

And You Will Know The Truth

How to Explain and Defend The Catholic Faith

Sebastian R. Fama



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Introduction to the Essays

Quite often those who object to Catholicism will do so on scriptural grounds. They claim the teachings of the Church are opposed to the teachings of the Bible. However, Scripture read in context fully supports Catholic teaching. The primary goal of my essays is to present the biblical case for Catholicism. I also refer to the writings of the Early Church Fathers. I do so in order to show that those who were taught by the Apostles believed and interpreted the Scriptures in the same way that the Catholic Church does today. I kept the essays short in the hope that skeptics would be more likely to read them. They are by no means an exhaustive study on the subjects they cover. They are designed to address the most common objections to Catholicism and thus remove any stumbling blocks to further investigation. Toward that end suggestions for further study appear on the last page.

Perhaps you are a skeptic. Perhaps you agree with those who say that the teachings of the Catholic Church are unbiblical. But have you ever examined the evidence that supports those teachings? You are certainly entitled to believe any thing that you wish. But shouldn't your opinions be based on evidence and not the prejudices of others?

In the movie, "To Kill a Mocking Bird," Tom Robinson, a black man, is accused of a crime that he obviously could not have committed. The story takes place in the American south during the early 1930's. The jury was composed of local townspeople all of whom were white. Despite clear evidence that indicated his innocence the jury found Tom guilty. The verdict was not based on the facts of the case but on the bigotry of the jury. If you were on that jury would you have stood up for the truth or would you have succumbed to peer pressure like the others? You are in such a position now. There is a great deal of prejudice against the Catholic Church. Can you examine the evidence without that prejudice affecting your opinion?

Perhaps you are a Catholic who thinks that apologetics (defending and or explaining the faith) is unnecessary. You may see it as a rude rejection of those who believe differently than we do. But that is simply not the case. Catholic Apologetics rejects false ideas but not the individuals who hold those ideas. Disagreeing with someone doesn't have to be an act of malice. In fact it can be an act of love.

Let me illustrate my point with a little story. Suppose your neighbor plans on visiting friends in a distant city. He informs you that he will be leaving the following morning on the 10:00 AM bus. Being familiar with the bus schedule you realize that there is no 10:00 AM bus to your neighbor's destination. However, there is a 9:00 AM bus. Would it be rude to correct your neighbor? After all he may reject what you have to say. And of course he has the right to do so. Still, if you truly care about him you are duty bound to tell him what you know. The same principal applies to our faith. With eternity at stake it would be foolish to ignore our differences.

It is also important to point out that there are Catholics who don't have a good understanding of their faith. A good number of them leave the Church every year due to the efforts of anti Catholic groups and churches. If these individuals had known why the Church teaches as she does, many of them would never have left. As a Catholic apologist I wish to reach such individuals so that they can at least make an informed decision.

Apologetics is an important part of the Church's work. In Jude 3 we are told to "Contend for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints." Paul tells Titus to "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the Faith, instead of giving heed to Jewish myths or to commands of men whom reject the truth" (Titus 1:13-14). Finally, Peter tells us to "Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15).

Jesus said that the truth would set us free. Common sense tells us that two opposing views cannot both be true. However, if the truth is to set us free, we must know what the truth is. Consequently a vehicle is needed to verify just what the truth is. Apologetics is that vehicle.

For those who wish to become apologists a word of advice: Don't expect that every one will convert once you have demonstrated the Catholic position. People remain outside of the Church for a variety of reasons. Some simply do not wish to abandon that which has been familiar to them. The deeper someone is immersed in a way of thinking the harder it is to see any flaws in it. In the final analysis sentiment and friendships can win over the truth.

Some leave or stay out of the Church because they are unwilling to accept one or more of its teachings. Whether or not those teachings are true is beside the point. As Scripture puts it: "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings" (2 Timothy 4:3).

Remember also that it is possible for your intentions to be misinterpreted. Oftentimes people are insulted by any kind of correction. Be careful in the way you communicate and pray that God would open the hearts of the people that you want to reach. Bear in mind that it is the Holy Spirit who converts hearts.

No matter what the outcome, never be judgmental or demeaning. While you may not have won the person over you may have planted a seed, a seed that may sprout and grow strong at some future date. Don't jeopardize that with the wrong attitude. Your objective should be to win souls not arguments. I once heard Mother Angelica say, "An argument is an exchange of feelings. A discussion is an exchange of ideas. Discussions lead to truth, arguments lead to bitterness." I couldn't agree more. That is why the Scriptures tell us to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

In writing the essays I have used either the New American Bible or the Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition). In a few cases I have quoted the versions that are used by the groups addressed in the essay. The reasoning is simple, I believe it is more effective to correct someone with a version they trust. That is not to say that all of the other versions can be trusted. The Bible used by Jehovah's Witnesses is not considered to be credible by any Scripture scholar. One reason is that some of the words have been changed to match their distinctive beliefs.

All of the essays are faithful to the teachings of the Magisterium. When using them with family or friends, make sure that you read them first and understand them. You may want to highlight points that you think are important or that may have come up in past conversations. Before your discussion you may want to consult books like Karl Keating's "Catholicism and Fundamentalism" or Rev. John O'Brien's "The Faith of Millions" as they cover these issues in more detail than I have. Feel free to copy and distribute anything in this book.

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Creationism or Evolution?

Is it possible to know that God exists even though we cannot see or touch Him? Well, we believe that radio waves exist and we can't see or touch them. And we believe it because the evidence allows for no other conclusion. We turn on a television and we see and hear someone who is many miles away. Adjusting the antenna changes the quality of the picture. Disconnect the antenna, and there is no picture. Obviously the television is receiving the pictures and sound from the air. Consequently, **we can know that radio waves exist even if we cannot see or touch them.**

Similarly, we can know that God exists because the evidence allows for no other conclusion. For instance, the fact that we exist is an indication that God exists. But, you might ask, what about the theory of evolution? Couldn't that explain our existence? No, not at all. A look at the evidence will show us why.

Honest evolutionists will admit that evolution is not a science. It is nothing more than a theory, an assumption that the universe and living things created themselves by a totally naturalistic, materialistic process. Creationists claim that a look at the facts rules out the theory of evolution. Evolutionists reject the idea of a Creator because they claim that facts must be observable by the senses. Thus, this would exclude God. However, it would also exclude radio waves. As we saw earlier, radio waves are not observable by the senses - their effects are. Likewise, God is not observable by the senses, but His effects are. Thus **we can know that God exists even if we can't see or touch Him.**

The theory of evolution contends that billions of years ago the elements which the universe is made up of were packed into a dense mass at an extremely high temperature. The mass exploded (the Big Bang) and over millions of years this mother of all chaotic events formed an orderly solar system with planets and stars. After our own planet cooled down, a variety of complex and delicately balanced ecosystems consisting of tens of thousands of species of animals, fish, plants, and bacteria were formed by chance. All of this supposedly evolved from a burnt rock, which is all the earth would have been after cooling down. Now, if life could come into existence by chance chemical reactions, why can't the process be repeated in the laboratory with deliberate actions, millions of dollars and the brightest minds?

But what about the fossil record, isn't that evidence of evolution? Hardly! Just how old the fossils are, is itself a matter of controversy. But more important is the fact that the fossil record contains no transitional forms. Transitional forms are not important to evolution - transitional forms *are* evolution. **No transitional forms means no evolution!**

What is a transitional form? Imagine that you are watching a cartoon illustrate how a fish evolved into an amphibian. At the beginning you would see a fish. As the cartoon progresses, the fish's fins begin to shrink and change shape until they have formed legs. Each frame of the cartoon would be a transitional form. If evolution takes millions of years, then there should be billions of transitional forms for each evolved group. But we find no such thing in the fossil record. Even in the earliest fossil layers we find completed, complex life forms, such as clams, snails, jellyfish, sponges, worms, etc. No one has been able to find fossilized ancestors for a single one of them.

Another problem arises when we realize that even the so-called "simple" life forms are not really simple. Today we know that a cell is one of the most complex structures known to man. In a book titled "*The Evidence for Creation*" by Dr. G.S. McLean, Roger Oakland and Larry McLean, we find the following on page 113:

"The cell has turned out to be a micro universe containing trillions of molecules. These molecules are the structural building blocks for countless complex structures performing chains of complex biochemical reactions with precision... a single cell surrounded by a cellular membrane exhibits the same degree of complexity as a city with all of its systems of operation, communication and government. There are power plants that generate the cell's energy, factories that produce enzymes and hormones essential for life, complex transportation systems that guide specific chemicals from one location to another and membrane proteins that act as barricades controlling the import and export of materials across the cellular membrane."

In the nucleus of every cell is the DNA. DNA contains millions of bits of coded information – information necessary for the building and development of our bodies. The function of DNA is more complex than a computer's. Is it not reasonable to conclude that something this complex had an intelligent designer?

Within the human body there are a number of irreducibly complex systems. That is, systems that would not function if they were any simpler. One example is our digestive system. Microvilli, which line the intestines, are microscopic bristles that somewhat resemble the bristles of a hairbrush. The spaces between the bristles are wide enough to allow nutrients to pass through to be absorbed and digested. However, the spaces are narrow enough to block the passage of bacteria, bacteria that would kill you if they were allowed to pass. This in itself refutes the theory of evolution, which contends that when a need presents itself, the body adapts by gradually changing (evolving) over millions of years. In this case millions of years would be too long. As soon as the deadly bacteria appeared, the body would have minutes to hours to design and evolve a system to block them. Failure to do so would result in immediate extinction. **Our continued existence rules out the evolutionary premise.**

But, some may wonder what about the alleged ape-men? The answer is simple: no one has ever found a fossil that indicates a link between man and ape-like ancestors. Fossils are either pure ape or pure man. Except for Neanderthal Man, the skulls of the alleged ape men were not found intact. They were pieced together from fragments and given the desired look.

Neanderthal Man had been traditionally portrayed as being chimp-like. However, in recent years he has been upgraded to human status. He had, on average, a larger brain size than modern man. He cared for his sick and elderly, buried his dead, employed art and religious rites, appreciated agriculture, clothing, and music. He is not that different from a number of cultures existing in recent centuries.

Nebraska Man was supposed to be half man and half ape. This was all based on the finding of a single tooth. Years later it was found that the tooth belonged to a wild pig. Piltdown man was also supposed to be a great evolutionary find. The upper part of a skull was found in a quarry. Within the same quarry there was found, among many other types of bones, a broken lower jawbone. The two were put together and we had Piltdown Man. Decades later it was found that the skull was human and the jawbone was that of an ape. The teeth had been filed down to simulate human teeth. Piltdown man was a hoax, an outright fraud.

Some propose the idea of theistic evolution. The idea that God created everything in a primitive state and then evolution took over. But there are no laws of nature to support this. However, we do have observable laws of nature, which refute such an idea. For instance, we can infer the following from the Second Law of Thermodynamics: (1) Natural processes always tend toward disorder, (2) the simple will never produce the complex and, (3) the universe is running down. Nothing has been observed to break this law. Evolution would have us believe that all the observable laws of nature are false. By the way, if the universe is running down (stars burning out), that would make the universe finite. Consequently, the elements that make up the universe could not have always been there. With time being eternal (there was always a yesterday and there will always be a tomorrow), all finite processes should have been completed in the past. This would be true no matter how far back in time that you went. So now we are left with two choices: **Either an intelligent being created everything out of nothing, or nothing created everything out of nothing.** Which do you suppose is more likely?

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The Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity can present a challenge to anyone investigating the Christian faith. Even some who call themselves Christian think it unreasonable. However, a close examination of the evidence shows us that not only is the doctrine of the Trinity Scriptural but it is reasonable and to be expected as well.

Simply stated the Doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that there is only one God and that one God is comprised of three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The obvious problem that some have with this is that something cannot be both one and three at the same time. But that is not what we are saying. God is one being not three beings. And that one being is comprised of three persons. If we said that He was one being and three beings or one person and three persons that would be contradictory.

If we worship a perfect all powerful God it is only natural to believe that such a God has no need of anything or anyone in order to be who He is. If He were dependant on anyone or anything He wouldn't be perfect or all powerful. It stands to reason that a perfect God would be perfectly loving. But love needs an object. And if God is going to be independent and perfectly loving the object of His love would have to be another person within Himself. God's love is creative and life giving so it naturally manifests itself in a third person. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity is reasonable and to be expected.

The Nicene Creed says that Jesus is "begotten not made, one in being with the Father." It also says that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son." But wouldn't that mean that the Son and the Holy Spirit came at a later time? No because that would mean that the Father was not perfect and all powerful before the Son and the Holy Spirit existed. And we know that can't be true. So they must have co-existed eternally. Consider the following example of the same concept: You can light one candle from another. The second flame can be said to proceed from the first. And yet both flames are of the same substance and are the same age. When you hold the flames together they are one. Pull them apart and they are distinctly two. We can say the second flame was begotten not made and one with the other.

Some balk at the idea of an eternal God. How can anyone be eternal? Well we know that time is eternal. There was always a yesterday and there will always be a tomorrow. We don't fully understand it but we know it has to be true. And is it not logical that the God who reigns over eternity be eternal Himself? As finite beings we can only fully understand finite concepts. However, we can see the necessity of eternal concepts.

For those who accept the Bible as the word of God the evidence is even stronger. Scripture is pretty clear on the fact that there is but one God. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed: "You are my witnesses" says the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He. **Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me**" (43:10).

The Bible is also clear on the fact that anyone else who is referred to as a god is a false god and in reality no god at all. Paul tells us the following in his first letter to the Corinthians:

"There is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords" – **yet for us there is one God**, the Father, from whom all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things and through whom we exist (8:4-6).

The end of this passage says something pretty interesting. It says there is "one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things and through whom we exist." The book of Colossians goes even further: **"For in Him [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities – all things were created through Him and for Him** (1:16). The Bible teaches us in a number of places that it was God who created all things (see Revelation 4:11). Unless Jesus is God how can all things be created through Him?

But doesn't Scripture portray Jesus as a man who is subordinate to God? Yes it does but there is no contradiction here. Jesus came to earth as a man to offer Himself up for our sins. This is called the Incarnation. As such He was fully human and fully divine. In His human nature He was subordinate to the Father. In His Divine nature He was one with the Father (John 10:30).

Isaiah predicts the birth of Jesus with these words: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God, Everlasting Father**, Prince of Peace." Mighty God, Everlasting Father? There is only one way to interpret that statement. Jesus is God.

In Isaiah 44:6 God the Father says: "**I am the first and I am the last**; besides me there is no god." In Revelation 1:17 Jesus says: "Fear not **I am the first and the last.**" God the Father said: "**I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior**" Peter said: "**Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**" (2 Peter 1:11).

In Exodus 3:14-15 God says to Moses: "I AM who I AM" And He said, "Say this to the people of Israel, "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: this is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

The actual Hebrew name rendered as "I AM" is recorded as YHWH. As a sign of respect the Israelites removed the vowels from God's name so that no one would repeat it. They felt that no one was worthy to speak the name of God. The name "I AM" is more a reflection of what the proper name of God means rather than the actual name itself. Yahweh and Jehovah are two guesses at what the original name was. For the sake of argument I will use Jehovah.

Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Jehoshua." Jehoshua is usually shortened to Joshua or Jeshua. In the east names are more than a label. Quite often they tell us something about the person. The name Jehoshua comes from two Hebrew words; Jehovah (the proper name of God) and hoshea (saving). So Jesus or Jehoshua literally means Jehovah our salvation.

The first of the Ten Commandments forbids us from worshipping anyone other than the one true God (Exodus 20:2-6). In Revelation 7:11 we read the following: "And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and **worshipped God.**" Here we see the residents of heaven worshipping the one true God.

The Greek word rendered as worship is proskuneo (προσκύνησαν). It literally means worshipped. The following New Testament verses use the same Greek word in relation to Jesus:

- And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Hail!" And they came up and **took hold of His feet and worshipped Him** (Matthew 28:9).
- Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him they **worshipped Him** (Matthew 28:16-17).
- And those in the boat **worshipped Him**, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33).

Conclusion; Scripture tells us we can only worship the one true God. Scripture also tells us that we can worship Jesus. Thus Jesus must be God.

Acts 5:3-4 tells us that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God. In 2 Corinthians 3:17 we are told that the Lord is the Spirit. Finally in Hebrews 3:7-9 the Holy Spirit claims to be God:

Therefore as **the Holy Spirit says**, "Today when you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing **in the wilderness**, where your fathers put **me to the test and saw my works for forty years.**

Compare that with Deuteronomy 8:2-4:

And you shall remember all the way which **the Lord your God** has led you these **forty years in the wilderness** ... And He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna ... Your clothing did not wear out upon you, and your foot did not swell, these forty years.

And so we see that there is one God. We also see that the Father is God, Jesus is God and the Holy Spirit is God. And that in a nutshell is the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Bible

The Bible has been translated into more languages and has sold more copies than any other book in the history of mankind. It was written by numerous authors over a period of 1500 years. It was written in several languages on three different continents, and yet it is internally consistent in all that it teaches. It presents a message so profound that countless numbers of believers have gone to their deaths rather than deny it. Those who believe that the Scriptures were divinely inspired do not do so blindly. The divine inspiration of the Bible is something that can be demonstrated.

There are a total of 5364 New Testament manuscripts in existence. That is far more than for any other work of antiquity. The fact that some differ from the others does not detract from the Bible's credibility. Because the vast majority of them are the same, we can safely assume that they accurately reflect the originals. If the Bible were merely a collection of human writings, hand copied and passed down through the ages by men, we would expect a great number of omissions, additions and variances. Most of the differences that we do find are nothing more than the types of errors that printers make today, what we would call typos. Only the originals would be free from such errors. Upon examination we find that these small mistakes don't affect any doctrine, precept or promise of the Bible. In other words, **the teachings of the Bible remain uncorrupted.**

The Dead Sea Scrolls provide further evidence that God protected the Bible from corruption. They were found in a cave near Khirbat Qumran, Jordan, in 1947. They contained fragments of every book of the Old Testament except for Esther. The book of Isaiah was found in its entirety. They turned out to be 1000 years older than the Masoretic manuscripts, which up until then were the oldest known. There were some differences in style, but none in substance.

There are claims that the Bible contains contradictions. Such claims are based on reading Scripture out of context. To properly understand Scripture we must always take into account the society for which a particular book was written and the literary style employed. The Bible contains history, poetry and apocalyptic writing (a highly symbolic language). We also find parables (stories composed to illustrate a point) and a good deal of hyperbole. Even today we routinely use hyperbole. We will often speak of someone laughing his or her head off or of it raining cats and dogs. Only someone unfamiliar with our culture would misunderstand such statements. Likewise if we are unfamiliar with the culture in which the Bible was written, we won't understand it. **When read in its proper context, the Bible has a message that is consistent and without contradiction.**

Archeology confirms the accuracy of Scripture. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire in Genesis 19 was thought by many to be a fairy tale, but in recent years the remains of two large cities were found at the southern tip of the Dead Sea. There is a great deal of bitumen, salt and sulfur in the area. An investigation revealed that the layers of sedimentary rock were molded together by intense heat. The biblical account seems to indicate that there was a natural gas explosion. Such an explosion would have ignited the bitumen and sulfur, which would account for the "fire and brimstone" which the Bible says, rained down on the cities. It would also explain how Lot's wife could have been encrusted in salt.

But what about the "silly passages"? You know, like the story of Noah's Ark? Incredibly enough, the story of Noah's Ark doesn't discredit Scripture - rather it does the opposite. There is a lot of evidence indicating that the earth was once entirely covered by water. The Grand Canyon is one example. We are told that it was formed over millions of years by the Colorado River wearing down through solid rock. But that is simply not possible. It is a hydrodynamic principle that water cannot meander while cutting through a solid material. It can only meander if it is cutting through soft, unconsolidated material such as mud or sand. It meanders because the soft material gives way to the pressure of the water. The Grand Canyon meanders and is quite deep. Logically one must conclude that the canyon was formed while its layers were still relatively soft.

But how would so much mud and sand come to be in one place? After all, the Grand Canyon is 277 miles long, 18 miles wide and 5000 feet deep. And what would produce enough water to perform such a feat? The only possible answer seems to be that the mud and sand were deposited by global floodwaters. A large channel, such as the Grand Canyon, could only have been cut when those same floodwaters receded.

The existence of large fossil beds is another indication that the earth was once totally flooded. Generally speaking fossils are not a natural occurrence. When an animal dies or is killed, its flesh is either eaten or it rots. Over time its bones turn to dust.

The only way that it could be preserved as a fossil is if it was buried at, or soon after, death. The existence of fossil beds containing the remains of as many as five million animals each would certainly rule out small natural floods.

The main objection to the flood of Noah is that such a flood would not have been natural. This is correct; it would not have been natural. However, we know that it happened. **If it happened and it wasn't natural, then it was supernatural, which is exactly what the Scriptures teach.**

There are occasions when historians will scoff at the Bible with claims that certain individuals mentioned in Scripture never existed. One such case is that of Gallio, Proconsul of Achaea. Acts 18:12-17 records that the apostle Paul was brought before him. The whole account was dismissed by many as being fictitious. Even Gallio's title was thought to be fantasy. That is, until an inscription was found at Delphi recording both his name and his title. It also dates him to 51 AD, the time that Paul was in Corinth (F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History* pages 298, 316).

For the most part, objection to the Bible has little to do with obscure passages or points of history. The real objection is to the many clear passages dealing with morality. In all too many cases the rejection of Scripture is just an attempt to take God out of the picture. If the Bible can be discredited, then its moral teachings carry little weight. If that is the case, then we are left to ourselves to determine what is right and what is wrong. Inevitably, we do as we please. Unfortunately this has a negative affect on society. In the early 60's many Americans saw fit to rebel against the biblical morality that had guided us for so long. The results were disastrous. Since 1960 our population has risen 41% – yet violent crime has risen 560%. Total crime is up 300%. People have become more self-centered and much less caring. There are an estimated 12 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases in the U.S. each year. Of these, three million occur among teenagers (Centers for Disease Control, *The Challenge of STD Prevention in the United States*). Despite massive education efforts, lives are still being destroyed by widespread drug abuse.

What do you think would happen if all Americans took Biblical morality seriously? The problems mentioned above would cease to exist. School children would go back to throwing snowballs at each other rather than using automatic weapons. People would begin to take marriage seriously and divorce rates would go down. Children would actually grow up knowing both of their parents. Tens of billions of dollars worth of merchandise would no longer be stolen each year. Consequently, the cost of living would go down and the number of poor people would be dramatically reduced. Many of our other problems would disappear almost overnight.

Human experience demonstrates the power of Scripture. Prison inmates who attended 10 or more Prison Fellowship Bible studies in a year were nearly three times less likely to be re-arrested during the 12 months after release than a matched comparison group. Specifically, **only 14% of those attending Bible study were re-arrested compared with 41% of those who didn't** (*Ministry Development Division, 1998. Religious programs, institutional adjustment, and recidivism among former inmates in Prison Fellowship Programs. Summaries of Prison Fellowship Program Evaluations & Surveys, Washington, DC: Prison Fellowship Ministries, page 6*). Professor David G. Myers notes that we now have massive evidence that people active in faith communities are happier and healthier than their unchurched peers. (Recent epidemiological studies—tracking thousands of lives through years of time—reveal they even outlive their unchurched peers by several years.) Why do you suppose that is?

People may not always want to act like Christians themselves, but they always want everyone else to. For example, imagine that you are traveling through a crime-ridden city late at night and your car breaks down. You get out of your car and start to look for a pay phone. Suddenly, in the shadows you see a group of young men coming your way. Wouldn't you feel better knowing that they were on their way home from a Bible study?

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The Church

There are those who contend that the Church is not a visible institution but merely the body of believers. However, Jesus compares His Church only to visible things, such as a flock, a body, a house, a city set on a hill, and a kingdom. 1 Timothy 3:15 tells us that the Church is "the pillar and foundation of truth." The words pillar and foundation indicate assurance and stability, not division and confusion, as one finds among the thousands of denominations that have sprung up since the Reformation.

It is important to note that it is not the Church that determines truth; rather God communicates His truth through the Church. All believers are a part of the Church, which, though one body, has many parts, and the many parts have different functions (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). The function of the Church's hierarchy is clearly shown in Scripture. Consider the following:

Peter and the council of Jerusalem, over which he presided, taught by the power of the Holy Spirit: **"It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us** not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities..." (Acts 15:28).

All of the Churches were to abide by the decision: "As they (Paul and Timothy) traveled from city to city, **they handed on to the people for observance the decision reached by the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem**" (Acts 16:4).

Bishops were in authority over congregations: "For this reason I left you in Crete so that you might **set right what remains to be done and appoint presbyters in every town**, as I directed you" (Titus 1:5). The office of bishop is spoken of eight times in the New Testament. The Greek words used are episcopos (ἐπίσκοπος), which means a superintendent or overseer, someone who visits, and episkopē (ἐπισκοπή), which just refers to the office.

Presbyters were reminded of their responsibilities: "From Miletus he had the presbyters of the Church at Ephesus summoned. **Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock**, of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the Church of God that He acquired with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock. **And from your own group, men will come forward perverting the truth to draw the disciples away** after them" (Acts 20:17, 28-30). How do you suppose those deceivers will appear? "Even Satan masquerades as an angel of light. **So it is not strange that his ministers also masquerade as ministers of righteousness**" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). That is why John says, "We belong to God, and **anyone who knows God listens to us, while anyone who does not belong to God refuses to hear us**. This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit" (1 John 4:6). This is a reflection of Jesus' own words, **"Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me"** (Luke 10:16), and **"If he refuses even to listen to the Church, then treat him as you would a gentile or a tax collector"** (Matthew 18:17).

Consequently, believers were to submit to Church authority, "Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. **Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings...Obey your leaders and defer to them**, for they keep watch over you and will have to give an account, that they may fulfill their task with joy and not with sorrow, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Hebrews 13:7-9, 17). The word "leader" is translated from the Greek word hegeomai (ἡγέομαι) and means to lead with official authority. Similarly, in 1 Peter 5:5 we read, "Likewise, you younger members, **be subject to the presbyters.**"

The teaching of the early Church parallels the scriptures. In the year 110, Ignatius of Antioch wrote in his letter to Polycarp, "You must be made holy in all things by being united in perfect obedience, in submission to the bishop and the priests." That Rome was the source of authority is confirmed by Irenaeus (140-202 AD): "We point to the tradition of that very great and very ancient and universally known Church, which was established at Rome...for with this Church, because of its superior authority, every church must agree" (*Against Heresies* 3, 3:2).

The Pope

"But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, **you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church**, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. 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**" (Matthew 16:15-19).

When God gives someone a new name it signifies a new role. For example, He changed Abram to Abraham. Abraham means father of many nations, which is what Abraham became. Peter means rock, which is what Peter became. The standard argument against this is that Peter in Greek is petros (πέτρος), meaning pebble, and that rock is petra (πέτρα), meaning mass of rock. Since Peter is a pebble he can't be the rock. Those who support this argument fail to take into account John 1:42: "Jesus looked at him, and said, '**So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas.**'" The Apostle Paul refers to Peter as Cephas eight out of the ten times that he mentions him. Cephas is the transliteration of the Aramaic word Kepha. Aramaic is the language that Jesus and His apostles spoke. **KEPHA** means **ROCK** the same as **PETRA**.

So why then is Peter called petros? Greek nouns are genderized. Petra is the feminine form of rock and it would have been improper to use it for a man's name. Consequently the masculine form (petros) had to be used. Hence, the preservation of the original Aramaic by the apostles John and Paul.

Some say that the rock spoken of is Peter's profession of faith or Christ Himself. Karl Keating, in his book "*Catholicism and Fundamentalism*," points out that this is impossible because,

According to the rules of grammar, the phrase 'this rock' must relate to the closest noun. Peter's profession of faith (Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God) is two verses earlier, while his name, a proper noun, is in the immediately preceding clause. As an analogy, consider this artificial sentence: "I have a car and a truck, and it is blue." Which is blue? The truck, because that is the noun closest to the pronoun "it". This identification would be even clearer if the reference to the car were two sentences earlier, as the reference to Peter's profession is two sentences earlier than the term rock. The same kind of objection applies to the argument that the rock is Christ Himself, since He is mentioned within the profession of faith (page 208).

Jesus validates Peter's role as the rock when He says, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The symbol of the keys always implied power and authority. Jesus may have had Isaiah 22:20-22 in mind when He made His statement: "In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your girdle on him, and will commit your authority to his hand...**and I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open and none shall shut; he shall shut and none shall open.**" Jesus gives Peter the keys; therefore, Peter's authority is the authority of Jesus.

It is critical to realize that Jesus' statement in Matthew 16 consists of all three verses, 17 through 19. To separate them, and attach unrelated meanings to them, is to misrepresent Scripture.

The night before He died Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and when you have turned again, **strengthen your brethren**" (Luke 22:31-32). Jesus prayed that Peter would strengthen the others. This statement presupposes that Peter is first among the Apostles. Luke 22:26 also implies an apostolic leader. "Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and **the leader** as one who serves."

After the Resurrection Jesus bestowed upon Peter the role he was twice promised. He said to him:

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time He said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time,

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

In this passage, Jesus the Great Shepherd is entrusting the care of His lambs and sheep to Peter. Note that Jesus acknowledges the presence of the other disciples but speaks directly to Peter. This can hardly be construed as a directive for all Christians. The Greek word for tend in verse 16 is *poimaino* (ποιμαίνω), meaning to tend as a shepherd or to rule.

It is important to note that Papal Infallibility is not a personality trait but a charism or gift. A pope speaks infallibly only when he speaks on faith or morals with the stated intention of requiring the compliance of the faithful. Even in the Old Testament, God used less than perfect men as the authorized interpreters of the law. Jesus shows us this in Matthew 23:1-3 when He says: "The Scribes and the Pharisees have taken the seat of Moses. Therefore do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice."

Even when he rules infallibly, a pope is doing no more than proclaiming what has always been taught. There is no special revelation involved. The pope's infallibility comes from the fact that the Holy Spirit prevents him from officially teaching error.

Truth by its very nature does not allow for opposing opinions. Because the Church is the recipient and dispenser of truth, infallibility is necessary if it is to function as Christ intended: "Make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

In the year 95, Clement, the fourth bishop of Rome, wrote a response to the Corinthians instructing them to receive back the bishops who were expelled by a turbulent faction. After explaining that the hierarchy was of divine origin, he said in part, "But if there are any who refuse to heed the declaration He [the Holy Spirit] has made through our lips, let them not doubt the gravity of the guilt and the peril in which they involve themselves" (*1 Clement 59:1*). So now we find that even before the last apostle had died, the bishop of Rome was directing the affairs of another church. A few years later in the year 110, Ignatius of Antioch acknowledged Rome's authority when he addressed the Roman church as "presiding over the brotherhood of love."

Around 189, there was a controversy between the churches of Asia and the rest of the Christian world. Eusebius tells us that Victor, the bishop of Rome, directed that they conform. Polycrates of Ephesus resisted him. Victor replied with an excommunication. When Irenaeus intervened and pleaded Polycrate's case, Victor withdrew the excommunication. Although there was disagreement, the resistance of the Asian bishops did not deny Rome's authority (*The History of the Church 5:23-25*).

Some contend that the Papacy is the result of the Church becoming corrupt in 312 during the reign of Constantine. Consequently, true Christianity was lost until the Protestant Reformation. If that is true, then Christianity did not exist for a period of 1205 years. Remember that Jesus said that the gates of Hell would not overcome His Church, and that He would be with us always, even until the end of the age (Matthew 16:18, 28:20). The anti-Papal theory makes Jesus a liar. Another problem arises from this view. The Old and New Testaments were settled at the councils of Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD) by Catholic bishops who then submitted the list to Pope Boniface for official approval. "Thus that the church beyond the sea [Rome] may be consulted regarding the confirmation of that canon" (Council of Carthage, *Canon 36*). Note that the councils took place well after the supposed corruption of the Church in 312. If this were the case, why would Bible-only Christians accept the product of a corrupt church as their sole rule of faith? If you reject the primacy of Peter and his successors, logic demands that you reject the Bible as well.

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Papal Infallibility

The issue of Papal Infallibility evokes strong reactions from those who oppose it. This is usually due to a misunderstanding of what the Church means by "Papal Infallibility." The most common misconception is that the Church claims that the pope himself is infallible, that in all things he is incapable of error. This, of course, is not true!

It is a necessity of Christian theology that every person be allowed the exercise of free will. Everyone, the pope included, must be free to accept or reject Christ for himself. If God were to make the pope infallible in the ultimate sense, he would be depriving him of his free will.

Infallibility does not mean that a pope is incapable of sin. All popes are human and therefore sinners.

Infallibility does not mean that the pope is inspired. Papal infallibility does not involve any special revelation from God. A pope learns about his faith in the same way that anyone else does--he studies.

Infallibility cannot be used to change existing doctrines or proclaim new ones. It can only be used to confirm or clarify what has always been taught. The teachings of Christ cannot change. As the Scripture says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Infallibility does not mean that a pope cannot err when he speaks as a private teacher. As a man he is fallible and capable of error.

Infallibility does not guarantee that a pope will officially teach anything. However, when he does teach he is protected. If he decides to teach the truth, the Holy Spirit allows it. If he decides to teach error, either knowingly or unknowingly, the Holy Spirit will stop him.

Infallibility is not something that endows a pope with divine powers, but rather it is a gift of the Holy Spirit that protects the Church from the human frailties of a pope.

All Christians believe that God used men infallibly in writing Scripture. Why then is it so hard to believe that He would work through men to protect it from corruption? Surely such a protection was implied when Jesus said to His disciples, "He who hears you hears me" (Luke 10:16).

The First Vatican Council taught that three conditions must be met in order for a pronouncement to be considered infallible:

- The pope must speak *ex cathedra* (from the chair of Peter) in his official capacity.
- The decision must be binding on the whole Church.
- It must be on a matter of faith or morals.

The first two conditions can be reasonably deduced from 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." The acts of binding and loosing in the context of the verse would by necessity be something more than casual remarks. The passage begins with Jesus saying, "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church" (16:18). The acts of binding or loosing would have to be official and meant for the whole Church.

The third condition stems from the obvious fact that Christian teaching is primarily a matter of faith and morals. Christianity's main objectives have always been getting people to heaven (faith) and teaching them how to live here on earth (morals).

Infallibility is also extended to the college of bishops when they, as a body, teach something in union with the pope. Collegial authority is usually exercised in an ecumenical council just as it was at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29).

Upon leaving the earth Jesus' final command to His apostles was to make disciples of all nations, "**teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age**" (Matthew 28:20). Are we to

believe that Jesus left us no means of knowing exactly what He commanded? That would make His parting statement nonsense. The Catholic Church believes the Bible when it teaches that:

- Jesus requires that we obey all that He commanded (Matthew 28:20).
- Jesus gives us the grace to obey all that He commanded (Philippians 4:13).
- Jesus provides us a means of knowing what He commanded (Matthew 16:15-19).

Early Christian writers bear witness to the Church's infallibility. Cyprian declares: "If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he [should] desert the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he still be confident that he is in the Church?" (The Unity of the Catholic Church 4, 251 AD). Irenaeus writes: "Where the charismata of the Lord are given, there must we seek the truth, with those to whom belongs the ecclesiastical succession from the Apostles, and the unadulterated and incorruptible word. It is they who ...are the guardians of our faith...and securely expound the Scriptures to us" (Against Heresies 4:26:5, 180-199 AD).

Despite the evidence, critics try to prove their case by appealing to three supposed examples of popes teaching error. The first two are Pope Liberius (352-366) and Pope Vigilius (537-555). Both were made to sign questionable statements of faith while under duress. This of course does not count, as Infallibility only applies to free acts of the pope and not to acts under torture.

The third example is that of Pope Honorius (625-638). Critics of Papal Infallibility feel that this example demolishes the doctrine once and for all. Here, they contend, is an example of a pope teaching error. After his death, an ecumenical council (The Third Council of Constantinople) condemned him. What could be more contradictory than an infallible pope being condemned by an infallible council? However, in their excitement the critics have overlooked something -- the facts.

The controversy stems from a letter that Pope Honorius wrote to Sergius, a Monothelite heretic. The Monothelite heresy maintained that Jesus had only one will, a divine will. The Church had always taught that Jesus was fully God and fully man. As such, He had both a divine and a human will. Before the heresy was widely known, Sergius sought to get the pope's approval by deception. In a letter to the pope he stated that Jesus never opposed the Father. Consequently, if two persons agree they may be spoken of as being of "*one will*." The pope, unaware of Sergius' deception, answered to the subject of Christ's "*opposition*" to the Father. He wrote in part: "We confess one will of our Lord Jesus Christ...Since Christ's human will is faultless there can be no talk of opposing wills." Subsequently, Monothelites fraudulently used this statement as proof that the pope believed with them that Christ had no human will.

Pope Honorius was deceived and then misrepresented. Furthermore, the Third Council of Constantinople condemned him for inaction, but not for teaching heresy. In any event, his letter was private. Thus the issue of infallibility never even entered the picture. By the way, if papal infallibility really was just a human invention, don't you think that the list of errors after 20 centuries would fill at least one book? And yet we are presented with only three examples, three examples that are not even plausible. Does this not speak in favor of the Church's position?

Ironically, many of the individuals who oppose the doctrine of papal infallibility claim to receive special revelations from God. Most believe that they can privately interpret Scripture in direct violation of 2 Peter 1:20. They characterize the doctrine of papal infallibility as arrogant, while claiming for themselves authority that goes far beyond it. And what is the fruit of their claims? Thousands of denominations all claiming the Bible as their authority and yet all disagreeing on what it teaches. To make matters worse, many of their teachings change from time to time. Those who object to the doctrine of papal infallibility are the greatest proof of its need.

An honest examination of the evidence can only lead to one conclusion: That Jesus Christ established an infallible Church. Scripture teaches it, logic demands it, and history confirms it.

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The Canon of Scripture

There is a significant difference between Catholic and Protestant Bibles. Catholic Bibles contain seven more books than Protestant Bibles do. The seven books, all in the Old Testament, are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch and 1 and 2 Maccabees. Catholics call the disputed books Deuterocanonical and consider them to be inspired. Bible Christians call them Apocryphal and consider them to be spurious.

The list of books that comprise the Bible is referred to as the canon. During Jesus' time there were two Old Testament canons in use. There was the Palestinian canon, which is identical to the Protestant Old Testament, and there was the Alexandrian canon – also known as the Septuagint – which is identical to the Catholic Old Testament. The Catholic Church uses the longer canon because the Apostles and the early Church used it.

Bible Christians use the shorter canon because it matches the present day Jewish canon. They will often quote Romans 3:2, which says, "The Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God." They reason that since God entrusted the Old Testament to the Jews, they should be the ones who determine which books belong in it.

This reasoning presents a couple of problems. Firstly, both Old Testament canons were received from the Jews. Thus neither canon is eliminated by this verse. Secondly, the Jews didn't settle on the Palestinian canon until at least 90 AD at the Council of Jamnia. This was well after authority had passed from the Jews to the Church (Acts 4:19). Ironically it was at the Council of Jamnia that the Jews also rejected the New Testament. Logically speaking, anyone who would consider Jamnia as being authoritative would also have to reject the New Testament.

Most Church Fathers regarded the Septuagint as the standard form of the Old Testament. When the Councils of Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD) set the canon of the New Testament they also confirmed the Septuagint as the Old Testament. Further evidence of the Septuagint's acceptance by the early Church can be found in the New Testament itself. It quotes the Old Testament approximately 350 times. Three hundred of those quotes are from the Septuagint. Surely this amounts to an overwhelming endorsement by the early Church.

Some raise objections over supposed errors. One example is in Judith 1:1-7. Here Nebuchadnezzar is called the king of Assyria when in fact it is well known that he was the king of Babylon. But Judith is not a historical book; it's a religious novel. The combining of the Babylonians and the Assyrians is a representation of the enemies of Israel. Both had conquered Israel at one time or another. Judith means Jewess and she represents the whole of Judaism. The lesson of the book is to rely on God's way of deliverance no matter what the method. Similar objections are raised over verses in Tobit, which are likewise symbolic and not historical.

Critics will often dismiss the role of the Church in determining the New Testament. They contend that the Holy Spirit caused the books of the New Testament to fall into place on their own. They would have us believe that the Church councils that dealt with the canon were nothing more than bishops getting together to say "Wow, look at that." Once again, history tells us another story.

The book of 1 Clement was considered inspired by most in the early Church (*Eusebius, The History of the Church 3:16, 325 AD*). We also know that the book of Revelation was disputed by many at the time. And yet Revelation made it into the canon and 1 Clement didn't. That's because the Church set the canon of Scripture, and she did so under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Just as God worked infallibly through men in writing the Bible, He worked infallibly through men in communicating exactly which books comprised it.

And so the canon stood, unchanged until the Protestant Reformation when Martin Luther threw out the seven Deuterocanonicals because they contradicted his new doctrines. He also wanted to throw out Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed. In Revelation 22:19 the apostle John proclaims, "If any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." It's true that this verse refers to the book of Revelation. However, common sense tells us that the same principal should apply to all of Scripture. Certainly God would never be pleased with us tampering with any part of His word.

Scripture Alone

One of the pillars of the Protestant Reformation is the doctrine of "Sola Scriptura," or "Scripture alone." The reformers taught that the Bible was the sole rule of faith, and that there was no need for an authoritative church. Now if this were a true teaching, as some still contend, we would expect to find it in the Bible, but we don't. The verse usually used to justify Sola Scriptura is 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired 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."

Note that this passage nowhere says that Scripture is the sole rule of faith. It says that it is profitable, and that is true. But that doesn't make it the sole rule of faith. It says that it can make you complete, and that is also true. However, in order for Scripture to make us complete, we must accept all that it teaches. And Scripture teaches that Christ established an authoritative church. That is why Paul tells Titus, who headed the church at Crete, to "**Exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you**" (Titus 2:15). Indeed an authoritative church is necessary in light of 2 Peter 1:20: "You must understand this, that **no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.**" So Scripture makes us complete by showing us that we need it and that we need the Church to teach us what it means. Only a church whose teachings are authoritative and unchanging can qualify as "The Church of the living God, **the pillar and foundation of truth**" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Cardinal Newman noted some years ago that 2 Timothy could not support the doctrine of Sola Scriptura because Paul's statement to Timothy would have to apply to him at that time. At that time there was only an Old Testament. If 2 Timothy were true in the sense that Bible Christians claim it is, it would rule out the New Testament, something that no Bible believing Christian would ever do.

