



[Apologetics]

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(This is a reflection of my faith journey as well as an attempt to crystalize some of my thoughts on radical discipleship. Truth be told, the critique on cultural Protestantism and nominal Christianity will be harsh and direct.)

The Church and I

"You're a staunch Catholic and yet don't know about *Summa Theologica*?" Patrick was laughing. He then tried to bring home the fact how even the much revered, holy and scholarly Thomas Aquinas felt that all his philosophical theological writings were "as straw" (after what he saw and experienced in a beatific vision). I readily admitted my ignorance about Thomism but was unflustered nonetheless. Even my untrained mind could fathom the fact of the dearth and shortfall of the



most elevated and eloquent thought of a creature when confronted with a personal encounter with God Himself. Patrick, of course, was just taking a cheap jab at the intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church. I did not think for a moment that the brilliant theologian was advocating an abandonment of logic and reasoning, and replacing them with a

faith rely solely on feelings and the sensory experience.

Patrick and I were on a common spiritual journey. He was a cradle Catholic raised in the affluent West (New Zealand) while I was catechized in the third world (Borneo) at a poor mission school ran by a solo nun. Our paths crossed at a boarding house in Christchurch, New Zealand. We were both staying with a wonderful landlady who attended a vibrant Pentecostal church. Mrs. Bradley would occasionally invite us to the revivalist-style meetings and Sunday worship at New Life Centre. I was quite impressed with the warm fellowship and highly-emotionally charged services. Untouched by the liberal-modernist theology of the time, I was quite comfortable with the phenomenon of *glossolalia*, private prophecies and miraculous healings since they formed an integral way of life in the general piety, lives of ecstatic saints and the

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mystical theology of my Catholicism. Even the "altar call" and "sinner's prayer" beckoning for repentance and conversion were reassuringly Catholic, something we were already doing at the *Confiteor* during each Mass and when we recited the daily *Act of Contrition*. Nonetheless, these Pentecostals had a quality of joy and spontaneity about them. Frankly, I was already thinking that the institutional ritualistic and formal form of worship had grown rather stifle and could really use a shot of enthusiasm. To my delight, I discovered a wide-spread neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement already vigorously active within the Catholic Church. I asked to be "baptized in the Holy Spirit" and sought out fellowship with some local charismatic prayer groups.

Faith and Reason

College presented many challenges with its excesses and prevalence of a counter-culture, intellectual arrogance, secularization, amorality, sexual revolution, drugs and groupies, popularity of Zen, Hare Krishna and a host of other Eastern religions. For the first time, I was also forced to reckon with various forms of anti-Catholicism, particularly from polemic rhetoric of bible-bashing Christian fundamentalists who decried the Catholic Church as the *Whore of Babylon*, the bogus sinister *Alberto Rivera* character in Jack Chick's "comic" strip tracts, the notorious fable of *Maria Monk*, the fabrication of *Pope Joan*, the willful untruths told in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and various types of antipapist smugness. It did not help when a slanted version of church history from whig text books were being taught in the secular universities; these were fiercely partisan, righteously judgmental, and contained extremely-biased accounts written by Protestants influenced by the misguided notion of whiggish triumphalism over popery and the established order.

Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask thy father and he will show thee; thy elders and they will tell thee (Deut 32:7)

A combination of personal crisis and a deep thirst for truth would thrust me to embark on an intense spiritual journey. Catholicism was on trial, Christianity was tested for relevancy in a modern and rapidly changing world. I knelt in deep prayers, asking the Holy Spirit for guidance and the gift of discernment. Almost immediately, a clear thought pervaded my sense to source direct from the church and to allow her collective ancient wisdom to illumine and teach. After all, the mother church should be able to state and defend her own official teachings against the hostility and amass of misinformation, misunderstanding, the hatred and deliberate lies told against her. At the end of the journey, I was leaving it to God to either unshackle me from the grip of "Romanism" or to be even more steeply confirmed in my childhood faith of Catholicism.

As the old adage says, we must be careful what we pray for --- we just might get it. Quite inexplicably, an avalanche of information began to surge as to quench my thirst and quest for truth. Over the next several months, I emptied the shelves of the library at Canterbury University and the Main Public Library. And as if that's not enough, I also wandered into the library of the Holy Name Seminary near the university (The staff

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there must be wondering about this mysterious unregistered student). I



Holy Name Seminary (Revisited 2007)

was reading everything Catholic and Protestant, comparing translations of bible and checking the various commentaries, delving into patristic Fathers' writings, examining the lives of saints, and studying the full documents of the ecumenical councils and papal encyclicals, and searching the several catechisms. I digested Karl Adam's *Spirit of Catholicism* as well as Loraine Boettner's mendacious anti-Catholicism book, *Roman Catholics*. I bought all the contemporary best sellers by Billy Graham, Malcolm Muggeridge (*Jesus Rediscovered*), Hal Lindsey (*The Late Great Planet Earth*), David Wilkerson (*The Cross and the Switchblades*), and the biographies of Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Wesley. The non-exhaustive



reading list continues with John Henry Newman (*Apologia, Essay on the Development of Doctrine*), G.K. Chesterton (*Orthodoxy, Heretics*), Archbishop Fulton Sheen (*Life is Worth Living*) and C.S. Lewis (*Mere Christianity, The Screwtape Letters*), St. Augustine (*City of God*) and various spiritual writers like Thomas à Kempis (*Imitation of Christ*), St. Francis de Sales (*Spiritual Exercises*). St. Therese of Lisieux (*Story of a Soul*) and St. John of the Cross (*Spiritual Canticle, Dark Night of the Soul*). For more

theological insights, I sought out Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), Hans Küng, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, and a final convergence on, very rightly, the greatest doctor of the church, St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*). For completeness, I rounded off with courses in Philosophy and Comparative Religion at the university.

