coptic Church.*

*B) The Church's shepherds are Biblical as they are ordained according to the Apostles Rite and have Apostolic succession from St Mark the first patriarch (Number 1) to Pope Shenouda the*

*Third, Patriarch, (Number 117).*

*C) The Church adheres to the teachings as received from the Lord without any change (I Timothy 6:3).*

*D) Her faith is one, her teaching is one, she believes in one creed, all her members partake of the same sacraments, her goal of salvation of all people is one, and her Head, the Lord Jesus*

*Christ, and His successors govern her.”*

(Source: <https://www.suscopts.org/pdf/copticchurch/rituals2.pdf>)

Going even further than the Catholic Church, each territorial branch of the Coptic Church has their own public register of their individual lines of converging ordained bishops, over 20 in total. Some of these go back hundreds of years.

These lines converge in Africa, where they are then traced all the way back to the apostles. They are currently on their 118<sup>th</sup> Pope. Unlike the Catholics, their claim to bolster their authenticity extends to maintaining only the teachings and practices in the original scriptures. This means that there is a denomination with valid apostolic succession that rejects the majority of the extra-biblical teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Sources: <https://www.stmaryofchicago.org/Home/AboutCopticChurch> and <https://nicholeanapostolicsuccession.wordpress.com/>

## **The Greek Orthodoxy has a More Cohesive Apostolic Lineage and More Biblically Congruent Doctrines than Roman Catholicism**

Now, the Greek Orthodoxy is an even greater threat to Catholic sovereignty by not only tracing their apostolic succession back to St. Peter, but also basing the origin of their Church in Antioch, somewhere Peter would have actually been during his ministry career in the scriptures (although, I could not find biblical evidence of him preaching there).

Unlike the Roman Catholic church, their church's genealogy appears to be free of schisms and anti-popes, logically suggesting a greater degree of authenticity and commitment to Christian practice. Their line of head bishops, over 160 strong, includes major Early Church figures such as Eudoius, Ignatius, and Flavian, the latter two being recognized as Catholic saints.

Sources: [https://www.saintgeorgekearney.com/apostolic\\_succession](https://www.saintgeorgekearney.com/apostolic_succession) and <http://saintandrewgoc.org/home/2014/6/30/apostolic-succession-in-the-orthodox-church.html>

As a second knock against the Catholic Church, here is how the Greek Orthodoxy defines their tradition:

*One of the distinctive characteristics of the Holy Orthodox Church is its changelessness, its loyalty to the past, its sense of living continuity with the ancient Church. This idea of living continuity may be summed up in one word: Tradition. As St. John of Damascus says, We do not change the everlasting boundaries which our fathers have set, but we keep the Tradition, just as we received it [On the Holy Icons, II, 12]. To an Orthodox Christian, Tradition means the Holy Bible; it means the Creed; it means the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils and the writings of the Fathers; it means the Canons, the Service Books, the Holy Icons, etc. In essence, it means the whole system of doctrine, ecclesiastical government, worship and art which Orthodoxy has articulated over the ages [Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church, p.204].*

*We take special note that for the Orthodox, the Holy Bible forms a part of Holy Tradition, but does not lie outside of it. One would be in error to suppose that Scripture and Tradition are two separate and distinct sources of Christian Faith, as some do, since there is, in reality, only one source; and the Holy Bible exists and found its formulation within Tradition. Source: <https://www.saintgeorgekearney.com/article/Holy+Tradition>*

It's pretty obvious who they're referencing with that underlined statement:

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."40 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".

... two distinct modes of transmission

81 "Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit."

"And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching (CCC)

Short of the (admittedly limp-wristed) backhanded remark toward the Roman Catholic claim of scripture and tradition being distinct, but to be observed equally, the Greek Orthodoxy's definition of Tradition is nearly identical with the Catechism's. If both the Catholic and Greek Orthodoxy's share genealogies with the Early Church, going back to Peter, and define Tradition similarly, why do they clash on Christian practices?

The Eastern Orthodoxy maintains that salvation and justification are solely the work of the Triune God and that works are required not to simply maintain grace but to actively progress in a path to salvation. They also reject the Pope on

the ground that Jesus is the sole head of the church, they don't require their clergy to be celibate, they reject purgatory and indulgences, and they follow Jewish traditions of fasting.

If you've read the first half of my Faith statement, you'll notice that the Greek Orthodoxy is far more in line with the practices and traditions of the Early Church as described in the Bible than the Roman Catholic church.

Jesus was the chief shepherd in the Early Church, just as He is in these Orthodox churches. Purgatory and indulgences are never established in the Bible and so the Greek Orthodoxy doesn't practice them. Paul calls for early bishops and deacons to be married men, and the Orthodox church continues to allow it. Even though I have no remote will to join the Greek Orthodoxy, I wouldn't even have half of the ammunition for scriptural refutation of their practices as I do for the Roman Catholic church.

In this regard, the concept of "Authority by Virtue of Apostolic Succession" is a double-edged sword that cuts the Roman Catholic church far deeper than it does their opponents.

### Orthodoxy Beliefs:

[https://www.saintgeorgekearney.com/about\\_orthodoxy](https://www.saintgeorgekearney.com/about_orthodoxy)<https://prescottorthodox.com/videos/5-differences-roman-catholic-church-eastern-orthodox-church/>



# The Early Church was Never Unified Under Roman Catholic Doctrine

## Background on The False Narrative of the Early Church

Let's another look at paragraph 81 in the catechism:

"And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching (CCC).

A common argument for the authenticity of the Roman Catholic Church is that its practices and doctrine are continuous and unaltered throughout history, leading back to the apostles.

Has the Catholic Church ever changed its teaching? No, for 2000 years the Church has taught the same things which Jesus taught." (Catholic Catechism for Adults).

"It is a historical fact the Catholic Church, from the twentieth century back to the first, has not once ceased to teach a doctrine on faith or morals previously held, and with the same interpretation; the church has proved itself infallible." (My Catholic Church).

In this regard, if anyone were to disagree with the Roman Catholic church on a doctrinal stance, even if it involved using scripture, it would be equivalent to arguing with the apostles themselves.

This isn't a reach, the Roman Catholic denomination has traditionally defined segregating Christian denominations as schisms. A secular definition of schism involves the splitting of two parties from an original source. The Roman Catholic encyclopedia, crudely conflating the Roman Catholic denomination with the entirety of the Christian church, defines schism as "A willful separation from the unity of the Christian Church." New Advent, delves further into this assertion that defines the Roman Catholic church as the sole Christian church and departure from their denomination as heresy, [here](#).

This definition paints a false history of a singular church with a unified doctrine that all other denominations wrongly deviated from. At first glance, such a claim may seem reasonable as Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant denominations share many of the same forefathers.

However, the reality is that even in the time of apostles, the greater Christian church (which I will refer to as the body of Christian believers rather than as a singular denomination, per 1 Corinthians 12:12) was never wholly homogeneous in beliefs and practices. The Roman Catholic denomination did not exist the moment Jesus christened Peter as the Rock. For over a

century there were just Christians, and they had many disagreements on the practice of their faiths.

## Doctrinal Clashes in the Early Church Captured in Scripture

The first disagreement with Christian practice that resulted in a division of Christian unity was likely the argument between what separated Judaism from Christianity. Where Christians their own separate religion? Did Christians need to become practicing Jews to have valid faiths?

Was the Jewish sacrament of circumcision necessary for salvation? You'll recognize most of these questions from Acts and Pauline epistles. What I want you to specifically focus on is the emphasis that these doctrinal clashes came from members within the Christian church:

Acts 15:24: Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,

Galatians 2:4: This issue arose because some false brothers had come in under false pretenses to spy on our freedom in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us.

Galatians 1:7: 6 I am amazed how quickly you are deserting the One who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is not even a gospel. Evidently some people are troubling you and trying to distort the gospel of Christ.

This clash is no small issue. Paul claims that teaching Jewish traditions as being a prerequisite for salvation as being against the truth of the Gospel. This would become a problem, because Peter, who should've known better, ultimately began acting in accordance with the Jewish Traditionalists, an issue that may have been rooted all the back to Jerusalem with James.

Galatians 2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. 13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

14 But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

How can apostolic succession be decisively trusted to preserve Christian doctrine and practice when the Apostles themselves squabbled over it? How can Peter be the prime bishop if the apostles didn't turn to his authority during these clashes?

No wonder the Council of Jerusalem referred to **scriptures** (Amos 9) to finalize their judgment instead of reinforcing their own church authority. The men themselves knew there was a higher standard than themselves that they could trust.

James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,

16 “After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, 17 that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things 18 known from of old.’ 19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God.

Elevating scriptures over Tradition and Magisterium is significantly more indicative of Protestant practice instead of a Roman Catholic one, isn't it? But, we don't have to stop there. By the end of the century, the church structure was already very different than the falsehood of a unified Roman Catholic church.

## **The Martyrdom of the James Shows the Fallibility of Historical Tradition**

In continuation with the Early Church described in Acts, churches were organized in territorial branches, with each church having its own bishop and its own preferred scriptures based on which apostolic writings they in their possession at the time (Gonzales, 2010).

Among these churches, the church of Jerusalem would be pre-eminent. Biblically, the church of Jerusalem was founded long before Paul had ever set foot in Rome. James (Jesus' brother, not the Son of Thunder) as the head speaker at the Council of Jerusalem, is believed to be the closest thing to a leader over the Christian Church.

Acts 15:13"And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me...

Acts 15:19: Wherefore my sentence is that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God"

How respected was James as a leader? Well, James not only summons a congregation of the apostles, early Christians, and Jewish sects (including the Pharisees) to him in Jerusalem, but he also gives the final and authoritative word at the end of the Council.

James' prestige and reputation go a lot further than his blood relation to the Messiah. James, of course, would go on to be known as [James the Just](#), becoming well known for his passionate adherence to Jewish laws.

So James, being pre-eminent over Peter and having a great respect for Jewish customs, now lends a lot of reasonable context to Peter and Paul's conflict at Antioch, as well as Luke's choice in singling out James from the other apostles multiple times in Acts:

Acts 21:17-18: "And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present".

Acts 12:17: But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, “Tell these things to James and to the brothers.” Then he departed and went to another place.

Now, James would become the first early church leader to be martyred. [James is put on trial and beheaded on a feast day, to please the Jewish authorities](#). More specifically, he was tried for refusing to recant Jesus' Lordship to the Sanhedrin.

**Pro Tip:** This is not to be confused with the apostle James, who's beheading (Acts 12) Jesus predicted in Matthew 20, where He likens the drinking of His cup to shedding His blood on the cross, and tells both James and John that they share in this cup.

Now, in studying this, one can already find budding discrepancies in history from major Early Church writers concerning James (Jesus' brother) death, rendering the recorded church history already suspect:

1. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish Historian, describes James as being tried before the Sanhedrin and [stoned to death](#).
2. However, Saint Hegesippus describes James as being stoned, and then killed with a [staff by a Pharisee](#).
3. Separately, a Roman Bishop, Clement, is quoted as describing James' death as such:  
*"According to Clement of Rome, quoted by Eusebius ("Hist. Eccl." ii. 1), James, surnamed "the Just" on account of his great virtue, was the first bishop of the Church elected at Jerusalem. About his martyrdom Clement writes that "he was cast from a wing of the Temple and beaten to death with a fuller's club.""*

These are all educated men, referencing the same event, but the game of telephone is already in effect. Each historian presents a slightly different on James' execution, but by the time these men are being quoted themselves the recounting takes on more different take. Eusebius quoting Clement, being a good example.

References: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-James-the-Lords-brother>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus\\_on\\_Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus_on_Jesus)  
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hegesippus.html>  
[JAMES - JewishEncyclopedia.com](#)

## The Church Continues to Fracture Without James

So, after James, the previous spokesperson for the Early Church, is killed somewhere between 40-66 AD, what happened to the Christian body? Well, whatever it was, it certainly wasn't unification. Paul and Peter still had their hands full with clashing Christian factions over elementary Christian doctrine. The two of them, plus Luke, passionately warn of wolves in sheep's clothing leading Christians astray.

Then of course, if the date of the writing of Revelation is accurate to the 70s AD, Jesus had already intervened through John to warn several Asian churches of being in spiritual danger. The church was not unifying at all, and they certainly were not consolidating power in Rome.

The whole point of John being at Patmos in the first place was exile during the widespread persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor Nero\*, which is a strong enough argument

against Rome being the seat of Christian authority alone. Of course, this persecution then continued under his successors Domitian and Trajan.

Even after Nero stopped actively hunting Christians, for decades under his successors, being formally accused of Christianity would lead to trial and execution, so the idea of there being a centralized Roman Catholic church in an office tied to the territory and founded on a succession of Peter is not historically congruent at all.

Source: [https://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/christ\\_has\\_come/ch-tc11.html](https://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/christ_has_come/ch-tc11.html)

*\*Some account ascribe John's exile as possibly being under Domitian or Claudius instead, which is discussed in the above source.*

## **Doctrinal Clashes in the Early Church as Captured in History**

So, let's take a look at what really happened to the Christian church between the 1<sup>st</sup> and second century. First, let's talk about additional heretical denominations arising from within the Early Church:

**Gnosticism:** Heretics who believe that Jesus was purely spiritual, and that flesh itself was inherently profane. This ultimately led to the conclusion that Jesus did not become a literal man, but simply a spiritual apparition masquerading as one.

To back their beliefs, they claimed that Jesus, through the apostles, handed their denomination secret doctrine. They would become infamous for writing many false books based on Mary and the apostles and would retain significance for centuries.

Source: <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2016/why-were-some-books-left-out-of-the-bible>

**Marcionism:** A heretical sect led by a bishop claiming divine revelation to distort Christian doctrine. The core foundation of Marcionism is the belief that the God of the Old and New Testament were distinct. The former being wrathful and destructive, and the latter being kind and benevolent.

The Marcionites established their own scripture canon contains just the Gospel of Luke and edited version of Pauline letters.

(Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Marcionites>)

**Montanism:** A Christian religion built on the idea that there were additional prophets still receiving special revelations under God. They grew in the Early Church for a while as their revelations at first appeared to reinforce scriptural practices. In fact, Montanism was so successful, it would actually claim an important Christian apologist well known to both the Catholic and Orthodox churches, Tertullian.

The founder, Montanus, and the prophets associated with him, were ultimately driven out of the church when they claimed that the Holy Spirit had newer, less theologically consistent, revelations for the church that must be accepted as divine (Gonzalez, 2010).

## **The Church Continued to Rapidly Fracture and Develop Heretical Sects**

Over the next few centuries, additional “schisms” in the early church would include Donatism, Novatianism, Arianism, and Pelagianism. Among these dominant seven, three of these would be integrated into the formation of the Proto-Catholic Church prior to the establishment of the Papacy: Marcionism, Novatianism, & Arianism.

Remember when I mentioned that the territorial organization of churches continued as it was outlined in Acts? These churches were not only largely decentralized in power, but they also possessed different canonical scriptures as well. At the time, canon scripture was pulled from the Greek translation of the Old Testament scriptures, the Septuagint, and then the collection of apostolic writings and the Gospels (Gonzalez, 2010).

These churches would each teach according to the writings they possessed, and some would become known by their preferred Gospel writings. Over time, these churches would share their writings and traditions with each other, producing a somewhat cohesive orthodox Christian practice, not in spite of, but because of their decentralization.

This would eventually become a problem, as the Gnostics began producing fake writings of the apostles and Mary. While the damage done by Gnosticism would be limited by its notoriety among many Early Church apologists, the growing faction of Marcionism would push these doctrinal freedoms to their tipping point.

Instead of writing new, easily debunked scriptures, the leader of the Marcionites (you get one guess as to what his name was) began producing an altered scriptural canon made up of edited apostolic writings.

Not only were these altered writings a danger to the orthodox churches, but Marcion would quickly go on to absorb a sizable following from the pre-existing churches, which he would leverage to establish his own rival church with its own priesthood. In fact, historians believe Marcion's heretical church to actually rival the size and influence of the "proper" Early Church.

Marcion would leverage his power to publish the first New Testament canon. Not only did he removed the entirety of the Old Testament from scripture, but he then stripped out the majority of epistles other New Testament writings that referenced Old Testament prophecy.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Marcionites>

[Chapter 158: I. Marcion and Marcionites - The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority](#)

## **It Was the Accumulation of Heretical Sects that Demanded the First Authoritative New Testament Canon**

Now, there were at least two sects, that not only had their own “scriptures” and would not adhere to common scriptures of the orthodox church. This led to the orthodox churches needing to establish some form of authenticity to separate themselves from the heretical schisms. Funnily enough, the claim to the apostolic succession was not sufficient at this time, as many of the territorial churches had kept registries of bishops that all led back to various apostles.

Obviously, the historical accuracy of some of these are suspect and the Gnostics had claimed apostolic succession first by virtue of possessing the secret teachings Jesus had passed to them through the apostles. So, apostolic succession was a no go.

In stark contrast with Roman Catholic belief today, the remaining orthodox churches established their authenticity through their many interworking church bodies. Rather than consolidating in Rome, the orthodox churches that had been sharing their scriptures and traditions with each other banded together and compiled their scriptures together to official create the first New Testament, which consisted of the original four Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles. .

The orthodox churches also professed to follow the pre-existing Old Testament canon that the Marcionites and Gnostics rejected. The orthodox churches then “first” donned the title Catholic, in reference to the fact that they shared a universal canon of scriptures and rejected the new and exclusionary doctrines of the Marcionites and Gnostics (Gonzalez, 2010). Since this was a counter council to Marcion's canon, this would've occurred between the second and third century.

Now, as a large group, apostolic succession took on more meaning, as the individual apostolic lines the orthodox churches had a lot in common. Each major orthodox church would profess their approval of this new canon and each church would show its record of succession back to one of the original apostles.

Soon, it became undeniable that the combined records of apostolic succession from the orthodox churches had a congruency that Marcionite and Gnostic churches did not, allowing them to refute the notion of those heretical churches possessing secret texts from the apostles themselves. This could not have been accomplished apostolic succession was centralized to Rome.

## **Exploring the Other, More Relevant, Definition of Catholic**

Let me expatiate; apostolic succession had a bit of a different meaning then than it does today. You see, Catholic does not only mean “universal,” but it also roughly translates as

“according to the whole.” Thus, apostolic succession was a lot more inclusive then, as opposed to now.

The line of bishops was not so important to distinguish the orthodox Christians from the heretics as was the cumulative confession of the new universal canons and creeds. The total weight of the witnesses (ie. the various orthodox churches) of these shared doctrines was the basis for the rejection of Marcionism and Gnosticism (Gonzalez, 2010).