Bible Christians claim that the Holy Spirit teaches them directly. They would point to 1 John 2:26-27, which says, "I write this to you about those who would deceive you, but the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you, as His anointing teaches you about everything." At first glance, this might appear to support their argument. However, putting it in context reveals something quite different. Note that John begins by saying, "**I write this to you about those who would deceive you.**" These are the teachers that John tells us we have no need of. Read verses 21-25, and the context becomes even clearer. "I write to you, not because you do not know **the truth**, but because **you know it...Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is what He has promised us, eternal life.**"

The anointing that John speaks of is an anointing that we possess by virtue of our Christianity. It is an anointing by which we receive grace – grace that enables us to do just what John asks us to do, to hold on to what we were taught from the beginning despite the enticements of the deceivers. He speaks of the truth as something that was received from the Church and not something that was personally received from the Holy Spirit.

While it is true that the Holy Spirit can and oftentimes does guide us personally, it is equally true that we are not always listening. Sometimes our own thoughts or the deceptions of others can be mistaken for the Holy Spirit. That is why God wouldn't choose this as the way to present the faith. After all, if we are to make a choice for Christ, we must **KNOW** and not **IMAGINE** what that choice entails.

The book of Ephesians addresses 2 Timothy and 1 John beautifully, "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors **and teachers, for the equipment of the saints...**so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (4:11-12, 14). Remember earlier in 2 Timothy, we found the phrase, (concerning Scripture) "that the man of God may be complete, **equipped** for every good work." First Paul tells us that we need Scripture to be equipped, and then he tells us that we need teachers to be equipped. Is there a contradiction here? Not at all as Scripture without the proper interpretation is of no value. That is why the Ethiopian Eunuch, despite his genuine desire for God, needed the Apostle Philip to explain the Scriptures to him (Acts 8:26-40). Note that it was God who sent Philip to the eunuch. Why do you suppose He did that?

The claim that we don't need teachers fails not only on the theological level, but in its practical application as well. If John believes that we don't need any teachers, why is he sending a letter that teaches? In fact why were any of the epistles

written and preserved? Are they not the teachings of Church leaders? It is also interesting to note that most Bible only pastors attended seminary where they were **taught the Bible**. On Sundays they give sermons in which they **teach the Bible**. They have Bible studies where again they **teach the Bible**. If we really don't need teachers why is all of this going on?

The early Christians couldn't have believed in Sola Scriptura even if they had wanted to, as they didn't have any Bibles. The printing press wasn't invented until 1450. Before that time Bibles were hand written and a copy would have cost the modern day equivalent of about \$8000.00. Even if they had access to Bibles it wouldn't have been much better as 99% of the people were illiterate. So the type of Christianity that Bible Christians say Jesus established wasn't even possible for fourteen centuries after he supposedly established it. Even today many countries have a low literacy rate. Didn't Jesus die for everyone? How are those who cannot read to know the Gospel? An authoritative church is the only logical and Biblical answer. Also worthy of note is the fact that the doctrine of Sola Scriptura is not found in any of the creeds from the early Church. If it were such an important doctrine that would have been unconscionable.

There are over 28,000 Bible only denominations all with different interpretations of the Bible. All of them claim authority from the Bible but they can't all be right, as the Holy Spirit does not contradict Himself. Therefore we can conclude that a good part of what they teach is the product of their own reasoning. The book of Proverbs advises us well when it says, "Lean not on your own understanding" (3:5). As long as humans are flawed creatures their reasoning will be flawed. Maybe not on every issue, but certainly on some. Who among us has not seen his or her errors in retrospect? Unfortunately it is not uncommon for the illusions of men to be presented as the Will of God.

Oftentimes those who reject Church authority do so in the name of freedom. But their concept of freedom is seriously flawed. Freedom is accompanied by responsibilities. As Bishop Donald Wuerl points out, "Freedom is not just about making choices but about making right choices. To place one's hand in an open fire is to exercise human freedom irresponsibly." In other words, freedom is not achieved by doing what you want; it is the result of doing what is right. An honest alcoholic knows this well.

Sola Scriptura and the accompanying idea of private interpretation bear a striking resemblance to New Age thought. The New Ager says, "I am God." The Bible Christian in effect says, "I speak for God." A major tenet of the New Age Movement is that there is no ultimate reality. Each individual must decide for himself what reality is. Thus "every man does what is right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). With the private interpretation of Scripture each individual decides for himself what Christian reality is. This is a far cry from the Biblical view of, "One Lord, **one faith**, one Baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). We would do well to heed the warning of Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."

Some may see that as extreme. After all, we are told that the differences between Bible Christians are minor. But is that really the case? One of the areas of contention is the subject of salvation. Some say that you can lose it some say that you can't. This is something that needs to be clearly understood as it will be key in determining the eternal destination of millions. This is hardly a minor issue. Also, theological disunity is a scandal to the world and a stumbling block for many. Jesus prayed that we would be one as He and the Father are one so that the world would know that the Father sent him (John 17:20-22). If the world does not know that the Father sent Jesus it is because we are not one. How many more souls would have come to Christ but for our disunity? It has been said that Jesus would have died for even one of us. If this were true then it would follow that every soul is precious. If every soul is precious how then can we so glibly write off millions of them in the name of freedom?

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Tradition

It is often alleged that the Catholic Church focuses on tradition rather than Scripture. That is simply not so. The Church focuses on Scripture and Sacred Tradition as they both flow out of the same divine wellspring, making up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation 2:9, 10*). This is verified by the teaching of Scripture. Scripture speaks of two kinds of tradition. One is condemned, and the other requires belief. Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, to "Stand firm, and **hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.**" Notice how Paul ranks oral tradition with written tradition equally. Why does he do that? He gives us the answer in 1 Thessalonians 2:13: "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received **the Word of God** which you heard from us, you accepted it **not as the word of men** but as what it really is, **the Word of God...**" So the oral traditions and the written were both the word of God. No wonder Paul was pleased when the Corinthians accepted the traditions that he passed on to them. "I commend you because you remember me in everything and **maintain the traditions** even as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2). It is sometimes claimed that the oral tradition that Paul is speaking of is what he later put into Scripture. But the Bible nowhere says this.

Bible Christians rely on Catholic Tradition. For instance, how do they know that the 27 books of the New Testament belong in the Bible? How do they know that Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark? His name doesn't appear in the manuscripts. How do they know that public revelation ended with the death of the last apostle? They know these things the same way that Catholics know them, because the Catholic Church tells us so.

So then, what type of tradition does Jesus condemn? Mark records the following statement made by Jesus to the Scribes and Pharisees:

"You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast **the tradition of men.**" And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep **your tradition!** For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'... but you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, 'what you would have gained from me is corban' (that is, given to God), then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus **making void the Word of God through your tradition**" (Mark 7:8-13).

The Scribes and Pharisees were violating one of the commandments with their own tradition (tradition of men), and Jesus corrects them with the traditional interpretation (Sacred Tradition). The Apostles taught in the same manner and, according to the Bible, apostolic teaching was the standard in the early Church: "And **they devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching** and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers" (Acts 2:42).

How can we recognize the traditions of men? Well, if they cannot be traced back to the early Church, they would have to be man-made. To believe otherwise would imply that God didn't get it right the first time. What Catholics call Sacred Tradition can be traced back to the early Church. The same cannot be said of those beliefs that are uniquely Protestant. Protestantism was the creation of men. It first appeared in the sixteenth century. We even know the names of the men who started it. Names like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. If men started it, it is a tradition of men and not of God. One could hardly argue that it was an apostolic institution.

Early Christians knew the importance of Sacred Tradition. In the year 200 AD Tertullian wrote, "Wherever it shall be clear that the truth of the Christian discipline and faith are present, there also will be found the truth of **the Scriptures and their explanation, and of all the Christian traditions**" (*The Demurrer against the heretics 19:3*). A few decades later, Origen writes, "That alone is to be believed as the truth which is in no way at variance with **ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition**" (*Fundamental doctrines 1, preface: 2, circa 225 AD*).

It is only when we embrace Scripture and Sacred Tradition that we have the complete Word of God. And as Jesus once said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **EVERY WORD** that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Justification

In Romans 1:17, Paul tells us that, "**The just shall live by faith.**" The Catholic Church is in full agreement with this statement. However, she does not agree with the way some would define faith. The Church speaks of faith in the biblical sense. While Paul says, "the just shall live by faith," he also says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but **faith working through love**" (Galatians 5:6). He further states, "If I have a faith that can move mountains, but **have not love, I am nothing...** And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. **But the greatest of these is love**" (1 Corinthians 13:2, 13). Why is the greatest of these love? Because without love there is no faith. So then, how is love manifested? Well, in Romans 12:9-13 Paul says, "**Let love be genuine**, hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good, love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality." Elsewhere Paul speaks of "the obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5). So for Paul, to have faith meant to take action. That is why James tells us that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:17).

When the Philippian jailer asked Paul, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). Some take this to mean intellectual assent, but the Biblical concept of believing means to act in accordance with. Jesus tells us in John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; **He who does not obey the Son shall not see life.**" So not obeying is not believing. Notice how Jesus answers the rich young man who asked, "Good Teacher, **what must I do to inherit eternal life?**" He said, "**You know the commandments...sell what you have and give to the poor**" (Mark 10:17-22). In Matthew 25:32-46, Jesus characterizes the saved as those who feed and clothe the poor and visit those in prison. He also characterizes the damned as those who refrain from such activities. In Revelation 20:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 we are told that we will be judged by our deeds. Was the Apostle John in error when he wrote, "And by this we may be sure that we know Him, if we keep His Commandments? He who says 'I know him' but disobeys His Commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps His word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in Him" (1 John 2:3-5). Finally, we are told in 1 John 3:23, "And **this is His commandment**, that we should **believe** in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and **love one another**, just as He has commanded us."

In Matthew 25:40, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." Reject your neighbor, and you reject Jesus! Does this mean that your good works will earn you salvation? No, not at all. All that we do, we do by the grace of God. Indeed we can not even say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3).

For the Christian there is no excuse for serious deliberate sin. "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation **will also provide the way of escape** that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Also, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments. And **His commandments are not burdensome**" (1 John 5:3). They are not burdensome because He enables us to obey them with His grace. As we are told in Hebrews 4:15-16, "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses...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.**" Jesus Himself says as much in John 14:15-16: "If you love me you will keep my Commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Councilor, to be with you forever." In other words, you can keep the Commandments, because He is sending another Councilor (the Holy Spirit) who will give you the grace to do it. This grace was the reason why Paul could say, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Phillipians 4:13).

So a failure to do good works is not a failure to earn one's salvation, but a rejection of grace which is ultimately a denial of the power of the Holy Spirit, and that is the "unforgivable sin" (Mark 3:28). It is unforgivable because it is a rejection of Christ. Good works are not something in addition to faith, but the proof that faith exists. The good works in question do not constitute "works salvation" because they were not produced by something within the individual but were in fact accomplished by the grace of God, which is a gift. There is nothing to boast about but much to be thankful for.

Clement, the fourth Bishop of Rome, writing around the year 95, taught about the connection between grace and works and the need for our cooperation with grace. He wrote, "**Let us therefore join with those to whom grace is given by God.** Let us clothe ourselves in concord, being humble and self-controlled, keeping ourselves far from all backbiting and slander,

being justified by works and not by words... Why was our father Abraham blessed? **Was it not because of his deeds of justice and truth, wrought in faith?...** So we, having been called through His will in Christ Jesus, were **not justified through ourselves** or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, **but through faith, whereby the almighty God justified all men**" (1 Clement 30:3, 31:2, 32:3-4).

As for the sacraments, they are occasions of grace and not rituals that must be performed to earn salvation. The grace received enables us to accept our salvation and to live the Christian life. This is reflected in Jesus' statement concerning the Eucharist in John 6:56. He said, "**Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.**" It is only by the grace of God that we accept Christ in the first place and it is only by the grace of God that we remain in Him. This is what the Church calls Sanctifying Grace. Besides Sanctifying Grace, every sacrament produces Sacramental Grace. Sacramental grace is a special grace that helps in the fulfillment of the duties related to a particular sacrament. For example, in the sacrament of Matrimony, the Sacramental Grace received can enable the couple to be the husband and wife that God would have them be.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Titus 3:3-7 speak of salvation as an inheritance. An inheritance cannot be earned, but it can be lost. Despite what some may claim, Christians can lose their salvation. Paul affirms this when writing the church at Corinth, "**but you yourselves wrong and defraud,** and that even your own brethren. **Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor the idolaters, nor the adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:8-10).

Paul does not even claim that he is saved. He tells us in 1 Corinthians 4:2-5, "It is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but **I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.** Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God." And again in 1 Corinthians 9:25-27, "Every athlete exercises self control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air, but I pommel my body and subdue it **lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.**"

The reason why you can lose your salvation is because even after accepting Christ a person is still capable of sinning and remaining unrepentant. And repentance is necessary for forgiveness. Scripture is very clear on this point. Listen to Paul's warning to the Church at Rome: "**Do you suppose,** then, you who judge those who engage in such things and yet do them yourself, **that you will escape the judgment of God?** Or do you hold his priceless kindness, forbearance, and patience in low esteem, unaware that **the kindness of God would lead you to repentance?**" (Romans 2:4). Jesus Himself warns the Church at Ephesus. He says: "Realize how far you have fallen. **Repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent** (Revelation 2:5).

The early Christians agreed with this teaching as we can see from such writings as the epistle of Barnabas, written around the year 130. In chapter four we read, "So no assumption that we are among the called must ever tempt us to relax our efforts, or fall asleep in our sins, otherwise the prince of evil will obtain control over us, and oust us from the kingdom of the Lord."

When we give our lives to Jesus our free will is not taken away. We do not become robots compelled to feed the poor or avoid sin. We must submit to Christ on a daily basis. As the Scripture says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God" (James 4:6-7).

If the Catholic Church's teaching on justification is wrong, then so is the Bible and so were the early Christians.

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Baptism

It is through the sacrament of Baptism that we become Christians, "For by one Spirit we were all **baptized into one body**" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Baptism also takes away sin: "Rise and be baptized, and **wash away your sins**" (Acts 22:16). Baptism and Confirmation are the sacramental elements of being born again, and the normal means by which we receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us in John 3:5, "Unless one is born of **water** and **spirit**, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." And in Acts 2:38-39, Peter says, "Repent and **be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, **and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. For the promise is to you and to **your children** and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Him."

The issue of infant Baptism is not discussed explicitly in the Bible, but it is likely that there were babies in the households of Lydia, Stephanus and the jailer at Philippi, where Paul baptized entire families (Acts 16:14-15, Acts 16:29-34 and 1 Corinthians 1:16). In Colossians 2:11-12 Paul alludes to infant baptism when he tells us that Baptism has replaced circumcision. Circumcision took place on the eighth day after birth (Genesis 17:12). We know that early Christians baptized their infants on the eighth day after birth because the third Council of Carthage decreed in the year 252, "that baptism of children need not be deferred until the eighth day after birth as some maintained, but might be administered as soon as possible" (Cyprian, Epistle 64 (59), 2).

The Waldenses and the Cathari (around the 12th century) first raised objections to infant Baptism. Modern day objections can be traced to Thomas Munzer. In 1521, he deduced from his private interpretation of the Bible that Baptism should not be administered to infants but only to adults after conversion and a personal commitment to Christ. Even Martin Luther denounced him and he was expelled from Wittenberg.

The Holy Spirit is the dispenser of grace. At Baptism there is an infusion of grace. If the grace a baby receives at Baptism is nourished (in a Christian atmosphere) it grows; if not, it dies. The saving grace of God enables us to hear and accept the Gospel, not only as adults but also as children hearing it for the first time. That babies can benefit spiritually is clearly indicated in Luke 18:15-16: "Now they were bringing even infants to Him that He might touch them. And when the disciples saw it they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him saying, 'Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.'" Mark finishes the story in his account, "And He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands upon them" (Mark 10:16).

Our personal commitment to Christ, once we have reached the age of reason, is our conscious decision to keep and maintain what God has already given us. Baptism doesn't guarantee one's salvation; rather one is saved as a result of responding positively to the grace received.

We have no record of early Christian writers condemning infant Baptism. However, much is written in support of it. Irenaeus, who lived from 140-202, and was a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John wrote, "Christ came to save all who through Him are **born again** unto God, **infants and** children, boys and youths, and aged persons" (*Against Heresies* 2, 22:4). Origen, who lived from 182 to 255 wrote, "**Baptism is given even to infants**" (*Homilies on Leviticus* 8:3).

As for the practice of pouring water on the forehead instead of total immersion, this too was a practice of the early Church. We read in the *Didache*, which was written somewhere between the years 70 and 150, that those being baptized could be immersed in water, but if it wasn't practical, "sprinkle water three times on the head" (2:7). Tertullian, writing in the second century, describes Baptism as, "a sprinkling of any kind of water" (*Baptism* 6:1). Many who were converted in prison were baptized this way.

In cases where there is no knowledge of the need for Baptism, an honest desire for Christ is sufficient. This is called Baptism of Desire. Likewise water baptism is not a requirement for those who are martyred upon conversion. The Church calls this Baptism of Blood. While water Baptism is normative, God is not legalistic. He takes everything into account. What is most important is the condition of one's heart (1 Samuel 16:7). All those who truly desire God shall have Him.

The Mass

The Sacrifice of the Mass is not a re-sacrificing of Jesus as some allege. It is the "once for all" sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. There are two parts to a sacrifice: the death of the victim, and the offering up of the fruits by the High Priest. Jesus' death took place once and is in the past. Yet, the fruits of His sacrifice must be applied to every believer past, present and future. In the book of Revelation, Jesus, who is in heaven, is referred to 29 times as the "Lamb." The Word of God portrays Jesus as a sacrificial lamb because, as the High Priest of the New Covenant, He is continually offering up the fruits of His Sacrifice. We partake of those fruits when we receive the Eucharist at Mass. Ironically, some of the most vocal critics of the Mass claim to be "washed by the blood of the Lamb" – blood that was shed two thousand years ago. Are they re-sacrificing Jesus?

Many Bible Christians don't believe in performing rituals. They claim that Christianity, unlike Judaism, is not a religion. They say that it's a relationship (with God); therefore rituals are unnecessary. However, **Christianity is a religion, a religion where believers can have a personal relationship with God.** In James 1:26-27 we read the following: "If any one thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man's **RELIGION** is vain. **RELIGION** that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world." When James calls Christianity a religion, he is commenting on its nature. The Greek word that is translated into "religion" is *threskeia* (θρησκεία). *Threskeia* means ceremonial observance, which is what a ritual is. This is the same word used by Paul to describe Judaism in Acts 26:5. If rituals have no place in Christianity, why does the Word of God refer to it in ritualistic terms?

Malachi 1:11 speaks prophetically of the Mass: "From the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts." The sacrifice spoken of is not the Judaic sacrifice. The passage refers to a pure sacrifice that will take place everywhere among the nations (Gentiles). This makes perfect sense as we are living in "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). Psalm 110 [109] provides even more detail. Verse 4 reads, "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You [Jesus] are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'" In Genesis 14:18 Melchizedek offered a sacrifice of bread and wine. So Psalm 110 is a prediction that Jesus would offer a perpetual sacrifice involving bread and wine. The Sacrifice of the Mass involves the offering of bread and wine.

The early Church understood the Mass to be a true sacrifice. Clement, the fourth bishop of Rome, wrote in the year 95 AD, "Our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those who blamelessly and holily have offered its **SACRIFICES**" (*1 Clement 44:4*). A few years later in the year 110 AD, Ignatius of Antioch said the following: "Make certain, therefore, that you all observe one common Eucharist, for there is but one body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup of union with His blood, and one single altar of **SACRIFICE**, even as there is also but one bishop, with his clergy and my own fellow servitors, the deacons" (*Letter to the Philadelphians No. 4*)

But, some will say, "I don't get anything out of the Mass." To the uninformed person, a candy bar seems more exciting than a million-dollar check. The colorful wrapper is certainly more pleasing to the eye, and you have a piece of candy inside. How can a plain piece of paper with handwriting on it compete with that? To the uninformed, the Mass may be viewed similarly. If you don't know what it is all about you, aren't going to understand its importance. And if you aren't open to what it has to offer, you won't get anything out of it.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church wisely points out that our Yes to Jesus Christ is twofold: a trustful abandonment to God and a loving assent to all that he has revealed to us. This is possible only by means of the action of the Holy Spirit (Nos. 150,176). If you are one of those who "doesn't get anything out of the Mass," Pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to be open to all the Mass has to offer. It will change your life.

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The Eucharist

The Church has always taught that the Eucharist is the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is difficult for some to accept. However, belief in the Real Presence rests upon the words of Christ Himself. In John 6:48-57 we read:

I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. **I am the living bread** that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread, will live forever, and **the bread that I will give is my flesh** for the life of the world. The Jews quarreled among themselves saying, "**How can this man give us his flesh to eat?**" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.** Whoever eats **my flesh** and drinks **my blood** has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For **my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.** Whoever **eats my flesh and drinks my blood** remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who **feeds on me** will have life because of me.

Opponents of the Real Presence contend that this is all symbolic. But read what happens in verses 60 and 66, – "Then many of His disciples who were listening said, **'This saying is hard, who can accept it?'**...**As a result of this, many [of] His disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied Him.**"

Jesus taught and did some things that went against the norms of His day. For instance, it was considered improper for a rabbi to speak familiarly with a woman in public. Likewise it was seen as improper for a Jew to request water from a Samaritan. And yet Jesus asked a Samaritan woman for water at Jacob's well (John 4:1-42). Another example is when Jesus, in sharp contrast to Jewish teaching, commanded His followers to love their enemies (Matthew 5:44). Both of these incidents took place before the events of John 6. Are we to believe that the same disciples who had no problem accepting these radically new ideas rejected Jesus over symbolism?

At the Last Supper, Jesus fulfilled His promise: "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, 'Take and eat, **this is my body.**' Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it all of you, **for this is my blood** of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-28). This could hardly be seen as symbolic, as Jesus held bread and the cup of wine in His hands and said "This is my body" and "This is my blood." He was obviously referring to what He was holding. Luke records that Jesus also said to do this in memory of Him (22:19). For the Jews, to do something "in memory" meant to make it actually present.

Paul affirms the Real Presence in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:27-29. "The cup of blessing that we bless, **is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?** The bread that we break, **is it not a participation in the body of Christ?...Therefore,** whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer **for the body and blood of the Lord...** For anyone who eats and drinks **without discerning the body,** eats and drinks judgment on himself." If the Lord's body and blood are not present, how can a wrong be committed against them? Jesus is the sacrificial lamb of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant sacrifice prefigured the New Covenant sacrifice. Both include a partaking of the sacrifice to signify a participation in its effects.

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch from the year 69 to 110, writes in his letter to the Smyrnaeans, "But look at the men who have those perverted notions about the grace of Jesus Christ...**they will not admit that the Eucharist is the self same body of our savior Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins, and which the Father in His goodness afterwards raised up again**" (7:1).

A few decades later, around the year 150, Justin martyr wrote: "Not as common bread or common drink do we receive these, but since Jesus Christ our savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by Him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, **is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus**" (*First Apology* 66).

Confession

In John 20:21-23, we find Jesus saying the following to his apostles: "Peace be with you. **As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.**' And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, '**Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.**'"

These verses refer to what Catholics call Confession or the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Those who object to the Catholic view of this passage usually contend that Jesus was simply speaking about believers forgiving those who have wronged them. Such a view is impossible for two reasons. The first reason is that Jesus qualifies His statement. He starts off by saying, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." This raises the question, in what manner was Jesus sent to forgive? Mark 2:5-12 gives us the answer:

And when **Jesus** saw their faith, He **said** to the paralytic, "My son, **your sins are forgiven.**" Now some of the Scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! **Who can forgive sins but God alone?"** Jesus, knowing what they were thinking, said in part, "But that you may know that **the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins,**" -- He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all.

Jesus didn't need to perform a miracle to show that He could forgive someone of a personal offense. The forgiveness spoken of is the forgiveness that makes salvation possible.

The second reason that John 20:21-23 does not refer to believers forgiving others who have wronged them, is that we are not given the option of retaining anyone's sins. In fact, our own forgiveness is dependent on our forgiving others. Jesus tells us this very thing in Matthew 6:14-15: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you. **But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**"

The only time sins would be retained, is when there is an obvious lack of repentance. This is only natural as Acts 3:19 tells us that repentance is necessary for forgiveness. The fact that the apostles could forgive or retain sins means that they would have to know what the sins were, and the disposition of the person in question. That could only happen if the person were to tell or confess his sins. Furthermore, if this function were necessary in the first century it would be necessary today.

The Didache, written between 70 and 150 AD, records the following: "**Confess your sins in Church**, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life" (4:14). Cyprian, writing in the year 251, wrote, "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But [the impenitent] spurn and despise all these warnings before their sins are expiated, before they have made a confession of their crime, **before their conscience has been purged in the ceremony and at the hand of the priest**" (*The Lapsed 15:1-3*).

Can only those confessing to a priest be forgiven? Certainly not. Confession is the normal means but not the only means. If someone were to die suddenly without confessing to a priest, all would not necessarily be lost. If the person died truly sorry for his or her sins and desired God's forgiveness, forgiveness would be granted. So why bother with Confession? Well for one because Jesus says so. But also because of the graces that we receive when we are absolved, - graces that help us avoid sin in the future.

It is easy to understand why someone might not want to go to Confession. While we don't mind admitting that we are not perfect, we often have a problem admitting to specific faults. Admitting them to our pastor is even less desirable. But we need not fear, for he is also a sinner. Let us remember also, that God is there to help us. As the scripture says, He gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

We seem to have a natural need to confess. Quite often we will discuss our misdeeds with a friend. Why not discuss them with a priest, as Jesus commanded, and receive forgiveness as well as consolation?

Purgatory

In 1 John 5:17, we see that there are different degrees of sin: "All wrongdoing is sin, but **there is sin that is not deadly.**" The Greek word used for deadly, Thanatos (θάνατος), signifies spiritual death as a consequence of sin – what we would call eternal damnation. The book of Revelation tells us that nothing unclean shall enter heaven (21:27). What would happen if we did not repent of a sin that was "not deadly" and we died? We are neither damned nor forgiven – yet we must be forgiven to enter heaven.

Temporal punishment, which is one aspect of divine justice, is found in at least two places in the Old Testament. Once, when Moses and Aaron are not allowed to enter the Promised Land because of their sin, (Numbers 20:12) and again when David is found guilty of murder and adultery. Although they all repented and were forgiven, God still punished them (2 Samuel 12:13-14). Purgatory is a place where satisfaction is made for unrepented venial (not deadly) sins and for temporal punishment due for all past sins.

In Matthew 12:32 Jesus says, "And whoever speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in **the age to come.**" Why does Jesus talk about forgiveness after death?

Jesus speaks of purgatory in Matthew 18:23-35. While speaking on forgiveness He says: "**The kingdom of heaven may be likened to...**" and then He tells a story about a king who forgave a servant's large debt. That same servant refused to forgive a much smaller amount of a fellow servant. The king then threw the first servant into prison "**until he should pay back the whole debt.**" Jesus then says, "**So will my Heavenly Father do to you,** unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart." What prison is there in the kingdom of heaven where you might remain until your debt is satisfied – purgatory maybe?

Paul also spoke of purgatory in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. He says in part, "The work of each will come to light, for the day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire [itself] will test the quality of each one's work. If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. But if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss, **the person will be saved, but only as through fire.**"

Those detained in Purgatory can be aided by the prayers of the faithful. Inscriptions in the catacombs bear witness to this ancient Church teaching. One reads, "Intercession has been made for the soul of the dear one departed and God has heard the prayer, and the soul has passed into a place of light and refreshment." Another one reads, "In your prayers remember us who have gone before you."

Support is also found in the writings of Tertullian (200AD), who declares that prayers for the dead are an apostolic ordinance. Clement of Alexandria (150-216 AD) writes about a place after death where "expiation and purification" occur before heaven is attained. Other Church Fathers agree, such as Origen (185-254 AD), Cyprian (200-258 AD), Jerome (342-420 AD), Ambrose (340-397 AD), Augustine (354-430 AD), and many others.

The tradition of the Jews is found in 2 Maccabees 12:42-46: "Turning to supplication, **they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out...** He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an **expiatory sacrifice...**if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to **pray for them in death...**Thus **he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin.**"

The Jewish historian Josephus, while commenting on the endurance of the Jews under siege in the year 63, writes, "Just as if deep peace enfolded the city, the daily sacrifices, **offerings for the dead,** and every other act of worship were meticulously carried out to the glory of God" (*The Jewish War*). If this is wrong, as some contend, and it was practiced in Jesus' day, why didn't He or the Apostles condemn it?

Indulgences

It is claimed that the Catholic Church invented the doctrine on indulgences in order to extract money from the faithful. Critics are quick to remind us that it was the selling of indulgences in the Middle Ages that sparked the Protestant Reformation. No one disputes that there were abuses by individuals in the past. But past abuses should not be used as a reason to reject indulgences. The Bible itself has always been subject to abuse. Should it too be rejected? Of course not! Both the Bible and the doctrine on Indulgences should stand or fall on their own merits.

To begin with, indulgences cannot be bought. Some will claim that the fees attached to Masses for the dead prove otherwise. However, the fees are small and usually go to the priest who says the Mass. Certainly priests, just like all full time ministers, deserve to get paid for the work they do. The Apostle Paul says as much in 1 Corinthians 9:11-12: "If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more?"

The use of indulgences goes back to the early days of the Church and is firmly based on scriptural principals. The Bible clearly teaches that some punishments are **eternal (lasting forever)**, and others are **temporal (lasting for only a time)**. Indulgences are granted for the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin.

One example in the Bible of temporal punishment is that of King David. When he was found guilty of murder and adultery, he repented and was forgiven by God (2 Samuel 12:1-18). Although God forgave him, He still punished him with, among other things, the death of his son.

That temporal punishment is satisfied in Purgatory is a necessity of Scripture. We know from 1 John 5:17, that all sins are not mortal (depriving us of eternal life). We also know that we must account for every sin. Ecclesiastes 12:14 says: "**God will bring every deed into judgment.**" And In Matthew 12:36-37 Jesus says: "On the Day of Judgment **men will render account for every careless word** they utter." How would someone who died with non mortal sins account "*for every careless word*?" Purgatory is the only possible answer.

The Church has always taught that temporal punishment is required in this life or in Purgatory to **heal the wounds of sin and prepare us for eternal happiness with God**. Pope Paul VI speaks of that dual role in his "*Apostolic Constitution on Indulgences*:" "The aim pursued by ecclesiastical authority [The Church] in granting indulgences is not only that of **helping the faithful to expiate the punishment due sin** but also that of **urging them to perform works of piety, penance and charity – particularly those which lead to growth in faith and which favor the common good**" (4:8). The Bible itself encourages such behavior.

- **On piety:** "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice; holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1).
- **On penance:** "Yet even now," says the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil" (Joel 2:12-13).
- **On charity:** "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18).

Those receiving indulgences must be sorry for their sins. The wrong attitude toward sin renders our prayers ineffectual. In Psalm 66:18-19 we read: "**If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.**" Performing acts of piety, penance and charity helps us to focus on the effects of sin, thus promoting in us a genuine contempt for it. A truly repentant individual is more likely to grow in holiness.

Indulgences may be partial, remitting only a part of the temporal punishment due, or plenary, remitting all of the temporal punishment due. Some Bible Christians are fond of claiming that the Catholic Church tries to keep its members away from

the Bible. Ironically, "A *partial indulgence* is granted to the faithful who, with the veneration due the divine word, make a spiritual reading from Sacred Scripture. A *plenary indulgence* is granted, if this reading is continued for at least one half an hour" (Enchiridion of Indulgences No. 50).

Strictly speaking, the granting of indulgences is not the forgiving of sins. "An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins **whose guilt has already been forgiven**" (Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 1471). Thus indulgences may be applied to the souls in purgatory by way of prayer. This was taught by the early Church as evidenced by Tertullian, who wrote: "We offer sacrifices for the dead on their birthday anniversaries" (The Crown 3:3, 211 AD).

"An indulgence is obtained through the Church who, by virtue of the power of binding and loosing granted her by Christ Jesus (Matthew 16:19), 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 punishment due for their sins" (Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 1478). The granting of indulgences is the logical extension of the Church's ministry of forgiveness (John 20:21-23).

There is some misunderstanding concerning the term "the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints." It is feared that the Church is somehow equating the saints with Christ. However, this is not so. The treasury consists of the prayers of Christ and the saints. The term is simply an acknowledgment that they both pray for us (Hebrews 7:25, Revelation 5:8).

Furthermore, the use of the word "*merits*" does not mean that we can earn anything from God. James Akin addressed this point in an article that appeared in the November 1994 issue of "*This Rock*" magazine entitled, "*A Primer on Indulgences.*" He wrote:

Humans can't earn anything from God, though by His grace they can please him in a way He chooses to reward. Picturing the saints' acts under a single, collective metaphor (such as a treasury) is biblical: "It was granted her [the Bride] to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" (Revelation 19:8). John tells us, "For the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints." Here the righteous deeds of the saints are pictured under the collective metaphor of clothing on the bride of Christ, the Church. Jewish theology also recognizes a treasury of merits. Jewish theologians speak of "the merits of the fathers" – the idea being that the patriarchs pleased God and inherited certain promises as a reward. God fulfills these promises and ends up treating later Jews more gently than they would have been treated. The idea of "the merits of the fathers" is essentially the same as the Catholic concept of the "treasury of merits." Both postulate a class of individuals, the Old Testament patriarchs on the one hand and Christ and the saints on the other, who have pleased God and whom God chooses to reward in a way involving lesser temporal punishments on others.

An example of this principle can be found in 2 Kings 8:16-19:

In the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoram the son of Jehosaphat, king of Judah, began to reign. He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. **And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah, for the sake of David his servant,** since he promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.

That indulgences exist is reasonable and to be expected. The same loving Father, who through the death of His only Son provided a way to eliminate our eternal punishment, also provided a way to eliminate our temporal punishment.

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Praying to Saints

There seems to be a great deal of confusion among non-Catholics concerning the Church's teaching on praying to the saints in heaven. It is alleged that by praying to them we equate them with God. This is false. But why pray to them, when we can pray to God? Don't the Scriptures tell us that we have but one mediator, and that is "Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). It is true that intercessory prayer is a type of mediation but not the type exclusively performed by Jesus. Hebrews 9:15 tells us that Jesus "is the Mediator of a new covenant." When the saints in heaven pray for us they are no more mediating a new covenant than we are when we pray for each other.

To pray means to ask, not to worship. Also, we do not pray to the saints instead of God. We pray to God and ask that the saints pray for and with us. Are we not to "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2), and to "pray for one another" (James 5:16)? Were we not "all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13)? Are not the saints in heaven still members of that body?

We know that "the prayer of a righteous person has great power" (James 5:16). Who could be more righteous or pray more fervently than those already perfected and in the Lord's presence? We know that they care for us, "**There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents**" (Luke 15:7). And finally we see that they present our prayers along with their own to Jesus: "The four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with **golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints**" (Revelation 5:8). Also, "And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and **he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints** upon the golden altar before the throne. **And the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God**" (Revelation 8:3-4). Note that incense represents our prayers, and that the angels and elders in heaven present our prayers to God.

In Matthew 18:10 we find, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven." What do you suppose the little ones' angels would be doing on their behalf before God? Praying for them is the only logical answer.

Demonstrating early Christian belief, Origen wrote in the year 233, "**But not the High Priest [Christ] alone prays for those who pray sincerely, but also the angels...as also the souls of the saints who have already fallen asleep**" (On Prayer 11).

Mary receives special honor because she, who once cared for the physical body of Christ, now cares, through her intercession, for the mystical body of Christ (the Church). Devotion to Mary differs, just as devotion to family differs, from devotion to God. In no way does it imply equality with God. Even the Protestant reformers saw this as being consistent with Scripture. Martin Luther wrote in a prologue to the Magnificat, "**May the tender mother of God herself procure for me the Spirit of wisdom profitably and thoroughly to expound this song of hers.**" John Calvin, working on his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, wrote, "We cannot celebrate the blessings given us in Christ without commemorating at the same time how high an honor God has granted to Mary when he chose to make her the mother of his only Son." Ulrich Zwingli stated, "The more honor and love for Christ, the more also the esteem and honor for Mary."

As for the title of Co-Redemptrix, it must be noted that the Church did not give her this title but agrees with the theology behind it. The title comes from tenth century theologians who explain that redemption was accomplished in three steps: (1) The Incarnation, when the Word was made flesh, (2) The performance, Christ's death and resurrection (the essential sacrifice which redeemed man), and (3) The application, whereby redemption is communicated to believers. Jesus alone accomplished the second step. Mary cooperated in the first and third steps. Indeed we are all commanded to participate in the third step: "Make disciples of all nations" (Mark 28:19). **In 1 Corinthians 3:9 we are referred to as "God's co-workers."** Does that make us equal to God? Does our work have the same value as His? Of course not! We merely work with God for the furtherance of His kingdom. It is only in this sense that we can be co-workers or co-redeemers with Christ.

Mary Ever-Virgin

There are some that contend that Mary had children other than Jesus. They cite several passages of Scripture that supposedly say as much. One example is Matthew 1:24-25, which reads, "When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her **until** she bore a son, and he named him Jesus."

The word "until" seems to indicate that after the birth of Jesus there were normal marital relations. However, the Greek word *heos* (ἕως) which is translated as until, does not imply that anything happened after Jesus' birth, nor does it exclude it. The point of the verse is that Joseph was not responsible for the conception of Jesus.

Another example of the word "until" being used this way is found in Luke 1:80. In reference to John the Baptist it states, "The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the desert **until** the day of his manifestation to Israel." Does this mean that once he appeared publicly he left the desert? It might appear so, but we know that he was in the desert after that. Jesus tells us as much in Luke 7:24: "When the messengers of John had left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds **about John**. 'What did you go **out to the desert** to see, a reed swayed by the wind?'"

But what about the verses that speak about the brothers and sisters of Jesus? For instance, Matthew 13:55-56: "Is He not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother named Mary, and His brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Are not His sisters all with us?" Could Matthew be referring to Jesus' cousins? Although both Greek and English have a word for cousin, Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus, does not. Hence the words brothers and sisters are used. These terms can also be used to refer to friends. Observe how Jesus himself uses the word "brothers" in Matthew 28:10 and see what happens in verse 16: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go **tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me**'... **The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had ordered them.**" Were the disciples His siblings? Of course not!

A comparison of the three gospel accounts of the women at the foot of the cross demonstrates that James and Joseph, two of the named brothers, are the sons of Mary and Cleophas (Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, and John 19:25). This Mary is obviously not the mother of Jesus, as she is mentioned in addition to her. Another obvious reason is the fact that Jesus' mother was married to a man named Joseph, not Cleophas.

In Mark 6:3 Jesus is called "**THE**" son of Mary" not "**A**" son of Mary. Elsewhere, Mary is called the mother of Jesus, but never the mother of anybody else. Even Protestant reformers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli taught that Mary remained a virgin. They believed that it was the clear teaching of Scripture.

In Luke 1:30-35, we find the following: "Then the angel said to her, 'Behold **you will conceive** in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall name Him Jesus.'... But Mary said to the angel, '**How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?**' And the angel said to her in reply, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.'" Mary's statement would make no sense at all unless she intended to remain a virgin. The angel said; "**you will conceive**" not **you have** conceived. If she were to conceive in the future, her normal thought would have been that she would have relations with a man in the future. Her protest could only have meant that she was a virgin and that she would like to keep it that way. The angel's reply is an assurance that such would be the case.

Additional evidence can be found at the foot of the cross. In John 19:26-27 we find: "When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple there whom He loved, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son.' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home." If Jesus had brothers and sisters, why did He entrust the care of His mother to the Apostle John?

The Immaculate Conception

In 1854 Pope Pius IX affirmed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. He wrote, in part, "We declare, pronounce and define, that the doctrine which holds that the most blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, **was preserved immune from all stain of sin**, by a singular grace and privilege of the omnipotent God, **in view of the merits of Jesus Christ...**" (*Ineffabilis Deus*).

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is consistent with the teachings of Scripture. In fact it is foretold in Genesis 3:15 where God says to Satan, "**I will put enmity between you and the woman**, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." The seed of the woman is Jesus; so the woman is Mary. The seed of Satan is sin. If the enmity between Mary and Satan were not the same as the enmity between Jesus and sin they would not have been included in the same sentence. The word enmity appears only once and it is applied to both situations. If there is a complete enmity between Christ and sin there must be a complete enmity between Mary and Satan. If Mary were to sin she would be cooperating to some degree with Satan and there would be no complete enmity.

Some claim that the woman is Eve or the nation of Israel. Eve does not qualify because she was a sinner. Likewise it couldn't be the nation of Israel, as the Israelites were at times famous for their rebellion against God. There are others who identify the woman as the Church. This would seem to be the most unlikely choice as Jesus is the seed of the woman. This means that the woman came first. Clearly Jesus came before the Church as He was the one who established it.

The New Testament is consistent with the Old. Luke 1:28 records the angel Gabriel addressing Mary: "**Hail full of grace.**" Note that Gabriel does not address Mary by name but by the title "Full of Grace." The Greek word *kekaritomene* (κεχαριτωμένη), which is translated as "Full of Grace," means, among other things, much graced or imbued with special honor. Could this refer to the special honor of bearing the Savior? It cannot, because the word *kekaritomene* is a perfect participle, which simply means that it refers to something that was completed in the past. At this point Mary had not even been asked, nor had she as yet accepted, the role of bearing the Savior.

It is by the grace of God that we avoid sin. To be full of grace would be a prerequisite to being sinless. However, being sinless does not make Mary equal to God. Remember that Adam and Eve were created sinless and they weren't equal to God. The early Church viewed Mary as the second Eve. Both were born without sin, the first would fail; the second would triumph. The early Church fathers called Mary "all holy," "all pure," "most innocent," "a miracle of grace," "purer than the angels," and "altogether without sin." These quotes all come from the first three centuries of Church history. So the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception could not be a later invention as some allege.

Does this mean that Mary didn't need a savior? Not at all, we can be *preserved* from sin or we can be *saved* from sin. Mary was preserved from sin. On a smaller scale we are sometimes preserved from sin. By the grace of God I have never killed anyone. I was *preserved* from a particular sin. There are murderers who have turned to Christ and no longer have the desire to kill. They were *saved* from a particular sin.