All Roads lead to Rome

If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will

4. [Coming Home \(Marcus Grodi\)](#)
5. [Ave Maria Radio](#)
6. [Catholic Truth Society](#)
7. [Catholics Come Home](#)
8. [Biblical Foundation International \(Gerry Matatics\)](#)
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21. [Corunum Catholic Apologetic \(Joe Gallegos\)](#)
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24. [Evangelical Catholic \(Phil Porvaznik\)](#)
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know the truth, and the truth will make you free (Jn 8:31-32).



The paradox of the crucified Christ, looking more like a victim than a vanquisher, is a temptation to adapt the truth of Christ to the criteria of worldly wisdom. This "stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23) of the "No greater love" (that a man should lay down his life for a friend, Jn 15:13) confounds the worldly wise and the hedonist crowd. We are told that "(unless) a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24). This revealed mystery of a personal God and divine mercy whereby the One who had power over life gave His life so man may live for eternity surpasseth understanding. Human wisdom cannot perceive the possibility of its strength in its own weakness nor grasps how death can be the source of life and love. Followers of Christ are called to imitate their Master (1 Cor 11:1), rise above mediocrity and even martyrdom [*Sanguis martyrurum, semen christianorum*, The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians (Tertullian, *Apol.*, 50, 13: CCL 1, 171)].

Christianity certainly did not begin with a blueprint for success. Christ only spent three short years in public ministry and only then to suffer a horrid crucifixion like a common criminal with his followers scattering in flight. This epic would have just been a remote and insignificant accident in human history except for the historicity of the empty tomb. The resurrection is the factual cornerstone of Christian faith, with the risen Christ bearing testimony to the power of God and manifesting the salvific plan ("If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain ... if for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied", 1 Cor 15:14-19). Instead of the philosophical void of karmas and vicious unending wheel of birth/death (reincarnation), the endless halls of humanism or life's quiet desperation (grinding boredom, futility and purposelessness), it lifts us in the hope and joy of living victoriously in Christ who defeated sin and conquered death ("O death, where is thy sting?", 1 Cor 15:54). The resurrected Christ told the disciples to spread the good news of salvation throughout the world, and promised to send the Holy Spirit as helper (Jn 14:26). On the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and transformed the disciples into spiritual warriors for the start of the evangelical mission. This community of faith which Christ founded upon Peter with the promise that the "gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18) would survive the rise and fall of empires (like the Imperium Romanum, Holy Roman Empire, Grand Empire of Napoleon, Eastern Bloc and the British Empire (where the sun finally set!), Attila the Hun (the "Scourge of God"), Norse raiders, Islamic conquests, Mongols invaders, the Dark Ages, Industrial Revolution, Nazism, Marxism-Leninism, Modernism, and all the calamities and upheavals of her 2000 years history. She gathered the Holy League fleet of Christian alliance to defeat the Ottoman Turks at Lepanto (AD1565) and thus saving Christian Europe. She also built and shaped Western Civilization by giving it civility and codified laws and the origins of international law, developing the university system, and promoting science and all forms of learning, architecture, art and music while also operating the largest corporal and spiritual works of mercy (hospitals,



orphanages, prison chaplaincy, shelters for the care of widows, lepers, dying, the homeless and private network of social service and charities) in the world. All the while, she is able to stay as a unified body in faith and doctrines with a cohesive vision of God's kingdom under "one fold and one shepherd" (Jn 10:16). The resilient ancient Church testifies to a God who has personally intervened in history to provide redemption for the world in and through Christ. She is a sign of God's work.

In retrospect, the Holy Spirit was active in guiding me through the voluminous literature by methodically harmonizing faith and reason as by building up a solid foundation of faith in Christ and His Church. As proclaimed in the papal encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth." By its nature, faith ("Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen", Heb 11:1) is suspended over the abyss of unbelief. The loyal Catholic gives free assent not only to the unseen God, but also to a church that claims power to pronounce decisively on doctrinal matters. The believer must continually turn to God with fresh humility: "I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mk 9:23). From the innage property of human reason, he gropes to reach "the deep waters" of knowledge (cf Prov 20:5). St. Thomas Aquinas (the Angelic Doctor) plumbed the depths to explain this reasonableness of the Faith by natural sciences ("From the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator", Wis 13:5) and philosophical learning. Anti-intellectualism undercuts the message of Christ. When Protestantism introduced the strict bibliology of *sola scriptura* at the expense of the metaphysical nature of theology, it also detached reason and objective reality. The result is an unhealthy religious fanaticism spouting intolerance and ignorance. Only in Catholicism is Christianity faithfully presented as a reasonable faith where the worldview is logical and rational. Her intellectual tradition defends the teachings of faith and findings of science as both necessary and good in achieving truth. The same God who "reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind" (CCC 159). Faith and reason are interdependent, mutually supporting and complimentary of each other. In the Father Brown mystery, "The Blue Cross," G.K. Chesterton's super-sleuth exposes Flambeau who had been masquerading as a



Catholic priest. Flambeau slipped up by asking: "Ah, yes, these modern infidels appeal to their reason; but who can look at those millions of worlds and not feel that there may well be wonderful universes above us where reason is utterly unreasonable?" Father Brown told him: "You attacked reason ... (that's) bad theology." This bespeaks

of Catholicism with a systematic theology which is an orderly, rational, and coherent account of the Christian faith and beliefs.

"Happy the man who meditates on wisdom and reasons intelligently, who reflects in his heart on her ways and ponders her secrets" (Sir 14:20-21) but it is "faith (which) sharpens the inner eye, opening the mind to discover in the flux of events the workings of Providence" (Encyclical Letter, *Fides et Ratio* (*Faith and Reason*), para 16, Pope John Paul II).