### A quick aside for sources:

While best described in in *Gonzales's Story of Christianity*, the combined readings of the below two sources also create a solid background and representation for the above progression of Apostolicity of the Early Church.

1. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism/Religious-orders-canon-and-monks>
2. <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2016/why-were-some-books-left-out-of-the-bible>

Instead of professing to hold secret scripture from a single line of apostolic succession, as the Gnostics and Marcionites did, the Catholic church could point to its shared teachings from multiple churches. The multiple churches, with multiple lines of successions, all leading down to multiple apostles, established a greater weight of authentic teaching.

This makes the later establishment of the Papal office, which would effectively restrict the authority of apostolic power and authority for salvation back to a single apostolic line, both disappointing and ironic.

## **Early Church Creeds Alluded to, and Countered, the Schismatic State of Early Christianity**

As a fun aside, this is actually around the time the original Apostle's Creed was first drafted and canonized. Prior to the creed, all churches, including Gnostic and Marcionite churches, used their own creeds based on the Trinitarian formula, which would be commonly invoked during their baptisms.

The more specific Apostles Creed was drafted to exclude the heretical sects in their additional details. It looked something like this, which you'll likely recognize as being very to most baptismal formulas used today:

*“Do you believe in God, the Father almighty? Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Ghost and of Mary the Virgin, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and died, and rose again at the third day, living from among the dead, and ascended unto heaven and sat at the right of the Father, and will come to judge the quick and the dead? Do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Church, and the resurrection of the flesh?” (Gonzalez, 2010)*

The emphasis on Jesus being born from Mary, dying, and the confession of the belief of the resurrection of the flesh, were all slights against the Gnostics. The profession of a singular almighty “God the Father” was a direct rejection of Marcion's claim to separate Old and New



Testament Gods. Lastly, the Holy Church was emphasized to establish the orthodox (now Catholic) churches as the authentic and superior denomination.

So, this means that the Christian Church became perfectly unified, defeated the schismatics, and was the singular and unbroken authority on Christianity until the Reformation right? Well, no. They didn't even make it a few centuries before their next major schism caused by the Novatians.

## The Schisms Continue

You see, persecution of Christians under Trajan had begun to die off in the later years of his reign as it began to embody the “don't ask, don't tell” policy. Even though things had begun to improve for Christians, Rome itself was beginning to splinter from within under the strain of various dissident groups.

Trajan's successor, Septimus Severus, decided to reunite Rome under a single religion. All gods and philosophies could still exist, as long as everyone agreed that the Roman sun god reigned above them all, this would become known as syncretism.

A rather damaging component of this edict was that all teachers and new converts to any religion not aligned under syncretism would be put to death. Once again, Rome could not be the epicenter of the Christian church, but its bane.

Source: <https://thehistoryofchristianity.wordpress.com/tag/syncretism/>

The proto-Catholic church fell into disarray. Some Christians fled to rural cities, such as Saint Clement, and other Christians, such as Saint Ignatius, Perpetua, and Felicitas, would become martyrs. This would last for roughly a decade under Septimus's rule, only to become progressively watered down by his successors. This reprieve would last until about 250 A.D, where Emperor Decius would replace syncretism with Hellenic Paganism, ruling that any worship of any non-pagan god was punishable by torture and imprisonment.

To weed out the Judeo Christian underground, Decius would require conversion and worship of the pagan gods to be verified by a legal document. This led to three new terms appearing in the church: the **confessor**, Christians who endured torture and imprisonment for their faith, **apostates**, who either followed the edict or suppressed their Christian identity in order to avoid persecution, and the **lapsed**, who fled Rome.

Source: <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/persecution-in-early-church-gallery>

This persecution only lasted a few years before Decius retired due to illness. After decades of sporadic oppression from Rome, the Christians were finally able to rebuild their churches in peace (at least until the next emperor, Valerian, snapped). This would lead to our next major

schism, where the confessors fell into sharp disagreement over whether or not the apostates and lapsed would be allowed to return to the Catholic Church.

This culminated in a sharp disagreement between two major bishops in the church. Cyprian of Carthage, a lapsed bishop who believed in forgiving and reaccepting the lapsed (with some caveats), and Novatian, the Bishop of Rome, who believed that lapsed should not be forgiven without some sort of evidence of repentance under adversity.

## **Background on the Resulting Synod and Schisms**

This would not be Novatian's first brush with schisms; the church of Rome wasted no time in its dogmatic foolishness by having a schism over whether or not fornicators and past idolaters would be allowed to be forgiven by the church and readmitted into communion (Gonzalez, 2010).

The moderates in the church would elect Cornelius as the new Roman bishop, and the more zealous ones would elect Novatian. As a schismatic bishop, Novatian had no problem butting heads with Cyprian as well, and his schism was quickly growing into its powerful denomination. Even before the formal establishment of the Papal Office, the apostolic line of the Roman church was a comedy of errors.

Source: <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Novatianism>

This would lead to Cyprian, not Novatian, calling a synod at Carthage to decide how to handle this topic. This would of course be another piece of evidence against the pre-eminence of the Roman Catholic church amongst the early churches. Back on topic, Cyprian was adamant on reabsorbing people into the church, but he also had to save face and come to terms with his personal idiosyncrasies about the lapsed.

You see, Cyprian was a student of the sharp-tongued Montanist, Tertullian. Tertullian would have actively condemned the actions of the lapsed, which Cyprian was a part of, so Cyprian needed to ethically reconcile that himself.

At the synod, Cyprian and the council ultimately decided that those who had purchased or obtained certificates without actually having sacrificed would be immediately readmitted to the communion of the church. Those who had sacrificed would only be readmitted on their deathbeds, or when a new persecution gave them the opportunity to prove the sincerity of their repentance.

Those who had sacrificed to pagan gods and showed no repentance would never be readmitted. All these actions were to be taken by the bishops, and not by confessors. These decisions found enough common ground between Cyprian, Novatian, and they confessors to put

the controversy to rest. However, the Novatian schism would continue for several generations after (Gonzalez, 2010).

boring areas. Cyprian then called a *synod*—that is, a gathering of the bishops of the region—which decided that those who had purchased or otherwise obtained certificates without actually having sacrificed would be immediately readmitted to the communion of the church. Those who had sacrificed would only be readmitted on their deathbeds, or when a new persecution gave them the opportunity to prove the sincerity of their repentance. Those who had sacrificed and showed no repentance would never be readmitted. All these actions were to be taken by the bishops, and not by confessors. These decisions ended the controversy, although the schism continued for some time.

(Gonzalez, 2010)

This is where the Proto-Catholic church would establish bishops as being above reproach by confessors, which would give Cyprian some much-needed reprieve. The allowance of the lapsed who fled, but had not committed pagan sacrifices, would also alleviate Cyprian's condemnation from confessors in the church. This is also where Novatian would wind up being considered outside of the orthodoxy. While he remained a bishop in Rome, he was never in full communion with the orthodox Proto-Catholic church, and he would ultimately be retroactively labeled an anti-pope centuries later. Is the Office of Pope divinely protected or not?

This gift of truth and never-failing faith was therefore divinely conferred on Peter and his successors in this See so that they might discharge their exalted office for the salvation of all, and so that the whole flock of Christ might be kept away by them from the poisonous food of error and be nourished with the sustenance of heavenly doctrine. Thus the tendency to schism is removed and the whole Church is preserved in unity, and, resting on its foundation, can stand firm against the gates of hell.” ([The First Vatican Council, chapter 4](#))

Uh-oh, I'm not seeing a lot of unity and infallibility from the Roman bishop, here.

## **Constantine, a Practicing Pagan, Seizes Power in the Church of Rome**

Just to recap, we are now deep in the third century, moving into the fourth, of Early Church history. We have found no unity, Orthodox practices and doctrine are still being defined and squabbled over, and the church of Rome is still not remotely pre-eminent. As we approach the

fourth century, we'll find some modest growth on the unity front, but it would come at a great cost.

In the mid to late third century, Roman Emperor Valerian would lead a questionably effective assault on Christianity. This afforded Christians some tenuous peace, so it wasn't until the turn of the fourth century that the Catholic Church would face severe persecution once again.

This would be under the reign of Emperor Diocletian, who would outlaw Christianity outright and make it punishable by imprisonment, torture, and death. His (sort of) successors, Constantius, would later relent on this persecution. Once the ardent enablers of the current regime had died off, it left a power vacuum in Rome that would be famously resolved by the syncretist, Constantine.

Proclaiming to have received a charge from God to conquer Rome, Constantine quickly became a powerful ally among the persecuted Christians, in spite of still being a practicing pagan.

This did not prevent the emperor from serving other gods. His own father had been a devotee of the Unconquered Sun. While not denying the existence of other gods, the worship of the Unconquered Sun was addressed to the Supreme Being, whose symbol was the sun. During most of his political career, Constantine seems to have thought that the Unconquered Sun and the Christian God were compatible—perhaps two views of the same Supreme Deity—and that the other gods, although subordinate, were nevertheless real and relatively powerful. On occasion, he would consult the oracle of Apollo, accept the title of High Priest that had traditionally been the prerogative of emperors, and partake of all sorts of pagan ceremonies without thinking that he was thus betraying or abandoning the God who had given him victory and power.

(Gonzalez, 2010)

As Constantine seized almost total control of the Roman empire and had treated the orthodox Christians well, he set himself as not only the highest authority of Rome, but also over its churches.

This could be seen during his calling and presiding over of the Council of Nicaea, which had called together over 300 clergies, barring the actual bishop of Rome, who was considered too aged and frail to attend (Gonzalez, 2010). Constantine called the council with the intention of ending a schism growing in the Roman churches called Arianism.

Arianism was a schism within the church that believed Jesus was created by God, and not continuous with God. It was with Constantine's guidance that the Nicene creed was created,

which would of course make it very explicitly known that Jesus was consubstantial with God (God from God, Light from Light).

Though Constantine clearly possessed immense goodwill and influence among Roman Christians, he himself had never actually converted. Constantine remained unbaptized until his deathbed and continued practicing paganism as he continued to gain authority in the church.

This was a problem, as the official religion of Rome was still paganism, and Constantine's technical title was... Supreme Pontiff of those pagan churches (Gonzalez, 2010). So, heresy in the Papal Office was there from even before its official conception.

especially with the Roman Senate. The official religion of the empire was paganism. As head of that empire Constantine took the title of Supreme Pontiff or High Priest, and performed the functions pertaining to that title. On coins minted as late as 320 one finds the names and symbols of the ancient gods, as well as the monogram for the name of Christ—the Chi-Rho that Constantine had used for the first time at the Milvian bridge.

(Gonzalez, 2010)

As Constantine found himself at increasing odds between the pagan Roman senate and the Christian Roman churches, he would ultimately favor the Christians. In a show of goodwill, Constantine issued edicts that would give the church and its clergy tax exemption, as well as render the Roman church as an entity capable of owning land and material riches.

This would ultimately harm the church more than help it, as the benefits for Bishops would lead to a marked prevalence of simony in Roman churches that would continue for centuries. These cumulative blessings to the Christian churches only further angered his pagan contemporaries. So, caught between Christianity and Paganism, Constantine found a happy medium by blurring the lines between the two.

## **Constantine Injects Paganism into the Roman Churches**

Under Constantine, Christian churches would fall under subtle Pagan influences. This would include the re-introduction of incense for church practices, priests distinguishing themselves with religious garments in a similar fashion to the pagans, the use of altars in Christian services, and the widespread belief of magical religious relics once owned by the apostles (Gonzalez, 2010).

While those well versed in the Old Testament scripture would recognize the first three as being commonalities in the Levitical priesthood, but much of its usage had fallen away in Early church. These were either rebuked by God, who no longer desired them (hello again, [Isaiah](#)) or rendered obsolete by the New Covenant (hello, [Hebrews](#)).

While Christianity had quite a fair few supernaturally blessed objects, the use of totems, graven images, and trinkets were never allowed. In the current age, all of these practices, distinguishing dress, and supernatural items had become staples of the pagans, particularly those following the Greek and Roman pantheons.

## **Compromise Between the Pagans and Christians Would Ultimately Fracture the Church's Unity Again**

This would, of course, eventually lead to an unofficial schism between the rapidly evolving Roman church and its fundamentalists, who disliked the direction the Roman church was heading in. They would mostly become known as the monastic movement, where thousands of them left the church of Rome to live in monasteries in Egypt and Syria.

Others, who were grounded enough to fear that the church was becoming apostate, but not wanting to make the trek into the desert, decided to schism into their own churches still within the Roman Empire.

Among these would be the Donatists, both the spiritual and literal successors to the Noviantists, who believed the Roman Catholic churches had become sinful and were unworthy of being the consecrated bride of Christ. They asserted that the Roman practice of sacred authority being the product of a religious office was flagrantly unbiblical (meaning they had read Acts and Timothy). Instead, they pertained that it was the personal righteousness that would determine the authenticity of the clergy (meaning they had read Matthew).

While better explained in *Story of Christianity*, Britannica has fair take on Donatism as well: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Donatists>

Over time, the Donatists would gain the affiliation of an even more spiritually aggressive party, called the Circumcellions. These people were known for being violently fanatic and would later play a substantial role in the fall of the Roman Empire.

## **The Early Church was Never Unified and the Roman Catholic Church Created More Schisms than it Prevented**

So, now we've covered roughly four centuries of early church history. In these four centuries, the orthodox church did not consider itself Catholic until the mid second century. It also did not believe in a singular line of apostolic succession being tied to special authority.

Rome spent much of its time being the epicenter of Christian persecution, hence the lack of a true Papal office, and many of the aesthetic and traditional components of modern Catholicism did not arise until Constantine's reign (Gonzalez, 2010).

Most importantly, I have four hundred plus years of historical narrative showing that the Christian church was never even remotely unified under the Roman Catholic Doctrine. Power in the Early Church was decentralized, if not even more so than it was in Acts, and continued that way for hundreds of years.

Schismatics also littered much of early church history, and many of them had shared heritage with the saints of the Roman Catholic church. Additionally, the Roman church has still yet to ever be considered the epicenter and leader of the Christian body. So, the burning question I had while reading this was, how exactly was the Papal office established?

Suggested Reading: González, J. L. (2010). *The story of Christianity*. New York: HarperOne. Retrieved from: <https://www.amazon.com/Story-Christianity-Vol-Church-Reformation/dp/006185588X>

# The Papacy is a Fabrication of Men

## Pope Was Not A Formal Title Until the 5<sup>th</sup> Century

As we've covered in the past chapter, the Papacy did not exist in the first four hundred years of Christianity and neither did the pre-eminence of the Roman bishop. So, why are there Early Church writings referring to Roman bishops as Popes then? This is actually a pretty benign point to dispute, but the term Pope, being Latin for father, was actually used refer to bishops of multiple offices repeatedly in the Early Church.

Among them was Saint Cyprian, occasionally referred to as Pope by his congregation in Carthage and much more prominently, Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, referred to as Pope by the members of the Early Church in Africa (Gonzalez, 2010).

### INTRODUCTION

#### ST. ATHANASIUS THE GREAT

(298-373 A.D.)

According to tradition, St. Athanasius the Great is the 20th Bishop of Alexandria and the successor of St. Mark the Evangelist who founded the Coptic Church of Alexandria, where he was martyred in 68 A.D. Athanasius had the official title of Patriarch of Alexandria<sup>(1)</sup> and was also called Pope, a title given to his successors to this day<sup>(2)</sup>.

This is especially prudent, because Pope Athanasius was actually present as a bishop in the Council of Nicaea, playing a prominent part in condemning the Arian heresy. This meant that he would still be considered a valid part of the proto-Catholic church. Not only that, but he would become a confidante to Constantine that was integral to keeping Arian from worming his way back into the Roman Catholic Church.

Source:

[http://orthokairos.weebly.com/uploads/5/7/3/1/57311059/the\\_doctrine\\_of\\_sanctification\\_in\\_st\\_athanasius\\_paschal\\_letters\\_-\\_fr\\_matthais\\_wahba.pdf](http://orthokairos.weebly.com/uploads/5/7/3/1/57311059/the_doctrine_of_sanctification_in_st_athanasius_paschal_letters_-_fr_matthais_wahba.pdf)



The reality was, that the church of Alexandria, much like the churches in Antioch and Jerusalem, were traditionally elevated to being at least equal with the church of Rome. This is irrefutably demonstrated in Canon 6 of the Council of Nicaea:

*“Let the ancient customs in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis prevail, that the Bishop of Alexandria have jurisdiction in all these, since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome also. Likewise in Antioch and the other provinces, let the Churches retain their privileges.”*

In fact, this equality was so well established that when the Great Schism occurred in the eleventh century, the Eastern Orthodoxy would actually excommunicate the Roman Catholic church, partially on the grounds of their claim to primacy:

*“The Great Schism came about due to a complex mix of religious disagreements and political conflicts. One of the many religious disagreements between the western (Roman) and eastern (Byzantine) branches of the church had to do with whether or not it was acceptable to use unleavened bread for the sacrament of communion. (The west supported the practice, while the east did not.) Other objects of religious dispute include the exact wording of the Nicene Creed and the Western belief that clerics should remain celibate.*

*These religious disagreements were made worse by a variety of political conflicts, particularly regarding the power of Rome. Rome believed that the pope—the religious leader of the western church—should have authority over the patriarch—the religious authority of the eastern church. Constantinople disagreed.*

*Each church recognized their own leaders, and when the western church eventually excommunicated Michael Cerularius and the entire eastern church. The eastern church retaliated by excommunicating the Roman pope Leo III and the Roman church with him.”*

Sources: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism> and <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/thisday/jul16/great-schism/>

## **The True Founding of the Papacy**

Believe it or not, the jump from the proto-Catholic church to the Roman Catholic church as we know it today would actually occur in about one generation. This would be under the reign of Saint Leo, a man who enacts the single most drastic power shift of Roman Catholicism this side of Constantine.

Speaking of Constantine, Leo shared more than a few similarities with the first "Pontifex" of the Roman church. You see, during his residence as Bishop of Rome, Leo had already made a name for himself for his prestigious background in Christian apologetics. He was largely famous for shutting down several heretical schisms in the Eastern Empire:



## St. Leo the Great

It is regrettable that so little is known about the early life of this man who proved to be such an extraordinary shepherd of the Catholic Church that he came to be known not only as Pope Saint Leo I, but also is one of the only two Popes in two thousand years to be called "the Great." What we do know is that as a deacon of the Roman Church, before being elevated to the office of Pope in 440 AD, St. Leo the Great had opposed the heresy of Pelagianism which taught that grace was not necessary for salvation, but was rather a bonus that God granted to those who earned it by their good works. As Pope, St. Leo the Great was forceful and unambiguous in his Christological teaching which affirmed the full divinity and humanity of Christ. In fact his most famous writing, commonly known as the *Tome of St. Leo* (449), was the basis of the Council of Chalcedon's (451)

While already respectable, Saint Leo would become legendary not due to successes in theology, but in war. Leo was the presiding bishop of Rome during the time that the Huns had made their second attempt on their thorough scourge of the Roman empire. They were doing pretty well for themselves, too. After robbing Constantinople at knifepoint, the opportunistic plunderers made their way westward with largely uncontested success.