But what about Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God?" Do you suppose that the word "all" includes severely retarded adults or babies who die at birth? Of course not. Paul is not speaking in the absolute terms that some assume he is. The meaning of this verse lies in its context. Who is Paul talking to? What is the issue being discussed? In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul is telling the Jewish Christians that they have no advantage over the Gentile Christians. In effect he is saying it doesn't make a difference, you are all in the same boat. Jews and Gentiles have all sinned and fallen short. Mary's sin offering in Luke 2:22 does not present a problem either, as it refers to ritual uncleanness and was purely external.

Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation and the chief proponent of Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone), said the following in a sermon: "But as the Virgin Mary was herself born of a father and mother in the natural way, many have been disposed to assert that she was also born in original sin, **though all with one mouth affirm that she was sanctified in the maternal womb, and conceived without concupiscence.**" (*On the Day of the Conception of the Mother of God*).

The Assumption

The doctrine of the Assumption of Mary, just like the doctrine of the Trinity, is not formally defined in Scripture. However, in both cases we find scriptural evidence to support them.

There are two examples in Scripture that clearly demonstrate the bodily assumption of saints. Enoch (Hebrews 11:5) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-13) were both taken up to heaven with their bodies. All Christians agree on this, so logically all should agree at least on the possibility that the same could have happened to Mary. **(1) Scripture teaches us that it was possible.**

The Assumption of Mary is further consistent with Scripture as it is the logical result of her Immaculate Conception (the fact that she was conceived without sin – see essay on The Immaculate Conception). Death and corruption in the grave are the consequences of sin: "You are dust and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). Mary was sinless. Thus, her being assumed body and soul into heaven was natural and to be expected. **(2) Scripture indicates that it was likely.**

Even though Scripture tells us that it was possible and even likely, that wouldn't necessarily mean that it happened. On the other hand, the fact that it is not explicitly taught in Scripture would not mean that it didn't. That idea comes from the Reformation doctrine of "Sola Scriptura," or Scripture alone. The leaders of the Protestant Reformation taught that all that was to be believed in matters of faith could be found on the surface of Scripture. However, this foundational teaching of the Reformation cannot itself be found in Scripture (see essay on Scripture Alone). What we do find in Scripture, is the establishment of an authoritative Church. For instance, the Church is "The pillar and foundation of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). And rejection of the Church is rejection of Christ: "Whoever rejects you rejects me" (Luke 10:16; see essay on The Church). **(3) Scripture shows us that the Church has the authority to teach.**

In 1950 Pope Pius XII formally defined the doctrine of the Assumption. He was not adding something new but was affirming what the Church had already believed for centuries. **(4) The Church in its authority proclaims that the Assumption of Mary is a reality.**

Reference to the Assumption of Mary is made early on. James of Sarugh speaks of Mary's sacred body going forth to paradise (*De Transitu Dei Genitricis Mariae, 490 AD*). Gregory of Tours writes, "The Lord commanded the holy body [of Mary] to be borne on a cloud to Paradise where, reunited to its soul and exulting with the elect, it enjoys the everlasting bliss of eternity" (*Libri Miraculorum, 593 AD*).

The Church does not say whether or not Mary died. When Pius XII defined the Assumption in 1950, he simply said that Mary "**having completed the course of her earthly life**, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory" (*Munificentissimus Deus*). Whether or not she died has been a matter of speculation for centuries. Epiphanius, Bishop of Constantia, wrote the following in 377 AD: "Whether she died or was buried we know not" (*Panarion 78:2*). If she did die, it would present no conflict with Scripture, as she did not remain in the grave. We saw earlier in Genesis 3:19 that the penalty for sin was not merely death but death and bodily corruption (to dust you shall return). If Mary died it would probably have been because she identified so closely with everything that her Son did.

The doctrine of the Assumption in no way equates Mary with God. It is not an ascension, something Mary did by her own power. Rather she was assumed into heaven by the power of God. Someday all of the saved will be assumed into heaven by the power of God, "For the hour is coming when **all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth**; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

Christians have always honored those who have gone on to be with the Lord. Cities that possessed the bones of saintly people proudly proclaimed the fact. However there are no records of any city claiming possession of Mary's remains. And that is because there were none to claim.

The Rosary

The Rosary consists of the Apostle's Creed, which is a statement of Christian belief, the Lord's Prayer, which was uttered by Jesus in Luke 11:2-4, the Glory Be, which is a prayer that glorifies the Trinity, the Hail Mary, and the Mysteries.

The Hail Mary and the Mysteries are probably the two parts of the Rosary that are most misunderstood by non-Catholics. However, they are both very scriptural. In **Psalm 143:5** we read, "I remember the days of old, **I meditate on all that thou hast done**; I muse on what thy hands have wrought." Eighteen of the twenty Mysteries are meditations on the life, passion and death of Jesus Christ.

As for the Hail Mary, we begin by recognizing the uniqueness of Mary: "**Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.**" In doing this we are not exaggerating, as we use the words of God as spoken by the angel Gabriel in **Luke 1:28**. Next we utter the first recorded words of praise for Jesus in the New Testament. They come from **Luke 1:42**. Mary has gone to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Upon her arrival, Elizabeth proclaims, "Blessed art thou among women and **blessed is the fruit of thy womb**" (Jesus). Finally we ask Mary's intercession. In short, we address Mary as God does, we praise Jesus, and we ask Mary to pray for and with us.

That those in heaven are connected to us is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 12:26: "**If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.**" And in Romans 12:5: "**So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.**" Does Jesus have one body in heaven and one body on earth? Of course not, and that is why 1 Timothy 2:1 applies to all members of the body, "**that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men.**"

Consider Revelation 5:8 where heavenly intercession is spoken of: "The four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, **which are the prayers of the saints.**" The word "saints" refers to believers. In Revelation 8:3-4 we see the same thing, "Another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and **he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints** upon the golden altar before the throne. And the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God." So the prayers of the saints are identified as incense, and an angel is adding incense (his prayers) to that which the saints have offered and then **he offers it all up to God.**

In 2 Maccabees 4:34 Onias the High Priest is murdered. Later, in 15:11-16, we are told that he appeared in a vision to Judas Maccabeus along with the prophet Jeremiah, who had died centuries earlier. In verse 14 we learn that the saints in heaven can and do pray for those of us still on earth. "And Onias spoke, saying, **This is a man who loves the brethren and prays much for the people and the holy city, Jeremiah the prophet of God.**"

Because the Rosary is repetitious, Matthew 6:7 is often used in an attempt to refute it. The KJV words it this way: "But when ye pray, use not **vain repetitions**, as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Jesus did not condemn repetition – He condemned vain repetition. "Praise God" or "Amen" can be vain repetition if not said from the heart. Was Paul wrong in telling the Ephesians to "Address one another [in] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (5:19)? Are we to believe that psalms can only be recited once and that songs can only be sung once? Did God violate his own principals in Psalm 150, when in a short span of six verses we read "praise the Lord," "praise God" or "praise him" thirteen times (150:1-6)? Of course not! Look at verses 5-6 of Matthew 6. Here Jesus seems to be condemning praying aloud in public. However, a close examination reveals that He is not condemning public prayer but *hypocritical* public prayer. Likewise, in verse 7, He does not condemn repetitious prayer but *hypocritical* repetitious prayer.

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Statues and Holy Pictures

Objections to the making and veneration of holy pictures and statues are based on faulty interpretations of Scripture. Those who are opposed to such practices traditionally appeal to Exodus 20:3-5: "**You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth. You shall not bow down before them or worship them.**"

God is not prohibiting the making of pictures and statues, but the deifying and worshipping of them. Note the first and last lines of the passage. Also consider what we find in Exodus 36:8 concerning the tabernacle curtains: "The various experts who were executing the work made the dwelling with its ten sheets woven of fine linen twined, having **cherubim** embroidered on them." And Exodus 37:7, concerning the Ark of the Covenant: "**two cherubim** of beaten gold were made for the two ends of the mercy seat..."

In 1 Kings we read some of what was in Solomon's Temple: "**In the sanctuary were two cherubim**, each ten cubits high, made of olive wood" (6:23). "This rested on **twelve oxen**" (7:25). Finally, "On the panels between the frames there were **lions, oxen and cherubim**" (7:29).

Why did God ask that images be made for His Temple and the Ark of the Covenant? Do you suppose that He didn't understand His own commandment? Except for one late period, we see that not even the Old Testament Jews understood Exodus 20 to be an absolute prohibition on images. When we consider all that the Scriptures tell us, we can see that the views of that one period were an extreme and unnecessary attempt to obey a commandment. We see this same sort of thing happening in Matthew 12:10, when Jesus is accused of violating the Law because he healed on the Sabbath. The spirit of the Law was abandoned for the letter of the Law.

Pictures and statues of saints are valued in the same way that pictures of friends and family are. They are not idols, but visible reminders of what they represent. For idolatry to exist, a person must worship something or think of it as if it were God. A man who kisses a picture of his wife and children is not practicing idolatry. He is merely expressing love for his family. The same applies to pictures and statues of saints. Idolatry is an interior disposition. It is wrong to judge interior motives by what we think we see.

The lives of the saints are inspirational. Their images remind us of their testimony, which can encourage us in our own walk with God. In the early Church, when 99% of the people couldn't read and there were no readily available texts, statues, pictures and stained glass windows were the common man's Bible.

If Exodus 20 were to be taken in the strictest sense, just think what it would mean. Not only could you not have images of saints, but also no pictures of friends or family, no statues of George Washington, no paintings of Martin Luther, and no picture Bibles or dolls for children. After all, if the Bible strictly prohibits the making of images, then you can't do it for any reason.

The idea that the early Christians refrained from making images is a myth that has been refuted by archaeology. There are a number of examples that remain from the first centuries. The Catacombs were covered with paintings of the saints. One notable example of a sacred object being venerated in the early Church can be found in the city of Herculaneum. Herculaneum and Pompeii were destroyed by an eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in the year 79. Herculaneum was totally buried and was only uncovered in modern times. In one of the houses archeologists found a kneeler that was placed in front of what was once a cross or crucifix. Eusebius talks of color portraits of Peter, Paul and Jesus that remained to his own time (324 AD). He also mentions a statue of Jesus and the woman cured of a hemorrhage (Mark 5:25-34). He relates that the statue was in front of the woman's home (*The History of the Church* 7:18). Now if such practices are wrong but were common in the first century, why is there no condemnation of them in the New Testament? Certainly such a blasphemy would not have been overlooked.

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Scapulars Medals and Relics

Many non-Catholics view the use of scapulars, medals and relics as idolatrous. They liken them to talismans or good-luck charms. Unfortunately this notion comes from a serious misunderstanding of what the Church teaches about the use of these articles.

The scapular was originally a part of a monk's habit. It was a narrow piece of cloth that was worn over the shoulders. In the 13th century lay people began placing themselves under the spiritual direction of the different monastic orders. They were called Third Order members. To show that they were associated with a particular community (Franciscans, Dominicans etc.) they would wear the scapular of that order. It was not always practical or convenient to wear the full scapular in daily life. Hence, the smaller modern day version came into being. This consists of two small squares of woolen cloth joined by strings and hung around the neck.

In one way, having a scapular devotion is similar to being a sports fan. A sports fan will often wear clothing with the colors or logo of his favorite team. Wearing the team's colors is not an act of idolatry. It is an act of devotion to the team it represents. Likewise wearing a scapular is not an act of idolatry. It is an act of devotion to the spirituality of the monastic order it represents. Those who wish to wear the scapular should be enrolled in it by the proper religious authority. Upon enrollment, members agree to a particular prayer discipline. As a result they share in the prayers of the community.

But critics will point to Mary's promise concerning the brown scapular of Mount Carmel as proof of idolatry. However, they only quote it in part and thus miss its meaning. They focus on the line that reads: "Whoever dies in this garment, will not suffer everlasting fire." The promise must be read in its entirety and in the light of Catholic teaching. The full text is as follows: "Take, beloved son, this scapular of thy order as a badge of my confraternity and for thee and all Carmelites a special sign of grace; whoever dies in this garment, will not suffer everlasting fire. It is the sign of salvation, a safeguard in dangers, a pledge of peace and of the covenant."

Note that Mary refers to the scapular as a "*special sign of grace*." The individual, as a result of prayer, receives grace. It is grace that enables us to live the Christian life and attain salvation. Thus, whoever dies in this garment [assuming that he remains faithful due to the grace received] will not suffer everlasting fire.

The Church has always been careful to point out that no religious article is miraculous in itself and that salvation always depends upon the life of the wearer. Christians have been using medals since the earliest centuries. A second century medal has been found with the images of the apostles Peter and Paul. Examples of other holy medals have been found in the catacombs. Medals are coin-like objects made to commemorate persons, places, historical events or the mysteries of the faith. Medals serve as reminders of what they portray. They serve much the same purpose as the reminders of God worn by the Israelites in Numbers 15:37-40. There we read; "The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the people of Israel, and bid them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put upon the tassel of each corner a cord of blue; and it shall be to you a tassel to **look upon and remember all the commandments of the Lord**'."

Relics are the remains or belongings of saints. From the earliest times, miracles have been associated with their use. God chooses to work through them to testify to the holiness of the individuals they came from. The use of relics is firmly rooted in Scripture. In Mark 5:25 the woman with the hemorrhage was cured after touching Jesus' garment. In Acts 19:12 we see that aprons and handkerchiefs touched by Paul were used to perform healings and exorcisms. Finally in 2 Kings 13:20-21 we find a dead man coming to life after touching the bones of the prophet Elisha.

The early Church also venerated relics. In *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, written around 155 AD, we see how Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was arrested and martyred for the Faith. After his martyrdom the authorities sought to deny the Christians his remains. Paragraph 17 relates it this way: "He [Satan] therefore proceeded to do his best to arrange that at least we should not get possession of his mortal remains, although numbers of us were anxious to do this **and to claim our share in the hallowed relics**."

When used properly, scapulars, medals and relics can become a means of enriching our spiritual life and bringing us closer to God.

Call No Man Father

"**Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.** Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:9-12).

This passage is often quoted in opposition to the practice of calling priests father. However, Jesus is dealing with a much different issue. He is pointing out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. In verses 6 and 7 which immediately precede the rejection of the titles of honor, Jesus explains in what sense His rejection is meant: "**and they love the place of honor** at feasts and the best seats in the Synagogues, and salutations in the market places, and being called rabbi." Here Jesus is commenting on their superiority complexes. They have effectively set God aside and put themselves in His place; thus the comments on being humbled and being exalted (see also verses 12-36).

Many times in the Gospels Jesus refers to our earthly fathers as well as our Heavenly Father. If the command to call no one on earth father were in the strict literal sense, He would not have done so. See Matthew 10:37, 15:4, 19:5, 19:19 and 19:29; also Luke 12:53 and 14:26. Similarly, we would not be commanded to "Honor your **father** and mother" (Exodus 20:12).

Jesus didn't object to titles, but to the way they were used. Paul calls himself the father of the Corinthians. "I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. **For I became your father in Christ Jesus** through the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:14-15).

Father Mitch Pacwa points out that "There are 144 occasions in the New Testament when the title of father is used for someone other than God. It is applied to the patriarchs of Israel, the fathers of families, to Jewish leaders and to Christian leaders" (*Call no Man Father*, This Rock January 1991).

Bible Christians call their ministers "Pastor." Pastor means shepherd. In John 10:14-16 Jesus says, "**I am the good shepherd.** I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, **one shepherd.**" If we reason that we cannot call a priest Father because we "have one Father who is in heaven," then can we not also reason that we cannot call a minister Pastor because there is only "one Shepherd?"

God is Father and Jesus is Shepherd in the ultimate sense. Church leaders are shepherds and fathers in a lesser sense. Why else would Peter say in 1 Peter 5:2-4, "Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when **the chief Shepherd** is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory." The term "Chief Shepherd" indicates that there are subordinate shepherds. One scripture verse clarifies another, and so it is with the different verses pertaining to the title of father.

When assuming these titles in the proper sense we share, in a subordinate way, in the priesthood of Jesus, working for the furtherance of God's kingdom. As practiced by the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, however, it was a way of exalting self while pretending to serve God.

Isolating and grabbing hold of one scripture verse is risky. It can be misleading or even dangerous. Even an honest and well-intentioned Christian can subconsciously bend a verse to suit his or her own needs. It is vitally important to understand the Bible as God intended. St. Augustine once said, "Not what one scripture says, but what all of Scripture says." We can take it a step further and say, not what Scripture says but what Scripture means.

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The Rapture

"The Rapture" is a term that is used by Bible Christians to describe the belief that at some point in time Jesus will come, and all true believers will literally rise up and meet Him in the air and be whisked away to heaven. All non-believers will remain on the earth to be dealt with later. The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus will come and judge the living and the dead. The righteous will be saved and the unrighteous will suffer eternal damnation. No one will be left on the earth.

Belief in such a rapture was first taught in the late 1800's. Interestingly enough there seems to be little agreement among Bible Christians as to what exactly will happen or when. One of the passages used to support belief in the Rapture is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Verse 17 says, "Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." This simply speaks about the end of the world when true believers will be saved. Paul's purpose is not to explain the judgment of the living and the dead, but rather he is assuring believers that the dead will participate in the Second Coming of Christ. Notice what the first and last verses of the passage say: **"But we would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep...therefore, comfort one another with these words."** The words "caught up in the clouds" are used to illustrate how quickly things will transform at the Second Coming of Christ: "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Matthew 24:36-44 is also used to support belief in the Rapture. It reads in part, "Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left." This means that the righteous will be saved and the unrighteous will be left for destruction (Hell). The conclusion of the passage (verses 45-51) makes this clear: **"Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom his master has set over his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.** Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, **and will punish him, and put him with the hypocrites. There men will weep and gnash their teeth."** Whenever the term "weep and gnash their teeth" appears in Scripture, it refers to those who are in hell.

Note that verse 45 begins with the words "who then." This shows us that we are still on the same subject as we were in verses 36-44. This is important because it illustrates that on the appointed day the righteous are being saved and the unrighteous are going to hell. Keeping that in mind, who does that leave on earth? No one!

If we combine all of the verses of Scripture that deal with this issue we find that the Rapture is simply not possible. Consider the following:

Jesus will be coming back to earth one more time not two. The Rapture requires a second coming, (the Rapture) and a third coming (the end of the world). Some try to get past this by claiming that the Rapture is not the Second Coming because we meet Jesus in the air and not on the earth. But even the verses used to support the Rapture such as 1 Thessalonians 4:15 speak of it as **"the coming"**, which indicates that it is a coming and a singular event at that.

1 Thessalonians 4:15: "For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until **the coming** of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep."

Matthew 24:27: "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will **the coming** of the Son of man."

1 Corinthians 15:22-23: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at **His coming** those who belong to Christ."

1 Thessalonians 2:19: "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at **His coming?**"

Jesus must stay in heaven until that time. That leaves no time for the Rapture before the end of the world.

Acts 3:19-21: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ appointed for you, **Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from old.**"

When He comes He will be coming all the way down to the earth. He won't be hovering over it, as the Rapture requires.

Acts 1:9-11: "And when He had said this, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, **will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.**"

When He comes He will be coming to judge the living and the dead. Once again if all are going to be judged that would leave no one on earth.

Matthew 25:31-46: "**When the Son of man comes in His glory**, and all the angels with him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will place the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at His right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'...Then He will say to those at His left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'...**And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.**"

In conclusion the Scriptures teach us the following:

- Jesus will be coming back to earth one more time not two.
- Jesus must stay in heaven until that time.
- When He comes He will be coming all the way down to the earth.
- When He comes He will be coming to judge the living and the dead.

In John 16:13, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would lead His apostles into all truth. And yet we find no support for the Rapture in the scriptures. Likewise, the writings of the early Church fathers are silent on the issue. Since some of them were contemporaries of the apostles, we can reasonably assume that they would have known about the Rapture if it were a part of the deposit of faith. The Rapture is also not mentioned in any of the creeds. As we noted earlier, the idea of the Rapture was first taught in the late 1800's. If the apostles and their successors were ignorant of the Rapture for eighteen centuries, it would mean that Jesus lied in John 16. That in itself rules out the Rapture.

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Abstinence

The concept of sexual abstinence is not as popular as it once was. Tragically there are even some in the Church who seem to have little or no regard for it. They choose to follow the lead of popular culture rather than the teachings of their faith. Even so, most men and women believe, at least subconsciously, that fornication (sex outside of marriage) is wrong.

The standard defense for fornication is usually a variation of the following: “There’s nothing wrong with sleeping with **someone you really love**. “ Curiously enough the same men who say this to their girlfriends say the opposite to their teenage daughters. If a man really thought it was okay he wouldn’t object to his daughters participating. The idea that it is okay for men but not for women – known as the “Double Standard” – is nonsensical. It is just a weak excuse for doing what is wrong.

It is obvious that women also realize that fornication is wrong. When a woman is challenged on the morality of sleeping with her boyfriend, it is not unusual for her to say: “It’s not like I am sleeping with a lot of men!” This statement is totally irrelevant but very telling. Whether or not an act is right or wrong has nothing to do with how many times it is done. I think we could all agree that murder is wrong. Can the person who has killed one person claim that he is not a murderer because he didn’t kill ten people? Of course not! Killing ten people is certainly worse than killing one person but killing one is still murder. An act is wrong because of its intrinsic nature. Repetition just makes it worse.

A woman could only think that fornicating with a large number of men is wrong if she first thought that fornicating with one is wrong. The claim about not sleeping with a lot of men is just a weak excuse for doing what is wrong.

Of course to **really love someone** you have to really know them. This takes time, effort and a clear mind. The promise of sex at the end of a date can cloud one’s mind. This is not at all conducive to a couple getting to really know each other. Perhaps you might be saying, “But I really do love him/her.” If that’s the case you shouldn’t be afraid to proclaim it publicly and to commit yourself to him/her which, by the way, is what we call marriage. Which do you think is an indication of “**really loving somebody**” – sleeping with them or committing your life to them?

Sex is addictive. With each new partner less discernment is used. It becomes easier and easier to cross the line. The act, rather than being a profound expression of love becomes an end unto itself. Sexual desire easily becomes lust and the other person becomes more an object and less a person. We think only of the moment and ignore the long term effects of our actions.

Everywhere you look fornication is portrayed as normal behavior. Movies, television, magazines, and so called school health clinics reinforce the idea that sex outside of marriage is natural and even expected. But ideas lead to actions. And actions have consequences. Sexual actions have consequences on a number of levels. They affect us physically, psychologically and spiritually.

Physical Effects – There are some thirty-seven sexually transmitted diseases (STD’S). Some of them are incurable and some are deadly. Society’s answer to this problem is “Safe Sex.” Just give people condoms and they can go about having safe sex thus eliminating unwanted pregnancies and deadly STD’s. Unfortunately this solution has more to do with ideology than reality. “Focus on the Family” noted in a recent newspaper ad the results of 25 years of “Safe Sex” ideology. They wrote:

- Ten percent of all 15 to 19 year-old females become pregnant each year (*Kids Having Kids*, A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing, June 1996, p 1).
- More than 80 percent of pregnant girls under age 17 who give birth and keep their babies end up on welfare, costing society a staggering \$21 billion a year (ibid, 20).
- Three million new cases of STD’s among teens are reported each year (Division of STD Prevention. *The Challenge of STD Prevention in the United States*, available at http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/dstd/STD_Prevention_in_the_United_States.htm).
- Up to 29 percent of sexually active adolescent girls have been found to be infected with Chlamydia (Alan Guttmacher Institute, Facts in Brief (Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the United States) Sept. 1993.

- A study of sexually active college women showed that 43 percent acquired HPV infection within a 3-year period (Ho, Gloria Y.F., et. al., “*Natural History of Cervicovaginal Papillomavirus infection in Young Women*,” The New England Journal of Medicine, February 12, 1998, Volume 338, Number 7, p 442).

The physical effects of sex are not limited to just pregnancy and STD’s. According to Health Canada: “You are more likely to develop cervical cancer if you have multiple sexual partners or if you become sexually active at an early age. Early sexual activity is believed to increase the risk because during puberty, cervical tissue undergoes many changes that might make the area more vulnerable to damage.”

In an article on Chastity, Mary Beth Bonnacci tells about yet another physical effect. She writes:

Hormonally, sexual arousal and intercourse set off a chain reaction designed to keep married couples bound together. Women experience a flood of oxytocin – the same hormone which they produce in labor and in nursing a baby. Oxytocin causes a woman to be forgetful, decreases her ability to think rationally – and causes an incredibly strong emotional attachment to form with the man she is with.

In other words the woman bonds to the man in a way similar to the way she would bond to her child. Consequently, she loses her ability to discern and may end up marrying or moving in with a man whom she would otherwise reject. This can cause her and any future children a great deal of pain. Even if this doesn’t happen a breakup under these circumstances can be especially devastating.

Psychological Effects – It is not unusual for individuals who engage in casual sex to become plagued with regrets. The Heritage Foundation found that about 25% of sexually active girls say they are depressed all, most, or a lot of the time while only 8% of girls who are not sexually active feel the same way. Low self esteem, promiscuity and even suicide are other problems that can develop.

Spiritual Effects – Christianity has always taught that fornication is illicit behavior. Some try to get around this by saying: “Isn’t God a God of Love? Doesn’t He love us just the way we are?” Yes God loves us but that doesn’t mean that He approves of everything we do. The same Bible that tells us of God’s incredible love for us in John 3:16 also calls fornication evil in Mark 7:21-23. And it’s also the same Bible that tells us that fornicators will be outside of the city [heaven] in Revelation 22:15. You see, God is a loving Father, but He is also a just judge.

For those who have succumbed to the addictive nature of fornication, all is not lost. God’s grace can restore you. Not only does God offer us forgiveness but healing as well. Indeed this has been the case for many. As the Scripture says: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). For more information, arrange a meeting with your pastor (if you don’t have one find one).

Recent studies illustrate the superiority of Christian Sexual ethics. One study found that non married men and women report significantly higher rates of sexual dysfunction than do married men and women (Sexual Dysfunction in the United States, Prevalence and Predictors, Edward O. Laumann, et. al.).

Another study found that married couples have the best and most satisfying sex (both physically and emotionally). The study further found that enjoyment was greatest when there was only one sexual partner in a lifetime (The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States, Edward O. Laumann, et. al., table 10.5, p 364).

Abstinence before marriage and fidelity after marriage is the only sure way to avoid STD’s. Combine that with the results of our two surveys and it is easy to see that adhering to Christian sexual ethics is the best way to achieve safe sex and great sex. And isn’t that what everybody wants?

Contraception

Discussions on subjects such as the Trinity or the Eucharist can usually be kept on the intellectual level. But when it comes to a subject like contraception a person's position may be influenced by forces beyond mere intellect. That's because what people believe on this issue can have a profound impact on their lives. Consequently, people aren't always willing to consider the arguments against contraception.

Up until 1930, all Christian bodies taught that contraception was illicit. At that time the Anglican Church decided that it was permissible for "grave reasons in a marriage." It wasn't long before "grave reasons in a marriage" became any reason. And that's pretty much the way it is today for most of Protestantism.

Scripture, the Early Church Fathers and even the Founders of Protestantism all condemned contraception. It had always been referred to as "onanism." The word onanism is derived from the name Onan. Onan was an Old Testament figure whose brother had died. According to the Levirate Law, if a married man died before fathering any children, his brother or nearest relative was duty bound to marry his wife in order to give the dead man descendants.

For selfish reasons Onan did not want to do this. Consequently, he spilled his seed on the ground rather than take a chance that his brother's wife would get pregnant. The Lord was so displeased that He killed Onan for "**what he had done**" (Genesis 38:6-10). Onan's sin was that he interrupted intercourse to prevent procreation. In other words he contracepted.

Some say that Onan's sin was not that he contracepted but that he failed to provide his brother with offspring. This is hardly the case. Note that the text says that he was slain for what he did (spill his seed), not for what he didn't do (provide his brother with offspring). If the opposite were true why would it be necessary to describe Onan's actions so explicitly? Why not just say, he refused to give his brother offspring?

Further evidence is found in the New Testament. In Galatians 5:2, Revelation 9:21, 18:23, 21:8, and 22:15, sorcerers or sorcery is condemned. Upon reading these passages, the average reader might associate these terms merely with the practice of witchcraft. But the Greek words used in these passages mean more than that. The two Greek words used are pharmakeia (φαρμακεία) and pharmakeus (φαρμακεύς). Pharmakeia is defined as: medication ("pharmacy"), i.e. by extension magic (literally or figuratively): sorcery, witchcraft. The definition of pharmakeus is even more explicit: a drug, i.e. spell giving potion; a druggist ("pharmacist") or poisoner, i.e. by extension, a magician or sorcerer. Note that both definitions give precedence to terms having to do with drugs or medication.

What type of medicine would be likened to witchcraft or sorcery? It certainly couldn't be the general use of medication for healing. It would have to be a destructive application, something like contraception. The writings of Hippolytus show us that contraception was practiced by some in the early Church. He writes: "Whence women, reputed believers, began to resort to drugs for producing sterility, and to gird themselves round, so to expel what was being conceived on account of their not wishing to have a child either by a slave or by any paltry fellow, for the sake of their family and excessive wealth. Behold, into how great impiety that lawless one has proceeded, by inculcating adultery and murder at the same time!" (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9:7, 225 AD).

Clement of Alexandria, another of the Early Church Fathers is one of many who condemn the act of contraception. He writes: "Because of its divine institution for the propagation of man, the seed is not to be vainly ejaculated, nor is it to be damaged, nor is it to be wasted" (*The Instructor of Children* 2:10:91:2, 191 AD).

The Church recognizes that there are two dimensions to the conjugal act (sexual intercourse). These are the procreative (bringing children into the world) and the unitive (expressing love and bonding). By nature these cannot be separated. Just as every conjugal act must be an expression of love it also must be open to the possibility of life. The conjugal act must be motivated by love, tenderness and respect. It should never be reduced to an act of self satisfaction.

Some think of the Church's stance as being out of touch or impractical. But is it? The prohibition on contraception is not merely a religious tenet. It is based on the Natural Law. The Natural Law is not a written law. It is something that is programmed into our nature. All living things have a nature. When they live in accord with their nature they flourish. When they don't it creates problems. For instance, if we don't get enough sleep and the right kind of food our physical

health will suffer. This is not a matter of opinion or religious belief. It's a fact of life. The same principle applies to the moral and psychological realms. Simply stated, the things we do have an affect on the way we think. And the way we think can change who we are.

Experience has shown that ignoring the Church's teaching on contraception has consequences. The use of contraceptives has made the sexual revolution possible. If sexual intercourse can be separated from procreation why reserve it for marriage? Self control is no longer necessary. After repeating a few obligatory phrases men are allowed to indulge themselves. Women become objects to be used rather than partners to be cherished. Predictably adultery and sexually transmitted diseases have increased dramatically.

In his book "*50 Questions on the Natural Law*" Charles Rice explains how abortion and euthanasia naturally flow from the contraceptive mentality. On page 256 he writes:

Abortion: Contraception is the prevention of life, while abortion is the taking of life. But both involve the willful separation of the unitive and procreative aspects of sex. The contraceptive mentality tends to require abortion as a backup. And many so-called contraceptives are abortifacient in that they cause the destruction of the developing human being.

Euthanasia: Once the contraceptive ethic and abortion accustomed people to the idea that burdensome lives are not worth living, the way was clear for euthanasia for the aged and the "useless." If man is arbiter of when life begins, he will predictably make himself the arbiter of when life ends.

As Mr. Rice notes, many contraceptives are abortifacient. Abortifacients don't prevent conception. They work by creating a hostile environment on the wall of the uterus. The fertilized egg cannot implant and is aborted. The IUD works this way as does Norplant, Depovera, and occasionally the Pill. Abortions caused in this manner far outnumber abortions performed in clinics.

So what does this all mean? Are we supposed to have babies until we die? No, not at all. The Church recognizes that there are natural means of regulating births that are consistent with nature and Divine Revelation. *Natural Family Planning* (NFP) has been shown to be reliable in controlling family size. And it does so while respecting the spouses and the conjugal act. It also does not carry with it all of the dangerous side effects associated with contraceptives. Side effects can include liver disease, blood clots, strokes, heart disease, migraines, cervical cancer and breast cancer.

A scientific survey conducted in 2000 under the direction of Dr. Robert Lerner of the University of Chicago showed that couples who use NFP have a 0.2% divorce rate, attend church more often and have happier, stronger marriages. With NFP intimacy and communication are enhanced. The family is made stronger and consequently society is made stronger. Not only is the Church's position not out of touch or impractical, it is the solution for much of what ails us. For more information on NFP contact the Couple to Couple League (www.ccli.org).

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Natural Family Planning

Natural Family Planning (NFP) seems to be the Catholic Church's best-kept secret. It's not that the Church wants it to be a secret. The message just doesn't seem to get out. NFP is the licit alternative to contraception, or birth control as it is usually referred to. NFP is just as effective as any method of contraception and it has the advantage of causing no harm to the woman's body with side effects and complications.

Rather than tamper with a woman's body, NFP works with it. NFP is not the Rhythm Method. The Rhythm Method is dependant on a regular cycle. Since many women don't have a regular cycle this method is not reliable by itself. NFP measures and senses the approach of ovulation by monitoring a woman's basal body temperature, cervical mucus and the timing of her cycle. By charting a woman's fertile times a couple can know on what days of the month she can get pregnant. If their goal is to limit family size they would abstain from intercourse on these days.

The Church has always taught that every act of sexual intercourse must be open to life. However, since times of infertility are a part of God's design, it is perfectly acceptable to have intercourse during these times. But some ask, what's the difference? Why would God care if we practiced NFP or used contraception? The result is the same.

Contraception is wrong because it separates sexual intercourse from its procreative function. Thus, sex can become an end unto itself. Making love should never be reduced to a means of relieving oneself. NFP, on the other hand, respects the procreative function. Couples become aware of and develop a respect for the woman's fertility. Surveys have shown that the divorce rate for NFP couples is between 2 and 4% while in the general population it's 50%.

Sex is a gift from God and it needs to be respected and used in accord with its design and purpose. Let me illustrate my point with an example. Suppose you were having dinner at a friend's house. After the main course your friend brings out some cheesecake. You really love the taste of cheesecake but you don't want the calories. The proper thing to do is to pass on the cheesecake. There is nothing wrong with not eating cheesecake. However, it would be wrong to take some cheesecake, chew it, enjoy the taste, and then spit it out to avoid the calories.

If you abstain from sex it's like not eating the cheesecake. If you contracept it's like chewing the cheesecake and spitting it out. In both cases you have performed the first part of what is by nature a two part process. The purpose of food is to taste good and to nourish. The purpose of sex is to communicate love and to produce offspring.

Some couples may struggle with periodic abstinence. But as with most things perseverance produces results. NFP data suggests that periodic abstinence increases passion and revitalizes romance. A study commissioned by the "Family of the Americas Foundation," showed that NFP couples have more frequent intercourse than those in the general public. NFP also enhances communication. A comparison of both methods illustrates the superiority of NFP.

Contraception

1. 97% effective
2. Sex is primary focus
3. Dangerous side effects
4. Promotes selfishness
5. Can result in abortion
6. Can weaken a marriage (Higher divorce rate)
7. Inconsistent with Scripture
8. Costs thousands of dollars over a lifetime
9. Less frequent sex (on average)

Natural Family Planning

1. 99% effective
2. Relationship is primary focus
3. No side effects
4. Promotes mutual responsibility
5. Never results in abortion
6. Strengthens marriages (Lower divorce rate)
7. Consistent with Scripture
8. Costs nothing once learned
9. More frequent sex (on average)

Couples interested in learning more about NFP should contact the Couple to Couple League of Cincinnati (www.ccli.org) or the NFP office in their diocese.

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Marriage

In recent years the institution of Marriage has increasingly come under attack. Some consider it to be an outdated relic from the past. Some think of it as an unnecessary formality while still others see it as something that **“was created for the benefit of men at the expense of women.”**

Isn't it true, critics will ask, that women are required to vow blind obedience to their husbands? No they aren't, at least not in the Catholic Church. To begin with the Church does not allow people to write their own vows. Marriage is an ecclesial affair, not a private or personal one. Vows are not to be reduced to subjective feelings or ideas but rather are objective formulae of revealed truth. While there may be some slight differences from country to country, Catholic vows essentially consist of the following:

I, _____, take you, _____, for my lawful husband / wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

The “blind obedience” objection is based on a misunderstanding of Ephesians 5:22 which reads in part: **“Wives, be subject to your husbands.”** If we only focus on verse 22 the critics seem to have a case. However, if we look at the entire passage we come to a very different conclusion.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. **Wives be subject to your husbands as to the Lord.** For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, His body, and is Himself its Savior. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. **Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,** that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so **husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.** He who loves his wife loves himself. **For no man ever hates his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church,** because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one." This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church. **However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband** (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Note that Paul starts off his comments with the words: **“Be subject to one another”** – so a husband and wife are to submit to one another. However, the manner in which they are to submit to one another differs. In verses 22-24 Paul explains **how a wife is to submit.** In verses 25-30 he explains **how a husband is to submit.**

Now it is true that Scripture assigns the husband a leadership role. But this does not entitle him to be a dictator or taskmaster. **Jesus makes it clear that to mistreat others is to mistreat Him (Matthew 25:40).** The leadership role that God has in mind here is more along the lines of what the military would call a “Point Man.” When soldiers go out on patrol in a war zone the point man literally leads the others. If they walk into an ambush he gets the brunt of the attack. It is a position that could require him to give his life for those he leads.

Keep in mind that **the husband vows to love his wife as Christ loved the Church.** And how did Christ love the Church? He healed the sick, fed the hungry and He even washed the feet of His apostles. In a final act of love and humility He willingly submitted to torture and death on a cross so that we, his bride, might have eternal life.

St. John Chrysostom advised husbands to “Love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church... Take the same provident care for her as Christ takes for the Church. Yes, even if it should be necessary for you to give your life for her, yes, and to be cut into pieces ten thousand times and to endure and to undergo any suffering whatever – do not refuse it” (Homily 20 on Ephesians circa 400 AD).

Jesus said in Matthew 20:28 that **he came to serve and not to be served.** Likewise, husbands are to be servants. You see **the husband only gets to be the leader if he is a servant. God gives no man a license to abuse his wife in any way.** Indeed the Vatican has proclaimed: "The battle of the sexes and, particularly, the subjugation of women is the result of original sin and not of God's original design for creation" (*Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*).

A husband's leadership also includes having the final say in instances where there is an unresolved disagreement. This is necessary to ensure harmony in the family and should present no problem as long as the husband follows Christ's example as explained above. The husband's role is not a regal privilege but a necessary responsibility. This sort of arrangement is not unique to marriage. Jesus sets the same standard for Church leaders. In Matthew 20:26-27 He tells His apostles: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave." Accordingly the popes have referred to themselves as the servant of the servants of God. All Christians are given a similar command in Philippians 2:3: "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves." If a man is obligated to have this attitude toward strangers, think how much more this would apply to the woman he has committed his life to.

But what if a husband neglects his duties? In his encyclical entitled "On Christian Marriage," Pope Pius XI wrote the following: "If the husband neglects his duty, it falls to the wife to take his place in directing the family" (no. 28).

What if the husband turns out to be a tyrant? Does the "for better, for worse" clause require a wife to accept her situation and make the best of it? The simple answer is no, of course not. The Church actually suggests that the two should separate. Once again Pope Pius XI: "For in certain circumstances **imperfect separation of the parties is allowed... in order to safeguard the education of the children and the well being of the family and to remove all those evils which threaten the married persons, the children and the state**" (no. 89).

A note of warning: This essay addresses the question of marital responsibilities in general terms. It should not be used to justify any drastic action. Such decisions should be made only after speaking with a competent priest or counselor.

Marriage requires a great deal of work and dedication. That is why Jesus raised marriage to the level of a sacrament. In the sacrament of matrimony the couple receives graces which specifically enable them to live the married life. "I can do all things in Him [Jesus] who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Some are of the opinion that couples who live together can be just as committed as married couples? Surely everyone is entitled to an opinion. But opinions don't change reality. And reality is where we live. On average, couples who live together (cohabitation) fare much worse than married couples do. Sixty percent of cohabiting couples will eventually marry. Unfortunately, the probability of divorce for cohabiters is 200% greater than those who did not cohabit prior to marriage (Family Institute, Duquesne University). Furthermore, a study following more than 11,000 British children from birth through age thirty-three concluded that "a parental divorce during childhood or adolescence continues to have a negative effect [on mental health] when a person is in his or her twenties or thirties" (Andrew J. Cherlin, P. L. Chase-Lansdale, C. McRae, "Effects of Parental Divorce on Mental Health Throughout the Life Course," *American Sociological Review* 63 (1998), 239-249).

Marriage is an essential part of a stable society. Married fathers are, on average, more committed to their children than are unmarried fathers. Studies show that marriage contributes positively to the emotional, physical and economic health of men, women and children and thus to the culture as a whole.

Cohabitors [who eventually marry] exhibit lower levels of marital interaction and higher levels of marital discord and instability than non-Cohabitors. Drug and alcohol abuse was more likely to appear among Cohabitors than among non-Cohabitors. Physical aggression is more prevalent among Cohabitors. Cohabitors are three times more likely to engage in extramarital affairs. Economically, cohabitation appears to reinforce discrimination on the basis of gender since recent studies indicate that women contribute between 65-70% of the financial resources in these unions. Additionally, women Cohabitors indicate that they undertake an undue proportion of the duties and responsibilities necessary to maintain these households (Family Institute, Duquesne University).

Marriage is about commitment, cohabitation is about convenience. When we consider all of the facts we can see that cohabitation and not marriage "**was created for the benefit of men at the expense of women.**"

Divorce and Remarriage

It is a sad fact of life that divorce has become an all-too-common occurrence. Many marriages that began with joy and hope end in bitter separation. Unfortunately, the Church is not immune to this problem.

As with marriage, many view the Church's position on divorce and remarriage as archaic and unrealistic. But the Church's position is nothing more than the direct teaching of Christ. In Luke 16:18 we hear Jesus saying: **"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery."**

Paul says essentially the same thing in Romans 7:2-3: "Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, **she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is still alive.** But if her husband dies she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress."

When confronted with this evidence, those who object will often turn to Matthew 5:31 where Jesus says: "It was also said, 'whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, **except on the ground of unchastity,** makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

And so the reasoning goes, if my spouse cheats on me I am free to divorce and remarry. But that is not the case. The Greek word that is translated as "unchastity" is *porneia* (πορνεία) which can mean harlotry, adultery, incest, or fornication. In determining how Jesus uses the word there are a couple of things we need to consider. First of all you cannot have Jesus contradicting himself by making no exceptions for one group (Luke 16:18) and then allowing them for another (Matthew 5:31).