To be deep in history is to cease to be Protestant (*An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, John Henry Newman)



Even as I was learning and training myself in faith, I could not help feeling dismay to see good Catholics being lured and led away by the emotionalism of *Me-Jesus* and simplistic Evangelicalism. Apologetics became an early part of my formation. In those days, books from Fr. Leslie

Rumble (*Questions People Ask; Radio Replies*), TAN books and pamphlets from Catholic Truth Society (CTS and ACTS), Frank Sheed (*Theology for Beginners, Theology and Sanity, The Church and I*) and the apostolate of the Catholic Evidence Guild provided wonderful additional reading materials. I would debate confidently with all comers (SDA, JW, LDS, Southern Baptists, Campus



Crusade, The Navigators, and anyone). The myriad of Protestant denominations and sects with their competing and conflicting basic beliefs is really a Tower of Babel, a jungle full of unsound bibliology and historicity. This is not to disparage our *separated brethren* but merely to point out the errors of their man's traditions as opposed to an authentic, historic Christianity. Anti-Catholic books written by Protestants are simply full of straw-man arguments, very selective in the use of historical data and are oftentimes outright misrepresentation of Catholic doctrines. Even worse, Protestants presumed so wrongly about their own foundational core beliefs:

Take *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone), the most fundamental Protestant principle and battle cry of the original reformers. The proof text frequently used is 2 Tim 3:16-17: "*All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teachings, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*" To say ALL apples are red is NOT to say Apples ALONE are red. The inerrancy, inspiration and sufficiency of the bible are not in dispute. What is troubling is the extrapolation onto the text what isn't there, the unbiblical claim that the Bible ALONE is authority to the exclusion of the authoritative role of Sacred Tradition and Church. When challenged, Protestants will skip and quote another bible verse outside the context, like 1 Cor 4:6: " ... that in us you might learn not to exceed what is *written*". There you have it again, *Sola Scriptura*? Not so fast. Proof-texting is just that, the popular pursuit of Protestants to use decontextualised quotes as pretext and garbled logic to support an illogical claim. Firstly, note the hedging expression and use of modal verb ("might") as a mean to convey vagueness purposely. Secondly, we know, through historical exegesis, that St. Paul was writing (for both 1 Corinthians and 2 Timothy) during a time when only the OT books and a scant collection of NT books were available. So what was "written" and "all scriptures" is meant of this incomplete bible only? Highly unlikely (although it would certainly stump the bible-toting fundamentalists). Even John Calvin regarded "what is written" to be obscure at best for proving *Sola Scriptura* (*Commentary on 1*



Corinthians 4:6). Rather, we read in context how the Corinthians were apparently doing what the Protestants are still doing today, that is, the exalting of one preacher at the expense of others ("So let no one boast of men ... that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another", 1 Cor 3:21 - 4:6) by being swayed by celebrity preachers, scholars and televangelists with stage persona, oratory charisma and flashy sideshow. Instead, St. Paul was advocating that we remove all distractions and always search the *theopneustos*-God-breathed sacred writings for safe ground and authority par excellence. The context is about the immaturity and pride that have caused the dissension in the Corinthian community.

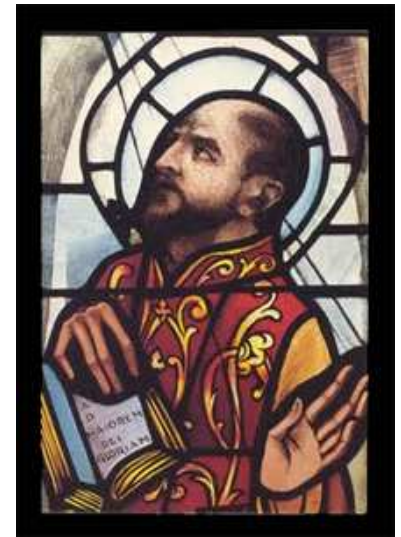
At the Council of Jerusalem, the exercise of *Magisterium* (that is, not *Sola Scriptura*) was regarded as a decision of the Holy Spirit which was binding on all believers ("For it has seemed good to the *Holy Spirit* and to us ...", Acts 15:28). To examine further, we can find St. Paul in *Second Letter to the Thessalonians* charging the believers to "stand firm and hold" to the two strains of an oral *and* a written apostolic *paradosis* (tradition) [2 Thess 2:15]. We must be mindful that the bible never taught that all apostolic traditions were reduced to the written form or that the oral tradition was completely supplanted by the "written" tradition eventually. By studying the bible even more closely, we will see how Christ and the apostles also quoted Jewish *oral* teaching (like the reference to "Moses' seat" and "Jannes and Jambres", Mt 23:2-3 and 2 Tim 3:8 respectively) and regarded it as a legitimate source beyond the written words of the OT. The *Great Commission* to proclaim the Gospel and teach ALL that Christ have commanded us (Matt 28:20) is truncated by a protestantized "book" which St. John plainly stated: "There are many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (Jn 21:25). We must not become too fixated like the Thessalonians in *Acts 17* who rejected St. Paul's oral teaching as unbiblical. The Bereans, on the other hand, were more receptive and who accepted Paul's apostolic preaching as fresh but genuine development of the knowledge of the messiahship.

For a practical application of *Sola Scriptura*, the world must await the invention of the printing press (AD 1440), universal literacy, and a generation of Christians who possess a reasonable skill of critical thinking to read the bible proficiently. Instead of *presuming* the Protestant doctrinal position of *Sola Scriptura*, all Christians must ask if: (1) Did Christ subscribe to the notion of *Sola Scriptura*?, (2) Did the apostles teach *Sola Scriptura*?. and (3) Did the first Christians and



Church Fathers believe in *Sola Scriptura*? The onus is upon Protestants to show why they should, with theological and moral certitude, depart from the doctrines of the universal Church which were good enough for our forefathers and the first Christians for 1600 years. Is your faith in fact faithless? If this same Church could infallibly establish the canonicity of the books of the bible in the 4th century, why is she not good enough for other matters of faith and morals now? Does the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* even fulfill its own criteria, i.e., is [Sola Scriptura](#) itself biblical? If it doesn't, then it is based on a logical incoherence.