After conquering Aquila, they turned their war path toward a relatively undefended Rome. This progression would become dicey for both sides, as the Romans and the Visigoths were the ones to defeat Atilla during his first conquest and he had already put his army through several battles to get there.

In spite of this, both the Eastern and Western branches of the Roman Empire shamelessly skirted away from the pillaging horde. However, Saint Leo rounded up his own forces and marched out to meet with Atilla himself.

I actually could not find a definitive case of what happened between Atilla and Leo, other than that it wasn't war, but more of a diplomatic meeting. Whatever happened, the Huns retreated and left Rome unscathed. While Historians would later go on to explain this as a tactical move on Atilla's part to recover his battered forces, a folk legend would quickly emerge detailing apparitions of Peter and Paul threatening Atilla at the meeting at the behest of Leo.

This win would put Leo in a very strong position for aggregating power. Not only did he prove himself to be more worthy of leadership than the Roman emperors themselves, but he also had the legend of Peter and Paul to exalt himself as a spiritual hero.

It was shortly after that Saint Leo, now dubbed Leo the Great, would introduce the idea of Rome being the pre-eminent church and its Bishop being its sovereign leader. How would he argue this?

With Matthew 16; the very same argument that Roman Catholics still use to defend the papacy to this day. Now, this wasn't exactly anything new. Matthew 16 had been common knowledge to the Early Church since the beginning, but for hundreds of years not only was Rome only considered one of several powerful churches, but that Paul and Peter were celebrated equally for founding early churches.

On the doctrinal side, Matthew 16 says nothing about Peter being able to hand his power to his successors, and Acts irrefutably establishes Jerusalem as the pre-eminent epicenter of Christendom and Paul as the founder of the church in Rome.

## **How Leo Seized the Papacy**

Well, Leo made three arguments. They weren't exactly good arguments, but bishops had already aggregated a lot of power by then and Leo the Great was a bonafide folk hero, so who was going to argue with him?

1. Leo produced the writings of Tertullian, which claimed that the early Roman church had registries detailing Peter as nominating Clement as his successor as Bishop of Rome. This could, of course, be easily refuted if the Roman registry of bishops wasn't fabricated retroactively, as the current registry details Linus as Peter's successor.

Also, why did he refer to a Montanist as a source of authenticity on Catholic teachings? I don't know, and apparently neither did the Romans.

2. Going back to Matthew 16, he rightly mentioned that Peter was granted the revelation of Jesus as the Christ by God Himself. Thus, by an admittedly large stretch, he argued that God Himself was always directing Peter and that Peter would be infallible. This would of course, be easily challenged by literally the remainder of Matthew, a sizable portion of Acts, and Galatians.

Unfortunately, many of the scriptures were in Greek and Hebrew, while the official language of Rome was still Latin, so the Laity was definitely not going to catch that.

3. He established that by this special gift and through Jesus' prayer, Peter was pre-eminent over all the apostles (sorry James) and was their spiritual source

of strength. This of course, is only reasonable if we ignore the context of Jesus' prayer, which was singling him out for needing additional spiritual guidance.

Anyway, Leo presented his arguments with admittedly impressive boldness and eloquence:

*"And I," he said, "tell you," that is to say, just as my Father has manifested my divinity to you, so I make known to you your own prominence. "That you are Peter," that is to say, although I am the indestructible rock, I "the cornerstone who make both things one," I "the foundation on which no one can lay another," you also are rock because you are made firm in my strength. What belongs properly to my own power you share with me by participation.*

*Jesus wished Peter who had been received into partnership in His undivided unity to be named what He Himself was, when He said: 'Thou art Peter . . .' Each apostle encountered the same danger through temptation from fear. All equally needed the help of divine protection, since the devil wanted to harass them all and to crush them all. Still, the Lord took special care of Peter and prayed especially for Peter.*

*It was as if the condition of the others would be more secure if the mind of their leader were not overcome. In Peter, therefore, the fortitude of all is reinforced, for the aid of divine grace is ordered in such a way that the firmness given to Peter through Christ is conferred upon the apostles through Peter."*

Now that Peter is established as the pre-eminent apostle with special power and authority from God himself, all he needed to do was tie Peter to Rome, hence Tertullian. With that piece of the puzzle found, Leo proudly declared Rome as being:

*"A holy people, an elect nation, a priestly and royal city, become, through the see of Peter established here, the head of the world; ruling more widely now through the divine religion than it ever did by worldly dominion. Though enlarged by many victories, you have spread the authority of your rule over land and sea. What your warlike labours have obtained for you is less than what the Christian peace has brought you."*

And just like that, Leo established the Papacy in the Roman Empire. While this abrupt change was less than welcome in the Eastern Empire and Africa, Leo the Great had ultimately won over the Western Empire. While its start would be a little rocky, the Papacy was pretty much unchallenged by outsiders until the Great Schism, and its iron grip on political and spiritual affairs in its ever-growing jurisdiction would not be successfully clipped until the Reformation.

Sources: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=aussi> and <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/essays-theology/leo-greats-legacy-remains-challenge-church-today>

# The Papacy has Been a Source of Relentless Evil for Centuries

## The Papacy Lead to Schism, it did not Protect the Church From It

In the last chapter, we covered how the Papacy was a prominent driver of the Great schism, which divided the Roman Catholic church from the Orthodox Churches, such as the Greek and Coptic Orthodoxies. However, after the split, the Papacy would still be the cause of a lot of internal conflict and tension.

In fact, the Papacy is widely regarded as one of the most tragic, comedic, and consistent abuses of political and theocratic power in history. Over the course of a millennium, the Papacy would be tainted by simony, succession by assassination, corpse desecration, mass killings, pillaging, demon worship, orgies, pedophilia, and political subterfuge.

## An Exhaustive List of the Enduring Evil of the Papacy

Before we dig in, let's take a little break for two PSA's from Paul:

1 Timothy 6:3: If someone spreads false teachings and does not agree with sound words (that is, those of our Lord Jesus Christ) and with the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing, but has an unhealthy interest in controversies and verbal disputes. This gives rise to envy, dissension, slanders, evil suspicions, 5 and constant bickering by people corrupted in their minds and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a way of making a profit.

1 Corinthians 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

And here is a quick word from his sponsor:

Matthew 17: 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

In short, Paul asserts that a false teacher can be known by their inability to stick to the teachings of Jesus, their hunger for conflict and controversy, and their inclination to pervert godliness as a way to acquire wealth. Paul also reminds us

that the drunkards, sexually immoral, idolators, and thieves can not be of God and will not admitted to Heaven.

Jesus also explicitly states that we will know if men are good by the fruits they create, in short, their actions and those consequences. Jesus makes it clear that a good person cannot be a bearer of bad works and a bad person cannot be a bearer of good works. This is not good news for the Papacy.

The Papal Office is supposedly divinely protected and its Pope is the authoritative representative of Jesus Christ. By virtue of Ordination, the Pope is the vessel of Jesus and Peters power and authority, and is protected from failure and blemish:

“Indeed, their apostolic teaching was embraced by all the venerable fathers and revered and followed by all the holy orthodox doctors, for they knew very well that this See of St. Peter always remains unblemished by any error, in accordance with the divine promise of our Lord and Savior to the prince of his disciples: I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren [60].

This gift of truth and never-failing faith was therefore divinely conferred on Peter and his successors in this See so that they might discharge their exalted office for the salvation of all, and so that the whole flock of Christ might be kept away by them from the poisonous food of error and be nourished with the sustenance of heavenly doctrine. Thus the tendency to schism is removed and the whole Church is preserved in unity, and, resting on its foundation, can stand firm against the gates of hell.” ([The First Vatican Council, chapter 4](#))

So, if the Papacy was a true office, the Popes must be saved and they must act in accordance with Jesus and Peter, especially when exercising the power and authority of their divinely protected office, right?

Well, I have a thousand plus years of history speaking to the contrary. Let's take a walk together through the obfuscatingly foolish, and evil, histories of the various failures of the Papacy:

## The Hall of Shame

**Pope Stephen VI:** Stephen VI would become best known for digging up the body of his predecessor Formosus and putting him on trial in what would become later known as the Cadaver Synod. He dressed Formosus up in his ceremonial garments, placed him on a throne, and cut off the three fingers on his right hand (the one used to gesture the blessing of the Roman bishop).

After suspiciously failing to defend even a single one of the many accusations Stephen levied at him (you could say Formosus remained *dead silent*), Formosus's

corpse was condemned and beheaded. Depending on the source, either all or part of him was unceremoniously dumped in the river Tiber. Stephen's actions, and a timely earthquake attributed to being vindication by God, led Roman mobs to murder him less than a month later.

Source: <https://rsc.byu.edu/peter-popes/pontiffs-palaces-pornocracy-godless-age>

**Pope Sergius III:** Speaking of murder, Pope Sergius allegedly inherited his office via murder at the turn of the tenth century. Not too keen on the mandate of clerical celibacy, Sergius would maintain an illicit relationship with the current senator of Rome, which would result in the birth of a future Pope, John XI. Not coincidentally, Sergius III was one of the presiding judges at the Cadaver synod. Fittingly, the Roman senator would continue sleeping around with powerful men after Sergius' death, to ends of placing her son John XI in the Papacy.

Sources: <https://amazingbeautifulworld.com/history/the-8-most-evil-popes-in-history/6/> and <https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/theodora-rome-c-875-c-925>

**Pope John XII:** Pope John XII, ordained at the tender age of eighteen, misinterpreted his role as chief shepherd pretty hard and became famous for plowing practically anything that moved. This would include his sisters, his niece, whores, widows, his father's girlfriend, and *allegedly* someone else's wife.

Not to be outdone his by murderous, pedophilic, or flat out insane contemporaries, John XII went the extra mile in making Protestant apologetics really easy by invoking demons, murdering his rivals, castrating at least one of his deacons, committing arson, and gambling.

It was so bad, that the church leaders were willing to threaten the false narrative of the Papacy being a divine institution by formally charging him and placing him on trial. John XII would be dishonorably discharged and replaced with Pope Leo VIII. **Remember, the first Vatican Council proclaims that Popes are divinely imbued with unfailing faith.**

Sources: <https://gw.geneanet.org/comrade28?lang=en&n=church&oc=0&p=pope+john+xii+of+roman+catholic>, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-XII>, <https://rsc.byu.edu/peter-popes/pontiffs-palaces-pornocracy-godless-age>, <https://amazingbeautifulworld.com/history/the-8-most-evil-popes-in-history/7/>, and <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/24/7-wicked-popes-and-the-terrible-things-they-did/>

**Pope Benedict IX:** John XII was not the first Pope to be condemned by Roman Catholic leaders. Not even a century later Pope Benedict IX would usher in a new era of rape, murders, and orgies, quite a few of which would apparently involve bestiality. He was condemned both by Victor III and Saint Damian, the latter of

which described him as: "feasting on immorality" and "a demon from hell in the disguise of a priest," who sponsored orgies and routinely partook in bestiality, according to "The Spirit." Benedict IX would top off his flagrant run of Papal protected evil by selling his office *twice*.

Source: <https://www.livescience.com/8606-7-unholy-pope-scandals.html> and <https://rsc.byu.edu/peter-popes/pontiffs-palaces-pornocracy-godless-age>

A fun aside on Simony: The papal office itself has a very amusing and tragic history of simony, which is quite ironic. Simony was likely named after the Simon, the infamous Magician in Samaria. Peter issues Simon one of his fiercest recorded rebukes in the scriptures after he attempts to buy the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now under Benedict, the Office of the Papacy, supposedly tied to Peter's sole apostolic line, would ordinate multiple Popes who purchased their position.

**Pope Urban II:** Pope Urban II is best known for initiating the First Crusade, where he invoked his Papal authority of the supreme care of men's souls, to proclaim: "All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins. This I grant them through the power of God with which I am invested."

Source: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/pope-urban-ii-orders-first-crusade> and <https://amazingbeautifulworld.com/history/the-8-most-evil-popes-in-history/4/>

By contrast, here is how Peter would handle such a situation:

1 Peter 3:8: Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For,

"Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.<sup>11</sup> They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.

<sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

**Pope Paul III:** In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Pope Paul III was responsible for reinforcing the outlawing of printing, distribution, and ownership of translated Bibles as the presiding authority over the Council of Trent. Paul III would also continue the trend of abusing his Papal position toward the end of nepotism by having 4 children and granting them each positions in Papal states.

Source: <https://roma-nonpertutti.com/en/article/218/pope-paul-iii-14681549-an-uncompromising-patron-of-artists-and-his-own-family>



**Pope Julius III:** The Roman Catholic Church and pedophilia scandals are pretty much par for the course these days, but believe it or not, the thousands of child molestation cases swept under the rug in the last century was actually the continuation of a precedent stretching back hundreds of years.

Pope Julius was a proud pedophile, he took on several underage boys as his lovers and wiped out a significant portion of the Vatican's treasury commissioning statues of prepubescent boys committing various sex acts, which he would place around his residencies. Recently, he has received the honor of being a "Gay Man of Influence" in multiple LGBTQ sites, *how progressive*.

Source: <https://historycollection.com/10-of-historys-most-scandalous-popes/10/>, <http://gayinfluence.blogspot.com/2012/03/pope-julius-iii.html> (*this one has pictures!*), <https://www.advocate.com/religion/2018/2/02/21-gay-popes-cardinals-and-assorted-catholic-leaders>, and <http://queerhistory.blogspot.com/2010/08/gay-popes-julius-iii.html>

**Pope Alexander VI:** The office of the Papacy would be further defined by orgies, nepotism, illegitimate children, and murder. Alexander would become particularly notorious for holding his own courts, where he would indict and confiscate the wealth of influential rival families. Not only that, but as he had developed a reputation for assassinating his political opponents, the Church leaders kept their peace for over a decade. This led to Alexander VI reigning for *eleven years* before he was assassinated.

Sources: <https://sites.psu.edu/historicalcharacters/2016/09/30/beyond-the-borgias-orgies/> and <https://www.ndb.com/people/159/000092880/>

**Pope Pius XII:** During World War II, the Roman Catholic Church offered to shelter displaced Jewish children. Roman Catholics had a history of persecuting Jews and the Roman Church had refused to take a hard stance against the Third Reich, so Pius would attempt to smooth over these tensions by making a public and formal promise to ensure the return of all sheltered children to their surviving families. Of course, that never happened.

By the direction of Roman Catholic dogma, those who are baptized are now forever Roman Catholic. So, it was now the church's prerogative to keep the children from returning to their Jewish families at any cost. While Pius's promise to return the Jewish children was made very public, he secretly passed an internal memo detailing the opposite, leading to an enduring crisis that would cement the divide between Roman Catholics and Jews to this very day.

Sources: [A really wordy link containing the transcribed internal memos](#) and <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/09/world/saving-jewish-children-but-at-what-cost.html>

## **A Pope Cannot Be Evil in His Personal Life and Infallibly Good in His Office, Both Aspects are Governed by the Same Evil Heart**

Now, I do want to address the tired and convenient assertion of the differences between infallibility and impeccability to excuse the evils of clergymen. The idea that the character of the Pope does not stain the legitimacy of his position was pretty much eliminated when the Pope succeeded the Christ as chief shepherd.

But, let's pretend that the 1st Vatican Council never made those bold claims of Papal faith and character. Let's say that the Pope was truly only in sync with God when exercising his Papal office in doctrinal matters. In that regard, I would like to offer this Papal Bull from Pope Innocent IV outlining protocols for torture, imprisonment, and seizure of property from other Christians.

A Papal Bull is an apostolic letter with a leaden seal. The Pope (in this case, Innocent IV) is invoking his apostolic authority when he issues these. I thought it was interesting that something as sacred as apostolic letters are more often than not kept hidden and untranslated in the Vatican, well removed from the eyes of the laity. After finding one translated, it's obvious to see why. Let's take a look at the Papal Bull of *Ad Extirpanda*:

**“To root up from the midst of Christian people the weed of heretical wickedness, which infests the healthy plants more than it formerly did, pouring out licentiousness through the offices of the enemy of mankind in this age the more eagerly (as we address ourselves to the sweated labour of the task assigned us) the more dangerously we overlook the manner in which this weed runs riot among the Catholic growth. Desiring, then, that the sons of the Church, and fervent adherents of the orthodox faith, rise up and make their stand against the artificers of this kind of evil-doing, we hereby bring forth to be followed by you as by the loyal defenders of the faith, with exact care, these regulations, contained serially in the following document, for the rooting-up of the plague of heresy.”**

**“Those who are thus appointed may and should seize the heretical men and women and carry off their possessions and cause these to be carried off by others, and take the heretics, or cause them to be taken, into the custody of the Diocesan bishop or his surrogates, and see to it that these things are fully accomplished as well in the diocese as in its entire jurisdiction and district.”**

**“The utterances of the aforementioned officials are to be faithfully accepted in every matter that regards their office, specially in the aforementioned oath; arguments tending to the contrary are not allowed, where two, three, or more of those present are such officials.”**

**“The head of state or ruler must force all the heretics whom he has in custody, provided he does so without killing them or breaking their arms or legs, as actual robbers and murderers of souls and thieves of the sacraments of God and Christian faith, to confess their errors and accuse other heretics whom they know, and specify their motives, and those whom they have seduced, and those who have lodged them and defended them, as thieves and robbers of material goods are made to accuse their accomplices and confess the crimes they have committed.”**

“And the house, in which a male or female heretic shall be discovered, shall be levelled with the ground, never to be rebuilt; unless it is the master of the house who shall have arranged the discovery of the heretics. And if the master of the house owns other houses in the same neighbourhood, all of the other houses shall in like manner be destroyed, and the goods that shall be found in the house and the others related to it shall be dispersed to the populace, and shall belong to whoever carries them off, unless the removers shall be appointed by law.

Above all, the master of the house, besides incurring eternal infamy, must pay the government or locality fifty pounds Imperial in coin; if unable to pay, he shall suffer life imprisonment. The borough where the heretics are arrested or discovered shall pay the government of the state a hundred pounds; and a manor shall pay fifty, and the regions adjoining manors and states, fifty.”

Source: [http://www.cathar.info/121295\\_ad\\_extirpanda.htm](http://www.cathar.info/121295_ad_extirpanda.htm)

Here are the teachings of Peter, Paul, and Jesus again for comparison:

1 Peter 3:8: Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.<sup>11</sup> They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.