Second, let's look at this logically. If the critics are correct in their interpretation of Matthew 5:31 then divorce for *any reason* is permissible. Think about it, if a couple wants a divorce all that would be necessary is for one or both of them to go out and have an affair. In effect God would be promoting adultery. This might be a good way to fill the church on Sunday morning, but somehow I don't think it would be very pleasing to God. The Church has always seen the word unchastity as referring to an invalid marriage such as a couple who are living together. They can divorce or *separate* because they were never married in the first place.

Marriage is a bond established by God. Jesus revealed this to us in Mark 10:6-9: "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. **What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder**"

These may be tough words but they are the words of Christ Himself. While it is important to understand what they mean, it is also important to understand what they don't mean. It is true that the bonds of a valid marriage can never be broken short of death. However, there may be occasions when it becomes necessary for a couple to separate, for instance in the case of an abusive spouse. If there is any threat to the well being of one of the spouses or the children, a separation would constitute the best course of action. However, even in such a case remarriage would not be possible. Paul makes this very clear in his first letter to the Corinthians where he writes: "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (**but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband**) and that the husband should not divorce the wife" (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

In certain cases there can be exceptions. If a problem was so serious that divorce was the only solution, there is a good chance that it existed before the marriage. This could prevent the marriage from being valid. If such is the case, the Church can annul the marriage and the innocent party would then be free to remarry.

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Annulment

Quite often you will hear an annulment described as a Catholic divorce. But an annulment and a divorce are two different things. Divorce dissolves a marriage while an annulment is a recognition that a sacramental marriage (valid in the eyes of the Church) never existed. The Church does recognize, however, that a civil marriage (valid in the eyes of the state) did exist.

In order for a marriage to be valid in the eyes of the Church, both parties must be aware of what constitutes a sacramental marriage. They must also be free, willing and capable of entering into such a commitment. Sometimes, despite the best of intentions, a couple is deficient in one or more of these areas. It is not unusual for such a couple to be unaware of this at the time they are married. This, of course, illustrates why careful preparation before marriage is so important. Consequently, an annulment proceeding is concerned with the situation as it existed at the time the marriage took place. Subsequent events are important only insofar as they shed light on relevant conditions that may have pre-existed the marriage. If serious problems were present at the beginning of the marriage, there is a good chance that they were present before the marriage. Of course this must never be assumed. However, if such was the case it could have been an impediment to a valid marriage. The grounds necessary for an annulment can in no way be construed as a way out of a valid marriage. A valid marriage can never be annulled, **“What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder”** (Mark 10:9).

There are a number of reasons why a marriage could be declared invalid. They can be divided into two types of cases, Formal and Documentary. Within the Formal category the most practical grounds are divided into three sub categories: (1) Psychological (2) Simulation of Consent (3) Force and Fear. Under psychological grounds a variety of factors are considered. Both parties must be able to grasp and assume the responsibilities of a lifelong commitment. Both must be mature, financially responsible, free from mental illness, and possess a sufficient use of reason. Additionally, spouses must have the ability to cope with ordinary stresses. Homosexuality would also be considered under this category.

Under Simulation of Consent both parties must be open to all that marriage entails. Both must enter marriage with the intention to be faithful. Both must be open to the possibility of children. If either party excludes from the beginning any essential element of marriage, the marriage is invalid. In order for valid consent to take place you must be aware of what is required and you must agree to it internally and externally.

Under Force and Fear both parties must give their consent freely. No one should marry because of any outside threat or pressure. For example, marriage is not something to be used as an escape from abusive parents. Neither is it to be seen as a necessary result of pre-marital pregnancy.

Within the Documentary category we find two sub categories: (1) Defect of Form, and (2) Previous Bond. Concerning Defect of Form, the Catholic Church has a set of requirements for what constitutes a proper marriage ceremony. If the specified procedures are not followed, the marriage is not considered to be valid. For instance: if a couple was married by a Justice of the Peace and at least one of the parties was Catholic, the marriage would be invalid. If the marriage took place before a non-Catholic minister without the permission of the bishop, the marriage would also be invalid. As for Previous Bond, a Catholic with a previous valid marriage may not contract another marriage while the first spouse is still alive.

You do not have to worry about confronting a former spouse during the annulment process. In fact the vast majority of cases involve only the submission of paperwork by your parish priest. Also, the granting of an annulment does nothing to affect the legitimacy of any children produced by the marriage. Finally, the fee charged for an annulment does not even cover the cost of the process and is usually much lower than one would expect. If a petitioner cannot pay, the case will still go through. So cost should never be an excuse for not seeking an annulment.

In this essay I have dealt with the annulment process in general terms. Anyone considering the process should explore the subject in more detail with a parish priest.

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Abortion

There are a variety of reasons given to justify an abortion. They include such things as I can't afford a baby, a baby would interfere with my career, I have enough children, and the doctor said if we have this child it will be handicapped. We are told that every child should be a wanted child.

But does any of this really matter? The real question is not whether a child is wanted; the real question is whether or not what is growing inside the mother is a living child. If it is not a living child, a woman should be allowed to have as many abortions as she wants. However, if it is a living child, it should be allowed to live. If it is wrong to kill a ten year old because he/she is not wanted, it is wrong to kill a baby because he/she is not wanted.

Many abortion proponents will claim that a fetus is just a blob of tissue. Therefore, its elimination is no more significant than cutting and discarding ones own fingernails. Of course this raises some curious questions. If a fetus is just a blob of tissue why don't abortion proponents show pictures of this blob to debunk the arguments of pro-lifers? And why is it that abortion providers prefer that women not see their ultrasounds?

The answer to both questions is obvious. A fetus is not just a blob of tissue. When women see their ultrasounds, they realize they are carrying a baby with moving arms and legs. Consequently, they are much less likely to end its life. In an article entitled *Saved by Sonogram* which appeared in "*Christianity Today*," Mark Stricherz reported the following:

Evidence that ultrasound helps to persuade women not to abort came in an unpublished study by Eric Keroack, medical director of "A Woman's Concern," a CPC in Boston. Keroack compared two 18-month periods in the crisis pregnancy center's history and kept data only on women who expressed interest in abortion. Without a sonogram, about 60 percent of 366 tracked women had abortions. But with a sonogram, 25 percent of 434 tracked women aborted. He estimated that 125 babies were born who would otherwise have been aborted.

Abortion providers prefer to keep women ignorant of what is going on inside of them. That's because **being truthful would mean less money in their pockets**. One woman at a Dallas Planned Parenthood clinic was told that she couldn't see her ultrasound because, "That will only make it harder on you." Why would viewing a blob of tissue make it harder for a woman to deal with an abortion?

The evidence, which abortion providers are very much aware of, indicates that a pregnant woman carries within her something much more than a blob of tissue. For instance:

Immediately upon fertilization, cellular development begins. Before implantation the sex of the new life can be determined. At implantation, the new life is composed of hundreds of cells and has developed a protective hormone to prevent the mother's body from rejecting it as a foreign tissue.

At 17 days, the new life has developed its own blood cells; the placenta is a part of the new life and not of the mother. At 18 days, there are occasional pulsations of a muscle which will become the heart. At 19 days, the eyes start to develop. At 20 days, the foundation of the entire nervous system has been laid down. At 24 days, the heart has regular beats or pulsations. At 28 days, 40 pairs of muscles are developed along the trunk of the new life; arms and legs are forming.

At 30 days, there is regular blood flow within the vascular system; the ears and nasal development have begun. At 40 days, the heart energy output is reported to be almost 20% of an adults. At 42 days the skeleton is complete and the reflexes are present. At 43 days, electrical brain wave patterns can be recorded. This is usually ample evidence that "thinking" is taking place in the brain. The new life may be thought of as a thinking person. At 49 days, the baby has the appearance of a miniature doll with complete fingers, toes and ears.

At 56 days all organs are functioning - stomach, liver, kidney, brain - all systems are intact. The baby has lines in its palms. All future development of new life is simply that of refinement and increase in size

which ends with full maturity (approximately 23 years). A new life exists with all of its parts needing only nourishment. This is approximately two months before "quickening."

In the 9th & 10th week, the baby squints, swallows and retracts its tongue. In the 11th & 12th week its arms and legs move, the baby sucks its thumb, inhales and exhales amniotic fluid, and nails begin appearing. At 16 weeks (four months), genital organs can be clearly differentiated; the baby grasps with its hands, swims, kicks and turns somersaults (still not felt by mother).

At 18 weeks, the vocal cords work. The baby can cry. At 20 weeks, hair appears on the head; weight - one pound; height - 12 inches. A fetus (little one, child, baby) is essentially no different at fertilization, ten weeks, twenty weeks or thirty weeks. A person is a person, no matter how small.

(Adapted from "Diary of an Unborn Child" Knights of Columbus 1993)

Babies in the womb are responsive to pain and touch and cold and sound and light. They drink their amniotic fluid, more if it is artificially sweetened, less if it is given an unpleasant taste. They get hiccups and suck their thumbs. They wake and sleep (A. Liley, *A Case Against Abortion*, Liberal Studies Whitcombe & Tombs, Ltd., 1971).

Some say that we shouldn't tell a woman what to do with her body. Fair enough. But we are not talking about the woman's body. We are talking about the baby's body. In an abortion a human baby is forced to die against its will.

Others justify abortion by claiming that babies in the womb are not viable. They define viable as being capable of independent existence. By that definition a one year old baby is not viable and neither are some handicapped adults. Such a standard should not be used as an excuse to end a life. A baby in the womb is fully alive and fully human and therefore should be allowed to live.

Abortion providers not only victimize babies but their mothers as well. It is not unusual for an abortion to cause physical complications. Complications such as infections, bleeding, blood clots, perforation of the uterus or bowel, and many others. Depression and lifelong guilt (Post-Abortive Syndrome) are also not uncommon.

Women who have abortions have a higher rate of premature births with subsequent pregnancies. When a baby is born full term the cervix is soft and opens relatively easy. However, before the baby is full term the cervix is firm and must be forced open to perform an abortion. This can damage the cervix leaving it weaker for future pregnancies. It is true that measures are usually taken to avoid such damage but they are not always successful. Full term delivery and adoption is still the safest route for the mother who carries an "unwanted" baby.

But what about women who become pregnant through rape? First of all, such instances are rare. Secondly, Re-victimizing the woman and killing her child is not the answer. As we saw earlier, abortion carries with it many dangers, both physical and psychological. Many rape victims who have had abortions end up being more depressed over the abortion than the rape.

Professor Stephen Krason points out that "psychological studies have shown that, when given the proper support, most pregnant rape victims progressively change their attitudes about their unborn child from something repulsive to someone who is innocent and uniquely worthwhile" (*Abortion: Politics, Morality, and the Constitution*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984, p. 284).

Unfortunately, all too many of our elected officials support the abortion industry in the interest of getting elected. They portray themselves as caring and compassionate but in reality they are nothing more than eloquent barbarians. They knowingly and willingly cooperate in the business of misleading and victimizing young women. What a sad turn of events. At one time kissing babies would get you votes. Now killing them does.

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Women's Ordination

While there are Catholics who favor ordaining women to the priesthood, it is important to note that the driving force behind this movement comes from the more radical elements in the Church. These individuals usually challenge the Church on a wide range of issues. They reject Church authority and yet they demand that women be allowed to be a part of the authority they reject. If the Church has no divine authority, what purpose would it serve to be a part of it? Such an obvious contradiction discredits their argument. Their real goal seems to be the promotion of rebellion.

The Church's position on women priests is not a matter of prejudice but a matter of differing roles. That there are differing roles in no way implies that one gender is superior to the other. Can women legitimately claim that men are inferior because they can not conceive and bear children? Can men claim that God is unfair because He created them for what surely seems to be a less glorious role? Of course not! God, who is perfectly just, determined that men and women were to have different roles. Hence the Church rejects the feminist notion that women have no worth unless they are exactly like men.

The Church's position on women priests is not a comment on leadership capability. There are many women within the Church who are the leaders of religious orders, television networks, retreat houses, schools, etc. The Church's position has to do with the practice of priestly functions. The primary function of a priest is to be a priest--to offer sacrifice to God. Jewish priests in the Old Testament as well as the New were exclusively male. Jesus chose twelve males to be His apostles and ultimately His first priests. If He wanted women priests He would have chosen some, thus setting the precedent and avoiding future conflict.

In his *"Apostolic Letter on Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone"* (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*), Pope John Paul II noted the following: "The fact that **the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, received neither the mission proper to the Apostles nor the ministerial priesthood** clearly shows that the non-admission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity, nor can it be construed as discrimination against them. Rather, it is to be seen as the faithful observance of a plan to be ascribed to the wisdom of the Lord of the universe (no. 3).

The Church does not choose priests; rather, God calls them. The Church merely ratifies or authenticates a vocational call. Only those who are *called* to the priesthood should be priests. This would exclude not only women but the vast majority of men as well. Some women will say that they feel called. If they truly were, however, we would have women priests. The idea that a group of men can stop God from accomplishing His will in someone's life is ludicrous. **The only one who can prevent God's will from being accomplished in your life is you.**

Was Moses able to free the Israelites from Egypt because Pharaoh feared him? No – he was able to do it because God called him and he said yes. At first he refused, claiming that he was ill suited. He worried about his credibility with the people and his lack of eloquence as a speaker. But God told Moses that He would be with him (Exodus Chapters 3-4). **God called Moses for a purpose, Moses said yes and then God made it happen. If God calls a woman to the priesthood and she says yes, God will make it happen.** The fact that we haven't had any women priests in the last two thousand years means one of two things. **Either God hasn't called any women to the priesthood or He did and they all said no.**

If God were calling women to the priesthood, would it not be reasonable to expect that He would have called some of the women who were closest to Him? And yet when we examine the writings of women such as St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton we don't find any claims of being called to the priesthood. We only find loyalty to God and His Church.

Pope John Paul II has made it clear that the Church's view in this matter is not subject to change. In *"Ordinatio Sacerdotalis,"* he said the following, **"I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful"** (no. 4).

Traditionalists

There are a number of Traditionalist groups who reject the Second Vatican Council and the changes that followed. They consider those who have accepted the changes to be what they call “The Conciliar Church.” They somehow imagine that members of this “Conciliar Church” are no longer Catholic and that they themselves are the loyal remnant.

Traditionalists are well aware that ecumenical councils have always spoken with authority. They try to get around this by claiming that Vatican II was a pastoral and not a doctrinal council. A pastoral council, they contend, can teach error and thus does not require assent. But no such distinction exists. An ecumenical council is an ecumenical council. When Pope John XXIII called the council pastoral he was referring to its approach. He wasn’t creating a new non binding class of council. What sense would that even make? Why summon 2600 bishops to Rome if their work would ultimately be meaningless?

Traditionalists prefer the style employed by the Council of Trent where anathemas were issued against heresies. They see Vatican II’s kind words to other religions as being contradictory to the work done at Trent. But that is simply not so. Trent was convened to address attacks on the faith by former Catholics (heretics). Thus anathemas would be a natural part of their work. Vatican II was, among other things, concerned with bringing the message of Christ to the world, thus its pastoral approach. If you want to communicate the Gospel effectively you begin by drawing attention to what is good in others as the apostle Paul did in Acts 17:22-23. You don’t foster effective communication with condemnations.

The “pastoral argument” becomes even more untenable when you consider two of the documents produced by the council. For instance: “***Dogmatic** Constitution on the Church*” and “***Dogmatic** Constitution on Divine Revelation*.” Use of the word Dogmatic would seem to indicate that these documents were something more than friendly suggestions.

In “*Humani Generis*” Pope Pius XII leaves no doubt as to the authority of the proclamations of a general (ecumenical) council. He wrote: “If the General Council in its official documents purposely passes judgment on a matter up to that time under dispute, it is obvious that the matter, according to the mind of the council, cannot be any longer considered a question open to discussion...”

Even if for some reason the council were not ecumenical its teachings would still require assent as they were promulgated by Pope Paul VI. Any teaching promulgated by a pope is authoritative by virtue of the Church’s Ordinary Magisterium (Vatican I, session 3, chapter 3).

Traditionalists try to back up their arguments by quoting council documents out of context. For instance, I received the following concerning “*Lumen Gentium*”:

“But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place among these there are the Moslems, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind (No. 16).”

Ask any Moslem if he adores Jesus as God. He does not and therefore he denies the one true God. Therefore Vatican II is in error when it equates Islam with Catholicism. Jesus established one Church and it has no equal.

There is no claim here of spiritual equality. This passage is merely affirming the traditional Church teaching that those outside the Church can get to heaven. The subject is treated in greater detail a few sentences later: “Those who through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation.”

The document affirms other traditional views of the Church:

- All men are called to the union of the Catholic Church (1:3).
- The Church has the mission to proclaim the kingdom of Christ to all peoples (1:5).
- Christ is the one mediator (1:8).

- The Church is necessary for salvation (2:14).
- Whoever knows this and leaves the Church cannot be saved (2:14).

Traditionalists are scandalized by the liturgical abuses that plague many Catholic churches today. They are appalled by Catholic universities that routinely alter Church doctrines to make them more acceptable to the modern world (Modernism). On these points their outrage is justified. Indeed, every Catholic should be outraged by such behavior. However, dissent within the Church never justifies schism. As someone once said, “You don’t leave Peter because of Judas.” If anything you stay and work for change.

For those who prefer the Latin Mass there are legitimate options. You can check with your diocese to see if there are any offered in your area. Or you can contact groups like The Fraternity of St. Peter (www.fssp.com) or The Institute of Christ the King (www.institute-christ-king.org). Schismatic groups such as the Society of St. Pius X should be avoided at all costs as support for such groups results in automatic excommunication.

Some Traditionalists are more creative than others. Within the movement there is a group known as the Sedevacantists. This group realizes that Catholics are supposed to be obedient to the pope. And yet they have been at odds with every pope since the council. Their solution to this dilemma – they claim there hasn’t been a pope since 1958. How do they know there hasn’t been a pope since 1958? Because every one who has occupied the office since that time has disagreed with them. Therefore they must be heretics and thus not real popes.

There are a couple of things wrong with this argument. First of all, not agreeing with someone’s private interpretation of Church documents does not constitute heresy. Secondly, even if they were guilty of heresy they would still have been popes. Pope Pius XII, the last real pope according to Sedevacantists, tells us as much in his apostolic constitution “*Vacantis Apostolicae Sedis*.” He wrote: “None of the cardinals may in any way, or by pretext or reason of any excommunication, suspension, or interdict whatsoever, or of any other ecclesiastical impediment, be excluded from the active and **passive election** of the supreme pontiff. We hereby suspend such censures solely for the purpose of the said election; at other times they are to remain in vigor” (no. 34).

Passive election refers to the cardinal himself being elected pope. This may seem odd at first glance. But it is actually necessary. Heresy can be a purely internal disposition without any outward manifestation. If a pope were a heretic and kept it to himself no one would know. If being a heretic would negate a papal election and you could never know for sure if a pope were a heretic, it follows that you could never know if we had a pope. If this were the case the Church would be in a constant state of chaos. We see this same principal applied to the Eucharist. The validity of the Eucharist does not depend on the worthiness of the priest. If it did you would never know if you were receiving a validly consecrated host.

It’s true that a heretical pope should step down as he would have no right to be pope. But if he didn’t step down he would still be pope. And the Church would be protected from his heresy by papal infallibility. If any pope planned on formally teaching heresy, whether on purpose or unknowingly, the Holy Spirit would not allow it. We have Christ’s word on that (Matthew 16:18).

There isn’t enough room in a short essay to adequately address all of the complaints Traditionalists have against the Church. However, some are worthy of note. They believe that only Catholics can be saved. This idea was condemned by Pope Pius IX in his encyclical, “*Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*,” No. 7. They believe that Christ died only for the elect. This idea was condemned by the Council of Trent, session 6, chapter 2 as well as 2 Corinthians 5:15. Some Traditionalists, such as the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, even appoint their own bishops. This was condemned by Pope Pius XII in “*Ad Apostolorum Principis*” and it results in an automatic excommunication for all involved.

So when Traditionalists say they reject Vatican II it is only the tip of the iceberg. In practice they also reject Trent, Vatican I, Pope Pius IX, and Pope Pius XII. I’m sure with a little more research this list would only grow.

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The Words of Consecration

The Traditionalist movement's greatest complaint against the Church has to do with the new mass (post Vatican II). Their biggest objection is to the change in the words of consecration. This, some hard liners claim, renders the new mass invalid. They specifically object to the words used in the consecration of the wine. In the Tridentine Liturgy (pre Vatican II) the wording is as follows: For this is the chalice of my blood of the New and Eternal Covenant: the mystery of faith: which shall be shed for you and for **many** unto the forgiveness of sins." In the new liturgy it is worded this way: "This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for **all** so that sins may be forgiven."

Both versions are based on Jesus' words at the Last Supper as recorded in Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24. The verse from Matthew reads: "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for **many** unto remission of sins." Traditionalists claim that Jesus used the word many because He was referring only to those who would accept His offer of salvation. They argue that changing the word to all would include the damned thus giving Jesus' statement a meaning He didn't intend. But is that really the case?

The Church changed the word many into all to clarify its meaning, not to change it. The Last Supper was to be the fulfillment of all that Jesus taught His apostles concerning the New Covenant. A year earlier He had told them that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood or they would have no life in them (John 6:54). They didn't understand but continued to follow Him. Later on He told them that He was to suffer and die (Mark 9:30-32). Once again they did not understand but they continued to follow. Now, at the Last Supper, He would put it all together for them. He was to die for the sins of the world and they would be able to partake of His sacrifice by receiving the Eucharist.

Other passages of Scripture attest to the fact that Christ died for **all**. For example: In John 3:16-17 we read: "For God so loved **the world**, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God sent His Son into the world to judge the world; but that **the world might be saved** by Him." Second Corinthians 5:15 tells us that Christ died for **all**. Finally, 1 John 2:2 tells us virtually the same thing: "And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also **for those of the world**."

Traditionalists do believe that Christ died for all men. However, as we noted earlier they believe that the words of consecration refer only to the elect. Once again, they believe this because Jesus uses the word many rather than all. They reason that if Jesus used the word many He couldn't have meant all. But this is a false assumption. In the parable of the wedding feast, Jesus uses the word many when referring to all of mankind. He said "**Many** are called but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

Elsewhere in Scripture the words **all** and **many** are used interchangeably. In Mark 10:45 we find: "For the Son of Man also is not come to be ministered unto; but to minister and to give his life **a redemption for many**." In 1 Timothy 2:6 we find: "For there is one God; and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself **a redemption for all**."

There is something else that needs to be considered. The Catholic Church has always taught that the sacrifice of the Mass is not a new sacrifice. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same. If they are the same sacrifice they must have the same purpose. If on the cross "Christ died for all" then in the Mass Christ's blood is shed for all.

Traditionalists will often quote "*Quo Primum*" to give their claims an air of authority. "*Quo Primum*" was a bull issued by Pope St. Pius V in 1570. Among other things it said that the Tridentine Liturgy was to be said in perpetuity. Since Pope Paul VI authorized a new liturgy in 1969, Traditionalists reason that he erred against the faith. This is yet another reason some claim that the new liturgy is illicit. Consequently, they lobby for a return to the Tridentine liturgy.

To properly understand "*Quo Primum*" we need to understand the type of document it was and the circumstances under which it was written. "*Quo Primum*" was a continuation of the work of the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent was convened for two reasons: (1) to address the errors of Protestantism and (2) to reform the interior life of the Church.

Just prior to the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent, problems had developed within the clergy. There was a good deal of corruption and liturgical abuse. The canons and decrees of the council make this very clear. In session 22 chapter 9 we find the following:

And because that many errors are at this time disseminated and many things are taught and maintained by divers persons, in opposition to this ancient faith, which is based on the sacred Gospel, the traditions of the Apostles, and the doctrine of the holy Fathers; the sacred and holy Synod, after many and grave deliberations maturely had touching these matters, has resolved, with the unanimous consent of all the Fathers, to condemn, and to eliminate from holy Church, by means of the canons subjoined, whatsoever is opposed to this most pure faith and sacred doctrine (Preliminary remarks on the following canons).

Whereas, therefore, either through the wickedness of the times, or through the carelessness and Corruption of men, many things seem already to have crept in, which are alien from the dignity of so great a sacrifice; to the end that the honour and cult due thereunto may, for the glory of God and the edification of the faithful people, be restored; the holy Synod decrees, that the ordinary bishops of places shall take diligent care, and be bound to prohibit and abolish all those things which either covetousness, which is a serving of idols, or irreverence, which can hardly be separated from impiety; or superstition, which is a false imitation of true piety, may have introduced.....

Lastly, that no room may be left for superstition; they shall by ordinance, and under given penalties, provide, that priests do not celebrate at other than due hours; nor employ other rites, or other ceremonies and prayers, in the celebration of masses, besides those which have been approved of by the Church, and have been received by a frequent and praiseworthy usage (Decree concerning the things to be observed and to be avoided in the celebration of the Mass).

“Quo Primum” was a disciplinary decree and not a doctrinal one. The fact that it allows for exceptions confirms this. Disciplinary decrees are subject to change. Only doctrinal pronouncements are not subject to change. Pius V’s intent was to stop priests from using illicit or unauthorized forms of the Mass. He wasn’t restricting future popes as he had no authority to do so. He used the words “in perpetuity” for emphasis. All of this is further confirmed by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *“Mediator Dei”* (On the Sacred Liturgy). While he wasn’t commenting directly on *“Quo Primum,”* His statements covered the same subject matter. In paragraph 58 he writes:

It follows from this that **the Sovereign Pontiff alone enjoys the right to recognize and establish any practice touching the worship of God, to introduce and approve new rites, as also to modify those he judges to require modification.** ... Private individuals, therefore, even though they be clerics, may not be left to decide for themselves in these holy and venerable matters, For the same reason no private person has any authority to regulate external practices of this kind, which are intimately bound up with **Church discipline** and with the order, unity and concord of the Mystical Body and frequently even with the integrity of Catholic faith itself.

Note that the pope alone has the authority to introduce and approve new rites. Private individuals even if they be priests or bishops (clerics) have no right to decide for themselves in such matters. In our present situation we have a pope who made modifications to the Mass. He was supported in this by every pope that followed him. On the other hand we have a movement started by a bishop and some priests who say that the popes are wrong. I think it is safe to say that the Traditionalists are clearly in error. When we consider what both *“Quo Primum”* and *“Mediator Dei”* have to say, we can easily see that Pope Paul VI acted well within his authority when he promulgated the new liturgy.

Traditionalists claim to accept all that the Church taught prior to Vatican II. Certainly there is no question that *“Mediator Dei”* was written prior to the council. So even when judged by their own standards, the Traditionalist arguments are without merit.

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Salvation Outside the Church?

One of the Catholic Church's most controversial teachings is the doctrine of "No Salvation outside the Church." The controversy stems from a misunderstanding of what the Church really means by this. The doctrine has been stated a number of times throughout Church History. One such time was in 1302 when Pope Boniface VIII wrote the following in "*Unum Sanctum*:" "That there is one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church we are compelled by faith to believe and hold, and we firmly believe in her and sincerely confess her, **outside of whom there is neither salvation nor remission of sins....** In her there is 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism'" (Ephesians 4:5) (no. 1).

It appears that the Church is saying that only Catholics can go to heaven or that Catholics are better than everyone else. However, neither view would be correct. The Church is simply acknowledging the fact that Jesus formulated one plan of salvation. If that is true, then it follows that all other plans are false. The Church is merely declaring that she believes her teachings to be true. Certainly that should be expected of any religion. After all, if you didn't believe that your teachings were true, why would you believe them?

But if only the Catholic Church has the complete plan of salvation, how would it be possible for a non-Catholic to get to heaven? Vatican Council II addressed this point in its "*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*," "**Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation**" (no. 16). In short, those who are *truly* unaware of what God requires of them are not held responsible; rather they are judged by what they did with the truth they had.

Ironically, many Bible Christians have their own version of "No Salvation outside the Church". They believe that unless a person accepts Christ as personal Lord and Savior he or she is headed for hell. No allowances are made for people who don't know any better. The Catholic Church rightly portrays God as both just and merciful – as opposed to legalistic.

Traditionalists view God in the same way that Bible Christians do. They believe that God makes no exceptions. Do it right or you are lost. In this case if you are not Catholic you have no chance for salvation. They reject Vatican II's qualification of the doctrine. They contend that Vatican II ignored earlier councils and introduced something new. Thus it is invalid and to be ignored. This of course is false. The Church's teachings before and after the council are the same.

Prior to Vatican II, children were taught the faith from the Baltimore Catechisms. In *Catechism number 3*, on page 106--question 185, and page 39--question 69, you will find the following:

185. Who is punished in hell? Those are punished in hell **who die in Mortal sin**; they are deprived of the vision of God and suffer dreadful torments, especially that of fire, for all eternity.

69. What three things are necessary to make a sin mortal? To make a sin mortal these three things are necessary: First, the thought, desire, word, action, or omission must be seriously wrong or considered seriously wrong; second, **the sinner must know that it is seriously wrong**; third, **the sinner must fully consent to it**.

So only a mortal sin can damn you to hell. And in order to be guilty of a mortal sin, you must know that you are committing one! **Hence, if you don't know, you are not guilty.** Jesus Himself teaches this very thing in John 9:40-41 where He says to the Pharisees: "Some of the Pharisees near Him heard this, and they said to Him, 'Are we also blind?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say 'we see,' your guilt remains.'" In other words because they knew better they were guilty of sin. Had they not known better, they would not have been guilty.

Prior to Vatican II Pope Pius IX, in his encyclical "*On Promotion of False Doctrines (Quanto Conficiamur Moerore)*," said the following:

We all know that those who suffer from invincible ignorance with regard to our holy religion, **if they carefully keep the precepts of the natural law** which have been written by God in the hearts of all men, if they are prepared to obey God, and if they lead a virtuous and dutiful life, **can, by the power of divine**

light and grace, attain eternal life. For God, who knows completely the minds and souls, the thoughts and habits of all men, will not permit, in accord with His infinite goodness and mercy, anyone who is not guilty of a voluntary fault to suffer eternal punishment (no. 7).

He said essentially the same thing in "*On the Church in Austria (Singulari Quidam)*;"

It must, of course, be held as a matter of faith that outside the apostolic Roman Church no one can be saved, that the Church is the only ark of salvation, and that whoever does not enter it will perish in the flood. **On the other hand, it must likewise be held as certain that those who are affected by ignorance of the true religion, if it is invincible ignorance, are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord** (no. 7).

The invincibly ignorant would not include those who think that all religions are the same. That would be indifference. Jesus said, "**I am the way**" (John 14:6), **not a way**. The person who is invincibly ignorant honestly believes, though erroneously, that he is going the right way.

St. Augustine's position is also consistent with Vatican II. "**When we speak of within and without in relation to the Church, it is the position of the heart that we must consider, not that of the body.... All who are within [the Church] in heart are saved in the unity of the ark** (*On Baptism, Against the Donatists 5:28 [39]* [A.D. 394]).

Clement I, a contemporary of the Apostles, wrote, "**Let us go through all generations** and learn that in generation after generation the Master has given a place of repentance for **those willing to turn to him**. Those who repented for their sins, appeased God in praying, and **received salvation, even though they were aliens to God**" (*1 Clement, no. 7* [AD 95]).

Paul clearly teaches that we are judged by our intentions. "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose **the purposes of the heart**. Then every man will receive his commendation from God" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

He expands on this in Romans 2:13-16, "For it is not the hearers of the Law who are righteous before God, but **the doers of the Law who will be justified. When Gentiles who have not the Law do by nature what the Law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the Law. They show that what the Law requires is written on their hearts**, while their conscience also bears witness and **their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them** on that day when, according to my gospel, **God judges the secrets of men** by Christ Jesus."

Their conflicting thoughts would accuse them if they suspected but ignored the fact that God required them to be members of His Church. As Vatican II put it in its "*Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes Divinitus)*," "**Hence, those cannot be saved, who knowing that the Catholic Church was founded through Jesus Christ, by God, as something necessary, still refuse to enter it or remain in it**" (no. 7). Their conflicting thoughts would excuse them if they truly sought God but were unaware of this requirement.

Dissenting Catholics, Traditionalist or otherwise, would do well to read the letter of the Holy Office concerning Fr. Leonard Feeney, who dissented on this issue back in 1949. It states in part, "**But this dogma [No Salvation outside the Church] is to be understood as the Church itself understands it. For our Savior did not leave it to private judgment to explain what is contained in the deposit of faith, but to the doctrinal authority of the Church.**"

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The Word of Faith Movement

The Word of Faith Movement, sometimes referred to as the Positive Confession Movement or the Prosperity Gospel, has been making inroads into mainline Christianity. Although it primarily affects Bible churches, it has managed to influence some Catholics. Faith teachers include Kenneth Hagin, Benny Hinn, Oral Roberts, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Robert Tilton, Paul and Jan Crouch, John Avanzini, Paul Billheimer, Charles Capps, Morris Cerullo, David Cho, Hobart Freeman, Norvel Hayes, Marilyn Hickey, T. L. Osborn, Frederick Price, and Jerry Savelle.

Faith teachers are not all the same. Some wander farther from the truth than others. However, there is much they have in common. For instance, they all teach that faith is a force. They also teach that fear is a force. Faith activates God and fear activates Satan. Words are the containers of faith or fear. Whatever is said with the mouth creates reality. If you speak words of faith, God *must* act on your behalf. If you speak negatively God *cannot* act on your behalf and Satan is given license to work against you.

Defining faith in this way leads to some strange beliefs. For example, Faith teachers claim there is no reason for a believer to be sick. Kenneth Hagin declares: "I believe that it is the plan of God our Father that no believer should ever be sick...It is not – I state boldly – it is not the will of God my Father that we should suffer with cancer and other dread diseases which bring pain and anguish. No! It is God's will that we be healed" ("Healing: The Father's Provision," *Word of Faith*, August 1977, page 9).

If there isn't any reason to be sick, surely there isn't any reason to take medicine. Frederick Price speaks of medicine as a crutch for the immature believer. He states: "When you have developed your faith to such an extent that you can stand on the promises of God, then you won't need medicine" (*Faith Foolishness*, page 88).

The Faith teachers look to Isaiah 53:5 to support their claims: "**But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with His stripes we were healed.**" The beginning of the verse sets the context: "**He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities.**" The healing spoken of here is spiritual not physical healing. This is made abundantly clear in 1 Peter 2:24: "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, **that we might die to sin** and live to righteousness. **By His wounds you have been healed.**"

While Isaiah 53:5 does not refer to physical healing Isaiah 53:4 does, and Matthew 8:16-17 notes this: "That evening they brought to Him many who were possessed with demons; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.'" During His ministry Jesus did heal the sick. But Scripture nowhere claims that this would always be the case. In fact, we find evidence to the contrary. When confronted by the Pharisees on His associating with sinners, Jesus said: "**Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.**" (Matthew 9:12). If Jesus came to abolish the need for physicians He surely would not have used them to illustrate a point and risk misleading His followers. Sirach 38:1-4 is more explicit: "**Honor the physician** with the honor due him...**The Lord created medicines** from the earth and **a sensible man will not despise them.**"

Perhaps the greatest example in the New Testament is that of Paul the apostle. Certainly Paul was a man of faith. And yet he was afflicted with a physical ailment. He writes of it in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9: "And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, **a thorn was given me in the flesh**, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. **Three times I besought the Lord** about this, that it should leave me; **but He said to me, 'my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'**"

No one knows for sure what Paul's thorn in the flesh was. But many scholars believe that it was an eye ailment. The Greek word rendered as thorn in 2 Corinthians 12:7 is skolops (σκόλοψ), which means withered at the front. It is derived from two other words, skelos (σκέλος), meaning to parch and optanomai (ὀπτάνομαι), meaning to gaze.

When someone in the movement does get sick they simply deny that they are sick. They claim that what appears to be an ailment is actually just a symptom put on them by the devil in order to fool them into believing that they are sick when they are not. The danger here is obvious. Ignoring symptoms can lead to greater problems – sometimes, even death.

Larry and Lucky Parker paid a high price for their dedication to the Faith teachers. In their book *We Let Our Son Die*, they tell how, in accordance with the teachings of the Word of Faith Movement, they withheld insulin from their diabetic son. He lapsed into a coma and died.

A recent news report revealed the following: "A Benny Hinn crusade ... became a tragedy for four people – including a baby and a young child – who died while awaiting a miracle healing from Hinn. All had been hospitalized but had left the hospital to attend the crusade" (Religious News Service, May 8, 2000). Unfortunately these are not the only examples.

The Faith teachers themselves are not immune from sickness. Kenneth Hagin has suffered at least four cardiovascular crises including one full-scale heart stoppage. Paul Crouch also suffers from heart problems. Fred Price's wife has been stricken with cancer and has thanked her doctors for radiation and chemotherapy. And yet they continue to teach falsely.

The same logic applied to health is applied to wealth. Jerry Savelle claims that you can speak your world into existence (*Framing Your World with the Word of God, Part 2*). Marilyn Hickey shows us how this is done. She actually said the following:

What do you need? Start creating it. Start speaking about it. Start speaking it into being. Speak to your billfold. Say, "You big thick billfold full of money." Speak to your checkbook. Say, "You, checkbook, you. You've never been so prosperous since I owned you. You're just jammed full of money" (*Claim Your Miracles*).

The Faith teachers' obsession with wealth runs counter to the teachings of Scripture. Paul tells Timothy that "**The love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith**" (1 Timothy 6:10). Jesus Himself warns us about such attachments. He said: "**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth**, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, **but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also**" (Matthew 6:19-21).

Faith teachers use their bizarre theology to prey on people in need. Robert Tilton claims God wants you to flourish financially and physically. But you need faith. To prove your faith, you need to make a vow of faith. A vow of faith is usually a large donation to Robert Tilton's ministry.

Some Faith teachers claim equality with God. Kenneth Hagin says: "Man...was created on terms of equality with God, he could stand in God's presence without any consciousness of inferiority...He made us the same class of being that He is Himself" (*Zoe: The God-Kind of Life*). Morris Cerullo is a bit more direct. He once proclaimed: "You're not looking at Morris Cerullo; you're looking at God" (*The End time Manifestation of the Sons of God*, tape 1). Benny Hinn, John Avanzini, Kenneth Copeland, and Charles Capps have all made similar claims.

Some Faith teachers don't deal very well with criticism. In 1992, Benny Hinn threatened the Christian Research Institutes staff members and their families with the following statement:

You're attacking me on the radio every night – you'll pay and *your children will*. Hear this from the lips of God's servant. *You are in danger*, Repent! Or God Almighty will move His hand. Touch not my Anointed...

Millions have heard the false gospel of the Faith teachers. How many of them have rejected Christianity thinking it to be nothing more than a con game.

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Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses claim to be "God's Visible Organization." They also claim to be "His prophet." They say that Jesus inspected their organization in 1919 and found a "faithful and discreet slave class, dispensing fine spiritual food to true believers" (*Yearbook 1975*, page 88). So what type of spiritual food have they been dispensing? In "*The Finished Mystery*" published in 1917, they claimed that in 1918 God would destroy the churches and church members by the millions, and Christendom would go down into oblivion that year. They also predicted that there would be worldwide anarchy in the fall of 1920. In 1920 they claimed that the Bible foretold the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other faithful ones of old. It was written that they would arrive in 1925 (*Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, page 81). They have predicted that the world would end in 1914, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, and 1975. Obviously none of their predictions have come true. Are we to believe that this is "fine spiritual food?"

They don't vote in elections, and they won't salute the flag or serve in the armed forces. They teach that it is wrong to celebrate birthdays, Christmas and Easter. They believe that Jesus and Michael the Archangel are one and the same.

Ricarda Bradford was seriously injured in an automobile accident. She was in desperate need of a blood transfusion. Her father, a devout Jehovah's Witness, refused to allow it, as Witnesses believe that the Bible prohibits blood transfusions. As a result, Ricarda died on her sixth birthday. Many of their teachings, such as this one, are arrived at by taking Bible verses out of context. When they are shown Bible verses that contradict their theology, their responses generally imply that the Bible doesn't really mean what it says.

Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that the doctrine of the Trinity is a false one. But even their version of the Bible disagrees. In Genesis 1:26 God says, "Let **US** make man in **OUR** image." In the next verse we read that "God proceeded to make man in **HIS** image." So God alone created man, and yet more than one person was involved. This is the doctrine of the Trinity. It is true that in some places the Scriptures speak of Jesus as being subordinate to the Father, but this is perfectly natural and necessary to the Christian view. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. In His human nature He is subject to the Father. In His divine nature He is equal to the Father.

Jesus' divinity is illustrated in John 2:18-21, where we read, "Therefore, in answer, the Jews said to Him, 'What sign have you to show us, since you are doing these things?' In answer **Jesus said to them, 'Break down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'** Therefore the Jews said, 'This temple was built in forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?' **But He was talking about the temple of His body.**" Acts 5:30 tells us that "The **God** of our forefathers **raised up Jesus.**" So the Bible tells us that Jesus raised His own dead body. It also tells us that the one who raised Him was God. Therefore Jesus is God.

Isaiah 9:6 predicts the birth of Jesus. Note what it calls Him: "For there has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us, and the princely rule will come to be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**"

Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that the Holy Spirit is not a person but God's active force. He is likened to "electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations." But this is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible not only tells us that the Holy Spirit is a person, but a divine one as well. In Acts 13:2 we read, "As they were ministering to Jehovah and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said, 'Of all persons set Barnabas and Saul apart for me for the work to which I have called them.'**" And again, "**The Holy Spirit aptly spoke** through Isaiah the prophet" (Acts 28:25). If the Holy Spirit is an impersonal force, how is it that it can speak and refer to itself in a personal way?

The divinity of the Holy Spirit is revealed in Acts 5:3-4: "But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan emboldened you to **play false to the Holy Spirit... You have played false not to men, but to God.**'" Further on in 2 Corinthians 3:17, Paul clearly says, "**Jehovah is the Spirit.**"

Jehovah's Witnesses claim that the doctrine of the Trinity derives no support from any Christian writers for three centuries after the birth of Christ (*Should You Believe in the Trinity*, page 7). Among the early writers mentioned are Tertullian, Origen and Theophilus of Antioch. However, Tertullian wrote, "And at the same time the mystery of the oikonomia is

safeguarded, for the unity is distributed in a **trinity**. Placed in order, the three are **the Father, the Son, and the Spirit**" (*Against Praxeas* 2:1, 213 AD).

Origen wrote, "For we do not hold that which the heretics imagine, that some part of the substance of God was converted into the Son, or that the Son was procreated by the Father from non-existent substances, that is, from a substance outside Himself, so that there was a time when He [the Son] did not exist...For it is **the Trinity** alone which exceeds every sense in which not only temporal but even eternal may be understood. It is all other things, indeed, which are outside **the Trinity**, which are to be measured by time and ages" (*Fundamental Doctrines* 4:4:1, 220 AD).