Take *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone), the other main tenet of Protestantism. Instead of justification which came by "the obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; 16:26) or by "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6), Protestants assert a legalistic view of a one-point-in-time mental assent of salvation and justification by "faith alone." Against the strict admonition of keeping the bible true and faithful (*I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and 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*, Rev 22:18-19), Martin Luther tampered with the bible to suit his personal view by physically adding the word ALONE after the word "faith" in Rom 3:28 (This he did with his German translation of the bible completed in 1534: "*So halten wir nun dafür, daß der Mensch gerecht wird ohne des Gesetzes Werke, allein durch den Glauben*" [3.28]). He added the word "*allein*" (alone) to justify his new doctrine of *Sola Fide*. So much from someone who complained that the Catholic Church had violated the Word of God by adding to it. And as if that was not enough, Martin Luther also arrogantly decided to discard the whole *Letter of James* because it was disagreeable with his novel doctrine. This was because St. James talked about "faith alone" but ONLY in the negative sense: "A man is justified by works and NOT by faith *alone*" (Jas 2:24). Further along, he spoke again this way: "So faith apart from works is dead", Jas 2:26). In the same context, he repeated: "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? ... So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (Jas 2:14-17). The renegadery of Martin Luther did not stop here. He also wanted to remove *Hebrews*, *Jude*, *2 Peter* and *Revelation* (Imagine the outrage of the "dispensationalists" if they only knew) from the bible. He then proceeded to preach that a man was justified by faith (saved) even if one were "to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day" (*Let Your Sins Be Strong*, from Martin Luther's *Saemmtliche Schriften*, Letter No. 99, 1 Aug. 1521). The result is the handing down of a perverted doctrine of *Eternal Security* which ignores the general sense of the bible by regarding salvation as a one-time past event instead of a continuing process to be worked out "with trembling and fear" (Phil 2:12) and the perseverance to cross the finish line (2 Tim 4:7, Heb 12:1). St. Paul was unwavering in exhorting the Christians in Galatia of the necessity to walk by the Spirit: "(because) immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and



the like ... shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal 5:19-21). Likewise to the Christians in Corinth: "Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9-10). As the radically renewed and transformed person in Christ, we cannot continue to be held captive by "the snare of the devil" (2 Tim 2:26) and be dragged down the gulf of misery as typified by the gloom and doom of the Reformed theology of *Double Predestination*. The foolish Calvinistic view of positive condemnation and salvation nullifies God's word by resigning man to a fatalism with no freedom to say "yes" or "no" (and in fact, God is even portrayed as *forcing* man to sin for lack of free will). Christ has often sternly rebuked his disciples for their unbelief, pride and inability to understand the deeper truth: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?" (Lk 9:41). All Christians must be on vigilant guard: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8). St. Paul repeated the warning: "As we have said before, so now I say again, If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed" (v. 9). By divorcing "good works" from "faith," Protestants are staging a false dichotomy of "either-or" which is a grossly flawed theology (which also then falsely pits *Christ vs. His Church*, *Christ vs. Mary*, *Bible vs. Sacred Tradition*). They denigrate or "bad-mouth" Catholicism for believing in a do-it-yourself salvation by works. Nothing is further from the truth. The real problem is the "other gospel" of *Justification by Faith Alone* which is not biblical. Like many other heretical doctrines, it uses *eisegesis* (as compared to exegesis) to inject an ill-formed preconceived idea into a bible text to force it to mean something at the expense of its true meaning. In biblical language and Catholicism, we can thus say confidently that: "a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law ... not by faith alone ... for faith apart from works is dead ... but faith working through love" (Rom 3:28, Jas 2:24, 26, Gal 5:6).

The Cradle of Christianity

Many have had sought to rediscover and return to the "pristine" church of the *Acts of Apostles* (e.g., the *Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement*) from frustration with the present fragmented state of Protestant Christianity. It was the right step in the direction to identify the *Ancient Order* except that there was no clearly delineated NT model to be found in the infant church. In the end, these well-meaning Christians again only succeeded in spawning even more distinct and disagreeing religious sects among themselves.



These Protestants failed to see the early persecuted church coming out of the catacombs. Like any society, she had to organize as she grew.





Deep in History 2009 (CHNI) <http://www.daddysloft.com/religion.html> she had to organize as she grew to be like the "mustard seed (to become) a big tree where the birds nested on its branch (Matt 13:31-32). From a "sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5) to *Antioch* where tradition held that St. Peter had planted the local church in AD 34 and where the believers were "first called Christians" (Acts 11:26), and to about AD 110 where we have the first extant recorded use of the name "catholic church" (*katholike ekklesia*) to denote the true Church as universally known (*Letter of St. Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*). The maintenance of orthodoxy and discipline were concerns in antiquity. With St. John, the last surviving Twelve, and transition into the post-apostolic period, the early church had to organize order and structure. The legitimate and unbroken apostolic chain of succession by the "laying on of the hands" (Acts 6:6, 9:17-19, 13:3, 1 Tim 4:14, 5:22, 2 Tim 1:13 - 2:2) was the divinely ordered pattern in the bible. We saw Pope Clement I exercising early petrine ministry by writing from the Church at Rome to correct the apostolic community at Corinth in AD 70: "Through countryside and city (the apostles) preached, and they appointed their earliest converts, testing them by the Spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of future believers. Nor was this a novelty, for bishops and deacons had been written about a long time earlier ... Our apostles knew through our Lord Jesus that there would be strife for the office of the 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*, 42:4-5; 44:1-3). St. Polycarp (AD 69-155), bishop of Smyrna, also journeyed to Rome to confer with Pope Anicetus about the time of keeping Easter. His disciple, St. Irenaeus of Lyons (AD 120-202), wrote to Christians who "may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world " to defer to the "tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized in Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul." He ended by listing the bishops of Rome and Popes: "The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of *Linus* the office of the episcopate ... To him succeeded *Anacletus*; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, *Clement* was allotted the bishopric" (*Adversus Haereses*, III, 3, 1-3).