1 Timothy 6:3: If someone spreads false teachings and does not agree with sound words (that is, those of our Lord Jesus Christ) and with the teaching that accords with godliness, <sup>4</sup> he is conceited and understands nothing, but has an unhealthy interest in controversies and verbal disputes. This gives rise to envy, dissension, slanders, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> and constant bickering by people corrupted in their minds and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a way of making a profit.

Matthew 17:15: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Look at the clear difference in theology and character expressed in the papal bull verses the scriptures. You cannot intellectually or ethically assert that Pope Innocent IV received the same Holy Spirit as Peter and Paul. Tell me that he had actual knowledge and devotion to the teachings of Jesus Christ and was not doing this to aggregate wealth and power for him and the Catholic church.

Did Jesus not say that a good vine would not bear bad fruit? Did He not say to His disciples that people would recognize them by their love for each other? Did Paul not state you would be able to discern who the real and fake apostles are by their actions, in spite of their convincing words?

I have literally centuries worth of evidence, some of which even admitted to by the Roman Catholic Church itself, detailing the abject evil of these Popes. The

Papacy was never an office instated by Jesus, just as the Roman Catholic church was never divinely instated as the pre-eminent church. It's all just lies from men. Lies that minimize the mercy, grace, and sufficiency of God, to the ends of establishing control over the laity and to aggregate wealth and power for the Church.

## **The Papacy Turned their Congregation to Sin**

For my final point, I would like to address the effect these Popes had on their church. You see, the Popes, while certainly not shepherds of Jesus' flock, did have a profound influence on the souls of their congregations. Under Pope Urban II, thousands of criminals and wayward souls would devote themselves to slaughter and pillaging in the Holy War under the belief that they were doing the work of God and that they would attain salvation should they die during their bloody conflict.

Under the Pope Innocent IV, thousands of Catholics would be roused to pillage, imprison, and torture Protestants by Papal decree. Not too long after came the two hundred year span of the Spanish Inquisition, where Catholics would leverage their political power to slaughter thousands of Protestants, Jews, and Muslims. The corruption of the Papacy was not benign, over the years it spread deep into the clergy, where it still resides today.

Source: <https://www.history.com/topics/religion/inquisition>

## **Failures of the Modern Popes: John-Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis:**

This corruption is actually rather easy to see in the modern church, in light of the more progressive modern-day Popes. While these popes would become further removed from the obvious sins of their predecessors, they would go on to become some of the strongest enablers of the inner corruption that had grown within the clergy over the years.

Rwandan Genocide: Under John-Paul II, several major Catholic parishes in Rwanda committed open genocide against the Tutsi people, a move stemming from the Catholic church's meddling in Rwanda's government affairs stemming back to WWII. Thousands of people were murdered by ordained Catholic clergymen over a multitude of years. John-Paul II purposefully ignored this war for as long as he

could. After the damage became large enough to receive international attention, he wrote this to the Rwandans:

“The Church... cannot be held responsible for the guilt of its members that have acted against the evangelic law; they will be called to render account of their own actions. All Church members that have sinned during the genocide must have the courage to assume the consequences of their deeds they have done against God and fellow men.”

Benedict would avoid addressing the Rwandans entirely, and when Francis was corralled into a meeting with the Rwandan King, he apologized profusely, but made none of the King’s suggested efforts to identify and punish the involved parties. Such hollow conduct ultimately lead their king to rebuke the Roman Catholic church on the whole for their lack of accountability and repentance.

Source: [https://www.avila.edu/userfiles/Education/Fulbright-Hays%20Project/Educator%20Microsite/Special%20Topic%20Presentations/The Catholic Church and the Rwan.pdf](https://www.avila.edu/userfiles/Education/Fulbright-Hays%20Project/Educator%20Microsite/Special%20Topic%20Presentations/The%20Catholic%20Church%20and%20the%20Rwan.pdf)

Pedophilia Crises: In the last few decades, literally **thousands** of cases of priests molesting children were being uncovered around the world. In fact, in the U.S. alone, 4000 priests had been allegedly involved in sexual abuse of a total of over 10,000 children. The term *allegedly* would actually be to the detriment of the Roman Catholic church, as John-Paul, Benedict, and Francis all strongly continued the practice of protecting priests from government laws and handling their investigation internally.

Just as how Paul and Francis dealt with Rwanda, they actively protected the Church from any kind of liability by running largely fruitless internal investigations and smoothing over public condemnation with empty apologies. They had no intention of repentance, their appearance was more important the spiritual health and integrity of their church.

Of course, this didn’t work out too well as people became fed up and started involving police and private investigators. While the Vatican initially tried to condemn the outside investigations and ensuing raids, the evidence of confirmed abuses piled up devastatingly fast. Just a few years ago, Philadelphia PD uncovered **irrefutable evidence** of a massive coverup of systemic child abuse involving three hundred priests and over a 1,000 children, who were raped and beaten.

One of the better-known cases these confirmed indictments is the case of a girl who was impregnated and subsequently forced into an abortion by the same priest.

Many clergymen involved in this cover-up were either *still practicing or actively promoted* at the time of their conviction.

Most notably, external investigators confiscated internal documents from the eight involved dioceses that showed evidence of the involved priests being shuffled around parishes, sometimes even out of state. The head investigator traced some of these cases all the way back to the Vatican. The Philadelphia cases would be only one of eleven harrowing investigations successfully completed on U.S. grounds. Similar situations would also occur in Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, even in the Vatican specifically.

Eventually, Benedict would speak up on the matter *several years after he stepped down as Pope*. He practically threw the entire Roman Catholic church under the bus. Benedict opened his 6,000 word essay by claiming that pedophilia in the church began to grow out of the sexual revolution in the 60s and that an absence of God pervaded the priesthood. He then faulted the Vatican laws concerning clergy accountability and investigations as “so broad as to make conviction nearly impossible.” Not to be outdone in this contest of putting one’s foot in their own mouth, Francis weighed in and blamed the clerical culture in the church that elevates priests above the laity. The Papacy did not protect the church from evil, the enabled it.

Unfortunately for Benedict, the seizure and investigations into the Vatican’s internal documents traced a continuous trend of child molestation all the back to the fourth century, meaning that Julius III did not actually set the precedence of pedophilia, but was merely following it. Unfortunately for Francis, the elevation of the priesthood over the laity was a tradition dating back over a millennium, likely originating as a product of the Novatian schism or Constantine’s reform.

Sources: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/14/us/catholic-church-sex-abuse-pennsylvania.html>, <https://www.bbc.com/news/10407559>, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/accountability/distinctly-catholic/conservatives-must-face-john-paul-iis-legacy-sex-abuse>, and <https://apnews.com/c98a296cd9be4da4aabbdd626403d7a4>

Systematic Nun Abuse: The Roman Catholic clergy has no problem preying on their own kind either. For the last thirty years, stories of nuns being physically and sexually abused have been piling up against the Catholic church. Much like the child molestation, the Vatican was aware of it, and they routinely buried the allegations and took minimal actions against the offending priests.

As the systemic abuse of nuns became an increasingly outspoken and international affair, nuns became progressively more emboldened and reach out to

the media. Collectively, the detailed being routinely subjected to rape, forced abortion, emotional abuse, and labor exploitation.

Pope Francis made a point not to mention it, leading him to become rather unprepared for being ambushed with these accusations during his tour of the Middle East. Francis not only admitted that this problem was well known by the Vatican, but then admitted that the problem had preceded well into Benedict's reign.

This led to Francis eventually holding a sex abuse council at the Vatican, where he boldly addressed the levy of horror stories by *reinforcing the precedent of the Church conducting internal investigations*. By continuing to refuse the accountability from external authorities, Francis has continued the precedent of enabling the widespread corruption in the Roman Catholic clergy. Even to this day, priests confirmed to have been rapists are still serving at their same congregations.

So, this is just equal parts foolish and evil:

“Let everyone revere the deacons as Jesus Christ, the bishop as the image of the Father, and the presbyters as the senate of God and the assembly of the apostles. For without them one cannot speak of the Church.”<sup>33</sup> (1554, CCC)

Sources: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/abused-nuns-reveal-stories-of-rape-forced-abortions>, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47134033>, and <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/05/world/europe/pope-nuns-sexual-abuse.html>

## **The Evils of the Clergy and Papacy Cannot Be Reconciled with the Protection and Lordship of Jesus**

The power aggregated by the Roman Catholic Church over the centuries has tainted the institution to its core. The Papacy has repeatedly led their congregations astray and has actively enabled dozens of the most abominable offenses against both men and God throughout history. So, I have several questions to those who have been conditioned to believe in the Pope as being the image of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, and having supreme care over the men's souls:

- Do you believe that submission to these men is truly necessary for salvation?
- Do you believe that Jesus has confined Himself to solely residing in and working through the Roman Catholic church, an institution that has been tainted by murder, rape, and political subterfuge over a millennium?

- More specifically, do you believe the sacraments the Church deems necessary for salvation are still valid if they're performed by a pedophilic or murderous priest, but are not valid if they had been delivered by a pious Orthodox or Protestant Christian?
- Do you believe the Roman Catholics who murdered Protestants and Jews under the Spanish Inquisition were saved Christians who were led to Heaven by the very Popes who ordered the slaughter?

The sovereignty of the Roman Catholic church does not hold up as a reasonable assertion under any remote form of historical, ethical, or doctrinal scrutiny. Jesus may have protected the Christian church from failing, but the Roman Catholic Church has failed a long time ago. Speaking of failures, I would like to invite to read my next chapter, detailing how the Roman Catholic church tried (and failed) to keep bibles out the hands of the Laity for literal centuries.



# The Bible is Not a Roman Catholic Book

Part of Roman Catholicism's false conflation of their denominational history with the Christian church comes from their claim that the Bible is a Roman Catholic book. In fact, the conflation of these histories drove the literal writing of a book, conveniently titled for the sake of my argument as, *The Bible is a Catholic Book*, which has been featured heavily in Roman Catholic media.

This is, of course, an untrue claim. One that is easily rejected both on a historical and ethical basis. The Bible is the product of all orthodox Christian churches, and of them, the Roman Catholic church was demonstrably the single most driving antagonistic force against the translation and distribution of the Bible as we know it today. Let's walk through this together.

## The Roman Catholic Church did not Compile the Bible

Assuming you've read this statement in order, and somehow managed to retain focus amidst dozens of pages of tangents, regurgitated research, and walls of scripture, you should already be familiar with the fact that the Early Church didn't exactly begin to resemble the Roman Catholic denomination as we know it today until the early fourth century under Constantine. Even then, the concepts of Magisterium, the Papal Office, the pre-eminence of the specific Roman Catholic denomination over other orthodox denominations did not exist until at least the mid-fifth century under Pope Leo the Great.

A common myth is that the current biblical canon was first established in the [Council of Nicaea](#), which is categorically untrue. After reading the translated proceedings from the council, there is no mention in any of the 20 canons the establishment of the valid biblical scriptures. In fact, the idea of the scriptural canon being decided at the Council of Nicaea is the product of a ninth-century Greek Manuscript called *Synodicon Vetus*, which was compiled by an unknown author, who described the process as such:

*“The council made manifest the canonical and apocryphal books in the following manner: Placing them by the side of the divine table in the house of God, they prayed, entreating the Lord that the divinely inspired books might be found upon the table, and the spurious ones underneath; and it so happened.*

*It was by an expedient nearly similar, that the fathers of the same council distinguished the authentic from the apocryphal books of Scripture. Having placed them all together upon the altar, the apocryphal books fell to the ground of themselves.*

*We have already said, that in the supplement to the Council of Nicaea it is related that the fathers, being much perplexed to find out which were the authentic and which the apocryphal books of the Old and the New Testament, laid them all upon an altar, and the books which they were to reject fell to the ground. What a pity that so fine an ordeal has been lost!"* Sources: <https://books.google.com/books?id=BiQAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA7-IA1#v=onepage&q&f=false> and <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/nicaea-canon/>

Now, this is obviously farcical and does not exist in any other historical work. The only two other sources for this false historical claim are Voltaire, who was a deist who strongly despised the Roman Catholic church, and Dan Brown, the knucklehead who wrote the *Da Vinci Code* (does anyone else remember that hot mess? It had a *movie*). In that regard, I would not put too much stock into these writings.

The original Old Testament canon appeared to have already been codified before the time of Jesus' ministry. Dozens of times in the four Gospels, Old Testament writings are referenced as a complete set of scriptures, both by Jesus and by the very scribes and Pharisees who questioned Him. If we widen our net a little bit, we'll find various instances in the New Testament referring to books in the Pentateuch, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Amos, Daniel, and Psalms.

But, if we want to be absolutely sure, we know the Old Testament canon was nearing completion by 285 BC, which is roughly the time when the Septuagint was first commissioned under the order of the Egyptian King, Ptolemy. The Septuagint was a translation of Old Testament scriptures from Hebrew to Greek. It took a little over a century to finish, making it both available and the preferred writing of both Jewish scribes and the Early Christian church.

Source: <https://biblearchaeology.org/research/new-testament-era/4022-a-brief-history-of-the-septuagint>

The original proto-canon of the New Testament was first established in the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century, which consisted of the original four Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles. This was roughly around the time the orthodox churches first consolidated their teachings and scriptures amidst the proliferation of Gnosticism and Marcionism in the Early Church (Gonzalez, 2010). This, of course, wouldn't be definitive, as various New Testament writings of varying authenticity were in circulation.

The earliest complete codified canon was likely assembled by Saint Jerome, who was a presbyter of Antioch. Under the direction of the current Bishop of Rome, Damasus, he began creating a compilation of Old and New Testament scriptures that were translated not from the pre-existing Septuagint, but back from the

original Hebrew, into Latin. Jerome was known for writing commentaries, several of which were rather critical about the Apocryphal books still found in Roman Catholic bibles today.

## **The Vulgate was Harshly Contested by Other Early Church Leaders Due to its Harmful Inaccuracies**

In spite of his formal commission from the church of Rome, Jerome's Vulgate was not well received by the proto-Catholic church at the time. Jerome had built a bit of artistic license in his translations that resulted in some serious alterations from the original Greek texts. Here is Saint Augustine, presenting some choice words about Jerome's translations:

*"I pray you not to devote your energies to translating the sacred books to Latin, unless you do as you did earlier in your translation of the book of Job, that is, adding notes that show clearly where your version differs from the Septuagint, whose authority has no equal. . . . Besides, I cannot imagine how, after so long, someone can find in the Hebrew manuscripts anything which so many translators did not see before, especially since they knew Hebrew so well."*

Jerome ignored the first letter, so Augustine followed up.

*"A certain bishop, our brother, ordered that your translation be employed in the church he leads. People were surprised that you translated a passage in Jonah in a very different way than they were used to singing [in church] for generations. There was a riot, particularly since the Greeks claimed that the passage was wrong. . . . So you see the consequences of supporting your translation on manuscripts that cannot be verified by known languages." (Gonzalez, 2010).*

Augustine was well within the right to speak so harshly as some of these translations were truly awful:

Verse	Greek translations	Latin Vulgate	Consequence
John 7:8-10:	Ye go up to the feast; I am not yet going up to the feast, for my time hath not yet been fulfilled. And having said these things to them he stayed in Galilee. But when his brethren went up, then he also went up to the feast, not openly, but as in secret.	Go ye up to this festival day, but I go not up to this festival day: because my time is not accomplished. When he had said these things, he himself stayed in Galilee. But after his brethren were gone up, then he also went up to the feast, not openly, but, as it were, in secret.	By omitting the, “yet” modifier, Jerome effectively details Jesus as lying to His disciples.
Matthew 6:11	Give us this day our daily bread.	Give us this day our supersubstantial bread.	Pretty sure this false translation is partly responsible for the doctrine of transubstantiation, given that it is literally directly outlined nowhere else in the entirety of the Bible.
Genesis 3:15	And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.	I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.	Jerome literally changes the child as being the one to crush the snake, to the mother being the one to crush the snake. I'm at least 50% certain the Vulgate is the reason why Marian Doctrine originated in the Roman Catholic Church alone.
Luke 1:28	And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.	And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.	That sounds suspiciously close to the Rosary, doesn't it? Make that 100% sure.
Romans 4:3:	For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed Elohim, and it was counted unto him for righteousness	As it is written: Abraham believed God: and it was reputed to him unto justice.	Remember when the Council of Trent condemned the belief of righteousness as a product of faith? That was also the same council where they professed the Latin Vulgate to be doctrinally inerrant. This isn't a coincidence.

As we know, the Vulgate would ultimately become the definitive Bible of the Roman Catholic Church for over a millennium. The doctrinal arguments between Jerome and Augustine were glossed over and the Vulgate became the official translation and incapable of being rejected.

“Moreover, the same sacred and holy Synod,--considering that no small utility may accrue to the Church of God, if it be made known which out of all the Latin editions, now in circulation, of the sacred books, is to be held as authentic,--ordains and declares, that the said old and vulgate edition, which, by the lengthened usage of so many years, has been approved of in the Church, be, in public lectures, disputations, sermons and expositions, held as authentic; and that no one is to dare, or presume to reject it under any pretext whatever” (Council of Trent, 2<sup>nd</sup> Decree)

Not only would the Vulgate be considered legally above reproach, but the printing and possession of any other Bible translation was illegal. This would obviously become a problem, as the Vulgate was clearly flawed. I would also like to point out, that once again, the Roman Catholic church has forbidden anyone to question them. That is not the way of theologians, critical thinkers, or ethical leaders, that is the way of cults and tyrannical regimes.

The Roman Catholic Church did the same thing with the Magisterium, and with the Papal office. This is social engineering and a far cry from the likes of Paul and Jesus who openly invited themselves to be tested on their doctrine.

Now in case you are wondering about the possibility that the Vulgate was the correct translation and that Tyndale was wrong, I would like to present Saint Irenaeus's interpretation on Genesis 3:15, about the woman, child, and snake:

*“He has therefore, in His work of recapitulation, summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam, and trampled upon his head, as thou canst perceive in Genesis that God said to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; He shall be on the watch for thy head, and thou on the watch for His heel.”*

Source: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book5.html>

Guess who’s the one prophesized to crush the serpent’s head underfoot? The child, not the mother. Irenaeus wrote this in his book, Against Heresies, which was published in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and written in Greek. Tyndale’s translation was right, and Jerome’s was wrong.

## **The Roman Catholic Church did not Create the Definitive Translation of the Modern Bible Either**

So, if the Latin Vulgate was a flawed translation, was commissioned before the establishment of the Roman Catholic denomination, and was not present in most Bible translations today, when did the Roman Catholic Church decree it amended? Well, they never intended to. It was actually the work of early Reformers that would amend the Latin Vulgate, and many good Christian men, including those

once Catholic, would be excommunicated, tortured, and killed by the Roman Catholic church in doing so.