Finally, Theophilus of Antioch: "The three days before the luminaries were created are types of **the Trinity, God, His Word, and His Wisdom**" (*Ad Autolycus* 2:15, 181 AD).

Jehovah's Witness theology concerning hell is also problematic. They teach that the Biblical terms used to describe hell are merely symbolic; that after death the damned will no longer exist. The idea of eternal torment is flatly rejected. But the Scriptures teach otherwise. In Matthew 25:41 we read, "Then He will say, in turn, to those on his left, 'Be on your way from me, you who have been cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.'" Notice how the everlasting fire is a place that was prepared. If it were not an actual place, no preparation would be needed. Further evidence is found in Revelation 21:8: "But as for the cowards and those without faith, and those who are disgusting in their filth, and murderers and fornicators, and those practicing Spiritism and idolaters, and all the liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This means the second death." There could only be a second death if those in question were still in existence after the first one.

Hell-fire cannot be symbolic of non-existence, as it would defeat the purpose of symbolism. The purpose of symbolism is to teach by way of illustration. Whenever symbolic language is used, there is always a parallel principle involved. For instance, if I said that I had an ocean of water in my basement, would you think that it was flooded or bone dry? Most people would think that it was flooded. An ocean is a large body of water, so it would symbolize an excessive amount of water. It would never be used to describe an absence of water. Similarly, hell-fire would never be used to describe non-existence. There are no two concepts more radically opposed. Non-existence is a total absence of reality, while fiery torture is the most vivid form of reality. How could one symbolize the other?

Consider what Jesus said about Judas in Matthew 26:24: "Woe to that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been finer for him to have never been born." Why would it have been finer for him to have never been born? If he were never born he would be non-existent. If he died unrepentant and went to a symbolic hell he would be equally non-existent. If such were the case, Jesus' statement would be foolish. It would only make sense if Judas went to a hell of eternal punishment.

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus was resurrected as a spirit. But the Bible disagrees. Luke 24:38-39 records the following: "So He [Jesus] said to them, '**A spirit does not have flesh and bones just as you behold that I have.**'" In response, Witnesses tell us that Jesus materialized bodies as the angels had done in the past when appearing to humans. Once again we appeal to John 2:18-21 where Jesus says that He will raise His then present body.

As we have seen, the Jehovah's Witnesses have a history of false claims and faulty theology. This hardly qualifies them to be "God's visible organization," let alone "His Prophet."

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Seventh Day Adventists

The main difference between Seventh Day Adventists and other Protestants is their adherence to Sabbath worship. They reason that since Exodus 20:19 establishes Saturday as the Jewish Sabbath, Christians ought to worship on Saturday. They rightfully claim that the Catholic Church changed the day of worship from the Sabbath (Saturday) to the Lord's Day (Sunday). However, they wrongfully claim that such an act was illicit.

Scripture speaks of an Old Covenant and a New Covenant. The Old Covenant was in effect until the coming of the Messiah [Jesus]. Once Jesus came He established a New Covenant. In Matthew 16:19 Jesus gives Peter the power to legislate in Church matters: "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." Under the New Covenant many things would change. For example, baptism would replace circumcision (Colossians 2:11-12), divorce would no longer be permitted (Mark 10:2-12), and animals would no longer need to be sacrificed (Hebrews 9:1-14). The day of worship would also change.

At first, the main day of worship for Christians was on Saturday. That's because the first Christians were Jews. At some point the Christians were expelled from the temple because they were seen as being divisive. Consequently, they began to meet in their homes. Eventually Church leaders decided that Sunday would be the Christian day of worship in honor of our Lord's resurrection.

While the New Testament doesn't explicitly command Christians to worship on Sunday, it seems to indicate that such was the practice. For instance, in the book of Acts 20:7 we see that the early Christians gathered together to break bread on Sunday. "**On the first day of the week**, when we were gathered together **to break bread**, Paul talked with them..." The term "to break bread" refers to the Eucharistic celebration. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 we read: "**On the first day of every week**, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come."

One thing the New Testament is clear on is that Christians are not to be judged for not observing the Jewish Sabbaths and feast days. "...having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross... Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a **festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.**" (Colossians 2:14-16).

Paul actually considers adherence to the Jewish days of observance as possible evidence that the Galatians have strayed from the faith. He writes: "but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have labored over you in vain" (Galatians 4:9-11). Paul says this because Christians are no longer bound by the Jewish ceremonial law (Romans 6:14).

There are many early Church writings that confirm Sunday as the Christian day of worship. Two are notable because of their early date. The first quote comes from "*The Didache*." It reads in part: "But every **Lord's day** . . . gather yourselves together and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned" (*Didache* 14 [A.D. 70]).

The second was written by Ignatius of Antioch who was a contemporary of the apostles. He wrote: "[T]hose who were brought up in the ancient order of things [i.e., Jews] have come to the possession of a new hope, **no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day...**" (*Letter to the Magnesians* 8 [A.D. 110]).

Another belief that separates Seventh Day Adventists from other Protestants is their view of the afterlife. They believe that upon death we go into an unconscious sleep. At the final judgment we will all be resurrected. The just will go off to eternal life with God. Those consigned to hell will burn until they die. At this point they will cease to exist. Adventists believe that the fires of hell are eternal. However, they don't believe that the punishments received there are eternal. To support their claims they will appeal to various Old Testament verses. For instance:

I said in my heart with regard to the sons of men that God is testing them to show them that they are but beasts. For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth (Ecclesiastes 3:18-21)?

For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward; but the memory of them is lost... Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10).

All of the ideas expressed in Ecclesiastes are not necessarily God's. Even the verse used in chapter three to promote the Adventist view begins with the author saying: "I said in my heart." Elsewhere in Ecclesiastes, Solomon acknowledges that God has a plan but that he doesn't know what it is. Consider the following:

He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The purpose of the book of Ecclesiastes is not to reveal the mind of God but to show us that human or earthly solutions are inadequate. For Solomon the obvious answer to all of our perplexing problems is God. The book of Ecclesiastes anticipates the coming of the Messiah. The lesson for Christians is that one should rely on Christ rather than self.

Many of the things that were not so clear in the Old Testament become clear in the New. The Bible itself tells us this: "...and now has manifested through the appearing of our savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and **brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel**" (2 Timothy 1:10). And what does the Gospel say about the nature of hell? Matthew 25:46 says: "And they will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into eternal life." If the damned cease to exist the punishment wouldn't be eternal. Incidentally, if the occupants of hell are not eternal why would the fires of hell be? Once everyone who was destined to go there went off into non existence the flames would no longer be needed. The fact that the fires of hell are eternal indicates that the punishments received there are eternal.

That there might be no doubt as to the true nature of hell; Peter borrows a word from Greek mythology to describe it. In 2 Peter 2:4 the word rendered as hell is Tartarus (Τάρταρος). Tartarus, by definition, is a place of eternal torment.

The early Church had no problem understanding the nature of hell. Justin Martyr wrote: "No more is it possible for the evildoer, the avaricious, and the treacherous to hide from God than it is for the virtuous. Every man will receive the **eternal punishment** or reward which his actions deserve. Indeed, if all men recognized this, no one would choose evil even for a short time, knowing that he would incur **the eternal sentence of fire.**" (*First Apology* 12 [A.D. 151]).

Luke 16:19-31 addresses the Adventist claim that the dead are unconscious in the grave until the second coming. In verse 22 both men die. In verse 23 we see that Lazarus is conscious and in heaven. We also see that the rich man is conscious and in hell.

A close examination of all the evidence concerning these two issues shows that the Church has been right all along.

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Mormons

Mormonism was started by Joseph Smith (1805-1844) who claimed to have had a vision from God when he was a young man. He claims he asked God which church was the true church. Supposedly God told him that they were all corrupt and that he was being chosen to restore the Christian church. A few years later he claims to have discovered some golden plates written in what he called reformed Egyptian. God enabled him to translate them and shortly thereafter, in 1830, he organized the Mormon Church. Once the plates were translated an angel took them back. The translated plates are what constitute the book of Mormon. The official name of the Mormon Church is The *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.

Mormons will tell prospective converts that “we must find and accept the truth.” On this we agree. Jesus Himself said: “And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32). But how can we be sure that something is true? Brigham Young once challenged his detractors with the following words: “Take up the Bible, compare the religion of the Latter-day Saints with it, and see if it will stand the test” (*Journal of Discourses* 16:46). I accept Mr. Young’s challenge!

Among other things the book of Mormon teaches that one of the lost tribes of Israel came to America in about 600 BC. After His ascension, Jesus supposedly came to America to preach the “Gospel” to them. This is a false claim for two reasons: First, there is no archeological evidence to support it. Mormon leaders cannot even agree on where in America all this took place. This is in stark contrast with the mountain of archeological evidence that bears witness to the events recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Second, it contradicts the Bible. The Bible tells us that Jesus ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9-11), He’s only coming back once (1 Thessalonians 4:15), He must stay in heaven until that time (Acts 3:19-21), and when He comes he will judge the living and the dead (Matthew 25:31-46). The living and the dead have not been judged. Hence Jesus has not come back yet. He is right where He has been since His ascension – in heaven.

Mormons believe that God the Father is a physical being. They believe that he was once like us in every respect. He was born of human parents and lived a faithful Mormon life. Consequently, after he died he was resurrected by his own god and became a god himself. This gave him the right to create planets of his own. Together with his heavenly wives (resurrected Mormon women) he created spirit children who were then placed into the physical bodies of children born on earth. Mormons believe that they can follow the same path to godhood.

Psalm 93:2 refutes this idea when it refers to God as being eternal. John 4:24 refutes this idea when it proclaims “God is Spirit.” And Numbers 23:19 proclaims: “God is not man, that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent.” Mormons are polytheists. That is they believe there is more than one god. However, they only worship the god of this world. They see Jesus and the Holy Spirit as being subordinate gods to God the Father

Mormons believe that marriages sealed in a Mormon temple go on into eternity. But when asked about this very issue Jesus said that those in heaven “neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Luke 20:27-35). Curiously enough Mormons can have their eternal marriages unsealed so they can divorce. This is also a contradiction of Scripture. In Mark 10:10-12 Jesus calls divorce and remarriage adultery.

The present Mormon teaching on abortion not only contradicts the Bible but previous Mormon teaching as well. As late as 1988 they taught that abortion is wrong except to save the life of the mother. In 1992 that all changed. That year’s edition of *Gospel Principles* allows for abortion in cases of incest and cases where the fetus is known to have severe defects.

One of the most outrageous teachings of Mormonism has been that being born with dark skin is a curse or punishment. To quote the Book of Mormon:

And it came to pass that I beheld, after they had dwindled in unbelief they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations (*1 Nephi* 12:23).

That doesn’t sound like divine revelation to me. It sounds more like Joseph Smith adopted an unfortunate but popular prejudice of his time (early 1800’s). While blacks have been allowed into the Mormon priesthood as of 1978, nothing has been said to change the teaching that black skin is a punishment for sins committed in a pre-existent state. The passages in the Book of Mormon and other Mormon Scriptures that deal with the issue remain. For those who might think such passages are figurative, consider the comments of Brigham Young:

You see some classes of the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in their habits, wild, and seemingly deprived of nearly all the blessings of the intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind. The first man that committed the odious crime of killing one of his brethren will be cursed the longest of any one of the children of Adam. Cain slew his brother. Cain might have been killed, and that would have put a termination to that line of human beings. This was not to be, and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin (*Journal of Discourses* 7:290).

When questioned about contradictions in Mormon teaching, we are told that the Mormon Church is continuously receiving revelations from God. Church members are required to adhere only to current teachings. Apparently we are to believe that sometimes God makes mistakes and corrects Himself. At other times He gets it right and then later screws it up. At this point a neutral observer might conclude: If the god of Mormonism was wrong the first time he addressed the issues of race and abortion, maybe he was wrong when he told Joseph Smith that all the other churches were corrupt.

Modern-day Mormons wouldn't agree with Brigham Young's Scripture challenge. While they will appeal to Scripture, ultimately their proof lies in their feelings or their testimony as they put it. However, truth is verified by facts not by feelings, especially when you consider the fact that feelings are very easily manipulated. A young person may feel that smoking and drinking is right because it makes him feel independent or accepted by his peers. But the fact remains that those are bad choices that can produce some very negative consequences.

Verifying the truth of your beliefs with your feelings is a very clever tactic. How can you argue with someone's feelings? It's like telling them that they really don't like their favorite song. However, if you rely on facts alone your position can be shown to be true or false. And if the goal is to "find and accept the truth" as our Mormon friends tell us, it becomes the only legitimate means for verifying the truth.

Mormons are considered to be "in good standing" if they pay a 10% tithe to the church and refrain from coffee, tea, tobacco and alcohol. They practice baptism for the dead so that even the deceased can become Mormons. They believe that Jesus and Lucifer are spirit brothers. For a time, polygamy was a permitted practice. In fact it was seen as a duty. After secretly practicing polygamy for years Joseph Smith proclaimed that God had revealed this teaching to him. The teaching was changed due to pressure from the federal government in 1890.

Mormons believe that there are three levels to heaven. The top level is for faithful Mormons. The middle level is for not so faithful Mormons and non believers who have led good lives. The bottom level is for those who have led evil lives. All three heavens will be filled with joy and peace though to different degrees. There is a place of outer darkness for Mormons who have been convinced of Mormon truth and then turned their backs on it. However, unrepentant murderers, rapists, and thieves will be going to the lowest heaven.

Some of what the Mormon leadership has taught is just silly. Such as the sun and the moon being inhabited (*Journal of Discourses* 13:270-271). I doubt that there are any Mormons who still believe this. However, this information originated from the same "divine authority" which established all of the other teachings of Mormonism. At this point an old saying comes to mind: "consider the source." I suppose we could go on but I think we have seen enough to determine the following:

- Mormonism contradicts the Bible.
- Mormonism contradicts itself.
- There is no archeological evidence for Mormonism's historical claims.
- Mormonism teaches and has taught reprehensible doctrines in the name of God.

To claim that Mormonism was established by the same God who created the universe is false. I believe that we can confidently conclude that Mormonism, rather than being a restoration of Christianity, is in fact a perversion of it.

Freemasons

The Catholic Church and Freemasonry have been at odds for centuries. Eight popes have condemned it, as well as have the majority of Christian denominations. Christianity and Freemasonry hold contrary beliefs. Catholics are forbidden to join the Lodge in the strongest of terms. The Church's position is expressed in its *"Declaration on Masonic Associations."* It states in part: **"Therefore the Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic associations remains unchanged, since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church, and therefore membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion."**

Despite the Church's clear rejection of Freemasonry, Catholics are falsely told that they can join the Lodge without compromising their faith. The evidence shows that Freemasonry is itself a religion, although Masons will deny that this is so. The *"New Catholic Encyclopedia"* states that "Freemasonry displays all the elements of religion, and as such it becomes a rival to the religion of the Gospel. It includes temples and altars, prayers, a moral code, worship, vestments, feast days, the promise of reward and punishment in the afterlife, a hierarchy, and initiative and burial rites" (vol. 6, page 137).

In support of their position, Masons claim that they are forbidden to even discuss religion. One might be inclined to believe that such a rule exists for the sake of keeping religion out of the Lodge. But it actually serves to keep Masons from challenging the unorthodox teachings of Freemasonry. Much of what is taught to Masons is of a religious nature. One could only challenge it from a religious standpoint. But Masons are not allowed to discuss their religion. As a result, new teachings are not questioned. When people are exposed to an ideology long enough there is an unconscious tendency to accept it. When this happens in a close knit society, like that of the Lodge, the rate of acceptance is even higher.

Masonic authorities, such as Albert Mackey, Albert Pike and Henry Coil, all confirm the fact that Freemasonry is a religion.

- In Albert G. Mackey's *"Encyclopedia of Freemasonry,"* you will find the following: **"The religion of Masonry** is cosmopolitan, universal..." (Volume 1, page 301).
- Henry Wilson Coil writes: "Many Freemasons make this flight [to heaven] with no other guarantee of a safe landing than their belief in **the religion of Freemasonry**" (*A Comprehensive View of Freemasonry* page 186).
- *"Morals and Dogma"* has been called "the most profound Masonic work written in the United States." Within its pages Albert Pike proclaims: **"Every Masonic Lodge is a temple of religion and its teachings are instructions in religion"** (page 213). And, **"Masonry...is the universal, eternal, immutable religion"** (page 219).

One of the religious principles taught by Freemasonry that is unacceptable to Christians is the idea that all religions are the same (Indifferentism). At the front of a Masons Bible there is an article titled *"The Great Light in Masonry"* written by Joseph F. Newton. It states: "For Masonry knows what so many forget, that **religions are many, but religion is one...** Therefore it [Masonry] invites to its altar men of all faiths, knowing that if they use different names for the nameless one of a hundred names, **they are yet praying to the one God and Father of all."**

But Masonic writings reject the God of the Bible.

- Albert Pike writes: "If our conceptions of God are those of the **ignorant, narrow minded and vindictive Israelite...**we feel that it is an affront and an indignity to [God]" (*Morals and Dogma* page 223).
- Coil refers to **the biblical God** as **"a partisan tribal God"** and implies that such a God-concept is **far inferior to the "God of Masonry"** (*Coils Masonic Encyclopedia* page 516).

If men of all faiths worship the same God, why denounce the God of the Bible? Maybe what the Lodge really means to say is that men of all faiths will worship one god once they have been hoodwinked into embracing the so called "god of

Masonry." Of course this would be a violation of the first Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

Those outside of Masonry are said to be in "darkness." Through Masonry one is supposedly brought to "light." Light, among other things, refers to "truth and wisdom" (*The Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* by Albert Mackey, Volume 1, page 446). However, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would lead the apostles into all truth (John 16:13). He never said that Freemasonry would lead them into all truth. He also told them to preach it to the world (Mark 16:15), not to keep it secret.

In the higher degrees of the Scottish rite, "light" consists of a Mason being exposed to Pagan beliefs and practices. "For example he is introduced to the Egyptian deities Osiris, Isis, Horus, and Amun; to the Scandinavian deities Odin, Frea and Thor; to Hindu, Greek and Persian deities and to Jewish Kabbalism [i.e. occultism]..." (*A Study of Freemasonry* Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993).

The ritual for the 30th degree of the Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, is the most problematic for Catholics. During the ritual candidates are told, "And, finally, keep aloof from uniting yourself with any sectional, political, or sectarian religious organization whose principles can in any way bias your mind or judgment, or in the slightest degree trammel with obligations and the vows you have just made." The Catholic Church forbids membership in Masonic associations. Certainly this would tend to "bias your mind or judgment," or "trammel with the obligations and the vows you have just made." To honor his oath, a Catholic Mason would have to leave his Church.

After the oath is taken, the candidate is shown a papal tiara (the pope's ceremonial headdress). He is then told the following: "This represents the tiara of the cruel and cowardly Pontiff, who sacrificed to his ambition, the illustrious order of those Knights Templar of whom we are the true successors. A crown of gold and precious stones ill befits the humble head of one who pretends to be the successor, the Vicar, of Jesus of Nazareth. It is therefore the crown of an impostor, and it is in the name of him who said, 'Neither be ye called masters' that we trample it under our feet." The candidates are then invited to trample on the papal tiara. All do so while brandishing daggers and shouting "Down with imposture."

Upon achieving each degree, Masons must promise to keep the secrets of the Lodge under pain of the most hideous tortures. For example, upon receiving his first degree a Mason swears "in the presence of Almighty God" to keep the secrets of Masonry, binding himself "under no less penalty than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by its roots, and my body buried in the rough sands of the sea." The taking of such oaths is always wrong for a Christian. If he means what he says, he is guilty of serious sin. If he doesn't, he is taking the Lord's name in vain in violation of the second commandment ("You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" Exodus 20:7).

Many Masons join the Lodge for social reasons. They are unaware of or don't care about the religious aspects of Freemasonry. However, by virtue of their membership they lend support to the promotion of Masonic principals, and as previously noted they run the risk of unconsciously adopting some of those principals. For Catholics, there is also the ban on receiving communion. That in itself is tragic. Remember that Jesus said you must drink His blood and eat His flesh or you have no life in you (John 6:53). Freemasonry denies you that life.

And so we find that any Catholic who becomes a Mason can't help but compromise his faith. He violates it if he joins, because the Church forbids it. He violates it when he takes his first oath, because he disobeys the second Commandment. He violates it if he accepts the god of Freemasonry, because he disobeys the first Commandment. He violates it if he swears an oath against the pope, because he rejects the Vicar of Christ. Is it really possible that Masonic authorities are unaware of this?

To their credit, Masons are responsible for many works of charity. They operate homes for elderly Masons and their wives, as well as a number of children's hospitals that offer free medical care for those in need. For this they should be commended. But charity does not excuse deception and idolatry. Charity can and should be practiced apart from such acts.

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Divination

Ouija Boards, psychic hotlines, Tarot Cards and ESP are some of the more common forms of Divination. Many think of occult practices as being harmless entertainment while others see them as a source of comfort. Few seem to realize that such acts can produce serious consequences. But some will ask, "How can that be? What's wrong with letting people know that a deceased relative or friend is happy and in a better place? Isn't the ability to see the future a gift from God? And what about ESP? Surely that's a gift from God."

Actually none of these practices are gifts from God. If they were He would have told us as much. Instead we find Him condemning them because their source of power is demonic. The teaching of Scripture is clear on both of these points:

When you come into the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate **the abominations of the peoples there**. Let there not be found among you anyone who immolates his son or daughter in the fire, **nor a fortune-teller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead. Anyone who does such things is an abomination to the LORD, and because of such abominations the LORD, your God, is driving these nations out of your way** (Deuteronomy 18:9-12).

But the children of Israel were disobedient:

They immolated their sons and daughters by fire, **practiced fortune-telling and divination**, and sold themselves into evil-doing in the Lord's sight, provoking him till, in his great anger against Israel, the Lord put them away out of his sight. Only the tribe of Judah was left (2 Kings 17:17-18).

Judah also rebelled and as a result all of Israel was exiled:

Even the people of Judah, however, did not keep the commandments of the Lord, their God, but followed the rites practiced by Israel. So the Lord rejected the whole race of Israel. He afflicted them and delivered them over to plunderers, finally casting them out from before him... Finally, the Lord put Israel away out of his sight as he had foretold through all his servants, the prophets; **and Israel went into exile** from their native soil to Assyria, an exile lasting to the present (2 Kings 17:19-23).

Occult practices may appear good but they are the work of Satan:

...for **even Satan masquerades as an angel of light**. So it is not strange that his ministers also masquerade as ministers of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and **they will perform signs and wonders** so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect (Matthew 24:24).

As we were going to the place of prayer, we met **a slave girl with an oracular spirit**, who used to bring a large profit to her owners through her **fortune-telling**. She began to follow Paul and us, shouting, "These people are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation." She did this for many days. **Paul** became annoyed, turned, and **said to the spirit**, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to **come out of her**." Then it came out at that moment (Acts 16:16-18).

The "benefits" of occult practices are what I would call "cheese in the trap." If you didn't put any cheese in a mouse trap the mouse wouldn't put his head in it. Satan isn't stupid. He meets you where you are. Most people wouldn't respond to the temptation to rob a bank. But they might accept the invitation to talk to their Uncle Fred who has been dead for ten years. If Satan can't get you to submit to his influence willingly, he will try to get you to submit unwittingly.

On the surface talking to Uncle Fred doesn't seem harmful. But that's a false perception because you aren't talking to Uncle Fred. You are talking to a demon who is impersonating Uncle Fred, a demon who was around during Uncle Fred's lifetime. That is how he knows things that you thought only you and Uncle Fred knew. Whenever you open yourself to demonic influences you are traveling in dangerous territory. Once you develop an appreciation for something it is much easier to be

drawn deeper into it. The deeper you are drawn into the occult the farther you are from God and the more likely it is that your faith will be harmed.

Keep in mind the fact that Satan is incredibly intelligent. Also remember that the occult is his creation. Put that together with the fact that he is dedicated to your destruction and you have a recipe for disaster.

Prolonged participation in occult practices can lead to demonic oppression or even possession. Even in the cases where this does not occur a danger still exists. Your involvement could be seen by others as an endorsement of the occult, an endorsement that could possibly lead to their becoming involved. And the further possibility that they might not fare as well as you did. Occult practices include but are not limited to:

Past Life Regression	Clairvoyance	Fortune Telling
Psychic Hotlines	Ouija Boards	Numerology
ESP	Reading Tea Leaves	Crystal Gazing
Séances	Palm Reading	Astrological Horoscopes

Any practice that seeks hidden knowledge via the spiritual realm can be included on this list. Needless to say any occult practice, no matter how benign in appearance, should be avoided at all costs. The Catechism of the Catholic Church sums it up well:

All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect and loving fear that we owe to God alone (CCC 2116).

Dabbling in the occult is tantamount to infidelity. In Jeremiah 3:6-9 we read the following:

The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah: See now what rebellious Israel has done! She has gone up every high mountain, and under every green tree she has played the harlot. And I thought, after she has done all this she will return to me. But she did not return. Then, even though her traitor sister Judah saw that **for all the adulteries rebellious Israel had committed, I put her away and gave her a bill of divorce**, nevertheless her traitor sister Judah was not frightened; she too went off and played the harlot. Eager to sin, she polluted the land, **committing adultery with stone and wood**.

In the end we have two choices. We can submit to a loving God or we can submit to the one who seeks our destruction.

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Our Debt to the Catholic Church

Attacks on the Catholic Church have never been in short supply. The Church's critics have been maligning her and predicting her demise for centuries. While those same critics fade off into history one by one, the Church continues on in her mission, sometimes shaken but never defeated.

Whenever scandals arise in the Church gleeful detractors try to portray the aberration as the norm. Starting with Judas, the Church has always had within its walls those who would betray Christ. However, to focus on such individuals while ignoring those who take their faith seriously is dishonest. Any faith should be judged by the actions of those who practice it, not by those who don't.

To be sure, any scandal should be dealt with swiftly and decisively. Church leaders who fail in this regard betray the Church and do tremendous harm to the cause of Christ. Once there is knowledge of wrongdoing, action must be taken immediately. To do anything less makes one an accomplice.

When you consider all the facts, it is easy to see that the Catholic Church's record is something to be admired. The miracles performed by Jesus give credence to His message. In like manner the Church's tremendous contributions to Western Civilization give credence to its teachings.

Protestants would do well to note that God chose to give the Bible to mankind through the Catholic Church. After the fall of Rome it was the Catholic Church that preserved literacy and education. The barbarians who ruled after Rome had no interest in preserving education or any of the ancient literature. Monasteries produced thousands of books and preserved many others. Schools were established in cathedrals. These cathedral schools would become the first universities complete with degrees and accreditation. Many convents and monasteries established their own schools.

In answer to the Gospel's call to care for the sick, the Church was the first to establish hospitals. Thomas E. Woods notes that by the fourth century, most large cities had Church sponsored hospitals. Even monasteries served as providers of medical care (*How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization* page 176).

From the beginning of its existence the Catholic Church has led the way in charitable giving. This of course is the natural result of Christ's call to care for the less fortunate. In a column for the National Catholic Register Andrew McNair revealed some pretty interesting statistics. He writes in part:

Every year, more than 9.5 million Americans in need turn to one of 1,400 charitable organizations run by the Catholic Church.

The Church runs more than 600,000 soup kitchens and stocks more than 2 million food banks and pantries. The Church provides temporary shelter for children and families, battered women, senior citizens and others. At present, about 110,858 people depend on these shelters for help.

Catholic counselors and counseling agencies help close to 700,000 families, individuals and groups.... Catholic housing services help around 67,000 homeless find and keep a permanent place to live. And Catholic neighborhood-support services sponsor youth centers, summer camps, sports programs and senior citizens centers; at present, nearly 300,000 people are enrolled in these services. Close to 80,000 girls and women are being served by Catholic pregnancy services.

In the 12th century the Church began to develop its system of canon law. This would eventually provide the foundation for Western Law. Prior to this, law in medieval Europe consisted of custom and some statutory law. Western Law was based on rules of evidence and rational procedures. Later on in the 16th century, and in response to the mistreatment of natives in the New World (North America), Fr. Francisco de Vitoria established the basis for international law. This reflected the biblical teaching that all men are created equal (Galatians 3:28).

In Wisdom 11:20 we read: "But you [God] have disposed all things by measure and number and weight." In Job 38:33 God Himself says: "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens; can you put into effect their plan on the earth?" Anyone who

studied the Scriptures couldn't help but come to the conclusion that our God was a God of order. Now if God created the universe to operate according to rational laws, it seemed only natural that those laws could be understood and harnessed. Thus the study of science was born. Thomas E. Woods relates that "Roger Bacon, a Franciscan who taught at Oxford, was admired for his work in mathematics and optics, and is considered to be the forerunner of modern scientific method" (page 94).

The Jesuits contributed heavily to the study of science. In "*The Jesuits: Missions, Myths and Histories*" Jonathan Wright notes:

They had contributed to the development of pendulum clocks, pantographs, barometers, reflecting telescopes and microscopes, to scientific fields as various as magnetism, optics and electricity. They observed, in some cases before anyone else, the colored bands on Jupiter's surface, the Andromeda nebula and Saturn's rings. They theorized about the circulation of the blood (independently of Harvey), the theoretical possibility of flight, the way the moon affected the tides, and the wave-like nature of light.

The Jesuits were wise enough to record the results of their research into encyclopedias. Thus others were able to benefit from their work. The Jesuits were responsible for spreading scientific knowledge to China, India, Lebanon, The Philippines, Africa, South America, and Central America.

Fr. Nicholas Steno is credited with formulating most of the principles of modern geology. Catholic monks were the movers and shakers in developing agriculture. The Benedictines made great strides in this area. They turned swamps into fertile land. Through their efforts peasants learned about irrigation. Thomas E. Woods notes that "The monks were also the first to work toward improving cattle breeds" (page 31).

The Church was instrumental in the development of Astronomy, Mathematics, Banking, Chemistry, Architecture, Economics, Culture and Art. Pope Sylvester II is responsible for the Christian world throwing out Roman Numerals in favor of the Hindu-Arabic numbers that we use today. He also invented the clock so that we would no longer have to rely on sundials. Space does not permit me to list all of the contributions that the Church has made to Western Civilization. Suffice it to say, the list, as Mr. Woods and others so ably illustrate, is quite long. It is important to note that the Church's contributions to Western Civilization were a direct result of its beliefs.

Despite being betrayed by some of its members, the Catholic Church has managed to accomplish what no other institution could. Even the Church's most devoted critics have to admit that they have benefited greatly from the efforts of those Catholics who have chosen to live their faith.

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Knowledge is not Enough!

On September 20, 2000, Pope John Paul II speaking to 40,000 people gathered for his general audience said: "Through the Holy Spirit, Christians are brought into a personal relationship with God." Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, speaking to a group of religion teachers and catechists at the Vatican was more explicit. He said: "Catechesis is not so much a matter of transmitting knowledge as it is a question of leading people to a relationship with Jesus."

Christianity is much more than a collection of facts. The loving God who created us desires to be in a relationship with us. When asked which was the greatest commandment, Jesus replied: "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind**" (Matthew 22:37). Think about it! Do you really believe that you can love anybody that much without knowing them?

In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul refers to the Church as "the Bride of Christ." Paul's marriage analogy is a good one, as it illustrates the type of relationship that should exist between God and us. You can read a biography and learn everything that there is to know about a person, and yet still not have a relationship with them. Likewise you can read and understand Scripture and still not have a relationship with God. A true marriage is a covenant. A covenant involves a giving of oneself to the other. Jesus gave Himself totally for us on the cross. We return that love by humbly submitting our lives to Him.

Some who recognize the need for a relationship with God feel that doctrine is a hindrance. They relegate the intellect to a position of insignificance. Ultimately they are guided by their feelings. If they feel strongly about something they attribute it to a prompting of the Holy Spirit. While the Holy Spirit certainly does guide us in a personal way, it is sound doctrine that confirms that the guidance is from the Holy Spirit and not from those who would deceive and manipulate us. Paul rightly warns Titus to "teach what befits sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). When we attach more importance to our feelings than we do to sound doctrine we can end up with a god of our own making, a god who is subject to our beliefs rather than a God who tells us what we are to believe. In the final analysis we have two choices: we can accept God or we can reject God, but we can never tell Him – how to be God.

In Psalm 42:1, David expresses his need for God: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God." It is perfectly natural for those who are in relationship with God to long for Him. But where does such a longing come from? Paul gives us the answer in Phillipians 4:13, where he says, "I can do all things in Him [Christ] who strengthens me." All that we do that is right is accomplished by the grace of God working in us. We do nothing good on our own. Indeed Jesus tells us as much in John 15:5: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for **apart from me you can do nothing.**"

God's grace is given to all who ask: "And I tell you, ask, and it will be given you, seek, and you will find, knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent, or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!**" (Luke 11:9-13).

Now it is true that we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at Baptism. However, like any gift, it is useless if it remains in the box. Many claim to embrace the Faith, but it seems to have little or no impact on their lives. Faith demands a response. We must consciously cooperate with the grace received at Baptism for it to be of any value.

So how does one respond to God's grace? Well, you can ask Jesus into your life with a simple prayer of commitment such as the one below. Note that these words are not magical. If the sentiments expressed in the prayer do not exist in your heart, nothing will happen. However, if you truly desire God you will find Him. And when you find Him, you will know "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding" (Phillipians 4:7).

Dearest Jesus: Thank you for loving me. I realize that I am a sinner. Please forgive me for all that I have done wrong. I realize that I cannot live this life without you. Come into my life and help me to be the person that you want me to be. Amen.

Doctrinal Concordance of the Bible

The Church

Matthew 16:18 - Jesus established and protects His Church
Matthew 28:20 - Jesus promises to be with His Church always
John 16:13 - The Holy Spirit guides the Church into all truth
1 Timothy 3:15 - The Church (not the Bible) is the pillar and foundation of truth
Matthew 18:17-18 - If someone refuses to listen to the Church cast him out
Matthew 28:18-20 - The Churches authority is Jesus' authority
1 John 4:6 - Anyone who knows God listens to the Church
Luke 10:16 - He who rejects the Church rejects Christ
Matthew 16:19 - The Church has power to legislate
Acts 15:28 - Decisions of the Church are decisions of the Holy Spirit
Acts 15:6-29 - Apostles and elders settle disputes authoritatively through councils
Acts 16:4 - People are to observe the decisions of the Apostles and elders
Acts 1:15-26 - The Apostles choose successors (bishops)
Titus 1:5 - Bishops appoint presbyters (priests)
1 Peter 5:5 - Be subject to the elders
Hebrews 13:17 - "Obey your leaders and submit to them"
John 10:16 - The Church must be one
Ephesians 4:4-5 - There is one body, one Lord, one faith and one baptism
Romans 16:17-18 - Avoid those who create dissensions
1 Corinthians 1:10 - There must be no divisions among you
Philippians 2:2 - Be in full accord and of one mind
John 17:21 - Jesus prayed that we would be one

Apostolic Succession

Ephesians 2:19-20 - The Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets
Ephesians 4:11 - That some should be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers
Acts 1:23-26 - Matthias is chosen to replace Judas
Acts 9:26-30 - Paul is approved by the Apostles
Acts 14:14 - Barnabas is also called an apostle
Titus 1:5 - Titus performs the duties of an apostle
1 Timothy 1:3-7 - Timothy is instructed to exercise the authority of an apostle
1 Timothy 3:1-7 - Qualifications for bishops (successors to the apostles)
1 Timothy 4:14 - The office of bishop was conferred upon Timothy by the laying on of hands

The Pope / Infallibility

John 1:42 - Simon is named Cephas (Peter) which means rock
1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:22, 9:5, 15:5, Galatians 2:9, 2:11, and 2:14 - Paul refers to Peter as Cephas
Matthew 16:18 - Jesus builds His Church on Peter the rock
Matthew 16:19 - Jesus gives Peter the keys of the kingdom, the power to loose and bind
John 21:15-17 - Jesus entrusts the care of His sheep to Peter
Luke 22:32 - Jesus tells Peter to strengthen his brethren
Acts 1:15-26 - Peter presided over the meeting that elected Matthias to replace Judas
Acts 2:14-42 - Peter preached the first public sermon (Pentecost)
Acts 3:6-8 - Peter performs the first miracle after Pentecost
Acts 5:1-11 - Peter inflicts the first punishment (Ananias and Saphira)
Acts 10:9-16 - It is revealed to Peter that Gentiles can be admitted into the Church

Acts 10:44-48 - Peter baptizes the first Gentiles
Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:14-16, Acts 1:13 - Peter is always listed first

The Bible Alone?

* 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - Scripture is profitable for teaching, that the man of God may be complete
Acts 8:26-35 - But guidance is needed to interpret the Scriptures
1 Timothy 3:15 - The Church (not the Bible) is the pillar and foundation of truth
Acts 2:42 - Church followed apostolic teaching (no Bibles, printing press not invented yet)
2 Peter 1:20 - Scripture is not a matter of ones own interpretation
2 Peter 3:16 - The ignorant and unstable twist Scripture to their own destruction
Proverbs 3:5 - Do not rely on your own insight

Tradition

* Matthew 15:3, Mark 6:8, Mark 7:9, and Colossians 2:8 - Human traditions condemned
2 Thessalonians 2:15 - Believers commanded to hold fast to Sacred Tradition
2 Thessalonians 3:6 - Shun those not living according to Sacred Tradition
1 Corinthians 11:2 - Corinthians commended for maintaining the traditions handed down to them
Romans 16:17 - Avoid those who are in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught

Justification

* Romans 1:17 - The just shall live by faith
Galatians 5:6 - "Faith working through love"
2 John 6 - Love is following His commandments
Romans 12:9-13 - "Let love be genuine, hold fast to what is good"
Acts 16:30-31 - Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved
John 3:36 - Not obeying is not believing
Mark 10:17 - "What must I do to be saved?"
Mark 10:19-21 - Obey the commandments
1 John 2:3-5 - "He who says, 'I know him' but disobeys His commandments is a liar"
Revelation 20:12, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 2:2-8, 1 Peter 1:17 - We are judged by our deeds
Romans 2:13 - Doers of the law not hearers of the law will be justified
James 2:14-26 - "Faith without works is dead"
Matthew 25:31-46 - The saved are those who feed the poor and cloth the naked
John 14:6 - Jesus is the only way to salvation
Matthew 25:40 - Reject your neighbor and you reject Jesus
* Ephesians 2:8-9 - We are saved by grace not our works
Hebrews 4:15-16 - God gives us grace in time of need, we do nothing on our own
Romans 1:5 - Jesus provides the grace to bring about the obedience of faith
1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation is too great, grace provides a way out
1 Corinthians 12:3 - We cannot even say that Jesus is Lord with out grace
Phillipians 4:13 - We can do anything with Christ (works performed by grace are not our works)
Matthew 7:21 - [that's why] Only those who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom

Have You Been Saved?

Ephesians 2:5-8, 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 3:5-7 - I have been saved
Phillipians 2:12 - I am being saved
Matthew 10:22, Matthew 24:13, Titus 3:5-7, Phillipians 3:11-14 - I hope to be saved
1 Corinthians 9:25-27, Romans 11:22, Hebrews 10:26 - Salvation can be lost
2 John 8, Hebrews 6:4-8 - Salvation can be lost
Luke 24:46-47 - Repentance is necessary for salvation
Romans 2:4 - Even Christians need to repent to be forgiven

Revelation 2:5 - Even Christians need to repent to be forgiven
Acts 26:20 - There should be evidence of your repentance
1 Corinthians 4:2-5 - Paul does not even claim to be saved

Regenerative Baptism

John 3:5 - You must be born of water and of Spirit to enter the kingdom
Acts 2:38 - Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins
Titus 3:5 - We are saved by the washing of regeneration
Acts 22:16 - "Be baptized and wash away your sins"
Romans 6:4 - "We were baptized into Christ's death that we might walk in newness of life"
1 Peter 3:21 - "Baptism now saves you"

Infant Baptism

Colossians 2:11-12 - Baptism replaces circumcision
Genesis 17:12 - Circumcision took place on the eighth day after birth
Mark 10:14 - Children can receive spiritual benefits
Luke 18:15 - "Now they were bringing even infants to Him"
Acts 16:15 - She was baptized with all her household (children?)
Acts 16:33 - He was baptized with all his family (children?)
1 Corinthians 1:16 - Paul baptized the household of Stephanus (children?)
Acts 2:39-39 - Be baptized, "the promise is to you and to your children"

Sunday Worship

Colossians 2:14-16 - Christians are not to be judged for not observing the Jewish Sabbath
Romans 6:14 - Christians are not bound by Jewish ceremonial law
Galatians 4:9-11 - Adherence to the Jewish days of observance is possible evidence of straying from the faith
Acts 20:7 - The disciples met on the first day of the week (Sunday) to break bread (celebrate the Eucharist)
1 Corinthians 16:2 - The Corinthians collected money for the Church on the first day of the week (Sunday)

The Mass

Malachi 1:11 - Foresees a pure sacrifice that takes place among the nations (Jews & Gentiles)
Matthew 26:26-28 - At the Last Supper Jesus broke the bread and gave it to His disciples
Acts 2:42 - The early church devoted itself to the Apostles teaching and the breaking of bread
Acts 2:46 - They attended temple (Liturgy of the Word) and broke bread (Liturgy of the Eucharist)

Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

Exodus 12:8, 46, Leviticus 6:17-19 - Under the Old Covenant the sacrificial lamb was eaten
1 Corinthians 5:7 - Jesus is the sacrificial lamb of the New Covenant
John 6:53 - Under the New Covenant the sacrificial lamb must also be eaten
John 6:35-71 - The Eucharist is promised
John 6:35, 48, 51 - Jesus says, "I am the Bread of Life"
John 6:51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57 - Jesus says, "The bread which I give is my flesh"
John 6:66 - Jesus disciples took him literally and He didn't correct them
Isaiah 9:20 - To symbolically eat ones flesh meant to do harm
Isaiah 49:26 - To symbolically eat ones flesh meant to do harm
Micah 3:3 - To symbolically eat ones flesh meant to do harm
Matthew 26:26-28 - The Eucharist is instituted, "This is my body this is my blood"
1 Corinthians 10:16 - The bread and wine are a participation in the body and blood of Christ
1 Corinthians 11:23-26 - This is my body this is my blood
1 Corinthians 11:27-29 - Receiving unworthily is profaning the body and blood of the Lord

Confession / Reconciliation

Mark 2:5 - Jesus forgives sins
John 20:21 - Jesus says: "As I have been sent so I send you"
2 Corinthians 5:18 - Christ gave us the ministry of reconciliation
John 20:23 - If you (the apostles and their successors) forgive the sins of any they are forgiven
John 20:23 - If you (the apostles and their successors) retain the sins of any they are retained
Romans 2:4 - "Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"
Acts 3:19 - Repentance needed for forgiveness
Matthew 6:15 - Believers may not retain the sins of anyone

Purgatory

Numbers 20:12 - Moses and Aaron, though forgiven, are still punished
2 Samuel 12:13-14 - David, though forgiven, is still punished
1 John 5:16-17 - There is sin that is not deadly
Revelation 21:27 - Nothing unclean shall enter heaven
Hebrews 12:23 - All in heaven have been made perfect
Matthew 12:36 - "On judgment day men will account for every careless word they utter"
Matthew 18:23-35 - In the kingdom of heaven you will remain in prison until your debt is paid
1 Corinthians 3:11-15 - Fire will test each one's work. He will be saved but only as through fire
Luke 12:41-48 - There are different degrees of punishment after death
2 Maccabees 12:42-45 - He prayed for the dead that they might be freed from their sin
2 Timothy 1:16-18 - Paul prays for his dead friend Onesiphorus

Praying to Saints

* Deuteronomy 18:10-11 - Critics liken praying to saints to divination
1 Samuel 28:3-14 - Divination is conjuring information from the dead (not asking for their prayers)
* 1 Timothy 2:5 - "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"
Hebrews 9:15 - Specifically: "He [Jesus] is the mediator of a new covenant" (when someone prays for you they are not mediating a new covenant)
1 Corinthians 12:13 - "We were all baptized into one body"
Romans 12:5 - We are one body and individually members of one another
Colossians 1:18 - Christ is the head of the body
Romans 8:35-39 - Death cannot separate us from Christ (or the rest of the body either)
1 Corinthians 12:26 - If one suffers all suffer
Galatians 6:2 - We are to bear one another's burdens
James 5:16 - We are to pray for one another
James 5:16 - The prayer of the righteous has great power
Luke 15:7 - Those in heaven (very righteous) care for us
Revelation 4:8 - Those in heaven pray constantly
Matthew 18:10 - The angels pray for us
Revelation 5:8 - The angels and saints present our prayers to God
Revelation 8:3-4 - The angels add their prayers to ours and present them to God
Tobit 12:12 - An angel presented Tobit and Sarah's prayer to God
2 Maccabees 15:11-14 - The deceased Onias and Jeremiah pray for Israel

Mary Ever-Virgin

* Matthew 1:25 - Joseph knew her not until she had born a son
Luke 1:80 - The word until in Greek does not imply that anything happened after the fact
Matthew 13:55 - "Are not His [Jesus] brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?"
Matthew 27:56 - Mary the mother of James and Joseph is also -
John 19:25 - Mary the wife of Clopas (not Joseph)
Matthew 28:10 - Jesus said, "Tell my brethren to go to Galilee and there they will see me"
Matthew 28:16 - "The eleven disciples went to Galilee" (Are they His siblings too?)