Christian is my name, Catholic my surname (*Christianus mihi nomen est, Catholicus cognomen*, St. Pacian, AD 310-391)

It is through the witnesses of the "Early Fathers" who were closest to Christ and the apostles, and who lived and wrote during the first eight centuries of Church history, to provide the beliefs and practices of the early Church "(which) is called *catholic*, then, because it extends over the whole world, from end to end of the earth, and because it teaches universally and infallibly each and every doctrine which must come to



the knowledge of men ... And if you ever are visiting in cities, do not inquire simply where the house of the Lord is --- for the others, sects of the impious, attempt to call their dens 'houses of the Lord' --- nor ask merely where the Church is, but where is the Catholic Church. For this is the name peculiar to this holy Church" (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, AD 315-386, *Catechetical Lecture 18*). St.



Pacian, Church Father, Bishop of Barcelona and who attended a church council at Sardica in 347 AD, clarified the word "Catholic": *Christian is my name, Catholic my surname* (Ep. ad Sympron, 1,43 PL 13, 1055). He went on to explain that a Christian is one who follows the correct teaching of the Catholic Church. It is sound doctrine as opposed to heresy, or, as St. Vincent of Lérins said, "that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all. This is what is truly and properly Catholic" (Common. 1.2; EuchPatr 2168, AD 434).

After studying the Early Fathers and church history, John Henry Newman 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*, 1878).

Authority and Discipline

In religion, what damned error, but some sober brow will bless it and approve it with a text (William Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice, Act III, Sc II, lines 77-79)



Even Shakespeare had some fun with it. Heresies are bad theologies which breed errors which kill the souls. *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Fide* and *Private Interpretation* are heresies condemned by the Ecumenical Council of Trent. The Protestant's view of the *private interpretation* of the bible is a product of heresy which has contributed to a bewildering multitude of 30,000 denominations and counting. The Bible itself plainly says that "no Scripture is of private interpretation" (2 Pet 1:20) but Protestants

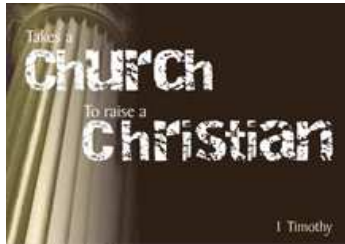
simply ignore it anyway. Protestants came out of each other (split) because it's every individual Protestant for him- or herself with no accountability to authority and discipline. Is God a God of chaos (1 Cor 14:33)? By each claiming to be inspired by the Holy Spirit but wickedly divided among themselves, the carnal flesh and human ego have blasphemed against the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:31-32) who is the Spirit of Truth (Jn 16:7-15). It makes a scorn of Christ's prayer for unity in love ("that they may be one, even as we are one", Jn 17:22) and unity in truth ("One Lord, one faith, one baptism", Eph 4:5). The bible exhorts us to attain to the unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ, to "mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" so that we may "no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles" (Eph 4:13-14). A delusive "invisible church" or the



marketing ploy of *non-denominationalism* was devised to explain away the glaring absence of a true visible and tangible unity amongst Christians. Divisive conflicts in Protestantism has allowed the "strong man" (Beelzebul) to continue to enslave and cause scandals and unbelief in Christ (Jn 17:21). Through disobedience, these hardened-heart Christians have "crucify the Son of God on their own account, and hold him up to contempt (Heb 6:6).

The Pillar and bulwark of the Truth

If we turn to *1 Tim 3:15*, we read that it is the CHURCH which is "the pillar and bulwark of the truth." The church, being the bride of Christ and like a mother for all believers, is given the authority to teach and



discipline her children in the household. Protestants will try to bring their particular slant of theology to re-interpret the passage instead of letting the bible speaks for itself. They want it to say the *bible* is the support and buttress of the truth but the verse does not say that. If we turn also to *Matt 18:15-17*, we are told that

the church is the final arbiter and has the authority to discipline and resolve disputes, and to ex-communicate a recalcitrant or obstinate sinner ("Tell it to the church; and if he refuse to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector"). The bible certainly does not propose the novel Protestant idea of comparing bible verses and if one disagrees, to go out and start a new church which one is agreeable with. Christ has instituted a church built upon Peter (Thou are *Kepha* (Peter, Rock), and upon this *kepha* (rock) I will build my church, *Matt 16:18*). It is this church which Christ demands of his followers: "He who hears you, hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (*Lk 10:16*).

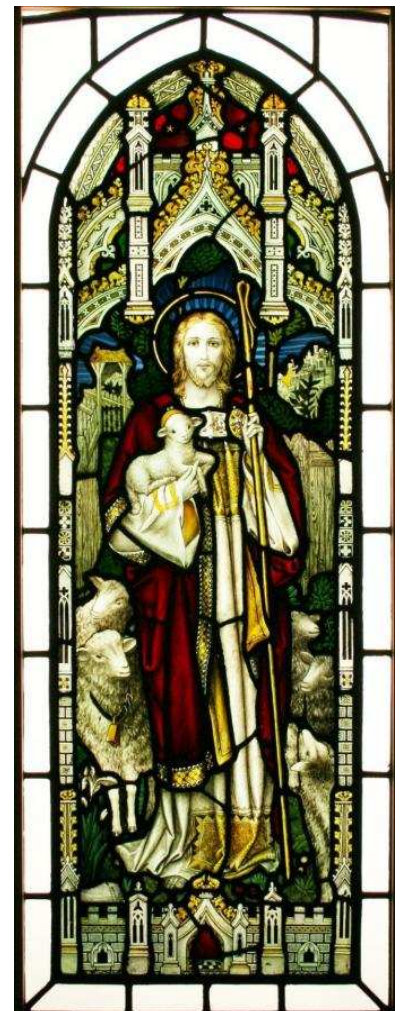
St. Jerome: *As I follow no leader save Christ, so I communicate with none but your blessedness, that is with the chair of Peter. For this, I know, is the rock on which the church is built* (Letter of Jerome to Pope Damasus, Epistle 15:1-2, AD 376).