William Tyndale was the first man to successfully create a mass-produced English Bible. Tyndale was a Catholic Priest in England, born at the turn of the fifteenth century. At the time of William Tyndale's life, the possession of Bibles by the common man had already been outlawed by the Roman Catholic church for almost three hundred years:

**“Canon 14: We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old or New Testament; unless anyone from motive of devotion should wish to have the Psalter or the Breviary for divine offices or the hours of the blessed Virgin; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.” (COUNCIL OF TOULOUSE, 1229 AD).**

The only people who were capable of reading scripture were ordained Roman Catholic clergy, and only after they had been tutored extensively in Roman Catholic dogma. Tyndale would express his frustration over this reality around the time he graduated with a Master of Theology from Oxford and was still denied access to the Bible.

*“They have ordained that no man shall look on the Scripture, until he be noselled in heathen learning eight or nine years and armed with false principles, with which he is clean shut out of the understanding of the Scripture.” —William Tyndale*

So, Tyndale would go on not only to become a Catholic priest, but to also become fluent in eight languages, including English, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. You could probably see where this is going.

Now, as a quick aside, William Tyndale did not actually make the first English translation of the Bible. Several English translations of the Latin Vulgate had already been illegally circulating through England at the time. The problem was, not only possession of these books was a crime, but that they were translations of the Vulgate, thus they were riddled with the grammatical and doctrinal errors stemming from their flawed source.

Furthermore, the person responsible for many of these English translations, John Wycliffe, had been sentenced a heretic. His translations were confiscated and publicly burned. After he had died the Roman Catholic church had his body dug up and his corpse desecrated.

This had happened less than a century prior to Tyndale's work, so the Roman Catholic church was well regarded as being murderously assertive of maintaining their iron grip on scriptural possession.

Source: <https://biblemanuscriptsociety.com/Bible-resources/English-Bible-History/Wycliffe-Bible> and <https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/murderous-history-bible-translations-catholic-murder-version-who-wrote-when/>

So, William Tyndale decided to test the water by formally requesting permission to create an English translation of the Bible. He was denied. This would serve as the beginning of his story, rather than the end, though. Tyndale was not happy in his position as a clergyman, and his unrest was forced to a peak upon being told by a fellow priest that:

*“We had better be without God’s laws than the pope’s.”*

Tyndale famously replied with:

*“I defy the Pope, and all his laws; and if God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost!”*

Tyndale fled to Germany to create his own unauthorized version of the English New Testament. He was a gifted polyglot, like Jerome, but with a greater dedication to preserving scripture, Tyndale corrected many of the errors in the Vulgate (and the Wycliffe Bible) by making a more authentic translation of the original Greek and Hebrew scriptures.

Predictably, the Roman Catholic Church confiscated his work, burned any copies they could get ahold of, and branded him a heretic. Fortunately for Christians, the printing press was accessible enough that Tyndale’s translations had become too copious to regulate.

Unfortunately for Tyndale, being a heretic was condemnable by death in England. So, the Roman Catholic church, after stripping him of his priesthood, conveniently handed him off to English authorities to be executed. Tyndale was burned alive, his last words being:

*“Lord! Open the King of England’s eyes.”*

Somewhat ironically, King Henry VIII would produce an official English translation of the Bible that was almost entirely sourced from Tyndale’s illicit works. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Tyndale’s translations would become the basis of the King James Bible, based on their incredible accuracy.

## **Bible Translations in Other Languages were also the Products of Reformed Forefathers**

Martin Luther would go on to break ground on the German translation. Predictably, his works were banned, he was labeled a heretic, then forced to flee the country. Of course, there was more to this story, Luther actively rejected the sale of indulgences, as well as the sovereignty of the Pope. He also published the infamous *95 theses*, which would ultimately lead to the dissolving of Papal states.

Further East, Jan Hus would create the first cohesive Czech translation. His story was a little more complex than that of Tyndale or Luther, though. Hus was far more moderate than his contemporaries. Jan Hus was a man caught between Roman Catholicism and the Reformation. He did not believe in the sovereignty or divine ordination of the body of the Roman Catholic Church, but he was also uncomfortable with John Wycliffe's rejection of transubstantiation.

Jan criticized the sale of indulgences, the Crusade, and the current schism, an era of two ordained pope's created by church infighting (although he ultimately supported one of them). Because of this, he was tried as a heretic by the Roman Catholic Church and sentenced to death using Wycliffe's works to accuse him of heresy. Jan Hus would not recant Wycliffe nor denounce his own beliefs, and he ultimately died for them.

Sources: <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/today-in-history-jan-hus-burned-at-the-stake-600-years-ago/> and <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/literature-and-arts/german-literature-biographies/jan-hus>

Every attempt to made to translate the Bible into a more accessible language, and every attempt to put Bibles in the hands of the public, was met with overtly malicious antagonism from the Roman Catholic church. Chances are, the Bibles you own today are a product of Tyndale and exist entirely in spite of the Roman Catholic Church, not because of it.

## **The Roman Catholic Church Actively Conspired to Keep the Bible Out of The Hands of the Public**

So, I want to take another look at some of these statements from the Roman Catholic church designed to suppress the general publics' access to scriptures. Below are three passages detailing literally centuries where they sealed away scriptures for the possession of their clergy alone.



(1) “Canon 14: We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old or New Testament; unless anyone from motive of devotion should wish to have the Psalter or the Breviary for divine offices or the hours of the blessed Virgin; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.” (COUNCIL OF TOULOUSE, 1229 AD).

(2) “This synod ordains and decrees, that, henceforth, the sacred Scripture, and especially the said old and vulgate edition, be printed in the most correct manner possible; and that it shall not be lawful for anyone to print, or cause to be printed, any books whatever, on sacred matters, without the name of the author; nor to sell them in future, or even to keep them, unless they shall have been first examined, and approved of, by the Ordinary; under pain of the anathema and fine imposed in a canon of the last Council of Lateran: and, if they be Regulars, besides this examination and approval, they shall be bound to obtain a license also from their own superiors, who shall have examined the books according to the form of their own statutes.

As to those who lend, or circulate them in manuscript, without their having been first examined, and approved of, they shall be subjected to the same penalties as printers: and they who shall have them in their possession or shall read them, shall, unless they discover the authors, be themselves regarded as the authors.” (Council of Trent, 2<sup>nd</sup> Decree)

(3) “To be reprov'd are those who translate into French the Gospels, the letters of Paul, the psalter, etc. They are mov'd by a certain love of Scripture in order to explain them clandestinely and to preach them to one another. The mysteries of the faith are not to be explained rashly to anyone. Usually in fact, they cannot be understood by everyone but only by those who are qualified to understand them with informed intelligence. The depth of the divine Scriptures is such that not only the illiterate and uninitiated have difficulty understanding them, but also the educated and the gifted (Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*)”

Just as William Tyndale had lamented, for hundreds of years the only way to get steady (and legal) access to scriptures in much of the world was through joining the Roman Catholic clergy or being a professor of their doctrine. This meant that the interpretation of Christian doctrine available to the public was only available after it had been passed through a contorted funnel of historical revisionism, mistranslations, and extra-biblical church dogma. In other words, as long as they alone were biblically literate, the Roman Catholic Church was free to contort Christianity to fit their ends, however they pleased.

No one could question them, and why would they? For most people, their only glimpse of Christian literature was what was dispensed to them by the Church through art, Roman Catholic readings, and through the words of their clergy. Even one did get ahold of scriptures, most people could not understand the Latin they were written in.

When John Wycliffe first started translating and distributing English bibles underground, people began becoming biblically literate and realizing that Roman Catholicism and Christianity were very different animals. Wycliffe and many of

the Christians who had gotten ahold of his Bible translation began to question and criticize the Roman Catholic Church's teachings on the Eucharist, Purgatory, prayers for the dead, and confession, using the Bible itself as their authority.

*"I profess and claim to be by the grace of God a sound (that is, a true and orthodox) Christian and while there is breath in my body I will speak forth and defend the law of it. I am ready to defend my convictions even unto death. In these my conclusions I have followed the Sacred Scriptures and the holy doctors, and if my conclusions can be proved to be opposed to the faith, willingly will I retract them."* (Wycliffe)

These people, who the Roman Catholic Church would classily refer to as Lollards, would have quite an impact on the church at the time. They needed to put an end to this movement as soon as possible, and the most efficient way to that was to slander (and later murder) Wycliffe.

*"This pestilent and wretched John Wycliffe, of cursed memory, that son of the old serpent... endeavoured by every means to attack the very faith and sacred doctrine of Holy Church, devising... to fill up the measure of his malice... the expedient of a new translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongue..."* (Archbishop Arundel, 1411)

The Pope himself would actually go on to issue no less than *five* Papal Bulls against Wycliffe. As you can see below, they were full of the mercy and grace of Christ, and definitely not the product of panic and malice from a man desperately trying to hold on undeserved political power:

*"It hath, in truth, been intimated to us by many trustworthy persons (who are much grieved on the subject), that one John Wickcliff, rector of Lutterworth, in the diocese of Lincoln, professor of divinity (would that he were not rather a master of errors), hath gone to such a pitch of detestable folly, that he feareth not to teach, and publicly preach, or rather to vomit out of the filthy dungeon of his breast, certain erroneous and false propositions and conclusions, savoring even of heretical pravity, tending to weaken and overthrow the status of the whole church, and even the secular government (Pope Gregory IX)"*

Source: <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/archives-five-bulls-of-pope-gregory-xi-against-wycliffe>

Note that the term "secular government" was to be taken with a grain of salt, as England was an ecclesiastical fiefdom under the Papacy at the time. Deriving both political power and money from their entanglement with the government, the Roman Catholic Church had a lot to lose if John revealed them to be lying.

Because of this, the Roman Catholic leaders realized that the Bible itself was a legitimate threat to the multitude of extra-biblical teachings they have cultivated over the centuries to keep people dependent on their church. Hence why they put so much effort into not only suppressing the Bible, but conditioning people that it was a sin to doubt or question them:

If anyone rejects any written or unwritten tradition of the church, let him be anathema (Second Council of Nicaea).

“We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff” (Unam Sanctam, 1302).

“The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.” (CCC, 100)

## The Roman Catholic Church Does Not Respect Scripture

We know by the Lollard movement, and how the Roman Catholic Church chose to deal with it, that scriptural literacy was a legitimate threat to the political and religious stranglehold Roman Catholic leaders had in the Medieval Church era. As I have established ad nauseam throughout the prior chapters of this statement, there are a lot of deviations between scriptural and Roman Catholic Christianity. For them, a mass-produced Bible would be a Pandora’s Box that could threaten their literal existence. Christianity was never meant to be as immense, wealthy, and politically powerful as the Roman Catholic church had become. Taken literally, the scriptures would show a very clear divide between the orthodox Early Church of the first few centuries and the Roman Catholic Church now.

Since two hundred or so years of murder, book burnings, and political coercion were incapable of stopping the Word of God from spreading through the laity, they needed to enact damage control as quickly as possible. This would ultimately come to a head at the Council of Trent.

The Council of Trent would enact three counter-offensives against the growing Reformist body within them. First, was to establish the erroneous Latin Vulgate as the only authentic translation. Because of that, they could decree that anyone possessing a non-vulgate Bible would be subject to the same punishment of the authors and printers, which, as we’ve established above, would include, torture, imprisonment, ex-communication, or even death:

Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall,--in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,--whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,--hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established.

As to those who lend, or circulate them in manuscript, without their having been first examined, and approved of, they shall be subjected to the same penalties as printers: and they who shall have them in

their possession or shall read them, shall, unless they discover the authors, be themselves regarded as the authors.” (Council of Trent, 2nd Decree)

Second, they would assert that salvation was imparted through sacraments and that they alone were the only ones capable of imparting those sacraments:

CANON I.-If any one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord; or, that they are more, or less, than seven, to wit, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Order, and Matrimony; or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament; let him be anathema.

CANON IV.-If any one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain of God, through faith alone, the grace of justification;-though all (the sacraments) are not indeed necessary for every individual; let him be anathema.

CANON X.-If any one saith, that all Christians have power to administer the word, and all the sacraments; let him be anathema.

CANON XIII.-If any one saith, that the received and approved rites of the Catholic Church, wont to be used in the solemn administration of the sacraments, may be contemned, or without sin be omitted at pleasure by the ministers, or be changed, by every pastor of the churches, into other new ones; let him be anathema.

Now, submission to the Roman Catholic Church would be wholly necessary for salvation. This would also reaffirm their ability to divinely condemn and punish people through their expanded doctrine on penance:

CANON III.--If any one saith, that those words of the Lord the Saviour, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained, (z) are not to be understood of the power of forgiving and of retaining sins in the Sacrament of penance, as the Catholic Church has always from the beginning understood them; but wrests them, contrary to the institution of this sacrament, to the power of preaching the gospel ; let him be anathema.

CANON VI.--If any one denieth, either that sacramental confession was instituted, or is necessary to salvation, of divine right; or saith, that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Church hath ever observed from the beginning, and doth observe, is alien from the institution and command of Christ, and is a human invention; let him be anathema.

CANON XV.--If any one saith, that the keys are given to the Church, only to loose, not also to bind; and that, therefore, priests act contrary to the purpose of the keys, and contrary to the institution of Christ, when they impose punishments on those who confess; and that it is a fiction, that, after the eternal punishment, has, by virtue of the keys, been removed, there remains for the most part a temporal punishment to be discharged; let him be anathema.

Lastly, and perhaps most profitably for the Roman Catholic Church, would be the insinuation that the *truth and rules of Christian doctrine* would not just be

wholly contained in scriptures, but also in unwritten traditions. Mind you, tradition being asserted as a source of spiritual authority long preceded the Council of Trent, but this renewed assertion would become particularly nefarious:

“This truth and rule are contained in written books and in unwritten traditions.”

In case the connotations of that statement seem a little too ambiguous, here is how it was established in the original draft:

“This truth [of the Gospel] is contained partly in written books, partly in unwritten traditions.”

Source:

[https://ir.stthomas.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=sod\\_mat#:~:text=On%20April%208%2C%201546%2C%20the%20contained%20in%20both%20Scripture%20and](https://ir.stthomas.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=sod_mat#:~:text=On%20April%208%2C%201546%2C%20the%20contained%20in%20both%20Scripture%20and)

This meant that Protestants would allegedly follow an incomplete Christianity, which as the Council had previously established in their sole claim to valid doctrine and sacraments, would result in spiritual death for all non-Catholics.

Now, when there was a conflict between scripture and tradition, the Roman Catholic Church would always win by default. Only the Roman Catholic clergy can interpret scripture, and tradition could amend scriptures to say whatever the Church wanted. It was an ingenious idea to counter a reformation born of **intellectualism, literacy, and critical thinking** with *circular reasoning and alarmism*.

In that regard, it wouldn't matter how sure Protestants were that the Roman Catholic Church had twisted scriptures, because even the slightest doubt that the Protestant was wrong would invite in a near-universally conditioned belief that the Roman Catholic Church alone was the way to salvation. In fact, why meditate on the scriptures at all when the Council of Trent produced its own catechism to tell you what Christianity really was, anyway?

So, let's bring back the table of doctrinal clashes from the Sola Scriptura chapter:

# SCRIPTURE VS. TRADITION

BY ETHAN WATERMAN

## JUSTIFICATION

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>For by grace are you saved through faith; not of yourself, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)</p> <p>Titus 3:4-7: "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."</p>	<p>CCC 2036, "The specific precepts of the natural law, because their observance, demanded by the creator, is necessary for salvation."</p> <p>CCC 2080, "The Decalogue contains a privileged expression of the natural law. It is made known to us by divine revelation and by human reason."</p> <p>CCC 2068, "so that all men may attain salvation through faith, Baptism and the observance of the Commandments,"</p>	<p>Tradition asserts that salvation is not freely granted to the faithful by grace. Salvation can be lost by sin and must continuously be reattained and maintained by laws and sacraments.</p> <p>Keep in mind that in the Roman Catholic Worldview, mortal sins include not submitting to the Pope, purposefully not attending Mass, and using contraception: <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortal_sin">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortal_sin</a></p>

# SALVATION THROUGH JESUS ALONE

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)</p> <p>12 Salvation exists in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)</p>	<p>"For it is only through Christ's Catholic Church, which is "the all-embracing means of salvation," that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation," (Vatican 2, Decree on Ecumenism, 3).</p> <p>"We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff" (Unam Sanctam, 1302).</p> <p>"It is impossible to save one's soul without devotion to Mary and without her protection." -Saint Anselm, Archbishop and Doctor of the Church, 1033-1109 AD</p>	<p>According to Catholic theology, Jesus is not sufficient as the only way, truth, and life. He is not the sole mediator. His salvation and sacrifice, and God's mercies, are in part dependent, restrained, or confined to the Catholic denomination and Mary.</p>

# INDULGENCES

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money. Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.</p> <p>But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. (Acts 8:18-25)</p> <p>Ezekiel 18:20 "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself."</p>	<p>CCC 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 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.</p> <p>CCC 1498, "Through indulgences the faithful can obtain the remission of temporal punishment resulting from sin for themselves and also for the souls in Purgatory."</p>	<p>Saving grace cannot only be merited by men's deeds, but it can be effectively purchased with money directly or through donations. People can also purchase grace and relieve the burden of other's people's sins, even if they are already dead.</p> <p>Thus, God is not concerned with hearts of His people above of all, appropriating for sins by any means is good enough.</p>

# DIVINE INTERCESSION

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>Hebrews 5:24 But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.</p> <p>1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.</p>	<p>"If anyone says that it is a deception to celebrate masses in honor of the saints and in order to obtain their intercession with God, as the Church intends, let him be anathema." [Council of Trent]</p> <p>"No man is delivered or preserved from the world's snares of Satan except through Mary; and God grants His graces to no one except through her alone." St. Germanus of Constantinople</p>	<p>According to tradition, Jesus is not the only mediator, nor is He the sole way to God. His sacrifice was not the whole propitiation for the sins of the Elect.</p> <p>Jesus is also not sufficient as high priest, nor is He emotionally or spiritually approachable enough to mediate between man and God without other appealing to Him on their behalf.</p>

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# WORSHIP AND DEVOTION TO GOD ALONE