Mark 6:3 - Jesus is the son of Mary not a son of Mary

John 19:26-27 - Jesus entrusted the care of His mother to the apostle John as He had no siblings

The Immaculate Conception

Genesis 3:15 - Enmity between Satan and Mary (if she sinned there would be no enmity)

* Romans 3:23 - All have sinned (Paul is saying there is no advantage for Jew or Gentile)

Luke 1:28 - "Hail full of grace," in Greek indicates something that was completed in the past

* Luke 1:47 - "My spirit rejoices in God my savior" (Jesus saved Mary by preserving her from sin)

The Assumption

2 Kings 2:1-13 - Elijah is assumed into heaven

Hebrews 11:5 - Enoch is assumed into heaven

John 5:28-29 - All of the righteous will be assumed into heaven

The Mother of God

Luke 1:43 - Elizabeth calls her "The mother of my Lord" Jesus is Lord because He is God

Statues and Images

* Exodus 20:4-5 - "You shall not make a graven image...you shall not bow down and serve them"

Exodus 25:18 - "And you shall make two cherubim of gold (for the Ark of the Covenant)"

Exodus 26:1 - The curtains around the ark have cherubim on them

Exodus 26:31 - The linen veil had cherubim placed on it

Numbers 21:8-9 - The Lord tells Moses to make the bronze serpent (did He forget Exodus 20?)

1 Kings 6:23 - By God's design the temple had engraved cherubim

1 Kings 6:35 - Doors in the temple had Cherubim, flowers and palm trees carved on them

1 Kings 7:25-45 - By God's design the temple had bronze oxen and lions

Relics

2 Kings 13:20-21 - A dead man comes to life after touching the bones of Elisha

Matthew 9:20-22 - A woman is cured by touching Jesus' garment

Acts 19:11-12 - People were healed by handkerchiefs or aprons that touched Paul

Holy Medals and Scapulars

Numbers 15:37-40 - The Israelites wore reminders of God

The Trinity

Genesis 18:1-2 - "And the Lord appeared to him...he beheld three men"

Genesis 1:26-27 - God says: "Let us make man in our image...God made man in His image"

Matthew 28:19 - "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

2 Corinthians 13:14 - "The grace of Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"

Jesus is God

Isaiah 9:6 - Prophecy concerning Jesus: "He will be called...Mighty God"

John 1:1 - Jesus is the Word and the Word is God

John 8:58 - Jesus claims to be the great "I Am" (God, Exodus 3:14)

John 10:30-33 - Jesus said: "The Father and I are one"

John 10:38 - Jesus said: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me"

John 14:9 - Jesus said: "He who has seen me has seen the Father"

John 20:28 - Jesus accepts Thomas calling Him "My Lord and my God"
Colossians 2:9 - "In Him [Jesus] dwells the fullness of deity"
Titus 2:13 - "Awaiting our great God and Savior Jesus Christ"

The Holy Spirit is God

Acts 5:3-4 - Lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God
2 Corinthians 3:17-18 - "The Lord is the Spirit"
Hebrews 3:7-9 - The Holy Spirit claims to be God

The Holy Spirit is a Person Not a Force

John 14:26 - The Holy Spirit will teach you all things
Acts 8:29 - "And the Spirit said to Philip"
Acts 13:2 - "The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul'"
Romans 8:27 - "The Spirit intercedes for the saints"
1 Corinthians 2:11 - "No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit"
1 Corinthians 12:11 - "The Spirit apportions to each one as He wills"
Ephesians 4:30 - "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit"

Confirmation

Acts 8:14-17 - Peter and John pray for baptized Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit
Acts 19:5-6 - Paul lays hands on those already baptized and they receive the Holy Spirit

Holy Orders

Luke 22:17-19 - Jesus institutes the priesthood at the Last Supper
John 20:22 - The Apostles are given the authority to forgive sin
Titus 1:5 - Bishops appoint presbyters (priests)
Acts 6:2-6 - The first deacons are ordained
Acts 14:23 - Paul and Barnabas appoint elders for the churches at Derbe
Titus 1:5 - Titus, a bishop, is to appoint presbyters (priests) in every town

Celibacy

* 1 Timothy 4:1-3 - Forbidding marriage is a doctrine of demons
Ephesians 5:21-33 - Marriage is good, a symbol of Christ and His Church
Matthew 19:12 - Jesus praises celibacy
1 Corinthians 7:8 - The apostle Paul was celibate
1 Corinthians 7:32-35 Celibacy is recommended for those in ministry

Anointing of the Sick

Mark 6:13 - The Apostles anointed the sick with oil and healed them
James 5:14-15 - The presbyters (priests) pray over and anoint the sick with oil

Chastity

Mark 7:21-23 - Fornication is called evil
1 Corinthians 6:18 - Flee fornication, it is a sin against your body
1 Corinthians 6:19 - Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. You are not your own
1 Corinthians 6:20 - You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body
1 Thessalonians 4:3 - Abstain from fornication, control your body in holiness not in lust
1 Corinthians 7:1 - It is well for a man not to touch a woman
1 Corinthians 7:2 - Because of the temptation to immorality each man should have his own wife

1 Corinthians 7:2 - And each woman her own husband
Galatians 5:19-21 - Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity...those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God
Ephesians 5:5 - No fornicator has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God
Revelation 22:15 - Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers ...
Colossians 3:5-6 - Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity...

Matrimony

Matthew 19:5 - A man leaves his father and mother to be joined to his wife
Matthew 19:6 - What God has joined together let no man put asunder
Ephesians 5:21-33 - Marriage is an image of the relationship between Christ and His Church

Artificial Birth Control

Genesis 1:28 - Adam and Eve told by God to be fruitful and multiply
Genesis 38:9-10 - Onan killed for spilling his seed on the ground
Deuteronomy 25:5-10 - Penalty for defying the Levirate law was not death
Galatians 5:20 - The word sorcery, pharmakeia in Greek, refers to abortifacient potions

Divorce and Remarriage

Malachi 2:14-16 - "For I hate divorce says the Lord"
Matthew 5:31-32 - "Whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery"
Matthew 19:9 - Whoever divorces and marries another commits adultery
Mark 10:10-12 - Whoever divorces and marries another commits adultery
Luke 16:18 - Divorce and remarriage is adultery
Romans 7:2-3 - A woman is bound to her husband for life. If she lives with another it's adultery
1 Corinthians 7:10-11 - When divorce is necessary remain single or reconcile

Homosexuality

Genesis 2:18 - It is not good that man should be alone
Genesis 2:18 - I will make him a helper fit for him
Genesis 1:27 - Male and female He created them
Genesis 1:28 - He said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply"
Genesis 2:24 - Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife
Leviticus 18:22 - You shall not lie with a male as with a woman, it is an abomination
Romans 1:27 - Homosexuality called unnatural and shameless
1 Corinthians 6:9 - Practicing homosexuals will not go to heaven
Matthew 25:31-45 - Jesus is the one who will judge (that is not the job of believers)
Matthew 19:19 - You shall love your neighbor as yourself (homosexuals are your neighbors)

The Rapture

* 1 Thessalonians 4:17 - We shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air
* Matthew 24:40 - Two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left
Matthew 24:47 - One man is rewarded (salvation)
Matthew 24:51 - The other is punished (hell) (that leaves no one on earth)
1 Thessalonians 4:15 - Jesus is coming back once more (not twice for a rapture and judgment)
Acts 3:20-21 - Jesus must stay in heaven until that time
Acts 1:11 - When He returns He will be coming all the way down to the earth (not hover above it)
Matthew 25:31-45 - When He comes He will come to judge the living and the dead
Matthew 25:46 - Some go to eternal punishment, some to eternal life (no one left on earth)

* Denotes a verse that is used in opposition to Catholic teaching

Introduction to the Early Church Fathers

The Early Church Fathers were the leaders and teachers of the early Church. They lived and wrote during the first eight centuries of Church history. Some of their writings were composed to instruct and / or to encourage the faithful. Other writings were composed to explain or defend the faith when it was attacked or questioned. The writings of the Early Fathers are widely available and studied. They are accepted by Catholic and non-Catholic scholars alike. Thus they provide common ground in establishing the beliefs and practices of the early Church.

The earliest of the fathers are known as the Apostolic Fathers. Their writings come to us from the first two centuries of Church History. They were the immediate successors of the Apostles. Three of them were disciples of one or more of the Apostles. Clement of Rome was a disciple of the apostles Peter and Paul. Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna were disciples of the Apostle John. Naturally we would expect that those who were taught directly by the Apostles would themselves believe and teach correctly.

Protestantism is based on the allegation that the Catholic Church became corrupt shortly after 312 AD. That's when the emperor Constantine converted and made Christianity the state religion. It is alleged that pagan converts came into the Church bringing with them many of their pagan beliefs and practices. According to Protestant historians the pagan practices that were brought into the Church became the distinctive doctrines of Catholicism. Thus the Catholic Church was born and true Christianity was lost until the Reformation. But history tells us a different story.

Shortly after the death of the apostle John, his disciple, Ignatius of Antioch, referred to the Church as the Catholic Church. In his Letter to the Smyrnaeans he wrote: "Where the bishop is present, there is the Catholic Church" (8:2 [A.D. 107]).

In reading the Early Fathers we see a Church with bishops in authority over priests and deacons. We see a church that baptized infants and believed in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. We see a Church that believed in the primacy of Rome, the intercession of the saints in heaven and the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Thus we are lead to the inescapable conclusion that the early Church was the Catholic Church.

As you can see, the writings of the Early Fathers are especially helpful in refuting the Protestant claim that many Catholic doctrines were invented in later years. Although they are wrong concerning the age of Catholic doctrines their reasoning is sound. If a teaching appears after the apostolic age without evidence of previous support it must be false. Curiously enough they abandon this line of reasoning when it comes to some of their own beliefs such as the doctrine of Scripture Alone (mid 1500's), The Rapture (late 1800's), the licitness of contraception (1930) and others.

Note that some doctrines existed in a primitive form during the early years. These doctrines would develop over time. One example is the Doctrine of the Trinity. All of its elements were present at the beginning but it wasn't clearly defined the way it is today. It wasn't until later that it was fully understood. This would not make it a late teaching as all of the information was there from the beginning. Other doctrines were developed in this same way.

Also worthy of note is the fact that the Early Fathers occasionally disagreed on minor issues that were not yet settled by the Church. This does not present us with a problem as we do not claim that the Fathers were infallible. While they were not infallible they were unmistakably Catholic. They clearly illustrate the fact that the early Church had no resemblance to Protestantism.

John Henry Newman, a convert to Catholicism, studied the Early Fathers and wrote: "The Christianity of history is not Protestantism. If ever there were a safe truth it is this, and Protestantism has ever felt it so; to be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant" (*An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*).

Christianity was started by Christ 2000 years ago and it has existed for 2000 years. It didn't go away for 1200 years and come back. Indeed that would have rendered Jesus' words impotent. In Matthew 16:18 as He was establishing His Church Jesus gave us a guarantee. He said: "I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." If the Protestant hypothesis is correct, the gates of hell did some serious prevailing and Jesus Christ is a liar. But of course such is not the case.

The Early Church Fathers on Creation Out of Nothing

The Early Church Fathers believed that God and not nature was the first cause of all things.

Hermas

Believe first of all that God is one, that he created all things and set them in order and brought out of nonexistence into existence everything that is, and that he contains all things while he himself is uncontained (*The Shepherd*, 2:1:1 [A.D. 80]).

Aristides

Let us proceed, then, O king, to the elements themselves, so that we may demonstrate concerning them that they are not gods but corruptible and changeable things, produced out of the nonexistent by him that is truly God, who is incorruptible and unchangeable and invisible, but who sees all things and changes them and alters them as he wills (*Apology* 4 [A.D. 140]).

Theophilus of Antioch

Furthermore, inasmuch as God is uncreated, he is also unchangeable; so also, if matter were uncreated, it would be unchangeable and equal to God. That which is created is alterable and changeable, while that which is uncreated is unalterable and unchangeable. What great thing were it, if God made the world out of existing matter? Even a human artist, when he obtains material from someone, makes of it whatever he pleases. But the power of God is made evident in this, that he makes whatever he pleases out of what does not exist, and the giving of life and movement belongs to none other but to God alone (*To Autolycus* 2:4 [A.D. 181]).

Irenaeus

Men indeed are not able to make something from nothing but only from existing material. God, however, is greater than men first of all in this: that when nothing existed beforehand, he called into existence the very material for his creation (*Against Heresies* 2:10:4 [A.D. 189]).

Tertullian

The object of our worship is the one God, who, by the word of his command, by the reason of his plan, and by the strength of his power, has brought forth from nothing for the glory of his majesty this whole construction of elements, bodies, and spirits; whence also the Greeks have bestowed upon the world the name Cosmos (*Apology* 17:1 [A.D. 197]).

There is, however, a rule of faith; and so that we may acknowledge at this point what it is we defend, it is this precisely that we believe: There is only one God and none other besides him, the Creator of the world who brought forth all things out of nothing through his Word, first of all sent forth" (*The Demurrer Against the Heretics* 13:1 [A.D. 200]).

Hippolytus

Then shall the righteous answer, astonished at the mighty and wondrous fact that he, whom the hosts of angels cannot look upon openly, addresses them as friends, and shall cry out to him, "Lord, when saw we you hungry, and fed you? Master, when saw we you thirsty, and gave you drink? You Terrible One, when saw we you naked, and clothed you? Immortal, when saw we you a stranger, and took you in? You friend of man, when saw we you sick or in prison, and came to you? You are the ever-living One. You are without beginning, like the Father, and co-eternal with the Spirit. You are he who made all things out of nothing" (*Discourse on the End of the World* 43 [A.D. 217]).

Origen

The specific points which are clearly handed down through the apostolic preaching are these: First, that there is one God who created and arranged all things and who, when nothing existed, called all things into existence (*The Fundamental Doctrines* 10:4 [A.D. 225]).

Cyprian

[The mother of the seven Maccabean martyrs said:] 'O son, pity me that bore you [nine] months in the womb, and gave you milk for three years, and nourished you and brought you up to this age; I pray you, O son, look upon the heaven and the earth; and having considered all the things which are in them, understand that out of nothing God made these things and the human race (*Exhortation to Martyrdom* 11 [A.D. 253]).

Methodius

In fact out of nothing, man is brought into being, [so] how much rather shall man spring again into being out of a previously existing man? For it: is not so difficult to make anything anew after it has once existed and fallen into decay, as to produce out of nothing that which has never existed" (*Discourse on the Resurrection* 1:14 [A.D.300]).

All things are placed under you [God] as their cause and author, as he who brought all things into being out of nothing, and gave to what was unstable a firm coherence; as the connecting band and preserver of that which has been brought into being; as the framer of things by nature different; as he who, with wise and steady hand, holds the helm of the universe: as the very principle of all good order; as the unchallengeable bond of concord and peace (*Oration on Simeon and Anna* 6 [A.D. 305]).

Lactanius

Let no one inquire of what materials God made those so great and wonderful works, for he made all things out of nothing. Without wood a carpenter will build nothing, because the wood itself he is not able to make. Not to be able is a quality of weak humanity. But: God himself makes his own material, because he is able. To be able is a quality of God, and, were he not able, neither would he be God. Man makes things out of what already exists, because he is... of limited and moderate power. God makes things from what does not exist, because he is strong; because of his strength, his power is immeasurable, having neither end nor limitation, like the life itself of the maker (*Divine Institutes* 2:8:8 [A.D. 307]).

The Apostolic Constitutions

For you [Father] are eternal knowledge, everlasting sight, unbegotten hearing, untaught wisdom, the first by nature, and the measure of being, and beyond all number; who brought all things out of nothing into being by your only begotten Son, but begot him before all ages by your will, your power, and your goodness, without any instrument, the only begotten Son, God the Word (*Apostolic Constitutions* 8:2:12 [A.D. 400]).

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The Early Church Fathers on The Church

The Early Church Fathers believed that the Catholic Church was the true Church, that it taught infallibly and that the clergy was made up of three ranks; bishop, priest, and deacon

Ignatius of Antioch

Follow your bishop, every one of you, as obediently as Jesus Christ followed the Father. Obey your clergy too as you would the apostles; give your deacons the same reverence that you would to a command of God. Make sure that no step affecting the Church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop's sanction. The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is one that is celebrated by the bishop himself, or by some person authorized by him. Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be; just as, wherever Jesus Christ is present, there is the Catholic Church (*Letter to the Smyrneans* 8:2 [A.D. 110]).

In like manner let everyone respect the deacons as they would respect Jesus Christ, and just as they respect the bishop as a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God and college of the apostles. Without these, it cannot be called a Church. I am confident that you accept this, for I have received the exemplar of your love and have it with me in the person of your bishop. His very demeanor is a great lesson and his meekness is his strength. I believe that even the godless do respect him (*Letter to the Trallians* 3:1-2 [A. D. 110]).

The Martyrdom of Polycarp

When finally he concluded his prayer, after remembering all who had at any time come his way – small folk and great folk, distinguished and undistinguished, and the whole Catholic Church throughout the world – the time for departure came. So they placed him on an ass, and brought him into the city on a great Sabbath (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8 [A.D. 110]).

Irenaeus

The Catholic Church possesses one and the same faith throughout the whole world, as we have already said (*Against Heresies* 1:10 [A.D. 189]).

Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers. On this account we are bound to avoid them, but to make choice of the things pertaining to the Church with the utmost diligence, and to lay hold of the tradition of the truth. For how stands the case? Suppose there should arise a dispute relative to some important question among us. Should we not have recourse to the most ancient churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary [in that case] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the churches? (ibid. 3:4).

Tertullian

Where was Marcion then, that shipmaster of Pontus, the zealous student of Stoicism? Where was Valentinus then, the disciple of Platonism? For it is evident that those men lived not so long ago – in the reign of Antoninus for the most part – and that they at first were believers in the doctrine of the Catholic Church, in the church of Rome under the episcopate of the blessed Eleutherus, until on account of their ever restless curiosity, with which they even infected the brethren, they were more than once expelled (*On the Prescription Against Heretics* 22,30 [A.D.200])

Clement of Alexandria

A multitude of other pieces of advice to particular persons is written in the holy books: some for presbyters, some for bishops and deacons; and others for widows, of whom we shall have opportunity to speak elsewhere (*The Instructor of Children* 3:12:97:2 [pre-**A.D. 202**]).

Even here in the Church the gradations of bishops, presbyters, and deacons happen to be imitations, in my opinion, of the angelic glory and of that arrangement which, the Scriptures say, awaits those who have followed in the footsteps of the apostles and who have lived in complete righteousness according to the gospel (*Stromateis* 6:13:107:2 [post-**A.D. 202**]).

Hippolytus

When a deacon is to be ordained, he is chosen after the fashion of those things said above, the bishop alone in like manner imposing his hands upon him as we have prescribed. In the ordaining of a deacon, this is the reason why the bishop alone is to impose his hands upon him: He is not ordained to the priesthood, but to serve the bishop and to fulfill the bishop's command. He has no part in the council of the clergy, but is to attend to his own duties and is to acquaint the bishop with such matters as are needful. . . . On a presbyter [priest], however, let the presbyters impose their hands because of the common and like Spirit of the clergy. Even so, the presbyter has only the power to receive [the Spirit], and not the power to give [the Spirit]. That is why a presbyter does not ordain the clergy; for at the ordaining of a presbyter, he but seals while the bishop ordains. (*Apostolic Tradition* 9 [ca. **A.D. 215**]).

Origen

Not fornication only, but even marriages make us unfit for ecclesiastical honors; for neither a bishop, nor a presbyter, nor a deacon, nor a widow is able to be twice married (*Homilies on Luke*, 17 [ca. **A.D. 235**]).

Cyprian

The spouse of Christ cannot be defiled; she is uncorrupted and chaste. She knows one home . . . Does anyone believe that this unity which comes from divine strength, which is closely connected with the divine sacraments, can be broken asunder in the Church and be separated by the divisions of colliding wills? He who does not hold this unity, does not hold the law of God, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation (*On the Unity of the Catholic Church* 6 [**A.D. 251**]).

Peter speaks there, on whom the Church was to be built, teaching and showing in the name of the Church, that although a rebellious and arrogant multitude of those who will not hear or obey may depart, yet the Church does not depart from Christ; and they are the Church who are a people united to the priest, and the flock which adheres to its pastor. Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church, and that those flatter themselves in vain who creep in, not having peace with God's priests, and think that they communicate secretly with some; while the Church which is Catholic and one, is not cut nor divided, but is indeed connected and bound together by the cement of priests who cohere with one another (*Letters* 66 [**A.D. 253**]).

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The Early Church Fathers on The Primacy of Peter/Rome

The Early Church Fathers understood from the beginning that Peter and his successors held a place of primacy in the Church.

Clement of Rome

Accept our counsel and you will have nothing to regret. . . . If anyone disobeys the things which have been said by him [Jesus] through us, let them know that they will involve themselves in no small danger. We, however, shall be innocent of this sin and will pray with entreaty and supplication that the Creator of all may keep unharmed the number of his elect (*Letter to the Corinthians* 58:2, 59:1 [A.D. 95]).

Ignatius of Antioch

You [the See of Rome] have envied no one, but others have you taught. I desire only that what you have enjoined in your instructions may remain in force (*Epistle to the Romans* 3:1 [A.D. 110]).

Irenaeus

But since it would be too long to enumerate in such a volume as this the succession of all the churches, we shall confound all those who, in whatever manner, whether through self-satisfaction or vainglory, or through blindness and wicked opinion, assemble other than where it is proper, by pointing out here the successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles. Peter and Paul, that church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the apostles. With that church, because of its superior origin, all the churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world, and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the apostolic tradition (*Against Heresies* 3:3:2 [inter A.D. 180-190]).

Clement of Alexandria

[T]he blessed Peter, the chosen, the preeminent, the first among the disciples, for whom alone with himself the Savior paid the tribute [Matt. 17:27], quickly grasped and understood their meaning. And what does he say? "Behold, we have left all and have followed you" [Matt. 19:27, Mark 10:28] (*Who is the Rich Man that is Saved?* 21:3-5 [A.D. 200]).

Tertullian

[T]he Lord said to Peter, "On this rock I will build my Church, I have given you the keys of the kingdom of heaven [and] whatever you shall have bound or loosed on earth will be bound or loosed in heaven" [Matt. 16:18-19]. ... Upon you, he says, I will build my Church; and I will give to you the keys, not to the Church; and whatever you shall have bound or you shall have loosed, not what they shall have bound or they shall have loosed (*Modesty* 21:9-10 [A.D. 220]).

Letter of Clement to James

Be it known to you, my lord, that Simon [Peter], who, for the sake of the true faith, and the most sure foundation of his doctrine, was set apart to be the foundation of the Church, and for this end was by Jesus himself, with his truthful mouth, named Peter, the first-fruits of our Lord, the first of the apostles; to whom first the Father revealed the Son; whom the Christ, with good reason, blessed; the called, and elect (*Letter of Clement to James* 2 [A.D. 221]).

Cyprian

With a false bishop appointed for themselves by heretics, they dare even to set sail and carry letters from schismatics and blasphemers to the Chair of Peter and to the principal church [at Rome], in which sacerdotal unity has its source" (*Epistle to Cornelius* [Bishop of Rome] 59:14 [A.D. 252]).

The Lord says to Peter: “I say to you,” he says, “that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church” . . . On him he builds the Church, and to him he gives the command to feed the sheep [John 21:17], and although he assigns a like power to all the apostles, yet he founded a single chair [cathedra], and he established by his own authority a source and an intrinsic reason for that unity. Indeed, the others were that also which Peter was [i.e., apostles], but a primacy is given to Peter, whereby it is made clear that there is but one Church and one chair. So too, all [the apostles] are shepherds, and the flock is shown to be one, fed by all the apostles in single-minded accord. If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he [should] desert the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he still be confident that he is in the Church? (*The Unity of the Catholic Church* 4 [A.D. 251]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

In the power of the same Holy Spirit, Peter, both the chief of the apostles and the keeper of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, in the name of Christ healed Aeneas the paralytic at Lydda, which is now called Diospolis [Acts 9 ;3 2-3 4] (*Catechetical Lectures* 17;27 [A.D. 350]).

Optatus

In the city of Rome the Episcopal chair was given first to Peter, the chair in which Peter sat, the same who was head — that is why he is also called Cephas — of all the apostles, the one chair in which unity is maintained by all. Neither do the apostles proceed individually on their own, and anyone who would [presume to] set up another chair in opposition to that single chair would, by that very fact, be a schismatic and a sinner. . . . Recall, then, the origins of your chair, those of you who wish to claim for yourselves the title of holy Church" (*The Schism of the Donatists* 2:2 [circa A.D. 367]).

Ambrose of Milan

[Christ] made answer: “You are Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church . . .” Could he not, then, strengthen the faith of the man to whom, acting on his own authority, he gave the kingdom, whom he called the rock, thereby declaring him to be the foundation of the Church [Matt. 16:18]? (*The Faith* 4:5 [A.D. 379]).

Augustine

Among these [apostles] Peter alone almost everywhere deserved to represent the whole Church. Because of that representation of the Church, which only he bore, he deserved to hear “I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (*Sermons* 295:2 [A.D. 411]).

Who is ignorant that the first of the apostles is the most blessed Peter? (*Commentary on John* 56:1 [A.D. 416]).

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The Early Church Fathers on Peter's Presence in Rome

There are those who contend that Peter couldn't have been the bishop of Rome because he was never in Rome. This of course runs contrary to the testimony of the Early Fathers.

Dionysius of Corinth

You have also, by your very admonition, brought together the planting that was made by Peter and Paul at Rome and at Corinth; for both of them alike planted in our Corinth and taught us; and both alike, teaching similarly in Italy, suffered martyrdom at the same time (*Letter to Soter of Rome* [inter **A.D. 166 -174**] as recorded by Eusebius).

Irenaeus

Matthew also issued among the Hebrews a written Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were evangelizing in Rome and laying the foundation of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also handed down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter (*Against Heresies* 3:1:1 [**A.D. 189**]).

But since it would be too long to enumerate in such a volume as this the successions of all the Churches, we shall confound all those who, in whatever manner, whether through self-satisfaction or vainglory, or through blindness and wicked opinion, assemble other than where it is proper, by pointing out here the successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient Church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, that Church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the Apostles. For with this Church, because of its superior origin, all Churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world; and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the Apostolic tradition (*Against Heresies* 3:3:2 [**A.D. 189**]).

Tertullian

Let us see what milk the Corinthians drained from Paul; against what standard the Galatians were measured for correction; what the Philippians, Thessalonians, and Ephesians read; what even the nearby Romans sound forth, to whom both Peter and Paul bequeathed the Gospel and even sealed it with their blood (*Against Marcion* 4:5:1 [inter **A.D. 207-212**]).

Eusebius

The Apostle Peter, after he has established the Church in Antioch, is sent to Rome, where he remains bishop of that city, preaching the Gospel for twenty-five years (*The Chronicle, Ad An. Dom.* 42 [**A.D. 303**]).

When Peter preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had been for a long time his follower and who remembered his sayings, should write down what had been proclaimed. Having composed the Gospel, he gave it to those who had requested it (*Ecclesiastical History* 6:14:1 [**A.D. 325**]).

Peter of Alexandria

Peter, the first chosen of the Apostles, having been apprehended often and thrown into prison and treated with ignominy, at last was crucified in Rome (*Canonical Letter*, canon 9 [**A.D. 306**]).

Lactantius

When Nero was already reigning Peter came to Rome, where, in virtue of the performance of certain miracles which he worked by that power of God which had been given to him, he converted many to righteousness and established a firm and steadfast temple to God. When this fact was reported to Nero, he noticed that not only at Rome but everywhere great multitudes were daily abandoning the worship of idols, and, condemning their old ways, were going over to the new

religion. Being that he was a detestable and pernicious tyrant, he sprang to the task of tearing down the heavenly temple and of destroying righteousness. It was he that first persecuted the servants of God. Peter, he fixed to a cross; and Paul, he slew (*The Deaths of the Persecutors* 2:5 [inter **A.D. 316-320**]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

[Simon Magus] so deceived the City of Rome that Claudius erected a statue of him, and wrote beneath it in the language of the Romans *Simoni Deo Sancto*, which is translated To the Holy God Simon. While the error was extending itself Peter and Paul arrived, a noble pair and the rulers of the Church; and they set the error aright... for Peter was there, he that carries about the keys of heaven (*Catechetical Lectures* 6:14 [**A.D. 350**]).

Damasus

The first see, therefore, is that of Peter the Apostle, that of the Roman Church, which has neither stain nor blemish nor anything like it. The second see, however, is that at Alexandria, consecrated in behalf of blessed Peter by Mark, his disciple and an evangelist, who was sent to Egypt by the Apostle Peter, where he preached the word of truth and finished his glorious martyrdom. The third honorable see, indeed, is that at Antioch, which belonged to the most blessed Apostle Peter, where first he dwelt before he came to Rome, and where the name Christians was first applied, as to a new people (*The Decree of Damasus* 3 [**A.D. 382**]).

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The Early Church Fathers on Apostolic Succession

The Early Fathers believed that authentic teaching and authority came through apostolic succession.

Clement of Rome

Our Apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife for the office of bishop. For this reason, therefore, having received perfect foreknowledge, they appointed those who have already been mentioned, and afterwards added the further provision that, if they should die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry (*Letter to the Corinthians* 44:1 [A.D. 95]).

Ignatius of Antioch

You must all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the presbytery as you would the Apostles. Reverence the deacons as you would the command of God. Let no one do anything of concern to the Church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop, or by one whom he appoints. Wherever the bishop appears, let the people be there; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church (*Letter to the Smyrnaens* 8:1 [A.D. 110]).

Irenaeus

It is possible, then, for everyone in every Church, who may wish to know the truth, to contemplate the tradition of the Apostles which has been made known throughout the whole world. And we are in a position to enumerate those who were instituted bishops by the Apostles, and their successors to our own times: men who neither knew nor taught anything like these heretics rave about. For if the Apostles had known hidden mysteries which they taught to the elite secretly and apart from the rest, they would have handed them down especially to those very ones to whom they were committing the self-same Churches. For surely they wished all those and their successors to be perfect and without reproach, to whom they handed on their authority (*Against Heresies* 3:3:1 [A.D. 180-199]).

It is necessary to obey those who are the presbyters in the Church, those who, as we have shown, have succession from the Apostles; those who have received, with the succession of the episcopate, the sure charism of truth according to the good pleasure of the Father. But the rest, who have no part in the primitive succession and assemble wheresoever they will, must be held in suspicion (ibid 4:26:2).

Tertullian

Moreover, if there be any [heresies] bold enough to plant themselves in the midst of the apostolic age, so that they might seem to have been handed down by the Apostles because they were from the time of the Apostles, we can say to them: let them show the origin of their Churches, let them unroll the order of their bishops, running down in succession from the beginning, so that their first bishop shall have for author and predecessor some one of the Apostles or of the apostolic men who continued steadfast with the Apostles. For this is the way in which the apostolic Churches transmit their lists: like the Church of the Smyrnaeans, which records that Polycarp was placed there by John; like the Church of the Romans where Clement was ordained by Peter. In just this same way the other Churches display those whom they have as sprouts from the apostolic seed, having been established in the episcopate by the Apostles. Let the heretics invent something like it. After their blasphemies, what could be unlawful for them? But even if they should contrive it, they will accomplish nothing; for their doctrine itself, when compared with that of the Apostles, will show by its own diversity and contrariety that it has for its author neither an Apostle nor an apostolic man. The Apostles would not have differed among themselves in teaching, nor would an apostolic man have taught contrary to the Apostles, unless those who were taught by the Apostles then preached otherwise.

Therefore, they will be challenged to meet this test even by those Churches which are of much later date – for they are being established daily – and whose founder is not from among the Apostles nor from among the apostolic men; for those

which agree in the same faith are reckoned as apostolic on account of the blood ties in their doctrine. Then let all heresies prove how they regard themselves as apostolic, when they are challenged by our Churches to meet either test. But in fact they are not apostolic, nor can they prove themselves to be what they are not. Neither are they received in peace and communion by the Churches which are in any way apostolic, since on account of their diverse belief they are in no way apostolic (*The Demurrer Against the Heretics* 32:1 [A.D. 200]).

Clement of Alexandria

After the death of the tyrant, the [Apostle John] came back again to Ephesus from the Island of Patmos; and, upon being invited, he went even to the neighboring cities of the pagans, here to appoint bishops, there to set in order whole Churches, and there to ordain to the clerical estate such as were designated by the Spirit (*Who is the Rich Man that is Saved?* 42:2 [inter 190-210 A.D.]).

Firmilion of Caesarea

But what is his error, and how great his blindness, who says that the remission of sins can be given in the synagogues of the heretics, and who does not remain on the foundation of the one Church which was founded upon the rock by Christ can be learned from this, which Christ said to Peter alone: "Whatever things you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth, they shall be loosed in heaven;" and by this, again in the gospel, when Christ breathed upon the Apostles alone, saying to them; "Receive the Holy Spirit: if you forgive any man his sins, they shall be forgiven; and if you retain any mans sins, they shall be retained." Therefore, the power of forgiving sins was given to the Apostles and to the Churches which these men, sent by Christ, established; and to the bishops who succeeded them by being ordained in their place (*Letter to Cyprian* 75:16 [A.D. 255-256]).

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The Early Church Fathers on Tradition

The Early Church Fathers recognized Oral Tradition (as taught by the Church) as being equally authoritative as written Tradition (Scripture) because they both came from the same God through the same Church.

Papias

Whenever anyone came my way, who had been a follower of my seniors, I would ask for the accounts of our seniors: What did Andrew or Peter say? Or Phillip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any of the Lord's disciples? I also asked: What did Aristion and John the Presbyter, disciples of the Lord say. For, as I see it, it is not so much from books as from the living and permanent voice that I must draw profit (*The Sayings of the Lord* [between A.D. 115 and 140] as recorded by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:39 [A.D. 325]).

Irenaeus

For even creation reveals Him who formed it, and the very work made suggests Him who made it, and the world manifests Him who ordered it. The Universal [Catholic] Church, moreover, through the whole world, has received this tradition from the Apostles (*Against Heresies* 2:9 [A.D. 189]).

True knowledge is the doctrine of the Apostles, and the ancient constitution of the Church throughout all the world, and the distinctive manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of the bishops, by which they have handed down that Church which exists in every place, and has come even unto us, being guarded and preserved, without any forging of Scriptures, by a very complete system of doctrine, and neither addition nor curtailment [in truths which she believes]; and [it consists in] reading [the Word of God] without falsification, and a lawful and diligent exposition in harmony with the Scriptures, both without danger and without blasphemy... (ibid. 4:33 [A.D. 189]).

Tertullian

For wherever both the true Christian rule and faith shall be shown to be, there will be the true Scriptures, and the true expositions, of all the true Christian traditions (*The Prescription of Heretics* 19 [A.D. 200]).

Origen

Seeing there are many who think they hold the opinions of Christ, and yet some of these think differently from their predecessors, yet as the teaching of the Church, transmitted in orderly succession from the Apostles, and remaining in the churches to the present day, is still preserved, that alone is to be accepted as truth which differs in no respect from ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition (*On First Principles* Bk. 1 Preface 2 [circa A.D. 225]).

Eusebius

While [Ignatius of Antioch] was making the journey through Asia under the strictest military guard, he strengthened the diocese in each city where he stayed by spoken sermons and exhortations, and he especially exhorted them above all to be on their guard against the heresies which then for the first time were prevalent and he urged them to hold fast to the tradition of the Apostles to which he thought it necessary, for securities sake, to give form by written testimony (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3:36 [A.D. 325]).

Athanasius

Without prefixing Consulate, month, and day, [the Fathers] wrote concerning Easter, "It seemed good as follows," for it did then seem good that there should be a general compliance; but about the faith they wrote not, "It seemed good" but, "Thus believes the Catholic Church"; and thereupon they confessed how they believed, in order to show that their own

sentiments were not novel, but Apostolic; and what they wrote down was no discovery of theirs, but is the same as was taught by the Apostles (*Letter on the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia* [A.D. 359]).

Basil

Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us “in mystery” by the tradition of the Apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force. And these no one will contradict; - no one, at all events, who is even moderately versed in the institutions of the Church. For were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in these matters... (*On the Holy Spirit* 27 [A.D. 375]).

Jerome

Don't you know that the laying on of hands after baptism and then the invocation of the Holy Spirit is a custom of the Churches? Do you demand Scripture proof? You may find it in the Acts of the Apostles. And even if it did not rest on the authority of Scripture the consensus of the whole world in this respect would have the force of a command. For many other observances of the Churches, which are do to tradition, have acquired the authority of the written law (*The Dialogue Against the Luciferians* 8 [A.D. 382]).

John Chrysostom

“So then brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Hence it is manifest, that they did not deliver all things by epistle, but many things also unwritten, and in like manner both the one and the other are worthy of credit. Therefore let us think the tradition of the Church also worthy of credit. It is a tradition, seek no farther (*Homilies on Second Thessalonians* [circa A.D. 400]).

Vincent of Lerins

I have often then inquired earnestly and attentively of very many men eminent for sanctity and learning, how and by what sure and so to speak universal rule I may be able to distinguish the truth of Catholic faith from the falsehood of heretical pravity; and I have always, and in almost every instance, received an answer to this effect: That whether I or any one else should wish to detect the frauds and avoid the snares of heretics as they rise, and to continue sound and complete in the Catholic faith, we must, the Lord helping, fortify our own belief in two ways: first, by the authority of the Divine Law, and then, by the Tradition of the Catholic Church (*Commonitory* 2 [A.D. 434]).

Theodoret

I have ever kept the faith of the Apostles undefiled... So have I learnt not only from the Apostles and the Prophets but also from the interpreters of their writings, Ignatius, Eustathius, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory, John, and the rest of the lights of the world; and before these from the holy Fathers in council at Nicaea, whose confession of the faith I preserve in its integrity, like an ancestral inheritance [styling corrupt and enemies of the truth all who dare to transgress its decrees] (*Letters* no. 89 [circa A.D. 443]).

The Early Church Fathers on Justification

The Early Church Fathers believed we are justified by faith and works. The works in question are not accomplished by the goodness of the individual, but by the grace of God.

Clement of Rome

Let us therefore join with those to whom grace is given by God. Let us clothe ourselves in concord, being humble and self-controlled, keeping ourselves far from all backbiting and slander, being justified by works and not by words. . . . Why was our Father Abraham blessed? Was it not because of his deeds of justice and truth, wrought in faith? . . . So we, having been called through his will in Christ Jesus, were not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the almighty God justified all men. (*Letter to the Corinthians* 30:3, 31:2, 32:3-4 [A.D. 110]).

Theophilus of Antioch

Give studious attention to the prophetic writings, and they will lead you on a clearer path to escape the eternal punishments and to obtain the eternal good things of God. He who gave the mouth for speech and formed the ears for hearing and made eyes for seeing will examine everything and will judge justly, granting recompense to each according to merit. To those who seek immortality by the patient exercise of good works, he will give everlasting life, joy, peace, rest, and all good things, which neither has eye seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man. For the unbelievers and for the contemptuous, and for those who do not submit to the truth but assent to iniquity, when they have been involved in adulteries and fornications and homosexuality and avarice and in lawless idolatries, there will be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, and in the end such men as these will be detained in everlasting fire (*To Autolykas* 1:14 [ca. A.D. 181]).

Clement of Alexandria

When we hear, 'Your faith has saved you,' we do not understand the Lord to say simply that they will be saved who have believed in whatever manner, even if works have not followed. To begin with, it was to the Jews alone that he spoke this phrase, who had lived in accord with the law and blamelessly and who had lacked only faith in the Lord (*Stromateis or Miscellanies* 6:14:108:4 [post A.D. 202]).