St. Ambrose: *Where Peter is, there is the Church* (Commentary on Twelve Psalms of David 40:30, AD 389)

St. Augustine: *We must remain true to the Christian faith and to the community of that Church which is catholic and which is called the Catholic Church* (De Vera Religione, 7, 12; PL 34, 128, AD 390)

St. Cyprian: *You cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother* (De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate, AD 251)

Where to find this church of Christ today? Not just any "church" but the *one* church founded by Christ which according to the promise of Christ ("Gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"), she has not gone into extinction or apostasy (*Matt 16:18*). The report of her imminent demise was greatly exaggerated. This church existed before any of the NT books were written. It is she who collected the books of the bible and



gave it canonicity in the fourth century. It is this same church which has kept the true faith in spite of the violent attack by enemies from within and without (and therewith one should not be flattened as to reject Christ and his Church just because of the failure and sins of some of her members). She protects the bible by undertaking the slow and painstaking task of hand copying the text of the Sacred Word until the invention of the printing press. This bible, being the book of the church, is an expression of her faith so it should be read and understood in the context of the life and experience of the church. Since the bible is not always perspicuous, Christians with unguided private interpretation of the bible will easily lapse into heresies so St. Peter would caution: "There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures" (2 Pet 3:16). There are ample examples in history and present day: Circumcisers (Acts 15:1), Gnosticism (1 Tim 6:20), Montanism, Sabellianism, Arianism, Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Donatism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Iconoclasm, Catharism, Jansenism, and Protestantism which manifests itself in many heads in all the above heresies.

Breaking of the Bread



Fast rewind to Christchurch, New Zealand: a Pentecostal worship service on a bare stage with a fast-talking preacher, exuberant singing with rhythmic hand clapping accompanied by manifestation of extraordinary charisms. It was a rousing expression of praise. But yet, something was amiss. The communion service consisting of crackers grape juice was casual, conducted with much irreverence and a lackadaisical attitude. Surely, the central focus of worship for the early Christians was the "breaking of the bread" (cf Acts 2:42, 46; Luke 24:30, 35). I sensed a lack of the sacred awe due to the absence of this ineffable "presence" in the dignified and noble Eucharistic celebration of a Catholic Mass. By reducing worship to just preaching and songs, there was stark sterility and an air of impoverishment. Is this NT worship?

Catholics follow in obedience to Christ's commandment at the Last Supper to continue the sacrificial priestly offering of his "body" and "blood" (Matt 26:26-28, Mk 14:22-24, Lk 22:19-20 and 1 Cor 11:23-25). This is prophesized by Malachi of an universal "pure offering" (Mal 1:11) and is foretold to be as in the manner of Melchizedek in the offering of bread and wine (Gen 14:18, Psalm 110). The Greek *anamnesis* (remembrance) is always used in the sacrificial context (See Num 10:10) so Christians are told to offer "a memorial sacrifice" in remembrance. At Calvary, Christ's blood was shed for the remission of sins. However, redemption must be applied to the individual person by faith in every generation. In eternity, the one-time sacrifice at Calvary is made present at Mass because what Christ did in the past is present to God now ("Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today



and forever", Heb. 13:8), so we can say "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). This mystery of mystery of the Mass is man's supreme and sublime expression of thanksgiving and homage to our heavenly Father by the offering of Christ as the unblemished paschal victim.

Christ spoke solemnly about Holy Communion: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have *no life in you*; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has *eternal life*, and I will raise him up at the last day. He who eats my flesh and drink my blood *abides in me, and I in him*" (Jn 6:53-56). Here, the allusion to physical flesh (*sarx*) and the graphic description of "gnawing" or "chewing" (*trogon*) clearly exclude the explaining away by symbolism. Christ deliberately used the strongest language to convey the connection between his sacrifice as the Passover Lamb and the Eucharist, even in the face of unbelief and scandal (Jn 6:60-69). In true to the Passover feast where the full end was the eating of the meal with the slaughtered paschal lamb as a sign of the restored communion between God and his covenant people, the Eucharist is that ultimate reality in the New Covenant. We are also told In the *Epistle to the Hebrews* how Christ is the high priest in heaven where the Heavenly Father behold a perfect and perpetual offering in the living body of the Son which "continues forever" (Heb 7:24). Further, we are told that we still have an earthly altar in the Eucharist whereby "through him [we] continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God" (Heb. 13:15). Finally, we see in St. John's vision of Christ in heaven appearing as "a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (Rev. 5:5-6). Christ appears as the paschal lamb because his sacrificial offering continues until "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9, 21:2, 9-10, 22:17).

The Catholic doctrines of the reality of the *Sacrifice of the Mass* and *Transubstantiation* are either monstrously insane with necessary fatal flaws, or they are in fact the most profound examples of "the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor 1:22-25). What did the early Christians believe? The earliest extant written documents will affirm Catholicism:

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]).

Pope Clement I: "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: He instructed those who held the "heterodox opinions" that "they abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer,



because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in his goodness, raised up again" (Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 6:2, 7:1, AD 110).

Justin Martyr: "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* 66:1–20, cir. AD 150).

Irenaeus of Lyons: "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]).

Origen: "I wish to admonish you with examples from your religion. You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish. You account yourselves guilty, and rightly do you so believe, if any of it be lost through negligence" (*Homilies on Exodus* 13:3, AD 244).

Cyril of Jerusalem: "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



assured by faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the body and blood of Christ" (*Catechetical Discourses: Mystagogic* 4:22:9, cir. AD 350).

Theodore of Mopsuestia: "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 to receive them as they are, the body and blood of our Lord" (*Catechetical Homilies* 5:1). 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* 66:1–20, 5th Century).

The above is just a sample of the unanimous testimony of the first Christians. The apostolic and historic understanding of the sacrificial language in the Last Supper has been faithfully handed down in antiquity. Will faithless Christians and Protestants (having "a form of godliness but denying the power thereof", 2 Tim 3:5) take off their blinders? Those who scoff and mock the ordained consecrated priesthood can heed the reproach of Prophet Malacci: "And you say, Wherein have we despised your name? You offer polluted bread upon my altar ... in that you say, the table of the Lord is contemptible (Mal 1:6-7). St. Paul also warned very sternly: "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself" (1 Cor 11:29). Even Martin Luther felt the misgiving and deplored how "every milkmaid and farmhand" now thought they could interpret scripture correctly: "*Who*, but the *devil*, has granted such license of wresting the words of the holy Scripture? Who ever read in the Scriptures, that *my body* is the same as the *sign of my body*? or, that is the same as *it signifies*?" (*Luther's Collected Works*, Wittenburg Edition, no. 7, p, 391).