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>1 Corinthians 7:35: And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.</p> <p>Isaiah 48:11: "For My own sake for My own sake, I will act; For how can my name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another"</p> <p>Luke 4:8: Jesus answered him, "It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.</p> <p>Psalms 148:13: Let them praise the name of the Lord. For His name alone is exalted. His glory is above earth and heaven.</p>	<p>Woe to those who despise devotion to Mary! . . . The soul cannot live without having recourse to Mary and recommending itself to her. He falls and is lost who does not have recourse to Mary.&amp;t. Alphonsus Maria Liguori</p> <p>(Source: <a href="http://www.catholictradition.org/Mary/mary18c.htm">http://www.catholictradition.org/Mary/mary18c.htm</a>)</p> <p>"We, therefore, who, though unworthy, hold the place of Vicar of Christ upon earth, shall never cease to promote the glory of so great a Mother, as long as life endures." (Pope Leo XIII, AUGUSTISSIMAE VIRGINIS MARIAE)</p> <p>"It is impossible to save one's soul without devotion to Mary and without her protection."-Saint Anselm</p>	<p>God is not the only entity to venerated or glorified. God does not mind the worship of other entities, and in fact, requires it for salvation, faith in Jesus means nothing without recourse to Mary.</p> <p>In that regard, the Psalmist was not to be taken literally when they said to exalt God alone, they were either lying or ignorant. Of course, this means that Jesus was wrong to quote them authoritatively.</p> <p>Not only that, but apparently Paul was purposefully misleading the early church by not ever venerating Mary. In fact, Mary is not glorified in even a single epistle. All of the Apostles were ignorant to this.</p>

# ICONOGRAPHY AND IDOLATRY

Scripture	Catholic Tradition	Conflicts Caused by Tradition
<p>Exodus 20:2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.</p> <p>3 "You shall have no other gods before me.</p> <p>4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved 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.</p> <p>5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,</p> <p>6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.</p>	<p>The holy Synod enjoins on all bishops, and others who sustain the office and charge of teaching, that, agreeably to the usage of the Catholic and Apostolic Church...they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the intercession and invocation of [dead] saints; the honor to relics; and the legitimate use of images..</p> <p>But that they think impiously who deny that the [dead] saints...are to be invoked; or who assert either that they do not pray for men; or that the invocation of them...is idolatry; or that it is repugnant to the Word of God, and is opposed to the honor of the one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus; or that it is foolish to supplicate, vocally or mentally, those who reign in heaven. (Council of Trent)</p> <p>The images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of other saints, are to be had and retained particularly in temples, and that due honor and veneration are to be given them. (Council of Trent)</p>	<p>God, through multiple commandments, established that NOTHING was to be venerated but Him directly.</p> <p>He even specified that images and statues of things representing things of heaven were clearly wrong.</p> <p>However, at some point He completely changed His mind without telling the Incarnate of His Word, Jesus, or any of the apostles, about it.</p>

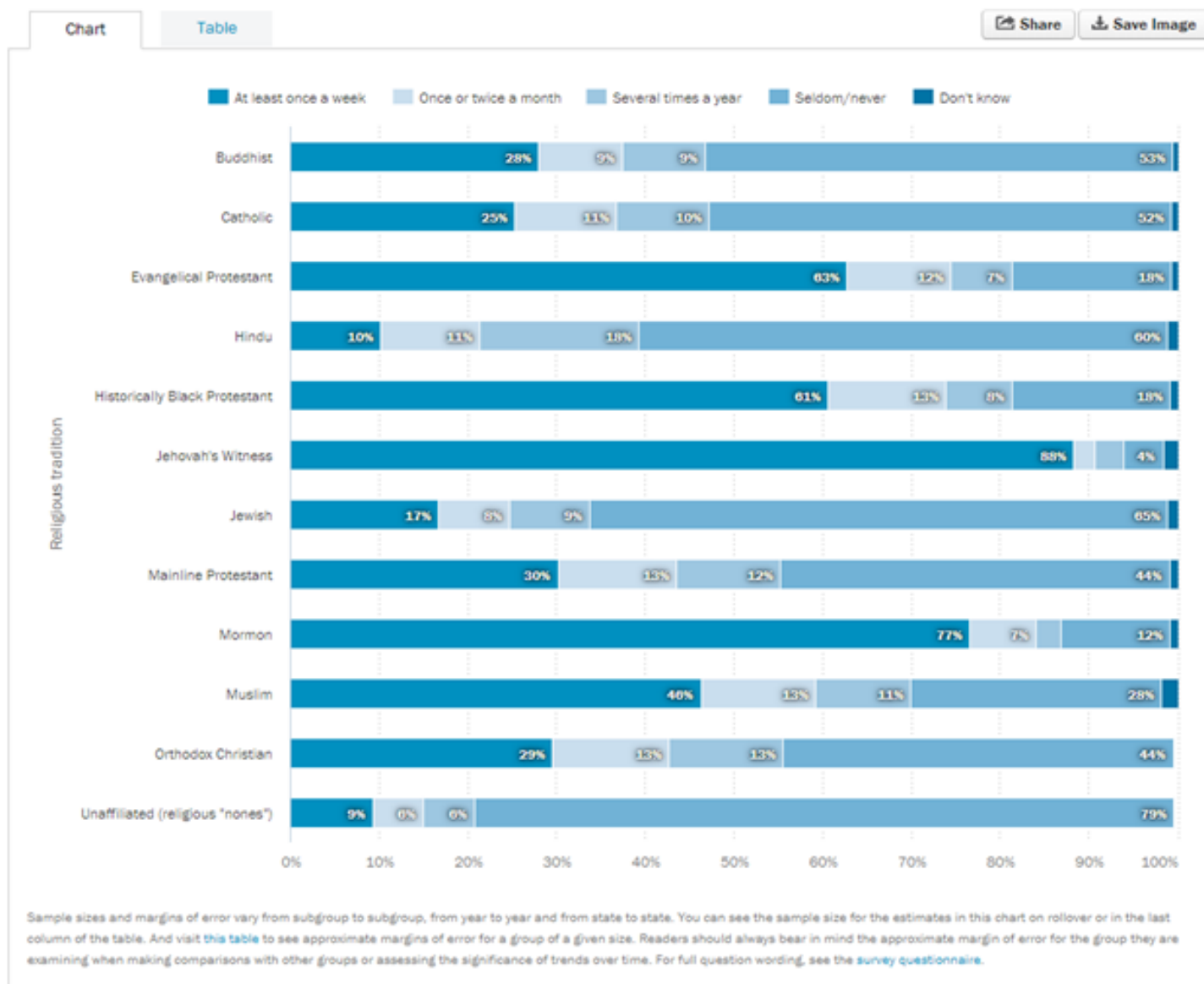
## **Roman Catholicism has Cultivated a Culture That Discourages Biblical Literacy**

Short of Saint Germanus, every one of those quoted traditions came from after the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Whether you agree with my counter-arguments or not, the impact of Catholic tradition is indisputable. Several of these doctrinal clashes, particularly those of iconography and submission to Christ alone, are far too different taken either at face value or by reasonable stretch, these were among some of the very same arguments that mobilized the Lollards and early Reformers. Tradition needed to be removed from being a subservient vehicle for scripture and to being of similar or greater weight if the Roman Catholic Church was going to successfully defend their denominational practices.

Today, suppression of the scripture is pretty much a non-issue. Pew Research center conducted a national survey in 2014 about various beliefs and practices of American Christians, drawing from a sizable sample size of 35,000 people. When it came to the frequency of reading scripture per week, Catholics came at the very bottom of the list amongst Christians. Only 25% of Catholics read their Bible at least once a week and 52% professed to seldom, or even never read their Bibles outside of Mass. Compare this to Evangelical Protestants, 63% of which read their Bibles at least once a week.

## Frequency of reading scripture by religious group

% of adults who read scripture...



Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/frequency-of-reading-scripture/>

This means that for at least 50% of Roman Catholics, their only exposure to the Bible is from four small passages they read weekly at Mass: an Old Testament reading, an Epistle, a Gospel story, and a psalm. Keep in mind, these passages are only two or three verses in length, and they are only read once a week to the majority of Catholics. Predictably, this does not add up to a very large percentage of the Bible being covered yearly. Compounding this, sermons at Catholic Mass occur in three-year cycles, with the lectionary being reread and unchanged between them.

So, how much of the Bible is covered in a single three-year Lectionary cycle? Well, for the weekly Mass attendee, only 40.8% of the New Testament and 3.7% of the Old Testament. So, fifty percent of Roman Catholics will go their entire lives possibly being exposed to less than half of the Bible. We know half of the Bible isn't genealogies and Israelites repeating the same mistakes, so, there is a lot of important history and context missing, much of which would become integral to understanding the New Testament.

Sources: <https://restlesspilgrim.net/blog/2014/03/23/lectionary-statistics/> and <https://www.usccb.org/offices/new-american-bible/liturgy>

## **The Roman Catholic Church Leverages Scriptural Ignorance to Its Benefit**

If you leaf back to the first half of this statement, you'll see the majority of my assertions based in New Testament scripture have been reinforced by pertinent Old Testament scripture. The Bible is a different book when read as a cohesive whole, and not in smatterings of separate passages. Ultimately, the Roman Catholic Church would leverage this scriptural illiteracy with their elevation of Tradition to exalt their aberrant doctrine over scripture as the Word of God.

So as the first of many examples, when Pope Francis exercised Magisterium with his councils to amend the Catechism with the death penalty being inadmissible in light of the Gospel, most didn't raise an eyebrow at the obvious doctrinal clash with the scriptures. This is because, statistically, there is a 96.3% chance that each of the following OT verses to not to have been brought up in Mass liturgy:

*Genesis 9:6: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.*

*Exodus 21:23-25: But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*

*Exodus 22:18 "You shall not permit a sorceress to live.*

*Deuteronomy 21: "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So, you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.*

I mean, even if we just square this off to the New Testament, you still have Peter overseeing the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). Paul goading Festus to put him to death if they could prove he had committed any sins worthy of the penalty (Acts 25:11), Paul reminding everyone that the wages of sin are death (Rom 6:23), and Jesus quoting one of the death penalties against the Pharisees (Mat 15.4).

Of course, I could understand preaching against mere men carrying out the death penalty. But this is specifically about government, what does Paul say about that?

Romans 13:1-4: Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Here is the amended Catechism:

*Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good.*

*Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.*

*Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person",<sup>[1]</sup> and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide". (2267)*

Listen, a punishment being morally reprehensible because it violates the inviolability and dignity of a person is not something that you are going to find anywhere in the Bible. This sounds very clearly like the product of modern progressivism. Church tradition has to replace scripture to keep the Roman Catholic Church palatable to the newer generations. However, if this happened in a Protestant church, we'd default to our knee jerk reaction to basically everything that challenges our Christian worldview: vindictive Bible beating, halfhearted boycotts, and finally, schism.

Not only would this be a departure from the scriptures, but Francis would actually double-back against Catholicism's **own** Tradition under Pope John-Paul:

"This is a departure from what the document, approved under Pope John Paul II in 1992, says on the matter: "Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor."

Source: <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2018/08/pope-francis-changes-teaching-on-death-penalty-its-inadmissible/>

Two divine representatives of Jesus wielding infallibility on matters of doctrine and faith, have arrived at different conclusions. The death penalty is either **inadmissible**, or it is in the right circumstances. Given that Francis made an absolute statement, this is in irreconcilable conflict with John-Paul's. This foolishness is another direct refutation of the Roman Catholic claim of preserving the doctrines of the Early Church:

Has the Catholic Church ever changed its teaching? No, for 2000 years the Church has taught the same things which Jesus taught." (**Catholic Catechism for Adults**).

"It is a historical fact the Catholic Church, from the twentieth century back to the first, has not once ceased to teach a doctrine on faith or morals previously held, and with the same interpretation; the church has proved itself infallible." (**My Catholic Church**).

Protestants are ready and willing to mold their denominations around their interpretation of scripture, while the Catholic church readily molds scripture to fit around their tradition. Ideally, neither practice would exist, but at the least, *sola scriptura* sets a hard baseline, unaltered for centuries, that can unite Protestants of various denominations around the world and over many generations. Catholics cannot, as they've altered the meanings of Christian doctrine frequently and significantly over the ages.

In fact, concerning the Second Commandment, the Catechism literally details how it altered the commandment in the Catechism to remove the charge against making graven images:

# Catechism of the Catholic Church

## PART THREE LIFE IN CHRIST

### SECTION TWO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

#### Exodus 20 2-17

I am the LORD your God,  
who brought you out  
of the land of Egypt,  
out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before me.  
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,  
visiting the iniquity of the fathers  
upon the children to the third and the fourth  
generation of those who hate me,  
but showing steadfast love to thousands of those  
who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not take  
the name of the LORD your God in vain;  
for the LORD will not hold him guiltless  
who takes his name in vain.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.  
Six days you shall labor, and do all your work;  
but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God;  
in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son,  
or your daughter, your manservant,  
or your maidservant or your cattle,  
or the sojourner who is within your gates;  
for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them,  
and rested the seventh day;  
therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honor your father and your mother,  
that your days may be long in the land  
which the LORD your God gives you.

You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness  
against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house;  
you shall not covet your neighbor's wife,  
or his manservant, or his maidservant,  
or his ox, or his ass,  
or anything that is your neighbor's.

#### Deuteronomy 5:6-21

I am the LORD your God,  
who brought you out  
of the land of Egypt,  
out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before me

...

You shall not take  
the name of the LORD your God in vain

...

Observe the sabbath day,  
to keep it holy

...

Honor your father and your mother

...

You shall not kill.

Neither shall you commit adultery.

Neither shall you steal.

Neither shall you bear false witness  
against your neighbor.

Neither shall you covet  
your neighbor's wife . . .

You shall not desire . . .  
anything that is your neighbor's.

#### A Traditional Catechetical Formula

1. I am the LORD your God;  
you shall not have  
strange Gods before me.

2. You shall not take  
the name of the LORD your God in vain

3. Remember to keep holy the LORD'S

4. Honor your father and your mother.

5. You shall not kill.

6. You shall not commit adultery.

7. You shall not steal.

8. You shall not bear false witness  
against your neighbor.

9. You shall not covet  
your neighbor's wife.

10. You shall not covet  
your neighbor's goods.

They, of course, justify this with a council, rather than with scripture:

Basing itself on the mystery of the incarnate Word, the seventh ecumenical council at Nicaea (787) justified against the iconoclasts the veneration of icons - of Christ, but also of the Mother of God, the

angels, and all the saints. By becoming incarnate, the Son of God introduced a new "economy" of images (Catechism, 2131).

This is a clear example of the Roman Catholic church overwriting scripture with their Tradition. There is literally no evidence for the claim that Jesus, taking the form of a man, meant that God was now no longer against the creation of images of things in Heaven or on Earth, especially with the intent of using these images for veneration.

Not to mention that I've have shown veneration to be indistinguishable from worship for Catholics by virtue of Marian doctrines and prayers, both in my prior chapter on *Prayer* and in my future chapter on *Rejecting Roman Catholic Marian Doctrine*.

### **So, in summary:**

- The Roman Catholic church did not create the definitive translation of the bible, the Reformer Tyndale did.
- The Roman Catholic church actively murdered bible translators in an attempt to keep scriptures sealed away from the laity.
- The Roman Catholic church taught that the Bible did not contain all that necessary truth for salvation.
- The Roman Catholic church dissuaded scripture reading by asserting only the clergy could interpret them.
- Modern Catholics largely do not read their Bibles consistently, Roman Catholic Mass doesn't even cover half of its contents.
- The Roman Catholic Church has repeatedly altered Christian doctrine by overwriting scripture with their Tradition.

In that regard, the Bible is most certainly not a Roman Catholic book. It doesn't take any stretch of logic to see why Evangelical Protestants are so far more biblically literate than their Catholic brethren.

Protestants believe all spiritual truths can be found in the Bible, Roman Catholics do not. Protestant forefathers risked imprisonment, torture, and even death to attain the Bible, while the Roman Catholic church actively persecuted them to keep it suppressed. Protestants temper their denominational doctrine with the scriptures, while the Roman Catholic church tempers scripture with their denominational teachings. The Bible may not belong to any specific denomination, but if any Christian church were to make a claim to it, the Roman Catholic church would be the least of them.



# Refutation of Roman Catholic Marian Doctrines

**Worship:** *“To honor or show reverence for as a divine being or supernatural power.” & “To regard with great or extravagant respect, honor, or devotion.” (Meriam Webster)*

## Roman Catholic Statements on Mary

Assuming you’ve read my chapter on prayer, you should already be aware of the blurred lines between veneration and worship, particularly in Roman Catholicism. Church doctrines about Mary would actually be the prevailing argument in that narrative. We are going to continue that argument here.

As the practice and theology of Marian doctrine is poorly defined and purposefully misrepresented by the Roman Catholic Church to both their congregation and their critics, I’ve decided to establish a common ground between us that I will be basing the remainder of this chapter on.

In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pope Pius IX codified the doctrines of Mariology in his Papal Bull, the [Ineffibalis Deus](#):

Let all the children of the Catholic Church, who are so very dear to us, hear these words of ours. With a still more ardent zeal for piety, religion and love, let them continue to venerate, invoke and pray to the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, conceived without original sin. Let them fly with utter confidence to this most sweet Mother of mercy and grace in all dangers, difficulties, needs, doubts and fears. Under her guidance, under her patronage, under her kindness and protection, nothing is to be feared; nothing is hopeless.

Because, while bearing toward us a truly motherly affection and having in her care the work of our salvation, she is solicitous about the whole human race. And since she has been appointed by God to be the Queen of heaven and earth, and is exalted above all the choirs of angels and saints, and even stands at the right hand of her only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, she presents our petitions in a most efficacious manner. What she asks, she obtains. Her pleas can never be unheard.

Let’s take a look at the assertions from this passage:

- Mary is to be prayed to, invoked, and venerated, implying that she possesses divine power and authority.
- Mary is the Mother of God and lived a blessed virgin.
- Mary was conceived without Original Sin, [meaning she never sinned throughout her life](#).

- Mary was appointed as Queen of heaven and earth, exalted over the angels at the right hand of Jesus.
- Roman Catholics are to pray to Mary to receive mercy and grace, she will oversee the work of their salvation.
- She also serves as a mediator between men and Jesus, who does whatever she asks of Him.