Origen

Whoever dies in his sins, even if he profess to believe in Christ, does not truly believe in him; and even if that which exists without works be called faith, such faith is dead in itself, as we read in the epistle bearing the name of James (*Commentaries on John* 19:6 [A.D. 226-232]).

Cyprian

You, then, who are rich and wealthy, buy for yourself from Christ gold purified in fire, for with your filth, as if burned away in the fire; you can be like pure gold, if you are cleansed by almsgiving and by works of justice. Buy yourself a white garment so that, although you had been naked like Adam and were formerly frightful and deformed, you may be clothed in the white garment of Christ. You who are a matron rich and wealthy, anoint not your eyes with the antimony of the devil, but with the salve of Christ, so that you may at last come to see God, when you have merited before God both by your works and by your manner of living (*Works and Almsgiving* 14 [A.D. 252]).

Aphracertes

Great is the gift which he that is good has given to us. While not forcing us, and in spite of our sins he wants us to be justified. While he is in no way aided by our good works, he heals us that we may be pleasing in his sight. When we do not

wish to ask of him, he is angry with us. He calls out to all of us constantly; "Ask and receive, and when you seek, you shall find" (*Treatises* 23:48 [A.D. 336-345]).

Gregory of Nyssa

Paul, joining righteousness to faith and weaving them together, constructs of them the breastplates for the infantryman, armoring the soldier properly and safely on both sides. A soldier cannot be considered safely armored when either shield is disjoined from the other. Faith without works of justice is not sufficient for salvation; neither is righteous living secure in itself of salvation, if it is disjoined from faith (*Homilies on Ecclesiastes* 8 [ca. A.D. 335- 394]).

John Chrysostom

He that believes in the Son has everlasting life." Is it enough, then, to believe in the Son,' someone will say, 'in order to have everlasting life?' By no means! Listen to Christ declare this himself when he says, 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord! Lord!" shall enter into the kingdom of heaven'; and the blasphemy against the Spirit is alone sufficient to cast him into hell. But why should I speak of a part of our teaching? For if a man believe rightly in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, but does not live rightly, his faith will avail him nothing toward salvation (*Homilies on the Gospel of John* 31:1[circa A.D. 391]).

Jerome

But since in the Law no one is justified before God, it is evident that the just man lives by faith.' It should be noted that he does not say that a man, a person, lives by faith, lest it be thought that he is condemning good works. Rather, he says the 'just man lives by faith. He implies thereby that whoever would be faithful and would conduct his life according to the faith can in no other way arrive at the faith or live in it except first he be a just man of pure life, coming up to the faith by certain degrees (*Commentaries on Galatians* 2:3:11 [A.D. 386]).

Augustine

"He was handed over for our offenses, and he rose again for our justification." What does this mean, "for our justification?" So that he might justify us, so that he might make us just. You will be a work of God, not only because you are a man, but also because you are just. For it is better that you be just than that you are a man. If God made you a man, and you made your-self just, something you were doing would be better than what God did. But God made you without any cooperation on your part. You did not lend your consent so that God could make you. How could you have consented, when you did not exist? But he who made you without your consent does not justify you without your consent. He made you without your knowledge, but he does not justify you without your willing it (*Sermons* 169:13 [inter A.D. 391-430]).

But we know that God does not hear sinners: but if any man is a worshiper of God and does his will, that man God will hear. He still speaks as one only anointed. For God does listen to sinners too. If God did not listen to sinners, it would have been all in vain for the publican to cast down his eyes to the ground and strike his breast saying: "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." And that confession merited justification, just as the blind man merited enlightenment (*Homilies on the Gospel of John* 44:13 [A.D. 416]).

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The Early Church Fathers on Baptism

The Early Church Fathers believed that being baptized was being born again. They baptized both adults and infants and they used three methods; immersion, pouring and sprinkling.

The Didache

After the foregoing instructions, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living [running] water. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water, and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Before baptism, let the one baptizing and the one to be baptized fast, as also any others who are able. Command the one who is to be baptized to fast beforehand for one or two days (*Didache* 7:1 [ca. **A.D. 70**]).

Justin Martyr

As many as are persuaded and believe that what we [Christians] teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, and instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we pray and fast with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father... and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit [Matt. 28:19], they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, "Unless you are born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (*First Apology* 61 [**A.D. 151**]).

Irenaeus

He [Jesus] came to save all through himself – all, I say, who through him are reborn in God; infants, and children, and youths, and old men. Therefore he passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, sanctifying infants; a child for children, sanctifying those who are of that age . . . [so that] he might be the perfect teacher in all things, perfect not only in respect to the setting forth of truth, perfect also in respect to relative age (*Against Heresies* 2:22:4 [**A.D. 189**]).

Tertullian

[N]o one can attain salvation without baptism, especially in view of the declaration of the Lord, who says, "Unless a man shall be born of water, he shall not have life" (*On Baptism* 12:1 [**A.D. 203**]).

When we are about to enter the water — no, just a little before — In the church and under the hand of the bishop, we solemnly profess that we renounce the devil and his pomps and his angels. Thereupon we are immersed three times (*The Crown* 3:2 [**A.D. 211**]).

Hippolytus

Where there is no scarcity of water the stream shall flow through the baptismal font or pour into it from above; but if water is scarce, whether on a constant condition or on occasion, then use whatever water is available. Let them remove their clothing. Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them (*The Apostolic Tradition* 21:16 [**A.D.215**]).

Recognitions of Clement

But you will perhaps say, 'What does the baptism of water contribute toward the worship of God?' In the first place, because that which has pleased God is fulfilled. In the second place, because when you are regenerated and born again of water and of God, the frailty of your former birth, which you have through men, is cut off, and so . . . you shall be able to attain salvation; but otherwise it is impossible. For thus has the true prophet [Jesus] testified to us with an oath: 'Verily, I

say to you, that unless a man is born again of water . . . he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (*Recognitions of Clement* 6:9 [A.D. 221]).

Origen

The Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism even to infants. The apostles, to whom were committed the secrets of divine sacraments, knew there is in everyone innate strains of [original] sin, which must be washed away through water and the Spirit (*Commentaries on Romans* 5:9 [A.D. 248]).

Cornelius I

As [the heretic Novatian] seemed about to die, he received baptism in the bed where he lay, by pouring. . . . (*Letter to Fabius of Antioch* 6:43 [A.D. 251]).

Cyprian

[I]t behooves those to be baptized . . . so that they are prepared, in the lawful and true and only baptism of the holy Church, by divine regeneration, for the kingdom of God . . . because it is written "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (*Epistles* 72 [73]: 21 [A.D. 252]).

As to what pertains to the case of infants: You [Fidus] said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, that the old law of circumcision must be taken into consideration, and that you did not think that one should be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day after his birth. In our council it seemed to us far otherwise. No one agreed to the course which you thought should be taken. Rather, we all judge that the mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born" (*Letters* 64:2 [A.D. 253]).

In the saving sacraments, when necessity compels and when God bestows his pardon, divine benefits are bestowed fully upon believers, nor ought anyone be disturbed because the sick are poured upon or sprinkled when they receive the Lord's grace" (*Letter to a Certain Magnus* 69(76):12 [A.D. 254]).

Ambrose

The Church was redeemed at the price of Christ's blood. Jew or Greek, it makes no difference; but if he has believed, he must circumcise himself from his sins [in baptism (Col. 2:11-12)] so that he can be saved . . . for no one ascends into the kingdom of heaven except through the sacrament of baptism.... "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (*On Abraham* 2:11:79-84 [A.D. 387]).

Augustine

It is this one Spirit who makes it possible for an infant to be regenerated . . . when that infant is brought to baptism; and it is through this one Spirit that the infant so presented is reborn. For it is not written, "Unless a man be born again by the will of his parents" or "by the faith of those presenting him or ministering to him," but, "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit." The water, therefore, manifesting exteriorly the sacrament of grace, and the Spirit effecting interiorly the benefit of grace, both regenerate in one Christ that man who was generated in Adam (*Letters* 98:2 [A.D. 408]).

The Early Church Fathers on The Mass

The Early Church Fathers believed and taught that the Mass was a true sacrifice. It was not a new sacrifice but a participation in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The Didache

Assemble on the Lord's Day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist: but first make confession of your faults, so that your **sacrifice** may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your **sacrifice** [Matt. 5:23—24]. For this is the offering of which the Lord has said, "**Everywhere and always bring me a sacrifice that is undefiled**, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is the wonder of nations" [Mal. 1:11, 14] (*Didache* 14 [A.D. 70]).

Clement 1

Our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate **those who blamelessly and holily have offered its sacrifices**. Blessed are those presbyters who have already finished their course, and who have obtained a fruitful and perfect release (*Letter to the Corinthians* 44:4-5 [A.D. 80]).

Ignatius of Antioch

Make certain, therefore, that you all observe one common Eucharist; for there is but one body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup of union with his blood, and one single altar of sacrifice—even as there is also but one bishop, with his clergy and my own fellow servitors, the deacons. This will ensure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God (*Letter to the Philadelphians* 4 [A.D. 110]).

Justin Martyr

God speaks by the mouth of Malachi, one of the twelve [minor prophets], as I said before, about the sacrifices at that time presented by you: "I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord, and I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name has been glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name is great among the Gentiles" [Mal. 1:10-11]. He then speaks of those Gentiles, namely us [Christians] who in every place offer sacrifices to him, that is, the bread of the Eucharist and also the cup of the Eucharist (*Dialogue with Trypho* 41 [A.D. 155]).

Irenaeus

He took from among creation that which is bread, and gave thanks, saying, "This is my body." The cup likewise, which is from among the creation to which we belong, he confessed to be his blood. He taught the new sacrifice of the new covenant, of which Malachi, one of the twelve [minor] prophets, had signified beforehand: "You do not do my will, says the Lord Almighty, and I will not accept a sacrifice at your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure sacrifice; for great is my name among the Gentiles, says the Lord Almighty" [Mal. 1:10-11]. By these words he makes it plain that the former people will cease to make offerings to God but that in every place sacrifice will be offered to him, and indeed, a pure one, for his name is glorified among the Gentiles (*Against Heresies* 4:17:5 [A.D. 189]).

Cyprian

If Christ Jesus, our Lord and God, is himself the high priest of God the Father; and if he offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father; and if he commanded that this be done in commemoration of himself, then certainly the priest, who imitates that which Christ did, truly functions in place of Christ (*Letters* 63:14 [A.D. 253]).

Serapion

Accept therewith our hallowing too, as we say, "Holy, holy, holy Lord Sabaoth, heaven and earth is full of your glory." Heaven is full, and full is the earth, with your magnificent glory, Lord of virtues. Full also is this sacrifice, with your strength and your communion; for to you we offer this living sacrifice, this unbloody oblation (*Prayer of the Eucharistic Sacrifice* 13:12-16 [**A.D.350**]).

Cyril

Then, having sanctified ourselves by these spiritual hymns, we beseech the merciful God to send forth his Holy Spirit upon the gifts lying before him, that he may make the bread the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ, for whatsoever the Holy Spirit has touched is surely sanctified and changed. Then, upon the completion of the spiritual sacrifice, the bloodless worship, over that propitiatory victim we call upon God for the common peace of the churches, for the welfare of the world, for kings, for soldiers and allies, for the sick, for the afflicted; and in summary, we all pray and offer this sacrifice for all who are in need (*Catechetical Lectures* 23:7-8 [**A.D. 350**]).

Ambrose

We saw the prince of priests coming to us, we saw and heard him offering his blood for us. We follow, inasmuch as we are able, being priests, and we offer the sacrifice on behalf of the people. Even if we are of but little merit, still, in the sacrifice, we are honorable. Even if Christ is not now seen as the one who offers the sacrifice, nevertheless it is he himself that is offered in sacrifice here on earth when the body of Christ is offered. Indeed, to offer himself he is made visible in us, he whose word makes holy the sacrifice that is offered (*Commentaries on twelve Psalms of David* 38:25 [**A.D. 389**]).

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The Early Church Fathers on The Real Presence

The Early Church Fathers believed that the Eucharist, while retaining the appearance of bread and wine, was the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Ignatius of Antioch

Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God. . . . They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in his goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 6:2-7:1 [A.D. 110]).

. . . and are now ready to obey your bishop and clergy with undivided minds and to share in the one common breaking of bread – the medicine of immortality, and the sovereign remedy by which we escape death and live in Jesus Christ for evermore (*Letter to the Ephesians* 20 [A.D. 110]).

Justin Martyr

We call this food Eucharist, and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration [i.e., has received baptism] and is thereby living as Christ enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these, but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nurtured, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus (*First Apology* 66 [A.D. 151]).

Irenaeus

He has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own blood) from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own body, from which he gives increase unto our bodies. When, therefore, the mixed cup [wine and water] and the baked bread receive the Word of God and become the Eucharist, the body of Christ, and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported) how can they say that the flesh is not capable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life —flesh which is nourished by the body and blood of the Lord and is in fact a member of him? (*Against Heresies* 5:2 [A.D. 189]).

Clement of Alexandria

“Eat my flesh)” [Jesus] says, “and drink my blood.” The Lord supplies us with these intimate nutrients, he delivers over his flesh and pours out his blood, and nothing is lacking for the growth of his children (*The Instructor of Children* 1:6:43:3 [A.D. 191]).

Hippolytus

“And she [Wisdom] has furnished her table” [Proverbs 9:1] . . . refers to his [Christ's] honored and undefiled body and blood, which day by day are administered and offered sacrificially at the spiritual divine table, as a memorial of that first and ever-memorable table of the spiritual divine supper [i.e., the Last Supper] (*Fragment from Commentary on Proverbs* [A.D. 217]).

Aphraahat

After having spoken thus [at the Last Supper], the Lord rose up from the place where he had made the Passover and had given his body as food and his blood as drink, and he went with his disciples to the place where he was to be arrested. But he ate of his own body and drank of his own blood, while he was pondering on the dead. With His own hands the Lord presented his own body to be eaten, and before he was crucified he gave his blood as drink (*Treatises* 12:6 [A.D. 340]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

The bread and the wine of the Eucharist before the holy invocation of the adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, but the invocation having been made, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ (*Catechetical Lectures* 19:7 [A.D. 350]).

Do not, therefore, regard the bread and wine as simply that, for they are, according to the Master's declaration, the body and blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the body and blood of Christ. . . [Since you are] fully convinced that the apparent bread is not bread, even though it is sensible to the taste, but the body of Christ, and that the apparent wine is not wine, even though the taste would have it so. . . partake of that bread as something spiritual, and put a cheerful face on your soul (ibid., 22:6,9).

Theodore

When [Christ] gave the bread he did not say, "This is the symbol of my body" but, "This is my body." In the same way when he gave the cup of his blood he did not say, "This is the symbol of my blood," but, "This is my blood," for he wanted us to look upon the [Eucharistic elements] after their reception of grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit not according to their nature, but receive them as they are, the body and blood of our Lord. We ought . . . not regard [the elements] merely as bread and cup) but as the body and blood of the Lord, into which they were transformed by the descent of the Holy Spirit (*Catechetical Homilies* 5:1 [A.D. 405]).

Ambrose of Milan

Perhaps you may be saying, "I see something else; how can you assure me that I am receiving the body of Christ?" It but remains for us to prove it. And how many are the examples we might use! . . . Christ is in that sacrament, because it is the body of Christ (*The Mysteries* 9:50, 58 [A.D. 390]).

Augustine

I promised you [new Christians], who have now been baptized, a sermon in which I would explain the sacrament of the Lord's table, which you now look upon and of which you last night were made participants. You ought to know that you have received what you are going to receive, and what you ought to receive daily. That bread which you see on the altar having been sanctified by the word of God is the body of Christ, That chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ (*Sermons* 227 [A.D. 411]).

What you see is the bread and the chalice, that is what your own eyes report to you. But what your faith obliges you to accept is that the bread is the body of Christ and the chalice is the blood of Christ. This has been said very briefly, which may perhaps be sufficient for faith, yet faith does not desire instruction (ibid. 272).

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The Early Church Fathers on Confession/Reconciliation

The Early Church Fathers taught that Christ passed on His authority to forgive sins to His priests.

The Didache

Confess your sins in church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life. . . , On the Lord's Day gather together, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure (*Didache* 4:14,14:1 [A.D.70]).

The Letter of Barnabas

You shall judge righteously. You shall not make a schism, but you shall pacify those that contend by bringing them together. You shall confess your sins. You shall not go to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of light (*Letter of Barnabas* 19 [A.D. 74]).

Ignatius of Antioch

For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are also with the bishop. And as many as shall, in the exercise of penance, return into the unity of the Church, these, too, shall belong to God, that they may live according to Jesus Christ (*Letter to the Philadelphians* 3 [A.D. 110]).

For where there is division and wrath, God does not dwell. To all them that repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop (ibid. 8).

Irenaeus

[The Gnostic disciples of Marcus] have deluded many women. . . Their consciences have been branded as with a hot iron. Some of these women make a public confession, but others are ashamed to do this, and in silence, as if withdrawing from themselves the hope of life of God, they either apostatize entirely or hesitate between two courses (*Against Heresies* 1:22 [A.D. 189]).

Tertullian

[Regarding confession, some] flee from this work as being an exposure of themselves, or they put it off from day to day. I presume they are more mindful of modesty than of salvation, like those who contract a disease in the more shameful parts of the body and shun making themselves known to the physicians; and thus they perish along with their own bashfulness (*Repentance* 10:1 [A.D. 203]).

The Church has the power of forgiving sins. This I acknowledge and adjudge (ibid. 21).

Hippolytus

[The bishop conducting the ordination of the new bishop shall pray:] God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . pour forth now that power which comes from you, from your Royal Spirit, which you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and which he bestowed upon his holy apostles . . . and grant this your servant, whom you have chosen for the episcopate, [the power] to feed your holy flock and to serve without blame as your high priest, ministering night and day to propitiate unceasingly before your face and to offer to you

the gifts of your holy Church, and by the Spirit of the high priesthood to have the authority to forgive sins, in accord with your command (*Apostolic Tradition* 3 [A.D. 215]).

Origen

[A filial method of forgiveness], albeit hard and laborious [is] the remission of sins through penance, when the sinner . . . does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine, after the manner of him who say, "I said, to the Lord, I will accuse myself of my iniquity" (*Homilies in Leviticus* 2:4 [A.D. 248]).

Cyprian

The Apostle [Paul] likewise bears witness and says: "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" [I Cor. 11:27]. But [the impenitent] spurn and despise all these warnings; before their sins are expiated, before they have made a confession of their crime, before their conscience has been purged in the ceremony and at the hand of the priest . . . they do violence to his body and blood, and with their hands and mouth they sin against the Lord more than when they denied him (*The Lapsed* 15:1-3 [A.D. 251]).

Of how much greater faith and salutary fear are they who . . . confess their sins to the priests of God in a straightforward manner and in sorrow, making an open declaration of conscience. . . I beseech you, brethren; let everyone who has sinned confess his sin while he is still in this world, while his confession is still admissible, while the satisfaction and remission made through the priests are still pleasing before the Lord (*ibid.* 28).

Sinners may do penance For a set time, and according to the rules of discipline come to public confession, and by imposition of the hand of the bishop and clergy receive the right of Communion. [But now some] with their time [of penance] still unfulfilled . . . they are admitted to Communion, and their name is presented and while the penitence is not yet performed, confession is not yet made, the hands of the bishop and clergy are not yet laid upon them, the Eucharist is given to them; although it is written, "Whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" [I Cor. 11:27] (*Letters* 9:2 [A.D. 253])

John Chrysostom

Priests have received a power which God has given neither to angels nor to archangels. It was said to them: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose, shall be loosed." Temporal rulers have indeed the power of binding: but they can only bind the body. Priests, in contrast, can bind with a bond which pertains to the soul itself and transcends the very heavens. Did [God] not give them all the powers of heaven? "Whose sins you shall forgive," he says, "they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." The Father has given all judgment to the Son. And now I see the Son placing all this power in the hands of men [Matt. 10:40; John 20:21-23]. They are raised to this dignity as if they were already gathered up to heaven (*The Priesthood* 3:5 [A.D. 387]).

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The Early Church Fathers on Purgatory

The Early Church Fathers believed in purgatory and prayers for the dead.

Clement of Alexandria

The believer through discipline divests himself of his passions and passes to the mansion which is better than the former one, passes to the greatest torment, taking with him the characteristic of repentance for the faults he may have committed after baptism. He is tortured then still more, not yet attaining what he sees others have acquired. The greatest torments are assigned to the believer, for God's righteousness is good, and His goodness righteous, and though these punishments cease in the course of the expiation and purification of each one, "yet" etc. (*Patres Groeci*. IX, col. 332 [A.D. 150-215]).

Origen

If a man departs this life with lighter faults, he is condemned to fire which burns away the lighter materials, and prepares the soul for the kingdom of God, where nothing defiled may enter. For if on the foundation of Christ you have built not only gold and silver and precious stones (I Cor., 3); but also wood and hay and stubble, what do you expect when the soul shall be separated from the body? Would you enter into heaven with your wood and hay and stubble and thus defile the kingdom of God; or on account of these hindrances would you remain without and receive no reward for your gold and silver and precious stones? Neither is this just. It remains then that you be committed to the fire which will burn the light materials; for our God to those who can comprehend heavenly things is called a cleansing fire. But this fire consumes not the creature, but what the creature has himself built, wood, and hay and stubble. It is manifest that the fire destroys the wood of our transgressions and then returns to us the reward of our great works. (*Patres Groeci*. XIII, col. 445, 448 [A.D. 185-232]).

Abercius

The citizen of a prominent city, I erected this while I lived, that I might have a resting place for my body. Abercius is my name, a disciple of the chaste shepherd who feeds his sheep on the mountains and in the fields, who has great eyes surveying everywhere, who taught me the faithful writings of life. Standing by, I, Abercius, ordered this to be inscribed; truly I was in my seventy-second year. **May everyone who is in accord with this and who understands it pray for Abercius** (Epitaph of Abercius [A.D. 190]).

Tertullian

That allegory of the Lord [Matt. 5:25-26] . . . is extremely clear and simple in its meaning . . . [beware lest as] a transgressor of your agreement, before God the judge . . . and lest this judge deliver you over to the angel who is to execute the sentence, and he commit you to the prison of hell, out of which there will be no dismissal until the smallest even of your delinquencies be paid off in the period before the resurrection. What can be a more fitting sense than this? What a truer interpretation? (*The Soul* 35 [A.D. 210]).

The faithful widow prays for the soul of her husband, and begs for him in the interim repose, and participation in the first resurrection, and offers prayers on the anniversary of his death (*Monogamy* 10 [A.D. 213]).

Cyprian

It is one thing to stand for pardon, another thing to attain to glory; it is one thing, when cast into prison, not to go out thence until one has paid the uttermost farthing; another thing at once to receive the wages of faith and courage. It is one thing, tortured by long suffering for sins, to be cleansed and long purged by fire; another to have purged all sins by suffering. It is one thing, in fine, to be in suspense till the sentence of God at the Day of Judgment; another to be at once crowned by the Lord (*Letters* 51[55]:20 [A.D. 253]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

Then we make mention also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition, next, we make mention also of the holy fathers and bishops who have already fallen asleep, and, to put it simply, of all among us who have already fallen asleep. For we believe that it will be of very great benefit to the souls of those for whom the petition is carried up, while this holy and most solemn sacrifice is laid out (*Catechetical Lectures* 23:5:9 [A.D. 350]).

John Chrysostom

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice [Job 1:5], why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them (*Homilies on First Corinthians* 41:5 [A.D. 392]).

Not in vain was it decreed by the apostles that in the awesome mysteries remembrance should be made of the departed. They knew that here there was much gain for them, much benefit. When the entire people stands with hands uplifted, a priestly assembly, and that awesome sacrificial victim is laid out, how, when we are calling upon God, should we not succeed in their defense? But this is done for those who have departed in the faith, while even the catechumens are not reckoned as worthy of this consolation, but are deprived of every means of assistance except one. And what is that? We may give alms to the poor on their behalf (*Homilies on Philippians* 3:9-10 [A.D. 402]).

Ambrose of Milan

Give perfect rest to thy servant Theodosius, that rest which thou hast prepared for thy saints... I have loved him, and therefore will I follow him into the land of the living; nor will I leave him until by tears and prayers I shall lead him with his merits summon him, unto the holy mountain of the Lord (*Funeral Sermon of Theodosius* 36-37 [A.D. 395]).

Augustine

There is an ecclesiastical discipline, as the faithful know, when the names of the martyrs are read aloud in that place at the altar of God, where prayer is not offered for them. Prayer, however, is offered for other dead who are remembered. It is wrong to pray for a martyr, to whose prayers we ought ourselves be commended (*Sermons* 159:1 [A.D. 411]).

Temporal punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by some after death, by some both here and hereafter, but all of them before that last and strictest judgment. But not all who suffer temporal punishments after death will come to eternal punishments, which are to follow after that judgment (*The City of God* 21:13 [A.D. 419]).

That there should be some fire even after this life is not incredible, and it can be inquired into and either be discovered or left hidden whether some of the faithful may be saved, some more slowly and some more quickly in the greater or lesser degree in which they loved the good things that perish, through a certain purgatorial fire (*Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Charity* 18:69 [A.D. 421]).

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The Early Church Fathers on Intercession of the Saints

The Early Church Fathers believed that the saints in heaven could be asked to pray for those of us still on earth.

Origen

But not the high priest [Christ] alone prays for those who pray sincerely, but also the angels... as also the souls of the saints who have already fallen asleep (*On Prayer II* [A.D. 233]).

Pectorius

Aschandius, my father, dearly beloved of my heart, with my sweet mother and my brethren, remember your Pectorius in the peace of the Fish [Christ] (Epitaph [A.D. 250]).

Cyprian

Let us remember one another in concord and unanimity. Let us on both sides always pray for one another. Let us relieve burdens and afflictions by mutual love, that if one of us, by the swiftness of divine condescension, shall go hence the first, our love may continue in the presence of the Lord, and our prayers for our brethren and sisters not cease in the presence of the Father's mercy (*Letters* 56[60]:5 [A.D. 252]).

Anonymous

Atticus, sleep in peace, secure in your safety, and pray anxiously for our sins (funerary inscription near St. Sabina's in Rome [A.D. 300]).

Anonymous

Pray for your parents, Matronata Matrona. She lived one year, fifty-two days (ibid.).

Cyril of Jerusalem

Then [during the Eucharistic prayer] we make mention also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition... (*Catechetical Lectures* 23:9 [A.D. 350]).

Anonymous

Mother of God, [listen to] my petitions; do not disregard us in adversity, but rescue us from danger (Rylands Papyrus 3 [A.D. 350]).

Hilary of Poitiers

To those who would fain to stand, neither the guardianship of saints nor the defenses of angels are wanting (*Commentary on the Psalms* 124:5:6 [A.D. 365]).

Ephraem of Syria

Remember me, you heirs of God, you brethren of Christ; supplicate the Savior earnestly for me, that I may be freed through Christ from him that fights against me day by day (*De Timore, Anim. in fin.* [A.D. 370]).

Liturgy of St. Basil

By the command of your only-begotten Son we communicate with the memory of your saints . . . by whose prayers and supplications have mercy upon us all, and deliver us for the sake of your holy name (*Liturgy of St. Basil* [A.D. 373]).

Gregory Nazianzen

Yes, I am well assured that [my father's] intercession is of more avail now than was his instruction in former days, since he is closer to God, now that he has shaken off his bodily fetters, and freed his mind from the clay that obscured it, and holds conversation naked with the nakedness of the prime and purest mind . . . (*Orations* 18:4 [A.D. 374]).

May you [Cyprian] look down from above propitiously upon us, and guide our word and life; and shepherd this sacred flock . . . gladden the Holy Trinity, before which you stand (*Orations* 17 [24] [A.D. 376]),

Gregory of Nyssa

Do you, [Ephraem] that art standing at the divine altar . . . bear us all in remembrance, petitioning for us the remission of sins, and the fruition of an everlasting kingdom (*Sermon on Ephraem the Syrian* [A.D. 380]).

Ambrose of Milan

May Peter, who wept so efficaciously for himself, weep for us and turn towards us Christ's benign countenance (*Hexameron* 5:25:90 [A.D. 388]).

John Chrysostom

He that wears the purple . . . stands begging of the saints to be his patrons with God, and he that wears a diadem begs the tent-maker [Paul] and the fisherman [Peter] as patrons, even though they be dead" (*Homilies on 2 Corinthians* 26 [A.D. 392]).

When you perceive that God is chastening you, fly not to his enemies . . . but to his friends, the martyrs, the saints, and those who were pleasing to him, and who have great power [in God] (*Orations* 8:6 [A.D. 396]).

Augustine

A Christian people celebrate together in religious solemnity the memorials of the martyrs, both to encourage their being imitated and so that it can share in their merits and be aided by their prayers (*Against Faustus the Manichean* [A.D. 400]).

Jerome

You say in your book that while we live we are able to pray for each other, but afterwards when we have died, the prayer of no person for another can be heard . . . But if the apostles and martyrs while still in the body can pray for others, at a time when they ought still be solicitous about themselves, how much more will they do so after their crowns, victories, and triumphs? (*Against Vigilantius* 6 [A.D. 406]).

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The Early Church Fathers on Mary's Perpetual Virginity

The Early Church Fathers believed that Mary remained a virgin after she gave birth to Jesus.

Origen

The Book [the *Protoevangelium*] of James [records] that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former wife, whom he married before Mary. Now those who say so wish to preserve the honor of Mary in virginity to the end, so that body of hers which was appointed to minister to the Word . . . might not know intercourse with a man after the Holy Spirit came into her and the power from on high overshadowed her. And I think it in harmony with reason that Jesus was the first fruit among men of the purity which consists in [perpetual] chastity, and Mary was among women. For it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the first fruit of virginity (*Commentary on Matthew 2:17* [A.D. 248]).

Hilary of Poitiers

If they [the brethren of the Lord] had been Mary's sons and not those taken from Joseph's former marriage, she would never have been given over in the moment of the passion [crucifixion] to the apostle John as his mother, the Lord saying to each, "Woman, behold your son," and to John, "Behold your mother" [John 19:26-27], as he bequeathed filial love to a disciple as a consolation to the one desolate (*Commentary on Matthew 1:4* [A.D. 354]).

Athanasius

Let those, therefore, who deny that the Son is by nature from the Father and proper to his essence deny also that He took true human flesh from the ever-virgin Mary (*Discourses against the Arians 2:70* [A.D. 360]).

Epiphanius

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things, both visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . . who for us men and for our salvation came down and took flesh, that is, was born perfectly of the holy ever-virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit (*The Man Well-Anchored 120* [A.D. 374]).

Jerome

But as regards Victorinus, I assert what has already been proven from the gospel—that he [Victorinus] spoke of the brethren of the Lord not as being sons of Mary but brethren in the sense I have explained, that is to say, brethren in point of kinship, not by nature. (*Against Helvidius: The Perpetual Virginity of Mary 19* [A.D. 383]).

Didymus the Blind

It helps us to understand the terms "firstborn" and "only begotten" when the Evangelist tells that Mary remained a virgin "until she brought forth her firstborn son" [Matt. 1:25]; for neither did Mary, who is to be honored and praised above all others, marry anyone else, nor did she ever become the mother of anyone else, but even after childbirth she remained always and forever an immaculate virgin" (*The Trinity 3:4* [A.D. 386]).

Ambrose of Milan

Imitate her [Mary], holy mothers, who in her only dearly beloved Son set forth so great an example of maternal virtue; for neither have you sweeter children [than Jesus], nor did the virgin seek the consolation of being able to bear another son (*Letters 63:111* [A.D. 388])

Pope Siricius I

You had good reason to be horrified at the thought that another birth might issue from the same virginal womb from which Christ was born according to the Flesh. For the Lord Jesus would never have chosen to be born of a virgin if he had ever judged that she would be so incontinent as to contaminate with the seed of human intercourse the birthplace of the Lord's body, that court of the eternal King (*Letter to Bishop Anysius* [A.D. 392]).

Augustine

In being born of a virgin who chose to remain a virgin even before she knew who was to be born other, Christ wanted to approve virginity rather than to impose it. And he wanted virginity to be of free choice even in that woman in whom he took upon himself the form of a slave (*Holy Virginity* 4:4 [A.D. 401]).

Leporius

We confess, therefore, that our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, born of the Father before the ages, and in times most recent, made man of the Holy Spirit and the ever-virgin Mary (*Document of Amendment* 3 [A.D. 426]).

Cyril of Alexandria

The Word himself, coming into the Blessed Virgin herself, assumed for himself his own temple from the substance of the Virgin and came forth from her a man in all that could be externally discerned, while interiorly He was true God. Therefore he kept his Mother a virgin even after her childbearing (*Against Those Who Do Not Wish to Confess That the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God* 4 [A.D. 430]).

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The Early Church Fathers on The Immaculate Conception

The Early Church Fathers believed that Mary was full of grace and thus sinless.

Justin Martyr

[Jesus] became man by the Virgin so that the course that was taken by disobedience in the beginning through the agency of the serpent might be also the very course by which it would be put down. Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the power of the Most High would overshadow her, for which reason the Holy One being born of her is the Son of God. And she replied, "Be it done unto me according to your word" (Luke 1:38) (*Dialogue with Trypho* 100 [A.D. 155]).

Irenaeus

Consequently, then, Mary the Virgin is found to be obedient, saying, "Behold, O Lord, your handmaid; be it done to me according to your word." Eve . . . who was then still a virgin although she had Adam for a husband — for in paradise they were both naked but were not ashamed; for, having been created only a short time, they had no understanding of the procreation of children . . . having become disobedient [sin], was made the cause of death for herself and for the whole human race; so also Mary, betrothed to a man but nevertheless still a virgin, being obedient [no sin], was made the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race. . . . Thus, the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. What the virgin Eve had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith (*Against Heresies* 3:22:24 [A.D. 189]).

Origen

This Virgin Mother of the Only-begotten of God is called Mary, worthy of God, immaculate of the immaculate, one of the one (*Homily* 1 [A.D. 244]).

Hippolytus

He [Jesus] was the ark formed of incorruptible wood. For by this is signified that His tabernacle [Mary] was exempt from defilement and corruption (*Orat. In Illud, Dominus pascit me, in Gallandi, Bibl. Patrum, II, 496 ante* [A.D. 235]).

Ephraim the Syrian

You alone and your Mother are more beautiful than any others, for there is neither blemish in you nor any stains upon your Mother. Who of my children can compare in beauty to these? (*Nisibene Hymns* 27:8 [A. D. 361]).

Ambrose of Milan

Come, then, and search out your sheep, not through your servants or hired men, but do it yourself. Lift me up bodily and in the flesh, which is fallen in Adam. Lift me up not from Sarah but from Mary, a Virgin not only undefiled but a Virgin whom grace had made inviolate, free of every stain of sin (*Commentary on Psalm* 118:22-30 [A.D. 387]).

Gregory Nazianzen

He was conceived by the virgin, who had been first purified by the Spirit in soul and body; for, as it was fitting that childbearing should receive its share of honor, so it was necessary that virginity should receive even greater honor (*Sermon* 38 [d. A.D. 390]).

Augustine

We must except the Holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sins, out of honor to the Lord; for from Him we know what abundance of grace for overcoming sin in every particular was conferred upon her who had the merit to conceive and bear Him who undoubtedly had no sin (*Nature and Grace* 36:42 [A.D. 415]).

Theodotus of Ancrya

A virgin, innocent, spotless, free of all defect, untouched, unsullied, holy in soul and body, like a lily sprouting among thorns (*Homily* 6:11[ante A.D. 446]).

Proclus of Constantinople

As He formed her without any stain of her own, so He proceeded from her contracting no stain (*Homily* 1[ante A.D. 446]).

Jacob of Sarug

[T]he very fact that God has elected her proves that none was ever holier than Mary, if any stain had disfigured her soul, if any other virgin had been purer and holier, God would have selected her and rejected Mary[ante A.D. 521].

Romanos the Melodist

Then the tribes of Israel heard that Anna had conceived the immaculate one. So everyone took part in the rejoicing. Joachim gave a banquet, and great was the merriment in the garden. He invited the priests and Levites to prayer; then he called Mary into the center of the crowd, that she might be magnified (*On the Birth of Mary* 1 [d. ca A.D. 560]).

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The Early Church Fathers on The Assumption

The doctrine of the Assumption was one that developed over time. It was not something new but rather the logical result of what was already known (Mary's Immaculate Conception).

Pseudo – Melito

If therefore it might come to pass by the power of your grace, it has appeared right to us your servants that, as you, having overcome death, do reign in glory, so you should raise up the body of your Mother and take her with you, rejoicing, into heaven. Then said the Savior [Jesus]: "Be it done according to your will" (*The Passing of the Virgin* 16:2-17 [A.D. 300]).

Timothy of Jerusalem

Therefore the Virgin is immortal to this day, seeing that he who had dwelt in her transported her to the regions of her assumption (*Homily on Simeon and Anna* [A.D. 400]).

John the Theologian

The Lord said to his Mother, "Let your heart rejoice and be glad. For every favor and every gift has been given to you from my Father in heaven and from me and from the Holy Spirit. Every soul that calls upon your name shall not be ashamed, but shall find mercy and comfort and support and confidence, both in the world that now is and in that which is to come, in the presence of my Father in the heavens". . . And from that time forth all knew that the spotless and precious body had been transferred to paradise (*The Dormition of Mary* [A.D. 400]).

Gregory of Tours

[T]he Apostles took up her body on a bier and placed it in a tomb; and they guarded it, expecting the Lord to come. And behold, again the Lord stood by them; and the holy body having been received, He commanded that it be taken in a cloud into paradise: where now, rejoined to the soul, [Mary] rejoices with the Lord's chosen ones. . . (*Eight Books of Miracles* 1:4 [A.D. 575]).

Theoteknos of Livias

It was fitting ... that the most holy-body of Mary, God-bearing body, receptacle of God, divinised, incorruptible, illuminated by divine grace and full glory ... should be entrusted to the earth for a little while and raised up to heaven in glory, with her soul pleasing to God (*Homily on the Assumption* [ca. A.D. 600]).

Modestus of Jerusalem

As the most glorious Mother of Christ, our Savior and God and the giver of life and immortality, has been endowed with life by him, she has received an eternal incorruptibility of the body together with him who has raised her up from the tomb and has taken her up to himself in a way known only to him (*Encomium in dormitionem Sanctissimae Dominae nostrae Deiparae semperque Virginis Mariae* [ante A.D. 634]).

Germanus of Constantinople

You are she who, as it is written, appears in beauty, and your virginal body is all holy, all chaste, entirely the dwelling place of God, so that it is henceforth completely exempt from dissolution into dust. Though still human, it is changed into the heavenly life of incorruptibility, truly living and glorious, undamaged and sharing in perfect life (*Sermon I* [A.D. 683]).

John Damascene

It was fitting that the she, who had kept her virginity intact in childbirth, should keep her own body free from all corruption even after death. It was fitting that she, who had carried the Creator as a child at her breast, should dwell in the divine tabernacles. It was fitting that the spouse, whom the Father had taken to himself, should live in the divine mansions. It was fitting that she, who had seen her Son upon the cross and who had thereby received into her heart the sword of sorrow which she had escaped when giving birth to him, should look upon him as he sits with the Father, It was fitting that God's Mother should possess what belongs to her Son, and that she should be honored by every creature as the Mother and as the handmaid of God (*Dormition of Mary* [A.D. 697])

Gregorian Sacramentary

Venerable to us, O Lord, is the festivity of this day on which the holy Mother of God suffered temporal death, but still could not be kept down by the bonds of death, who has begotten Thy Son our Lord incarnate from herself (*Gregorian Sacramentary, Veneranda* [ante A.D. 795]).

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The Early Church Fathers on The Mother of God

The Early Church Fathers had no problem referring to Mary as the Mother of God. They saw it as a natural consequence of the Incarnation.

Irenaeus

The Virgin Mary, being obedient to his word, received from an angel the glad tidings that she would bear God (*Against Heresies*, 5:19:1 [A.D. 189]).

Hippolytus

[T]o all generations they [the prophets] have pictured forth the grandest subjects for contemplation and for action. Thus, too, they preached of the advent of God in the flesh to the world, his advent by the spotless and God-bearing (*theotokos*) Mary in the way of birth and growth, and the manner of his life and conversation with men, and his manifestation by baptism, and the new birth that was to be to all men, and the regeneration by the laver [of baptism] (*Discourse on the End of the World* 1 [A.D. 217]).

Gregory the Wonderworker

For Luke, in the inspired Gospel narratives, delivers a testimony not to Joseph only, but also to Mary, the Mother of God, and gives this account with reference to the very family and house of David (*Four Homilies* 1 [A.D. 262]).

It is our duty to present to God, like sacrifices, all the festivals and hymnal celebrations; and first of all, [the feast of] the Annunciation to the holy Mother of God, to wit, the salutation made to her by the angel, “Hail, full of grace!” (ibid., 2).

Peter of Alexandria

They came to the church of the most blessed Mother of God, and ever-virgin Mary, which, as we began to say, he had constructed in the western quarter, in a suburb, for a cemetery of the martyrs (*The Genuine Acts of Peter of Alexandria* [A.D. 305]).

Methodius

Hail to you forever, you virgin Mother of God, our unceasing joy, for unto you do I again return. . . . Hail, you fount of the Son’s love for man. . . . Wherefore, we pray you, the most excellent among women, who boast in the confidence of your maternal honors, that you would unceasingly keep us in remembrance. O holy Mother of God, remember us, I say, who make our boast in you, and who in august hymns celebrate your memory, which will ever live, and never fade away (*Oration on Simeon and Anna* 7 [A.D. 305]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

The Father bears witness from heaven to his Son. The Holy Spirit bears witness, coming down bodily in the form of a dove. The archangel Gabriel bears witness, bringing the good tidings to Mary. The Virgin Mother of God bears witness (*Catechetical Lectures* 10:19 [A.D. 350]).

Ephraim the Syrian

Though still a virgin she carried a child in her womb, and the handmaid and work of his wisdom became the Mother of God (*Songs of Praise* 1:20 [A.D. 351]).

Athanasius

The Word begotten of the Father from on high, inexpressibly, inexplicably, incomprehensibly, and eternally, is he that is born in time here below of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God (*The Incarnation of the Word of God* 8 [A.D. 365]).

Epiphanius of Salamis

Being perfect at the side of the Father and incarnate among us, not in appearance but in truth, he [the Son] reshaped man to perfection in himself from Mary the Mother of God through the Holy Spirit (*The Man Well-Anchored* 75 [A.D. 374]).