During the *Discourse on the Bread of Life*, many disciples disbelieved and left, finding it to be "a hard saying" (Jn 6:60; cf. v66). Jesus said to the Twelve, "Will you also go away?" St. Peter professed to our Lord, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). On the road to Emmaus, the resurrected Christ explained to the two disciples from the bible but it was only in the "breaking of the bread" that they recognized Him (Lk 24:13-35). The faltering and faithless doubting Thomas-Protestants must also slip to their knees and confess in awe "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:27-28) in the personal encounter with the Eucharistic Christ, a mystery to be lived.



The Examined Life

Why I stayed in the Church?

A question which I will attempt to explain for "an account for the hope

that is in (me)" (1 Pet 3:15):

I chose to be obedient to Authority. Christ changed Simon's name to Peter (Jn 1:42; Mk 3:16; Lk 6:14) and then used a word-play to reveal His plan: "Thou art *Kepha* (Peter) and upon this *kepha* I will build my church" (Matt 16:18). As Christ's disciple, I shall find and join this Church which was founded by Christ.

Christ commanded us to "love one another; ... by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35). Christ prayed that "we may be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee ... so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (Jn 17:21-22). St. Paul chastised the Corinthian Christians: "That there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment (1 Cor 1:10). Who are we then to cause division? "Has Christ been divided up?" (1 Cor 1:13).



It is important to stay united with the See of Peter which Christ conferred primacy and authority in the Church. When St. Paul was converted, he went to see "Cephas" (a transliteration of *Kepha* in Greek) and remained with him for fifteen days (Gal 1:18). Again, after fourteen years and as an apostle to the Gentiles, St. Paul went back to Jerusalem to seek confirmation that what he was preaching was in line with the Church "lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain" (Gal 1:1-2).

Apostolicity is a mark of the Church founded by Christ upon the apostles. Apostolicity of mission is a guarantee of apostolicity of doctrine." Christ commissioned the apostles: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21). St. Paul understood apostolicity when he said: "How can men preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:15). It is not for any Johnny-come-lately to set up shop (church) at any place and time without proper ecclesiastical authority. A Protestant, stubbornly resistant to and defiant of authority, will do well to study how St. Paul dealt with the discord and disunity in the church at Corinth. Not too long later, the fourth Pope, St. Clement I, would again intervene to settle more seditious and factional struggles there around AD 70. This was one of the first recorded evidences of papal correction to a church (even of apostolic origin) outside of Rome. The Apostle John was still alive and he did not raise an objection. St. Irenaeus of Lyons would affirm: "With this church, on account of its more primordial authority ("propter potentioris principalitatem") all other 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" (*Adversus Haereses*, III,2, d.180). At the Council of Chalcedon (d. 451), the Fathers responded in unity to the papal definition of the two natures of Christ, "Peter has spoken through Leo." By disobeying Christ and His Church, it is thus not surprising to see Protestantism in disarray. It has buried itself under a heap of heretical teachings like *Bible Alone*, *Faith Alone* and *Private Interpretation*, *Once Saved Always Saved*, *Health and Wealth Gospel*, and *Double Predestination*. Coming into the third



Prayer to St. Michael

Saint Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.
Be our protection against the
wickedness and snares of the
devil.
May God rebuke him, we
humbly pray;
and do Thou, O Prince of the
Heavenly Host - by the Divine
Power of God - cast into hell,
satan and all the evil spirits,
who roam throughout the
world seeking the ruin of
souls. Amen.

*Sancte Michael Archangele,
defende nos in praelio.
Contra nequitiam et insidias*

millennium, it has just about given up to the orders of this world. The bible warns about "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Tim 4:3). These are the church-hopping cafeteria Christians who are constantly shopping for a "church" which is agreeable with their private agenda. Present-day Protestants are so far removed from apostolic Christianity that they would not know the historic "pristine" church even if they are looking directly at it. They have become a follower of the book (bibliolatry) instead of the bearer of the living Word of God entrusted to the apostles and their successors (Fidei Depositum: *O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you*, 1 Tim 6:20). By refusing the divinely ordained leadership and communion with Rome, they will soon and readily succumb to apostasy and the collapse of faith and morals by the yielding to an ill-formed conscience which justified with deception the abominations of artificial contraception, abortion, divorce and ordination of openly gay ministers. In the wild world of Protestantism, every believer is allowed to stand on his or her favorite bible verse(s) in defiance of authority. Is there any wonder when the ELCA took a popularity vote to allow the ordination of people in committed same-sex or non-celibate relationships? The true church of God is a theocracy; she does not compromise non-negotiable truths for the sake of popularity but remains faithful to her Master and claims no authority to change God's law.

Protestantism is an out-of-control runaway train heading quickly to destruction as evidenced by the swift erosion of faith through theological liberalism, moral relativism, religious subjectivism, indifferentism and secularism. And you can thank *Sola Scriptura* for it.

St. Francis of Assisi

The House for all: Saints and Sinners. Humanity is teemed with sinners and mediocrities. The Church is a great dragnet cast into the sea. She is a maker of saints and poor sinners, as well as being a sanctuary for some disreputable popes and too many scandalous members in her long faith journey. But thankfully, Christ came to save [sinners like me](#): "For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9:13). To be let down by the Church (or by a particular part of organization) is not a reason to leave, abandon and disown the family of God.

During the medieval decline and spiritual corruption, St. Francis of Assisi also had to call for conversion and renewal in the Church. But unlike Martin Luther, he understood that genuine reform came from within and by staying in oneness with the Church. Without strife and schism, he responded to the mandate: "Go, Francis, and repair my house which is falling into ruin." Today, the Church honors him as a true son who had embraced a life of evangelical poverty and charity. By being faithful doing God's will on earth, St. Francis is also the most beloved saint of all Christendom.