If you'll humor me for a moment, I really want to drive home how definitive this definition of Mary as a sinless, divine administrator, who's the overseer of men's salvation is in Roman Catholicism:

“For God, having given her power over his only-begotten and natural Son, also gave her power over his adopted children – not only in what concerns their body – which would be of little account – but also in what concerns their soul.” -Saint Louis Marie de Montfort, 1673-1716 AD

“It is impossible to save one's soul without devotion to Mary and without her protection.” -Saint Anselm, Archbishop and Doctor of the Church, 1033-1109 AD

“Not only do they offend thee, O Lady, who outrage thee, but thou art also offended by those who neglect to ask thy favors . . . He who neglects the service of the Blessed Virgin will die in his sins . . . He who does not invoke thee, O Lady, will never get to Heaven . . . Not only will those from whom Mary turns her countenance not be saved, but there will be no hope of their salvation . . . No one can be saved without the protection of Mary.” St. Bonaventure

So, how exactly does this not count as worship? She literally holds more power alone than entire pantheons of Pagan gods. The Roman Catholic interpretation of Mary refutes Jesus' role of being the sole “way, truth, and life,” and rejects Peter's claim that “by no other name but Jesus must men be saved.” These idolatrous beliefs are frequently professed when Roman Catholics **pray** to her:

## Consecration Prayer to Mary (by St. Kolbe)

IMMACULATA, Queen of Heaven and earth refuge of sinners and our most loving Mother, God has willed to entrust the entire order of mercy to thee. I, N\_\_\_, a repentant sinner, cast myself at thy feet humbly imploring thee to take me with all that I am and have, wholly to thyself as thy possession and property. Please make of me, of all my powers of soul and body, of my whole life, death and eternity, whatever most pleases thee.

Source: [https://traditionalcatholicprayers.com/2019/10/06/prayers-of-consecration-to-the-immaculate-heart-of-mary/#:~:text=Consecration%20Prayer%20to%20Mary%20\(St.&text=I%2C%20N\\_\\_\\_%2C%20a%20repentant,eternity%2C%20whatever%20most%20pleases%20thee.](https://traditionalcatholicprayers.com/2019/10/06/prayers-of-consecration-to-the-immaculate-heart-of-mary/#:~:text=Consecration%20Prayer%20to%20Mary%20(St.&text=I%2C%20N___%2C%20a%20repentant,eternity%2C%20whatever%20most%20pleases%20thee.)

This is not some specific prayer cherry-picked from the annals of history; this is a pre-mediated prayer, **written by a saint**, meant to be repeated by Catholics, hosted on a website called *Traditional Catholic Prayers*. It literally has a place to

insert your name right before a plea to Mary to take **everything** of who that person is and has as a dedication to please her. You don't have anything left to offer God after you've offered **everything to Mary**. But why would you even need to? According to Saints Anselm and Bonaventure, Mary is necessary for salvation.

Scroll back up to the Meriam Webster definition of worship. Their depiction of worship pales in comparison to the physical and spiritual devotion the Catholic Church requires of Mary. Even cradle Catholics who do not understand the depth of Catholicism's idolatrous teachings are endangered by even the most casual forms of Mary worship. Does the Rosary not invoke the name of Mary more than Jesus Himself? Not only that, but it also proclaims her as a mediator for salvation and pronounces her the holy Queen of Heaven.

Let's just rip off this band-aid now; God alone is Holy. There is actually irrefutable evidence of this in Revelation:

Revelation 15:4 Who will not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed. "

This isn't some one-off verse either, here it is again earlier in Samuel:

1 Samuel 2:2: "There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God."

All of these assertions of Marian doctrine are heretical lies that are both directly and indirectly refuted by the Bible. I understand to the Roman Catholic reading this that scripture dominant arguments do not hold a lot of weight, but if you would please bear with me, I can also prove the Early Church did not believe this either.

## **Mary was not Holy, nor Immaculate**

The Mary of the Bible was never professed to be immaculate, nor even holy, for that matter. The Roman Catholic argument for Mary's holiness is tenuously rooted in the idea that she had to be consecrated to bear Jesus. If Jesus was sinless, so then must be Mary.

"It's an assumption of Luke's Gospel and indeed the whole New Testament that Jesus is sinless. Theologically, that implies—requires—that Mary must be sinless, for Jesus must take sinless flesh from his mother. If he were to take sinful flesh on, he wouldn't be sinless—unless we want to be Gnostic or docetist (two heresies that go hand in hand), and suggest Jesus' soul was sinless but body sinful." (Huizenga, 2018 – Catholic World Report)

This Roman Catholic assertion is dangerously foolish and I'm not just talking about the Gnostic strawman. First of all, if Mary had to be sinless to bear Jesus, so that He was sinless, that in turn would require Mary's father to be sinless so that Mary could be born sinless. This, by virtue of Original Sin being a hereditary affliction, would then require his father to be sinless and so on and so forth.

How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam "as one body of one man".<sup>293</sup> By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature.

By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a *personal sin*, but this sin affected the *human nature* that they would then transmit *in a fallen state*.<sup>294</sup> It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation (by "breeding") 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. (CCC, 404)

That's just not logically cohesive. Furthermore, this Roman Catholic claim of Immaculate Conception is not only wholly incongruent with a greater scriptural narrative that had been established for centuries, but it also clashes with the very essence of Jesus Himself.

Jesus "emptied" Himself out to become a man, lived in abject humility, and refused to consider Himself spiritually equal to God while He was on earth. Then He died being persecuted for legalistic and spiritual crimes He never committed. So, at what point of time, would Jesus, who specifically went out of His way to rub shoulders with some of the most unclean castes of society, require to be born of a sinless woman?

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.

Jesus came to die on the cross to forever pay for the sins of God's people. Therefore, people who are free from sin, such as the proposed Roman Catholic Mary, who was born without sin and never sinned during her life, would not need either a savior or grace. This message makes up the majority of the Gospel, which proclaims that anyone who truly holds the belief of Jesus Christ as their savior (from sin) will be saved (John 3:16).

Isaiah 53:10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Not convincing enough? Here's Paul spelling it out for the skeptics:

1Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2For in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set you free from the law of sin and death. 3For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man, as an offering for sin. He thus condemned sin in the flesh, 4so that the righteous standard of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

If Mary was immaculately conceived (or simply born "pure") and never sinned, she would be the first human in history to be entirely righteous by the Law. She would need no savior. Well, literally in the Magnificat itself, Mary gives us this:

Luke 1:46: "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.

Mary specifically states that God is her savior, as in, she is in need of saving.

Moreso, Mary professes to be His humble servant, as in, not holy. Then she states that as the consequence of bearing Jesus, generations from now on will call her blessed. This directly asserts that she was not blessed before being granted the privilege of bearing Jesus.

Not convinced? Well, here is how the angel, Gabriel introduces himself to Mary:

"Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31

Mary was not born Holy, blessed, or favored. From the words of an angel, she had **found** favor.

Now, if you own a Catholic Bible, you'll probably be reading this instead:

"And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

If you've read my chapter on how *The Bible is Not a Roman Catholic Book*, you would know that this verse was born from the poorly translated Latin Vulgate. Keep in mind, the Vulgate was so full grammatical and doctrinal errors that it was actively rejected by the Early Church. The writer of the Vulgate, Jerome, would ultimately find himself in a feud with Saint Augustine.

Long story short, the original scriptures did not agree with Jerome. When William Tyndale retranslated the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts into English, he did not find Jerome's aberrations in there, either. Historically, the only reason this mistranslation exists today is out of spite for Tyndale and the budding Reformation.

Let's get back to the original point of Jesus' holiness not justifying the assumption of Mary's immaculate conception (and subsequent sinlessness). Jesus specifically went out of His way, as per God's will, to become as human as possible.

Hebrews 2:14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

I'm not sure what part of Hebrews 2:14 had confused the Roman Catholic church so badly, but it is a blatant and irreconcilable refutation of the assertion that Jesus had to have been born from an immaculate woman. Jesus needed to be as human as possible, both so He proves his mastery over sin and so He could guide and mediate His flock as the High Priest.

Hebrews 4: 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Perhaps had Roman Catholic leaders understood this, they wouldn't have tried burying Jesus' priesthood under a mountain unnecessary mediators.

## **Mary was not Exalted Beyond Men**

Mary is not called holy by Jesus, the disciples, or the apostles, even once. Even though Mary was a wonderful proto-Christian who had found favor with God (judging by her Magnificat, it's obvious why), she was not instrumental to the Gospel past the birth of Jesus. How can I argue this? Well, for starters, Mary is

only very briefly mentioned throughout Matthew, Mark, and John, leaving Luke to pick up the slack. If Mary was instrumental to Gospel, and why did three-quarters of the gospels pay her minimal attention?

Outside of the Gospels, Mary is mentioned just once in Acts as praying with the disciples, and then is promptly **never mentioned again in the entirety of scripture**. There is no prophecy of an immaculate Mary or Queen of Heaven and Earth in the Old Testament, nor is there any mention of one in the New Testament. For the biblical Mary was simply the mother of Jesus, and even that isn't true in a spiritual sense, as Jesus had existed thousands of years before she was even born.

Colossians 1:5 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He may have preeminence. 19 For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, 2 and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through the blood of His cross.

As all things were created through Jesus. Jesus is not the product of Mary, Mary is the product of Jesus. Mary is not holy, she is just a person. As consequence, here is Jesus stating that Mary is beneath John the Baptist, who in turn is the least amongst all those in Heaven:

Matthew 11:11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Is that not on the nose enough for you? Well, let's try this again. Here is Jesus explicitly putting Mary beneath His disciples:

Matthew 12:48 But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

So, by Jesus' own words, this literally obliterates any idea of Mary receiving any special exaltation for just being Jesus' earthly mother in His ministry.

In fact, Jesus actually goes as far to rebuke someone who claims Mary to be blessed, once again placing her well beneath the disciples:

Luke 11:27 As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” 28 But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

Notice the operative term, *rather*. Jesus specifically chose not to add to this man’s claim, but to override it. Adherence to the Gospel is necessary and is important to the Gospel, not Mary. Jesus, who obviously understood the Gospel, was already exposing the foolishness of Marian doctrines centuries before they were even established.

I know it sounds rather harsh, but the significance of Mary’s motherhood tapers off with Jesus’ birth. I implore you to search for yourselves, but Jesus never refers to Mary as mother *once* in the entirety of the Bible. Jesus clearly cares about her, just before his death He entrusted her to John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, but Jesus never attaches any spiritual significance to the motherhood of Mary. Even though Mary carried many wonderful qualities of a Christian, she is just a person.

So then, the idea of Mary remaining sinless is pretty much steam-rolled by Jesus and Paul as well:

Luke 18: 19: “Why do you call Me good? Jesus replied. “No one is good except God alone.”

Romans 3:10 “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

Paul is quoting scriptures, so why hasn’t he made a new concession for Mary? By Roman Catholic Tradition, his lack of devotion to Mary would see him anathema. But eschewing Tradition for reality sees Paul continuing the biblical narrative all people, Mary included, being sinners in need of a savior.

## **Mary is Not the Co-Redemptrix, nor Does She Have any Authority over Jesus**

Now, what does Mary herself say about her place in the role of God’s work?

*"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."* (Luke 1:38)

What does Mary say concerning her spiritual being?

*“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.”* (Luke 1:47)



What does Mary say concerning grace and mercy?

“His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation.” (Luke 1:50)

Does Mary ever command Jesus even once in the Bible? Perhaps as a child, but by the time Jesus' ministry had begun, He was projecting a higher level of authority. Notice how quick she is to hand Him all of the authority in the wedding at Cana in John 2:

“On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and His disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to Him, “They have no more wine.”

4“Woman, why does this concern us?” Jesus replied. “My hour has not yet come.”

5His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever He tells you.”

Look at that transaction, look at how Jesus conducts Himself. He was not concerned about glorifying or immediately submitting to His mother, who once again, He addresses as woman. Jesus is concerned about His role in the Gospel. The Trinitarian God is the only entity to be venerated.

There's a reason Jesus is the only way, truth, and life. There is a reason Jesus is the eternal High Priest and sole Mediator between man and God. There is a reason why not a single apostle or disciple ever prayed to any name other than God. Mary is a great Christian because of her complete self-humbling nature and her submission to Jesus and God. To make her Holy and a co-mediatrix of salvation is literally disrespecting her Christly devotion and conduct in her life.

## Mary Did Not Remain a Virgin

We can biblically reject the claim of Mary being the “Ever-Virgin” as well.

Matthew 1: 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Let's focus on the operative word “knew.” Joseph clearly knew Mary in a literal sense, since he was **betrothed** to her, so that wouldn't make the remotest sense for Matthew to record. Nor would the term “know” be applicable for the two of them simply being together in person; how do you think Mary got to Bethlehem? Do you know what would make sense for Matthew to record though? An assertion that Mary, who would go on to bear multiple children, was still a virgin at the time Jesus was conceived.

You see, “knew” is a euphemism for sexual relations that is used multiple times throughout the Bible. In fact, just in Genesis alone:

Genesis 4:4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.”

Genesis 4:7 Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch.

Genesis 4:25 And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.”

This terminology also exists outside of the Pentateuch, in other Old Testament passages. For example, it describes the conception of Samuel:

1 Samuel 1:19: They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. <sup>20</sup> And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, “I have asked for him from the Lord.”

Here it is again, detailing how King David never slept with his final attendant:

1 Kings 1:1 Now King David was old and advanced in years. And although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm. <sup>2</sup> Therefore his servants said to him, “Let a young woman be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait on the king and be in his service. Let her lie in your arms,<sup>[a]</sup> that my lord the king may be warm.” <sup>3</sup> So they sought for a beautiful young woman throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. <sup>4</sup> The young woman was very beautiful, and she was of service to the king and attended to him, but the king knew her not.

So, here was Matthew purposefully emphasizing the claim that Mary, a woman with multiple children, did indeed remain a virgin until after she had given birth to Jesus, fulfilling the prophecy of the virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14.

Isaiah 7:14: Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.

And why would Mary remain a virgin for the entirety of her life? That would require people to ignore the fact one of the earliest commandments God gives people is to “be fruitful and multiply.” (Gen 1:28; Gen 8:27). It’s not as if the Roman Catholic Church does not still observe this, as they denounce most forms of birth control.

It’s not just a commandment though, God values children:

Psalm 127:3: “Children are indeed a heritage from the LORD, and the fruit of the womb is His reward. 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are children born in one’s youth. 5 Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. He will not be put to shame when he confronts the enemies at the gate.”

So even Paul, the actual *ever-virgin* explicitly states:

1 Corinthians 7:3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

So then, why would Mary, a paragon of virtue, go her whole life without “knowing” Joseph when it serves the two-fold purpose of fulfilling conjugal rights and bearing children for God?

Is it really easier for a Roman Catholic, without any legitimate direct biblical evidence, to dismiss all of the verses explicitly stating Mary as being a mother of multiple children. Is it really logical to instead assume that Joseph had borne children from another woman and/or that Mary of Clopas was the actual mother and the other Mary was simply being referred to as their mother? Are we really just going to ignore all of the verses describing Mary's children and Jesus's brothers?

Are Roman Catholics really going to act like Joseph had an affair another Mary without any scriptural or historical evidence? Joseph was clearly submissive to God, and divorce is only permitted in the case of adultery or if the other spouse rejects their faith (Romans 7). Neither of those things are mentioned anywhere in the Bible for Joseph.

Mary's eternal celibacy and Joseph's extra-marital children are not intellectually or exegetically defensible assertions when faced with even the most benign of arguments wielding literal interpretation. I mean, it’s not as if classical Greek didn’t have words for cousin and stepbrothers at the time. In fact, just to discount all of the above, John blatantly records Jesus traveling with his: mother, brothers, and disciples:

John 2: 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. 12 After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers, and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

There is John explicitly separating Jesus’ family from His disciples. Just as Jesus Himself did.

Matthew 12:48 But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

## Prayer and Invocation of Mary is not Necessary for Grace and Salvation

Let's bring back Archbishop Bonaventure here for our context:

"Not only do they offend thee, O Lady, who outrage thee, but thou art also offended by those who neglect to ask thy favors . . . He who neglects the service of the Blessed Virgin will die in his sins . . . He who does not invoke thee, O Lady, will never get to Heaven . . . Not only will those from whom Mary turns her countenance not be saved, but there will be no hope of their salvation . . . No one can be saved without the protection of Mary." St. Bonaventure

And of course, the Catechism itself:

"This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation . . . Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix." (969)

...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 souls from death. (966)

Roman Catholic dogma truly does preach Mary as necessary to salvation. This is worship. Mary has been effectively added to the God-Head as a proprietor of grace and salvation. The authority of Heaven is no longer under the Triune God, but also of Mary. Add in the practice of praying to saints for intercession and submitting to the Pope as Chief Shepherd, and the Roman Catholic church has effectively recreated a Pantheon of divine (or semi-divine) beings other than God, just as the pagans did. I mean, according to the Catechism, the "perfect Mary" *literally sanctifies the Catholic church*:

But while in the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle, the faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase in holiness. And so they turn their eyes to Mary: in her, the Church is already the "all-holy." (Catechism, 829)

Where did Roman Catholic forefathers get this from? Certainly not from the Bible.

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

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:23-24)

**Peter:** This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men<sup>3</sup> by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11-13)

**Paul:** “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” (Romans 5:8-11)

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

## Mary is not the Queen of Heaven

"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."<sup>508</sup> The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians. (966)

Let's talk about the Assumption for a moment. Even if Mary had somehow outlived all of Jesus' disciples, there is no feasible way she would have outlived Luke, who compiled his Gospel retroactively and wrote Acts. So, I find it rather telling that in none of the epistles, nor in Revelation, which was believed to be written around 70 AD, mention Mary as ascending into heaven and assuming divine Queenship.

While there is no mention of Mary ascending into Heaven, there are Biblical mentions of the Queen of Heaven, and they are not good.

Jeremiah 4:7: 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.

Jeremiah 44:17: But we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our officials, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no disaster.

The Queen of Heaven was a title held by the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, later known as Asherah.

1 Kings 18:18: 18 "I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals. 19 Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

Asherah hails from the same Babylonian pantheon as Baal. In this Pantheon, the highest of their gods was El, who was viewed as the father of the gods. Asherah was El's wife and thus the mother of the pantheon. She was considered the Mother Goddess, and her various incarnations were viewed exercising roles in fertility, motherhood, and femininity.

Consequently, when El was heretically conflated with God, Asherah was falsely professed to be His queen. This resulted in many altars and statues dedicated to her, which arose not only in pagan temples, but in Israelite temples as well. Obviously, God took exception to this:

"Do not set up any wooden Asherah beside the altar you build to the Lord your God, and do not erect a sacred stone, for these the Lord your God hates."—Deuteronomy 16:21-22

"Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it."—Judges 6:25

Sources: <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Asherah>, <https://www.compellingtruth.org/queen-of-heaven.html>, and <https://www.ancient-origins.net/human-origins-religions/asherah-0010611>

So, if Jesus is the King of Heaven, and Mary is the Queen of Heaven, this Catholic narrative effectively revives this Pagan narrative. So, when you read through the entirety of the Bible, you will invariably find that not once a Queen of Heaven is alluded to in a non-pagan sense. Understand that this was always the way it was meant to be. Christianity is a monotheistic theology, there is only one God, one Ruler of Heaven, and one Savior:

Isaiah 43:10: "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me, no god was formed, and none will come after Me.