Ambrose of Milan

The first thing which kindles ardor in learning is the greatness of the teacher. What is greater than the Mother of God? What more glorious than she whom Glory Itself chose? (*The Virgins* 2:2[7] [A.D. 377]).

Gregory of Nazianz

If anyone does not agree that holy Mary is Mother of God, he is at odds with the Godhead (*Letter to Cledonius the Priest* 101 [A.D. 382]).

Jerome

As to how a virgin became the Mother of God, he [Rufinus] has full knowledge; as to how he himself was born, he knows nothing (*Against Rufinus* 2:10 [A.D. 401]).

Theodore of Mopsuestia

When, therefore, they ask, 'Is Mary mother of man or Mother of God?' we answer, 'Both!' The one by the very nature of what was done and the other by relation (*The Incarnation* 15 [A.D. 405]).

Cyril of Alexandria

I have been amazed that some are utterly in doubt as to whether or not the holy Virgin is able to be called the Mother of God. For if our Lord Jesus Christ is God, how should the holy Virgin who bore him not be the Mother of God? (*Letter to the Monks of Egypt* 1 [A.D. 427]).

John Cassian

You cannot then help admitting that the grace comes from God. It is God, then, who has given it. But it has been given by our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ is God. But if he is God, as he certainly is, then she who bore God is the Mother of God (*On the Incarnation of Christ Against Nestorius* 2:2 [A.D. 429]).

Council of Ephesus

We confess, then, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man, of a rational soul and a body, begotten before all ages from the Father in his Godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born of Mary the Virgin according to his humanity, one and the same consubstantial with the Father in Godhead and consubstantial with us in humanity, for a union of two natures took place. Therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. According to this understanding of the unconfused union, we confess the holy Virgin to be the Mother of God because God the Word took flesh and became man and from his very conception united to himself the temple he took from her (*Formula of Union* [A.D. 431]).

The Early Church Fathers on Contraception

The Early Church Fathers were undivided in their condemnation of artificial birth control. In fact, all Christian churches were in agreement on this until 1930.

Letter of Barnabas

Moreover, he [Moses] has rightly detested the weasel [Lev. 11:29]. For he means, “Thou shalt not be like to those whom we hear of as committing wickedness with the mouth with the body through uncleanness [orally consummated sex]; nor shalt thou be joined to those impure women who commit iniquity with the mouth with the body through uncleanness” (*Letter of Barnabas* 10:8 [A.D. 74]).

Clement of Alexandria

Because of its divine institution for the propagation of man, the seed is not to be vainly ejaculated, nor is it to be damaged, nor is it to be wasted (*The Instructor of Children* 2:10:91:2 [A.D. 191]).

To have coitus other than to procreate children is to do injury to nature (ibid. 2:10:95:3).

Hippolytus

[Christian women with male concubines], on account of their prominent ancestry and great property, the so-called faithful want no children from slaves or lowborn commoners, they use drugs of sterility [oral contraceptives] or bind themselves tightly in order to expel a fetus which has already been engendered [abortion] (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9:7 [A.D. 225]).

Lactantius

[Some] complain of the scantiness of their means, and allege that they have not enough for bringing up more children, as though, in truth, their means were in [their] power . . . or God did not daily make the rich poor and the poor rich. Wherefore, if any one on any account of poverty shall be unable to bring up children, it is better to abstain from relations with his wife (*Divine Institutes* 6:20 [A.D. 307]).

God gave us eyes not to see and desire pleasure, but to see acts to be performed for the needs of life; so too, the genital [‘generating’] part of the body, as the name itself teaches, has been received by us for no other purpose than the generation of offspring (ibid. 6:23:18).

Epiphanius

They [certain Egyptian heretics] exercise genital acts, yet prevent the conceiving of children. Not in order to produce offspring, but to satisfy lust, are they eager for corruption (*Medicine Chest Against Heresies* 26:5:2 [A.D. 375]).

John Chrysostom

[I]n truth, all men know that they who are under the power of this disease [the sin of covetousness] are wearied even of their father’s old age [wishing him to die so they can inherit]; and that which is sweet and universally desirable, the having of children, they esteem grievous and unwelcome. Many at least with this view have even paid money to be childless, and have mutilated nature, not only killing the newborn, but even acting to prevent their beginning to live [sterilization] (*Homilies on Matthew* 28:5 [A.D. 391]).

Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit, where there are medicines of sterility [oral contraceptives], where there is murder before birth? . . . Indeed, it is something worse than murder, and I do not know what to call it; for

she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God and Fight with his [natural] laws? (*Homilies on Romans* 24 [A.D. 391]).

Jerome

But I wonder why he [the heretic Jovinianus] set Judah and Tamar before us for an example, unless perchance even harlots give him pleasure; or Onan, who was slain because he grudged his brother seed. Does he imagine that we approve of any sexual intercourse except for the procreation of children? (*Against Jovinian* 1:19 [A.D. 393]).

You may see a number of women who are widows before they are wives. Others, indeed, will drink sterility [oral contraceptives] and murder a man not yet born, [and some commit abortion] (*Letters* 22:13 [A.D. 396]).

Augustine

This proves that you [Manicheans] approve of having a wife, not for the procreation of children, but for the gratification of passion. In marriage, as the marriage law declares, the man and woman come together for the procreation of children. Therefore, whoever makes the procreation of children a greater sin than copulation, forbids marriage and makes the woman not a wife but a mistress, who for some gifts presented to her, is joined to the man to gratify his passion (*The Morals of the Manichees* 18:65 [A.D. 388]).

You [Manicheans] make your auditors adulterers of their wives when they take care lest the women with whom they copulate conceive. They take wives according to the laws of matrimony by tablets announcing that the marriage is contracted to procreate children; and then, fearing because of your [religious] law [against childbearing] . . . they copulate in a shameful union only to satisfy lust for their wives. They are unwilling to have children, on whose account alone marriages are made. How is it, then, that you are not those prohibiting marriage, as the apostle predicted of you so long ago [I Tim. 4:1-4], when you try to take from marriage what marriage is? When this is taken away, husbands are shameful lovers, wives are harlots, bridal chambers are brothels, fathers-in-law are pimps (*Against Faustus* 15:7 [A.D. 400]).

For thus the eternal law, that is, the will of God creator of all creatures, taking counsel for the conservation of natural order, not to serve lust, but to see to the preservation of the race, permits the delight of mortal flesh to be released from the control of reason in copulation only to propagate progeny (ibid. 22:30).

Caesarius

Who is he who cannot warn that no woman may take a potion [an oral contraceptive or an abortifacient] so that she is unable to conceive or condemns in herself the nature which God willed to be fecund? As often as she could have conceived or given birth, of that many homicides she will be held guilty, and, unless she undergoes suitable penance, she will be damned by eternal death in hell. If a woman does not wish to have children, let her enter into a religious agreement with her husband; for chastity is the sole sterility of a Christian woman (*Sermons* 1:12 [A.D. 522]).

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The Early Church Fathers on Divorce and Remarriage

The Early Church Fathers taught that a legitimate marriage lasted to death. And if separation became necessary a person was to remain single as long as the former spouse was alive.

Hermas

What then shall the husband do, if the wife continue in this disposition [adultery]? Let him divorce her, and let the husband remain single. But if he divorces his wife and marries another, he too commits adultery (*Shepherd* 4:1:6 [A.D. 80]).

Justin Martyr

In regard to chastity, [Jesus] has this to say: If anyone look with lust at a woman, he has already before God committed adultery in his heart. “And, whoever marries a woman who has been divorced from another husband, commits adultery.” According to our Teacher, just as they are sinners who contract a second marriage, even though it be in accord with human law, so also are they sinners who look with lustful desire at a woman. He repudiates not only one who actually commits adultery, but even one who wishes to do so; for not only our actions are manifest to God, but even our thoughts (*First Apology* 15 [A.D. 151]).

Clement of Alexandria

That Scripture counsels marriage, however, and never allows any release from the union is expressly contained in the law: “You shall not divorce a wife, except for reason of immorality.”

And it regards as adultery the marriage of a spouse, while the one from whom a separation was made is still alive. “Whoever takes a divorced woman as wife commits adultery,” it says: “for if anyone divorces his wife, he debauches her”; that is, he compels her to commit adultery. And not only does he that divorces her become the cause of this, but also he that takes the woman and gives her the opportunity of sinning; for if he did not take her, she would return to her husband (*Miscellanies* 2:23:145:3 [A.D. 208]).

Origen

Just as a woman is an adulteress, even though she seems to be married to a man, while a former husband yet lives, so also the man who seems to marry her [and] who has been divorced does not marry her, but, according to the declaration of our Savior, he commits adultery with her (*Commentaries on Matthew* 14:24 [A.D. 248]).

Council of Elvira

Likewise, a woman of the faith [i.e., a baptized person] who has left an adulterous husband of the faith and marries another, her marrying in this manner is prohibited. If she has so married, she may not at any more receive communion — unless he that she has left has since departed from this world (canon 9 [A.D. 324]).

If she whom a catechumen [an unbaptized person studying the faith] has left shall have married a husband, she is able to be admitted to the fountain of baptism. This shall also be observed in the instance where it is the woman who is the catechumen. But if a woman of the faithful is taken in marriage by a man who left an innocent wife, and if she knew that he had a wife whom he had left without cause, it is determined that Communion is not to be given to her even at death (canon 10).

Ambrose of Milan

No one is permitted to know a woman other than his wife. The marital right is given you for this reason: lest you fall into the snare and sin with a strange woman. “If you are bound to a wife, do not seek a divorce”; for you are not permitted, while your wife lives, to marry another (*Abraham* 1:7:59 [A.D. 387]).

You dismiss your wife, therefore, as if by right and without being charged with wrong doing and you suppose it is proper for you to do so because no human law forbids it; but divine law forbids it. Anyone who obeys men ought to stand in awe of God. Hear the law of the Lord, which even they who propose our laws must obey: "What God has joined together let no man put asunder" (*Commentary on Luke 8:5* [A.D. 389]).

Jerome

Wherever there is fornication and a suspicion of fornication a wife is freely dismissed. Because it is always possible that someone may calumniate the innocent and, for the sake of a second joining in marriage, act in criminal fashion against the first, it is commanded that when the first wife is dismissed a second may not be taken while the first lives (*Commentaries on Matthew 3:19:9* [A.D. 398]).

Pope Innocent I

[T]he practice is observed by all of regarding as an adulteress a woman who marries a second time while her husband yet lives, and permission to do penance is not granted her until one of them is dead (*Letters 2:13:15* [A.D. 408]).

Augustine

Neither can it rightly be held that a husband who dismisses his wife because of fornication and marries another does not commit adultery. For there is also adultery on the part of those who, after the repudiation of their former wives because of fornication, marry others. This adultery, nevertheless, is certainly less serious than that of men who dismiss their wives for reasons other than fornication and take other wives. Therefore, when we say; "Whoever marries a woman dismissed by her husband for reason other than fornication commits adultery," undoubtedly we speak the truth. But we do not thereby acquit of this crime the man who marries a woman who was dismissed because of fornication. We do not doubt in the least that both are adulterers. We do indeed pronounce him an adulterer who dismissed his wife for cause other than fornication and marries another, nor do we thereby defend from the taint of this sin the man who dismissed his wife because of fornication and marries another. We recognize that both are adulterers, though the sin of one is graver than that of the other. No one is so unreasonable to say that a man who marries a woman whose husband has dismissed her because of fornication is not an adulterer, while maintaining that a man who marries a woman dismissed without the ground of fornication is an adulterer. Both of these men are guilty of adultery (*Adulterous Marriages 1:9:9* [A.D. 419]).

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The Early Church Fathers on Salvation Outside the Church

The Early Church Fathers taught that those outside of the Church had no hope of salvation. However, they made allowance for those who didn't know any better or had no means to comply.

Ignatius of Antioch

Be not deceived, my brethren: If anyone follows a maker of schism [i.e., is a schismatic], he does not inherit the kingdom of God; if anyone walks in strange doctrine [i.e., is a heretic], he has no part in the Passion [of Christ]. Take care, then, to use one Eucharist, so that whatever you do, you do according to God: For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the union of his blood; one altar, as there is one bishop, with the presbytery and my fellow servants, the deacons (*Letter to the Philadelphians* 3:3-4:1 [A.D. 110]).

Justin Martyr

We have been taught that Christ is the first-begotten of God, and we have declared him to be the Logos of which all mankind partakes [John 1:9]. Those, therefore, who lived according to reason [Greek, logos] were really Christians, even though they were thought to be atheists, such as, among the Greeks, Socrates, Heraclitus, and others like them. . . . Those who lived before Christ but did not live according to reason [logos] were wicked men, and enemies of Christ, and murderers of those who did live according to reason [logos], whereas those who lived then or who live now according to reason [logos] are Christians. Such as these can be confident and unafraid (*First Apology* 46 [A.D. 151]).

Irenaeus

In the Church God has placed apostles, prophets, teachers, and every other working of the Spirit, of whom none of those are sharers who do not conform to the Church, but who defraud themselves of life by an evil mind and even worse way of acting. Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace (*Against Heresies* 3:24:1 [A.D. 189]).

[The spiritual man] shall also judge those who give rise to schisms, who are destitute of the love of God, and who look to their own special advantage rather than to the unity of the Church; and who for trifling reasons, or any kind of reason which occurs to them, cut in pieces and divide the great and glorious body of Christ, and so far as in them lies, destroy it — men who prate of peace while they give rise to war, and do in truth strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel. For they can bring about no "reformation" of enough importance to compensate for the evil arising from their schism. . . . True knowledge is that which consists in the doctrine of the apostles, and the ancient constitution of the Church throughout all the world, and the distinctive manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of the bishops, by which they have handed down that Church which exists in every place [i.e., the Catholic Church] (*ibid.*, 4:33:7-8).

Origen

There was never a time when God did not want men to be just; he was always concerned about that. Indeed, he always provided beings endowed with reason with occasions for practicing virtue and doing what is right. In every generation the Wisdom of God descended into those souls which he found holy and made them to be prophets and friends of God (*Against Celsus* 4:7 [A.D. 248]).

If someone from this people wants to be saved, let him come into this house so that he may be able to attain his salvation. . . . Let no one, then, be persuaded otherwise, nor let anyone deceive himself: Outside of this house, that is, outside of the Church, no one is saved; for, if anyone should go out of it, he is guilty of his own death (*Homilies on Joshua* 3:5 [A.D. 250]).

Cyprian of Carthage

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. He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother (*The Unity of the Catholic Church* 6, 1st ed. [A.D. 251]).

Let them not think that the way of life or salvation exists for them, if they have refused to obey the bishops and priests, since the Lord says in the book of Deuteronomy: "And any man who has the insolence to refuse to listen to the priest or judge, whoever he may be in those days, that man shall die" [Deut. 17:12-13]. And then, indeed, they were killed with the sword . . . but now the proud and insolent are killed with the sword of the Spirit, when they are cast out from the Church. For they cannot live outside, since there is only one house of God, and there can be no salvation for anyone except in the Church (Letters 61[4]:4 [A.D. 253]).

The baptism of public witness [desire] and of blood cannot profit a heretic [one who holds the faith and then abandons it] unto salvation, because there is no salvation outside the Church (*Letters* 72 [73]:21 [A.D. 253]).

Lactanius

It is, therefore, the Catholic Church alone that retains true worship. This is the fountain of truth; this, the domicile of faith; this, the temple of God. Whoever does not enter there or whoever does not go out from there, he is a stranger to the hope of life and salvation. . . Because, however, all the various groups of heretics are confident that they are the Christians and think that theirs is the Catholic Church, let it be known that this is the true Church, in which there is confession and penance and which takes a health-promoting care of the sins and wounds to which the weak flesh is subject (*Divine Institutes* 4:30:11-13 [A.D. 307]).

Jerome

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. Between heresy and schism there is this difference: that heresy involves perverse doctrine, while schism separates one from the Church on account of disagreement with the bishop. Nevertheless, there is no schism which does not trump up a heresy to justify its departure from the Church (*Commentary on Titus* 3:10-11 [A.D. 386]).

Augustine

We believe also in the holy Church, that is, the Catholic Church. For heretics violate the faith itself by a false opinion about God; schismatics, however, withdraw from fraternal love by hostile separations, although they believe the same things we do. Consequently; neither heretics nor schismatics belong to the Catholic Church, not heretics, because the Church loves God, and not schismatics, because the Church loves neighbor (*Faith and the Creed* 10:21 [A.D. 393]).

When we speak of within and without in relation to the Church, it is the position of the heart that we must consider, not that of the body. . . All who are within [the Church] in heart are saved in the unity of the ark (*On Baptism, Against the Donatists* 5:28[39] [A.D. 400]).

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The Early Church Fathers on The Divinity of Christ

The Early Church Fathers believed and taught that Jesus Christ, as the second person of the Trinity, was God.

Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church at Ephesus in Asia . . . predestined from eternity for a glory that is lasting and unchanging, united and chosen through true suffering by the will of the Father in Jesus Christ our God (*Letter to the Ephesians* 1 [A.D. 110]).

For our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived by Mary in accord with God's plan: of the seed of David, it is true, but also of the Holy Spirit (ibid., 18:2).

To the Church beloved and enlightened after the love of Jesus Christ, our God, by the will of him that has willed everything which is (*Letter to the Romans* 1 [A.D. 110]).

Aristides

[Christians] are they who, above every people of the earth, have found the truth, for they acknowledge God, the Creator and maker of all things, in the only-begotten Son and in the Holy Spirit (*Apology* 16 [A.D. 140]).

Tatian the Syrian

We are not playing the fool, you Greeks, nor do we talk nonsense, when we report that God was born in the form of a man (*Address to the Greeks* 21 [A.D. 170]).

Melito of Sardis

It is no way necessary in dealing with persons of intelligence to adduce the actions of Christ after his baptism as proof that his soul and his body, his human nature, were like ours, real and not phantasmal. The activities of Christ after his baptism, and especially his miracles, gave indication and assurance to the world of the deity hidden in his flesh. Being God and likewise perfect man, he gave positive indications of his two natures: of his deity by the miracles during the three years following after his baptism, of his humanity in the thirty years which came before his baptism during which, by reason of his condition according to the flesh, he concealed the signs of his deity, although he was the true God existing before the ages (*Fragment in Anastasius of Sinai's The Guide* 13 [A.D. 177]).

Irenaeus

For the Church, although dispersed throughout the whole world even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and from their disciples the faith in one God, Father Almighty, the creator of heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them; and in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who announced through the prophets the dispensations and the comings, and the birth from a Virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily ascension into heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus our Lord, and his coming from heaven in the glory of the Father to reestablish all things; and the raising up again of all flesh of all humanity, in order that to Jesus Christ our Lord and God and Savior and King, in accord with the approval of the invisible Father, every knee shall bend of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth (*Against Heresies* 1:10:1 [A.D. 189]).

Clement of Alexandria

The Word, then, the Christ, is the cause both of our ancient beginning — for he was in God — and of our well-being. And now this same Word has appeared as man. He alone is both God and man, and the source of all our good things (Exhortation to the Greeks 1:7:1 [A.D. 190]).

Despised as to appearance but in reality adored, [Jesus is") the expiator, the Savior, the soother, the divine Word, he that is quite evidently true God, he that is put on a level with the Lord of the universe because he was his Son (ibid.,10:110:1).

Tertullian

The origins of both his substances display him as man and as God: From the one, born, and from the other, not born (*The Flesh of Christ* 5:6-7 [A.D. 210]).

That there are two gods and two Lords, however, is a statement which we will never allow to issue from our mouth; not as if the Father and the Son were not God, nor the Spirit God, and each of them God; but formerly two were spoken of as gods and two as Lords, so that when Christ would come, he might both be acknowledged as God and be called Lord, because he is the Son of him who is both God and Lord (Against Praxeas 13:6 [A.D. 216]).

Origen

Although he was God, he took flesh; and having been made man, he remained what he was: God (*The Fundamental Doctrines* 1:0:4 [A.D. 225]).

Hippolytus

Only [God's] Word is from himself and is therefore also God, becoming the substance of God (*Refutation of All Heresies* 10:33 [A.D. 228]).

For Christ is the God over all, who has arranged to wash away sin from mankind, rendering the old man new (ibid. 10:34).

Cyprian of Carthage

One who denies that Christ is God cannot become his temple [of the Holy Spirit . . . (*Letters* 73:12 [A.D. 253]).

Arnobius

"Well, then," some raging, angry, and excited man will say, "is that Christ your God?" "God indeed" we shall answer, "and God of the hidden powers" (*Against the Pagans* 1:42 [A.D. 305]).

Lactantius

He was made both Son of God in the spirit and Son of man in the flesh, that is, both God and man (*Divine Institutes* 4:13:5 [A.D. 307]).

Council of Nicea 1

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father. Through Him all things were made (*Creed of Nicea* [A.D. 325]).

The Early Church Fathers on The Trinity

Groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Oneness Pentecostals dispute the doctrine of the Trinity. Jehovah's Witnesses even go so far as to claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was unknown to the Early Church Fathers.

Athenagoras

For, as we acknowledge a God, and a Son his Logos, and a Holy Spirit, united in essence, - the Father, the Son, the Spirit because the Son is intelligence, reason, wisdom of the Father, and the Spirit an effluence, as light from fire; so also do we apprehend the existence of other powers, which exercise dominion about matter, and by means of it (*A Plea for the Christians*, 2:18 [A.D. 177]).

Irenaeus

For the Son, who is the Word of God, arranged these things beforehand from the beginning, the Father being in no want of angels, in order that He might call the creation into being, and form man, for whom also the creation was made; nor, again, standing in need of any instrumentality for the framing of created things, or for the ordering of those things which had reference to man; while, [at the same time,] He has a vast and unspeakable number of servants. For His *offspring* and His *similitude* do minister to Him in every respect; that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Word and Wisdom; whom all the angels serve, and to whom they are subject (*Against Heresies* 4:7:4 [A.D. 180-190]).

Theophilus of Antioch

The three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the Trinity, of God, and His Word, and His Wisdom (*To Autolytus* 2:18 [A.D. 181]).

Clement of Alexandria

And the address in the *Timæus* calls the creator, Father, speaking thus: 'Ye gods of gods, of whom I am Father; and the Creator of your works.' So that when he says, 'Around the king of all, all things are, and because of Him are all things; and he [or that] is the cause of all good things; and around the second are the things second in order; and around the third, the third,' I understand nothing else than the Holy Trinity to be meant; for the third is the Holy Spirit, and the Son is the second, by whom all things were made according to the will of the Father (*The Stromata* 5:14 [A.D. 202]).

Hippolytus

A man, therefore, even though he will it not, is compelled to acknowledge God the Father Almighty, and Christ Jesus the Son of God, who, being God, became man, to whom also the Father made all things subject, Himself excepted, and the Holy Spirit; and that these, therefore, are three. But if he desires to learn how it is shown still that there is one God, let him know that His power is one. As far as regards the power, therefore, God is one. But as far as regards the economy there is a threefold manifestation, as shall be proved afterwards when we give account of the true doctrine (*Against the Heresy of One Noetus* 8 [A.D. 200-210]).

Tertullian

...All are of One, by unity (that is) of substance; while the mystery of the dispensation is still guarded, which distributes the Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three *Persons* - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: three, however, not in condition, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in aspect; yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God, from whom these degrees and forms and aspects are reckoned, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (*Against Praxeus* 2 [A.D. 213]).

...all the Scriptures attest the clear existence of, and distinction in (the Persons of) the Trinity, and indeed furnish us with our Rule of faith.... (ibid. 11[A.D. 213]).

Origen

...the divine benefits [are] bestowed upon us by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which Trinity is the fountain of all holiness.... (On First Principles 1:4:2 [A.D. 220-230]).

And under this rule must be brought also the understanding of the sacred Scripture, in order that its statements may be judged not according to the worthlessness of the letter, but according to the divinity of the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration they were caused to be written (ibid. 4:27 [A.D. 220-230]).

Now this expression which we employ – ‘that there never was a time when He did not exist’ – is to be understood with an allowance. For these very words ‘when’ or ‘never’ have a meaning that relates to time, whereas the statements made regarding Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are to be understood as transcending all time, all ages, and all eternity. For it is the Trinity alone which exceeds the comprehension not only of temporal but even of eternal intelligence; while other things which are not included in it are to be measured by times and ages (ibid. 4:28 [A.D. 220-230]).

Gregory Thaumaturgus

There is a perfect Trinity, in glory and eternity and sovereignty, neither divided nor estranged. Wherefore there is nothing either created or in servitude in the Trinity; nor anything superinduced, as if at some former period it was non-existent, and at some later period it was introduced. And thus neither was the Son ever wanting to the Father, nor the Spirit to the Son; but without variation and without change, the same Trinity abides forever (*Declaration of Faith* [circa A.D. 250]).

Gregory Nazianzen

But [the faithful] worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one Godhead; God the Father, God the Son and (do not be angry) God the Holy Spirit, one nature in three personalities, intellectual, perfect, self-existent, numerically separate, but not separate in godhead (*Orations* 33 [A.D. 374]).

Epiphanius

[The Antiochenes] confess the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit to be consubstantial, three hypostases, one essence, one divinity. That is the true faith which has been handed down by the fathers... (*Against the Heresies of the Panarians* 73 [A.D. 374-377]).

Ambrose of Milan

The substance of the Trinity is, so to say, a common Essence in that which is distinct, an incomprehensible, ineffable Substance. We hold the distinction, not the confusion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; a distinction without separation; a distinction without plurality; and thus we believe in Father, Son and Holy Spirit as each existing from and to eternity in this divine and wonderful Mystery: not in two Fathers, nor in two Sons, nor in two Spirits (*To Gratian, On the Christian Faith* 4:8 [A.D. 381]).

Augustine

As regards this question, then, let us believe that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one God, the Creator and Ruler of the whole creature; and that the Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son, but a trinity of persons mutually interrelated, and a unity of an equal essence (*On the Trinity* 9:1 [A.D. 428]).

The Early Church Fathers on Hell

The Early Church Fathers taught that any one who dies in a state of mortal sin will suffer for all eternity in hell

Ignatius of Antioch

Corrupters of families will not inherit the kingdom of God. And if they who do these things according to the flesh suffer death, how much more if a man corrupt by evil reaching the faith of God for the sake of which Jesus Christ was crucified? A man become so foul will depart into unquenchable fire, and so will anyone who listens to him (*Letter to the Ephesians* 16:1-2 [A.D. 110]).

Second Clement

If we do the will of Christ, we shall obtain rest; but if not, if we neglect his commandments, nothing will rescue us from eternal punishment (*Second Clement* 5:5 [A.D. 150]).

Justin Martyr

No more is it possible for the evildoer, the avaricious, and the treacherous to hide from God than it is for the virtuous. Every man will receive the eternal punishment or reward which his actions deserve. Indeed, if all men recognized this, no one would choose evil even for a short time, knowing that he would incur the eternal sentence of fire. On the contrary, he would take every means to control himself and to adorn himself in virtue, so that he might obtain the good gifts of God and escape the punishments (*First Apology* 12 [A.D. 151]).

[Jesus] shall come from the heavens in glory with his angelic host, when he shall raise the bodies of all the men who ever lived. Then he will clothe the worthy in immortality; but the wicked, clothed in eternal sensibility, he will commit to the eternal fire, along with the evil demons (ibid. 52).

The Martyrdom of Polycarp

Fixing their minds on the grace of Christ, [the martyrs] despised worldly tortures and purchased eternal life with but a single hour. To them, the fire of their cruel torturers was cold. They kept before their eyes their escape from the eternal and unquenchable fire (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 2:3 [A.D. 155]).

Athenagoras

We [Christians] are persuaded that when we are removed from this present life we shall live another life, better than the present one. . . . Then we shall abide near God and with God, changeless and free from suffering in the soul . . . or if we fall with the rest [of mankind], a worse one and in fire; for God has not made us as sheep or beasts of burden, a mere incidental work, that we should perish and be annihilated (*Plea for the Christians* 31 [A.D. 177]).

Theophilus of Antioch

Give studious attention to the prophetic writings [the Bible] and they will lead you on a clearer path to escape the eternal punishments and to obtain the eternal good things of God... [God] will examine everything and will judge justly, granting recompense to each according to merit. To those who seek immortality by the patient exercise of good works, he will give everlasting life, joy, peace, rest, and all good things. . . . For the unbelievers and for the contemptuous and for those who do not submit to the truth but assent to iniquity, when they have been involved in adulteries, and fornications, and homosexualities, and avarice, and in lawless idolatries, there will be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish; and in the end, such men as these will be detained in everlasting fire (*To Autolycus* 1:14 [A.D. 181]).

Irenaeus

The penalty increases for those who do not believe the Word of God and despise his coming. . . . It is not merely temporal, but eternal. To whomsoever the Lord shall say, "Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire," they will be damned forever (*Against Heresies* 4:28:2 [A.D. 189]).

Hippolytus

Standing before [Christ's] judgment, all of them, men, angels, and demons, crying out in one voice, shall say: "Just is your judgment!" And the righteousness of that cry will be apparent in the recompense made to each. To those who have done well, everlasting enjoyment shall be given; while to the lovers of evil shall be given eternal punishment. The unquenchable and unending fire awaits these latter, and a certain fiery worm which does not die and which does not waste the body but continually bursts forth from the body with unceasing pain. No sleep will give them rest; no night will soothe them; no death will deliver them from punishment; no appeal of interceding friends will profit them (*Against the Greeks* 3 [A.D. 212]).

Minucius Felix

I am not ignorant of the fact that many, in the consciousness of what they deserve, would rather hope than actually believe that there is nothing for them after death. They would prefer to be annihilated rather than be restored for punishment. . . . Nor is there measure nor end to these torments. That clever fire burns the limbs and restores them, wears them away and yet sustains them, just as fiery thunderbolts strike bodies but do not consume them (*Octavius* 34:12-5:3 [A.D. 226]).

Cyprian of Carthage

An ever-burning Gehenna and the punishment of being devoured by living flames will consume the condemned; nor will there be any way in which the tormented can ever have respite or be at an end. Souls along with their bodies will be preserved for suffering in unlimited agonies. . . . The grief at punishment will then be without the fruit of repentance; weeping will be useless, and prayer ineffectual. Too late will they believe in eternal punishment, who would not believe in eternal life (*To Demetrian* 24 [A.D. 252]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

We shall be raised therefore, all with our bodies eternal, but not all with bodies alike; For if a man is righteous, he will receive a heavenly body, that he may be able worthily to hold converse with angels; but if a man is a sinner, he shall receive an eternal body, fitted to endure the penalties of sins, that he may burn eternally in fire, nor ever be consumed. And righteously will God assign this portion to either company; for we do nothing without the body. We blaspheme with the mouth, and with the mouth we pray. With the body we commit fornication, and with the body we keep chastity. With the hand we rob, and by the hand we bestow alms; and the rest in like manner. Since then the body has been our minister in all things, it shall also share with us in the future the fruits of the past (*Catechetical Lectures* 18:19 [A.D. 350]).

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The Early Church Fathers on The Sabbath/Lords Day

Contrary to the teaching of Seventh Day Adventists the early Church gathered for worship on the Lord's Day (Sunday), not Saturday, in honor of the day our Lord rose from the dead.

The Didache

But every Lord's day . . . gather yourselves together and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned (*Didache* 14 [A.D. 70]).

Ignatius of Antioch

[T]hose who were brought up in the ancient order of things [i.e., Jews] have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death (*Letter to the Magnesians* 8 [A.D. 110]).

The Didascalía

The apostles further appointed; On the first day of the week let there be service, and the reading of the holy scriptures, and the oblation [sacrifice of the Mass], because on the first day of the week [Sunday] our Lord rose from the place of the dead, and on the first day of the week he arose upon the world, and on the first day of the week he ascended up to heaven, and on the first day of the week he will appear at last with the angels of heaven (*Didascalía* 2 [A.D. 225]).

Victorinus

The sixth day [Friday] is called parasceve, that is to say, the preparation of the kingdom. . . . On this day also, on account of the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, we make either a station to God or a fast. On the seventh day he rested from all his works, and blessed it, and sanctified it. On the former day we are accustomed to fast rigorously, that on the Lord's Day we may go forth to our bread with giving of thanks. Let the parasceve become a rigorous fast, lest we should appear to observe any Sabbath with the Jews . . . which Sabbath he [Christ] in his body abolished (*The Creation of the World* [A.D. 300]).

Eusebius

They [the early saints of the Old Testament] did not care about circumcision of the body, neither do we [Christians]. They did not care about observing Sabbaths, nor do we. They did not avoid certain kinds of food, neither did they regard the other distinctions which Moses first delivered to their posterity to be observed as symbols; nor do Christians of the present day do such things (*Church History* 1:4:8 [A.D. 312]).

[T]he day of his [Christ's] light . . . was the day of his resurrection from the dead, which they say, as being the one and only truly holy day and the Lord's day, is better than any number of days as we ordinarily understand them, and better than the days set apart by the Mosaic Law for feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths, which the Apostle [Paul] teaches are the shadow of days and not days in reality (*Proof of the Gospel* 4:16:186 [A.D. 319]).

Athanasius

The Sabbath was the end of the first creation, the Lord's day was the beginning of the second, in which he renewed and restored the old in the same way as he prescribed that they should formerly observe the Sabbath as a memorial of the end of the first things, so we honor the Lord's day as being the memorial of the new creation (*On Sabbath and Circumcision* 3 [A.D. 345]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

Fall not away either into the sect of the Samaritans or into Judaism, for Jesus Christ has ransomed you. Stand aloof from all observance of Sabbaths and from calling indifferent meats common or unclean (*Catechetical Lectures* 4:37 [A.D. 350]).

Council of Laodicea

Christians should not Judaize and should not be idle on the Sabbath, but should work on that day; they should, however, particularly reverence the Lord's Day and, if possible, not work on it, because they were Christians (canon 29 [A.D. 360]).

John Chrysostom

When he said, "You shall not kill" . . . he did not add "because murder is a wicked thing." The reason was that conscience had taught this beforehand, and he speaks thus, as to those who know and understand the point. Wherefore when he speaks to us of another commandment, not known to us by the dictate of conscience, he not only prohibits, but adds the reason. When, for instance, he gave commandment concerning the Sabbath — "On the seventh day you shall do no work"— he subjoined also the reason for this cessation. What was this? "Because on the seventh day God rested from all his works which he had begun to make" [Ex. 20:10]. And again: "Because you were a servant in the land of Egypt" [Deut. 21:18]. For what purpose then, I ask, did he add a reason respecting the Sabbath, but did no such thing in regard to murder? Because this commandment was not one of the leading ones. It was not one of those which were accurately defined of our conscience, but a kind of partial and temporary one, and for this reason it was abolished afterward. But those which are necessary and uphold our life are the following: "You shall not kill... You shall not commit adultery... You shall not steal." On this account he adds no reason in this case, nor enters into any instruction on the matter, but is content with the bare prohibition (*Homilies on the Statues* 12:9 [A.D. 387]).

You have put on Christ, you have become a member of the Lord and been enrolled in the heavenly city, and you still grovel in the Law [of Moses]? How is it possible for you to obtain the kingdom? Listen to Paul's words, that the observance of the Law overthrows the gospel, and learn, if you will, how this comes to pass, and tremble, and shun this pitfall. Why do you keep the Sabbath and fast with the Jews? (*Homilies on Galatians* 2:17 [A.D. 395]).

Apostolic Constitutions

And on the day of our Lord's resurrection, which is the Lord's Day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God that made the universe by Jesus, and sent him to us, and condescended to let him suffer, and raised him from the dead. Otherwise what apology will he make to God who does not assemble on that day . . . in which is performed the reading of the prophets, the preaching of the gospel, the oblation of the sacrifice, the gift of the holy food (*Apostolic Constitutions* 2:7:60 [A.D. 400]).

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The Early Church Fathers on The Filioque Clause

Contrary to claims by the Orthodox Church the Catholic Church did not invent the idea that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The teaching not only appears in Scripture but was taught by the early Church as well.

Tertullian

"I believe that the Spirit proceeds not otherwise than from the Father through the Son" (*Against Praxeas* 4:1 [A.D. 216]).

Origen

"We believe, however, that there are three persons: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and we believe none to be unbegotten except the Father. We admit, as more pious and true, that all things were produced through the Word, and that the Holy Spirit is the most excellent and the first in order of all that was produced by the Father through Christ" (*Commentaries on John* 2:6 [A.D. 229]).

Maximus the Confessor

"By nature the Holy Spirit in his being takes substantially his origin from the Father through the Son who is begotten" (*Questions to Thalassium* 63 [A.D. 254]).

Gregory the Wonderworker

"[There is] one Holy Spirit, having substance from God, and who is manifested through the Son; image of the Son, perfect of the perfect; life, the cause of living; holy fountain; sanctity, the dispenser of sanctification; in whom is manifested God the Father who is above all and in all, and God the Son who is through all. Perfect Trinity, in glory and eternity and sovereignty neither divided nor estranged" (*Confession of Faith* [A.D. 265]).

Hilary of Poitiers

"Concerning the Holy Spirit . . . it is not necessary to speak of him who must be acknowledged, who is from the Father and the Son, his sources" (*The Trinity* 2:29 [A.D. 357]).

Didymus the Blind

"As we have understood discussions . . . about the incorporeal natures, so too it is now to be recognized that the Holy Spirit receives from the Son that which he was of his own nature. . . . So too the Son is said to receive from the Father the very things by which he subsists. For neither has the Son anything else except those things given him by the Father, nor has the Holy Spirit any other substance than that given him by the Son" (*The Holy Spirit* 37 [A.D. 362]).

Epiphanius of Salamis

"The Father always existed and the Son always existed, and the Spirit breathes from the Father and the Son" (*The Man Well-Anchored* 75 [A.D. 374]).

Basil the Great

"[T]he goodness of [the divine] nature, the holiness of [that] nature, and the royal dignity reach from the Father through the only-begotten [Son] to the Holy Spirit. Since we confess the persons in this manner, there is no infringing upon the holy dogma of the monarchy" (*The Holy Spirit* 18:47 [A.D. 375]).

Ambrose of Milan

"The Holy Spirit, when he proceeds from the Father and the Son, does not separate himself from the Father and does not separate himself from the Son" (*The Holy Spirit* 1:2:120 [A.D. 381]).

Gregory of Nyssa

"[The] Father conveys the notion of unoriginate, unbegotten, and Father always; the only-begotten Son is understood along with the Father, coming from him but inseparably joined to him. Through the Son and with the Father, immediately and before any vague and unfounded concept interposes between them, the Holy Spirit is also perceived conjointly" (*Against Eunomius* 1 [A.D. 382]).

The Athanasian Creed

"[W]e venerate one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in oneness. . . . The Father was not made nor created nor begotten by anyone. The Son is from the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, not made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding" (*Athanasian Creed* [A.D. 400]).

Augustine

"Why, then, should we not believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from the Son, when he is the Spirit also of the Son? For if the Holy Spirit did not proceed from him, when he showed himself to his disciples after his resurrection he would not have breathed upon them, saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' [John 20:22]. For what else did he signify by that breathing upon them except that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from him" (*Homilies on John* 99:8 [A.D. 416]).

Cyril of Alexandria

"Since the Holy Spirit when he is in us effects our being conformed to God, and he actually proceeds from the Father and Son, it is abundantly clear that he is of the divine essence, in it in essence and proceeding from it" (*Treasury of the Holy Trinity*, thesis 34 [A.D. 424]).

Council of Toledo

. . . The Spirit is also the Paraclete, who is himself neither the Father nor the Son, but proceeding from the Father and the Son. Therefore the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten, the Paraclete is not begotten but proceeding from the Father and the Son" (Council of Toledo [A.D. 447]).

Fulgence of Ruspe

"Hold most firmly and never doubt in the least that the same Holy Spirit who is Spirit of the Father and of the Son, proceeds from the Father and the Son" (*The Rule of Faith* 54 [A.D. 524]).

John Damascene

"And the Holy Spirit is the power of the Father revealing the hidden mysteries of his divinity, proceeding from the Father through the Son in a manner known to himself, but different from that of generation" (*Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 12 [A.D. 712]).

"I say that God is always Father since he has always his Word [the Son] coming from himself and, through his Word, the Spirit issuing from him" (*Dialogue Against the Manicheans* 5 [A.D. 728]).

Council of Nicaea II

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, proceeding from the Father through the Son" (*Profession of Faith* [A.D. 787]).

How Old is Your Church?

Name of Church	Year Founded	Name of Founder
Catholic	33	Jesus Christ
Orthodox	1439	Separated from Catholic Church
Lutheran	1517	Martin Luther
The Church of England	1534	King Henry VIII
Presbyterian	1560	John Knox
Congregationalist	1582	Robert Browne
Baptist	1605	John Smyth
Dutch Reformed	1628	Michaelis Jones
Quaker	1652	George Fox
Amish	1693	Jacob Amman
Methodist	1744	John & Charles Wesley
Unitarian	1774	Theophilus Lindley
Episcopal	1789	Samuel Seabury
Disciples of Christ	1804	A group of Presbyterian ministers
Mormon	1830	Joseph Smith Jr.
Seventh Day Adventist	1860	Ellen White
Salvation Army	1865	William Booth
Christian & Missionary Alliance	1865	Albert Simpson
Jehovah's Witnesses	1872	Charles Taze Russell
Christian Scientist	1879	Mary Baker Eddy
Assemblies of God	1914	A group of Pentecostal preachers
Foursquare Gospel	1918	Aimee Semple McPherson
United Pentecostal	1945	A merger of Oneness churches
United Church of Christ	1957	A union of different traditions
Calvary Chapel	1965	Chuck Smith

Note: This list is by no means exhaustive. There are thousands of denominations who claim the Bible as their authority. Listing them all is neither practical nor necessary. I believe the list as it stands illustrates my point.

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For Further Study

The essays in this book are by no means comprehensive. They are designed for two purposes, to disarm the skeptic and to strengthen the faithful. In both cases they are meant to be a starting point. For a complete understanding of the faith, further study is needed. The following books are what I consider to be some of the best resources for that purpose. Some deal with the faith in general while others deal with specific doctrinal issues. As of this writing all of them are available at StayCatholic.com. Go to the “Reading List” page and click on “Special Reading List.” You can get a full description of each book by clicking on its link.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church
How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization by Thomas E. Woods
The Biblical Basis for the Catholic Faith by John Salza
Catholicism and Fundamentalism by Karl Keating
Search and Rescue by Patrick Madrid (Evangelizing Family and Friends)
Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds by Philip Johnson
The Historical Reliability of the Gospels by Craig Bloomberg
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