Isaiah 44:8: Do not tremble or fear. Have I not told you and declared it long ago? You are My witnesses! Is there any God but Me? There is no other Rock; I know not one.”

Don't forget, the church is the bride of Jesus, who is the King; exegetically there is even less room for Mary to be Queen of Heaven.

Isaiah 54:5: For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

## Revelation 12 is not about Mary

In my experience, the most common argument for Mary being the Queen of Heaven is in Revelation 12:

1 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.

4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Let's talk about this, because the Roman Catholic version of Mary cannot possibly be the woman in this passage. Why? Because Roman Catholic Mary was immaculately conceived, thus not under the curse of original sin. Do you want to know what one of the side effects of original sin was?

Genesis 3:16 To the woman He said: “I will sharply increase your pain in childbirth; in pain you will bring forth children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

As a direct consequence of eating the forbidden fruit, which ushered in the knowledge of good and evil, God afflicted effectively eternal curses on all involved parties. Because of Adam's involvement in the original sin, all men will suffer and toil to yield their livelihoods. Due to Eve, all women would suffer pains of childbirth. Due to Lucifer taking the form of a snake, snakes would forever slither on the ground.

So, Mary, free from the curse of original sin, would certainly not have suffered pains of childbirth. Also, *and I don't mean to alarm anyone*, but Revelation (read exegetically) is prophetic in nature. This means that it takes place well after the

birth of Jesus; so it would be kind of foolish to assert that Jesus was being born again when the book was written decades after He ascended.

Not convinced? Well, Irenaeus confirms pain in child birth as a product of the curse the original sin his book, *Against Heresies*:

*"It was for this reason, too, that immediately after Adam had transgressed, as the Scripture relates, He pronounced no curse against Adam personally, but against the ground, in reference to his works, as a certain person among the ancients has observed: "God did indeed transfer the curse to the earth, that it might not remain in man." But man received, as the punishment of his transgression, the toilsome task of tilling the earth, and to eat bread in the sweat of his face, and to return to the dust from whence he was taken.*

*Similarly also did the woman [receive] toil, and labour, and groans, and the pangs of parturition, and a state of subjection, that is, that she should serve her husband; so that they should neither perish altogether when cursed by God, nor, by remaining unrepriended, should be led to despise God. But the curse in all its fulness fell upon the serpent, which had beguiled them."*

Source: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3.html>

So, who else better fits the allegory of the woman? Well, the Christian church. The church is the bride of Christ. So, under His Kingship, the church would technically be the Queen, if there was such a thing.

Isaiah 54:5: For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

Revelation 21:9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

In fact, Israel is specifically referred to as a pregnant woman in labor in Micah.

Micah 4:9 Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished, that pain seized you like a woman in labor? 10 Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.

Thus, if Israel is the pregnant women, I suppose her offspring would reasonably refer to the Church, which was inducted into Israel's plan for salvation:

Romans 9:22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— 24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? 25 As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not



my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'" 26 "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

Furthermore, while Mary is never specifically bequeathed a crown in the Bible, the believers of the church each are.

2 Timothy 4:8 In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Lastly, the church, being God's people, are the spiritual progression of God's original peoples, the Israelites. Thus, the twelve gems in her crown would easily symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel. The number twelve also represents the twelve foundations of the Early Church, the apostles:

Revelation 21:12 It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

So then, if the Woman is Israel (making her offspring the Church), what else could Revelation 12 reasonably mean? Well, amongst eschatologists, I've identified two alternate explanations.

The first is one where woman, dragon, and the child are taken at face value as the Church, Satan, and Jesus. Since Satan could not defeat Jesus, the child, he turns and persecutes the people of the church he is defeated. This refers to the three and a half year tribulation period, which would work out to roughly 1260 days, using 360-day lunar cycles.

Revelation 12:5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Symbology of Revelation 12: [https://www.clarkssummitu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/5\\_Dellaperute\\_Final\\_Dragon-Exegesis\\_7-9-18.pdf](https://www.clarkssummitu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/5_Dellaperute_Final_Dragon-Exegesis_7-9-18.pdf)

Layman's explanation of Tribulation prophecy: [https://www.preciousseed.org/article\\_detail.cfm?articleID=3120](https://www.preciousseed.org/article_detail.cfm?articleID=3120)

Article on the Tribulation symbology: <https://www.unsealed.org/2016/12/revelation-12-escape-to-place-prepared.html>

The second explanation involves God announcing the coming of Jesus through the use of astrological signs, just like He did with Jesus' birth. This explanation is quite reasonable as well, as God is already known for this exact thing:

The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4).

That said, Revelation 12 opens with this:

1 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.

In this instance, the woman would be the constellation Virgo (equated to the Goddess of Innocence of Purity to the [Hellenic Greeks](#)). The Dragon refers to the constellation, Draco. So, Revelation 12:1 would show an astrological event consisting of Virgo overlapping with the Sun, both of them sitting above the moon. This is actually a thing that has happened back in September 2017. Notably, the constellation Leo is composed of 9 stars, and 3 additional stars aligned with it just above Virgo on the same day, representing the crown of twelve gems.

Now, to blow things out conspiracy theory territory and straight into the Twilight Zone, Jupiter passed through the lower half of Virgo during that same month. For any western nation even remotely touched by the Hellenic Greeks or Romans around the time of Jesus, Jupiter represents Zeus, the king of gods in their cultures. So, the Woman in Heaven had “given birth” to the “king.” This would also be the sign of the End Times (which makes the following decade rather exciting for pre/mid-tribulationists).

If you have time for a deep rabbit hole, there is an incredible 30-page article linked below that covers this prophecy and the actual real-world event in with a level of detail that exceeds the scope of this statement:

<https://www.godskalender.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Revelation-12-Sign.pdf>

## **The Early Church did not profess Mary Worship**

The Roman Catholic Church often likes to assert the false claim that they have never changed their doctrines, and they are a direct spiritual and doctrinal continuation of the apostles:

Has the Roman Catholic Church ever changed its teaching? No, for 2000 years the Church has taught the same things which Jesus taught." (Catholic Catechism for Adults).

"It is a historical fact the Catholic Church, from the twentieth century back to the first, has not once ceased to teach a doctrine on faith or morals previously held, and with the same interpretation; the church has proved itself infallible." (My Catholic Church).

I have refuted this claim repeatedly throughout this order of statements, including the eucharist, the papal office, and idolatry. Marian doctrines, of course, will be no different. With a bit of patience (and google translate), we can debunk this current errant claim right out the gate due to an omission from Pope John-Paul himself:

"Also in relation to other aspects of Marian doctrine, many centuries have been necessary to arrive at the explicit definition of revealed truths regarding Mary. Typical cases of this journey of faith to discover in an ever more profound way the role of Mary in the history of salvation are the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, proclaimed, as is well known, by two venerable predecessors of mine, respectively by the Servant of God Pius IX in 1854, and by the Servant of God Pius XII during the jubilee of the year 1950."

Source: [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/audiences/1995/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_aud\\_19951108.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/audiences/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19951108.html)

Just like most other Roman Catholic traditions, Marian doctrines are not found in the Bible and was developed through culminating Roman Catholic dogma over time. I know that sounds a little harsh, but, John-Paul pretty much flat out reinforces the complete lack of Marian doctrine in scripture, himself:

"We must recognize that, at first glance, the Gospels provide little information about the person and life of Mary. Of course, we would have liked more abundant indications in this regard, which would allow us to get to know the Mother of Jesus better.

Neither do the other New Testament writings, in which an explicit doctrinal development about Mary, is lacking. Even the letters of Saint Paul, which offer us a rich thought about Christ and his work, limit themselves to saying, in a very significant passage, that God sent his Son, "born of a woman"

So, if you've read my chapter on the Early Church, I've explained that the Gnostic sects are responsible for a fair amount of Marian scriptures. In that regard, here is writing from the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Archbishop of Constantinople, Saint John Chrysostom, concerning Mary's humanity:

*"They have no wine." For she desired both to do them a favor, and through her Son to render herself more conspicuous. Perhaps too she had some human feelings, like His brethren, when they said, "Show thyself to the world" (c. xvii. 4), desiring to gain credit from His miracles. Therefore He answered somewhat vehemently, saying, Ver. 4. "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." To prove that He greatly respected His mother, hear Luke relate how He was "subject to" His parents (Luke ii. 51), and our own Evangelist declare how He had forethought for her at the very season of the Crucifixion.*

*For where parents cause no impediment or hindrance in things belonging to God, it is our bounden duty to give way to them and there is great danger in not doing so; but when they require anything unseasonably,*

*and cause hindrance in any spiritual matter, it is unsafe to obey. And therefore He answered thus in this place, and again elsewhere, "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren?" (Matt. xii. 48), because they did not yet think rightly of Him; and she, because she had borne Him, claimed, according to the custom of other mothers, to direct Him in all things, when she ought to have revered and worshiped Him."*

Homilies of Saint John: [https://documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0345-0407\\_Iohannes\\_Chrysostomus\\_Homilies\\_on\\_The\\_Gospel\\_Of\\_John\\_EN.pdf](https://documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0345-0407_Iohannes_Chrysostomus_Homilies_on_The_Gospel_Of_John_EN.pdf)

Here is an Archbishop in 400 A.D., explaining in a work published with the authority of the Proto-Catholic Church, that Jesus had rebuked Mary for desiring to indirectly profit off of His miracle at Cana. Not only that, but Saint John asserts that Mary was simply His earthly mother and had no right to exert authority over Him.

Another Archbishop, Nestorius, would become infamous for arguing against the use of the term God-Bearer / Mother of God in favor of Christ Bearer. He argued that as God was eternal, Mary should not be called the Mother of God. In spite of consequent church councils that ruling both for and against his claim, Nestorius was exiled just for making the mere assertion.

Source: <https://pursuingveritas.com/2015/02/04/christologies-in-conflict-cyril-and-nestorius/>

This judgment would be rendered quite foolish in retrospect, as the Athanasian Creed was accepted by the Catholic Church in the same century, which gives us a passage that flagrantly denies the claim of the Catholic Mary to "God-Bearer."

*"21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. 22. The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten."*

Source: <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/athanasian.creed.html>, and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasian\\_Creed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasian_Creed)

So, then, when did anti-biblical Marian doctrines start to coalesce? It's hard to tell, exactly. In fairness to the Roman Catholic Church, exaggerations of the Mary do indeed extend all the way back to the turn of the third century:

*"In accordance with this design, Mary the Virgin is found obedient, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." But Eve was disobedient; for she did not obey when as yet she was a virgin. And even as she, having indeed a husband, Adam, but being nevertheless as yet a virgin...having become disobedient, was made the cause of death, both to herself and to the entire human race; so also did Mary, having a man betrothed [to her], and being nevertheless a virgin, by yielding obedience, become the cause of salvation both to herself and the whole human race." (Irenaeus, Against Heresies).*

Roman Catholic infighting on Marian doctrine would continue at least until the mid-fifth century, where the council of Chalcedon would codify the title of "God-

Bearer” for Mary and encourage Marian feasts. From then, each additional century introduced new lore that would eventually cultivate in the same Mariology that John-Paul would declare realized over a millennium later.

Source:

[https://www.academia.edu/30351042/Mariology\\_in\\_the\\_First\\_Five\\_Centuries\\_An\\_Introduction\\_to\\_the\\_Development\\_of\\_Mariology\\_in\\_the\\_Early\\_Church](https://www.academia.edu/30351042/Mariology_in_the_First_Five_Centuries_An_Introduction_to_the_Development_of_Mariology_in_the_Early_Church)

Much like the Eucharist and the origin of the Papacy, Marian doctrines were a doctrinal aberration that had been fabricated over time.

# Rejection of Roman Catholicism's Different Gospel

## An Exaltation of God Through His Gospel

I would like to open this chapter up with my favorite expression of the Gospel, given by Peter in Acts:

Acts 11: 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.

They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

We should take a moment to profess and appreciate how beautiful the Gospel is, now that we have the majority of the Bible as context:

## God Designed a Perfect World and Made us in His Image

In Genesis, God created man in His image. He gave him a woman as his companion, a beautiful garden to live in, and dominion over the Earth. God also gave Adam a single rule, not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Of course, the two of them did, ushering in a world of sin that threatened to forever separate man from God.

## After We Separated Ourselves from God, He Reached Back Out

For centuries after, God's people rebelled against Him. God gave them ordinances, they followed idols. He gave them leaders, they turned against them. He gave them prophets, which were largely ignored, He gave them judges and kings as mediators, and they too fell into sin. Each time we pulled away, God faithfully pursued us, even though we were unworthy.

## The OT God was not Just a God of Justice, but a God of Mercy

God's relationship with the Israelites could be almost neatly divided between Him doling out punishments to establish the wages of sin, and Him forgiving those

who love Him. He blessed Abraham, who suffered cowardice. He blessed Moses, in spite of his temper, He forgave Jonah, despite his vindictiveness toward the Ninevites, and He blessed David and Solomon, in spite of their worldliness.

Even those God had condemned to suffer, such as the Sodomites, Ishmael, and Esau, He was willing to have mercy on. Concerning Sodom, Abraham haggled God down to sparing the entire city if He could find just ten righteous men (spoiler alert: He did not find 10 righteous men).

For Ishmael, when Hagar cried out for help for both herself and her son in the wilderness, God cared for them both. Even Esau, who God had hated before he was even born, still built wealth, a family, and reunited with Jacob, even after losing both of his birth rites.

## **God Loves us so Much, He Chose Mercy as the Eternal Basis for Sanctification**

Over thousands of years, God lived on a precedent of mercy, in spite of the Israelite's penchant for breaking His covenants. In Isaiah, He rebukes Israel for their sin, and instead of wiping them out, He laments that their hearts are not toward Him. So, God tells them that He'll give them new hearts and send them a Messiah to wipe clean their sin. Instead of doubling down on a system of Laws to curtail righteousness, God sent His only son to die on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice.

This was all to redeem His people, who were incapable of redeeming themselves. All His people needed to do was to believe in Jesus, and through His sacrifice and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit they (and by extension, we) would be saved. The Old Testament, the New Covenant, and the Gospel together make up the single greatest love story in the history of world.

## **True and Biblical Christianity is Based on God's Mercy and Sovereignty**

God established an economy of mercy. He provided mercy and guidance to His people. In return, He charged them as their two greatest commandments to love Him and to love each other. Free of the deathly grasp of sin and led toward righteousness by the Holy Spirit, Christians themselves would live as a pleasing offering to God through their devotion to Him and their kindness to others (Hebrews 13:15).

God, who considered them His children and promised that through the return of His Son, would establish a New Jerusalem where they could abide with Him forever. This what the Gospel means to a biblical Christian. But it is not what it means to the Roman Catholic.

## **Roman Catholicism Messily Scribbles Over God's Covenant of Mercy to Aggregate Power and Prestige Toward their Church**

The Roman Catholic cannot have faith in an abounding grace from God, they must constantly garner for themselves a sufficient amount of grace to be considered saved through a series of sacraments. They must acknowledge that they are always in danger of losing their salvation should they not be in congruence with the Church ([for example](#), not submitting to the Roman Pontiff, using contraception, and deliberately missing Mass are all mortal sins).

CCC 2036, "The specific precepts of the natural law, because their observance, demanded by the creator, is necessary for salvation."

"Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself. It results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace.

If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back. However, although we can judge that an act is in itself a grave offense, we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God. (CCC, 1861)

The Roman Catholic cannot find salvation from the dedication to Jesus Christ. They must submit and devote themselves to the Roman Church, to Mary, and to the Pope, lest they fall out of the fold of their denomination, guaranteeing damnation in their worldview.

"We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff" (Unam Sanctam, 1302).

"It is impossible to save one's soul without devotion to Mary and without her protection." -Saint Anselm, Archbishop and Doctor of the Church, 1033-1109 AD

The Roman Catholic cannot freely grow and learn in Christian doctrine. They are ensnared in a narrative of extensive, unbiblical, and self-sabotaging traditions, that force them to mangle their scriptural revelations to fit within the narrative of their "Sovereign" church.

"It is the task of exegetes to work, according to these rules, towards a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture in order that their research may help the Church to form



a firmer judgment. For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God." (CCC, 119)

Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall,—in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,—whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,—hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established. ([Council of Trent, 2nd Decree](#))

“This truth [of the Gospel] is contained partly in written books, partly in unwritten traditions.”([Original Council of Trent Deliberation](#))

The beautiful Gospel of Jesus is buried beneath an ocean of caveats. The relationship between God and man is confounded by a pantheon of unnecessary mediators. The holy book God cultivated Himself cannot even be trusted without the authority of the Roman Church.

## **Reformed Christianity (Christianity Distilled to its Purest Practices and Doctrines) is a Better Path**

As a Reformed Christian, I am dedicated to the Triune God alone, whom I study through the Bible. I know these to be the Word of God and that His truth and intentions have been divinely breathed into the scripture. As a servant of Jesus and a student of His Word, I can profess without an ounce of cognitive dissonance that:

- As a member of His flock, chosen before the creation of the world, Jesus willingly died to redeem me. This was to the pleasure of God Himself. I am no longer enslaved by sin, for now, I am under grace.

[Ephesians 1:](#) <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

- Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, I am spiritually guided toward a life of repentance and devotion to God.

[John 16:26:](#) But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Titus 3:5: He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

- As a saved man, I can rejoice in the mercies of God and serve Him with a devotion born purely out of love and gratitude. A devotion that is not perverted by the Sisyphean ordeal of rituals to secure a piecemeal stock of grace that is constantly depleting.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

- Jesus is my sole mediator between myself and God. Through Jesus, my Lord and High Priest, I can approach God with confidence.

1 Timothy 2:5: For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- I worship God alone. Jesus is my only mediator. Though called to live a righteous life and repent, my good works are pre-ordained by God and I am sustained by grace alone.

Ephesians 2:2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

The Bible is the only guaranteed source of God’s doctrine. I live by these precepts, knowing that they are wholly congruent with the scriptures.

Roman Catholic history is built on lies, mistakes, and mistranslations. Their doctrines are woven from an ever-expanding web of assumptions and corruptions

that only loosely conceal their own internal contradictions. Their leaders purposefully suppressed the knowledge of the scriptures and revised Christian history to exert control over their congregation and prop up a false Chief Shepherd.

## **In Closing**

I won't sacrifice my undivided devotion of God to submit to a corrupt body of men. I exalt and glorify God alone, who provided me a Lord and Savior through Jesus. By Jesus' lordship and sacrifice (and with the direction of the Holy Spirt) I have been justified through grace by my faith. All of this is outlined and foretold in the Bible, which is the only true written word of God.

*Soli Deo Gloria, Sola Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, and Sola Scriptura.*