The Faith of our Fathers



How to know the authentic historic Christianity? The sure way is through

Contra nequiam et insidias diaboli esto praesidium. Imperet illi Deus, supplices deprecamur. Tuque princeps militiae caelestis, Satanam aliosque spiritus malignos, qui ad perditionem animarum pervagantur in mundo divina virtute in infernum detrude. Amen.



Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.



the Early Fathers. These were the early Christians that received the *Fidei Depositum* directly from the apostles who received it from Christ. So it was Christ who taught the

Apostles, who also taught the Early Fathers and who in turn, taught the later Church Fathers. The Church has preserved the apostolic deposit through apostolic succession. In all ages of Christianity when the validity of a teaching is questioned, all faithful Christians should ponder and ask: Can this be traced back through the writings of the Fathers to the apostles? This is what our Faith is based upon.

We are at a critical juncture of human civilization. Not only is the world becoming increasingly secular, we are also experiencing an aggressive expansion of Islam with global violence and jihad campaigns perpetrated by Muslim fundamentalists. We are in a time when there is a virulent hostility toward Christianity in general. We are reminded of the crusaders, who under a united Christendom rallying around the Pope, were able to respond to thwart the advance of Islamic ambitions. The present state of a weakened divided Christianity is diminishing the ability to proclaim the Gospel because of the disputations and polemics between Christians ("A house divided will not stand" [Mark 3:25] and "A kingdom divided against itself is laid waste" [Matt 12:25]). By misplacing one's allegiance or even giving a tacit assent by association, a Christian can hinder and contribute to the disruption of the reign of God's Kingdom. By remaining Protestant, one is participating thus perpetuating the sins and errors of the Reformation. Christ has warned that it would be better to have a millstone tied around our necks and cast into the depths of the sea than to cause one of the "little ones" to stumble (Mk 9:42). Unsuspecting Christians have been fed with the falsehood of the eternal security of OSAS (that the one-moment-of-faith will forever guarantees salvation). Some have used it as a license to sin since they are told that "believe once, and ye shall not surely die." Sounds familiar? It is the same lie that the old serpent has used from the beginning (Gen 3:4).

Why are the present-day Protestants still protesting? Pope Leo X in *Exsurge Domine* (1520) condemned the errors of Martin Luther. The Church convened the Ecumenical Council of *Trent* (1545-1563) under Pope Paul III which responded by a vigorous campaign of reform. All the worldly excesses of the Renaissance had been eradicated a long



time ago. Today, most Protestant "churches" are really only concerned with the maintenance of status quo. They are steeped in their own traditions in oblivious to the marks of "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" of the true Christian church affirmed in the ancient Nicene Creed (AD 325). When Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli of Rome converted to Catholicism at the

conclusion of WWII, he was asked why he did not choose Protestantism. He answered, "Protesting is not attesting", an elegant testimony of a faith which professes what it believes (attesting) rather than protesting against what it does not believe (Protestantism) [*Before the Dawn*, Autobiographical Reflections by Eugenio Zolli, Ignatius Press). We will all do well to imitate the holy and saintly Pope John Paul

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.



Il who set the example by acknowledging man's continued need for repentance and asking God's forgiveness for the "sins of the past" of Catholics (Lent, 2000). No reciprocity has been shown. It begs the question if Protestant Christians are so blameless and immune from embracing sins themselves? I always scrunch in pain whenever an ignorant and uninformed Protestant barrage and persecute the Pope and the Catholic Church "beyond measure" (Gal 1:13) not unlike the zealous pre-converted Paul (Acts 9, 22, 26). Or when an ex-Catholic-turned-Evangelical slanders and disdains the Mother Church after being indoctrinated to turn against her (usually with an overly-simplistic and inadequate explanation of a "born-again" experience in the development of spiritual maturehood). The spiritual "high" of conversion is a moment of grace; instead, many simply acculturated into the anti-Catholic bigotry of popular fundamentalism without "testing the spirits to see whether they are of God" (1 Jn 4:1). Time and again, we have been warned about it: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel" (Gal. 1:6). The devil is quick to return and attack a carnal Christian (Lk 22:31: "Behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat"). And it is only to St. Peter that Christ has pledged: "But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, *strengthen your brethren*" (Lk 22:32). These misguided Christian zealots risk losing their souls by joining force with *Legion* (Mk 5:9) in attacking the Church established by Christ ("*Else perhaps you may find yourselves fighting even against GOD*" (Acts 5:39).

The Pilgrim Church



The Church on earth is in the world until there "be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells" (cf. 2 Pet. 3:13). She has made her pilgrim way along the paths of the world to proclaim that Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). The increased profanity, immorality and lawlessness of the present world lends greater urgency to the duty of every Christian to witness and proclaim the good news of the Gospel in this final Age (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11). At the invocation of at the Ecumenical Council of Vatican II, Pope John XXIII prophetically called for "A New Pentecost". It was around 1975 when I was again moved and encouraged by Pope Paul VI who addressed The World Congress in Rome of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference: "*Nothing is more necessary to this more*



and more secularized world than the witness of the spiritual renewal that we see in the Holy Spirit ... How then could this spiritual renewal not be a chance for the Church and for the world? And how, in this case, could one not take all the means to insure that it remains so?"

This is an exciting time for the Church. As of old, she is destined to do battle with the insidious onslaught of a faithless and irreligious generation, self-absorbed and self-congratulatory, a culture of



"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me"
(Revelation 3:20)

The Theological Virtues

Faith, Hope, Love

The Cardinal Virtues

Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude

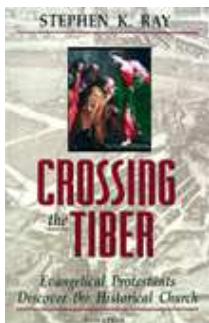
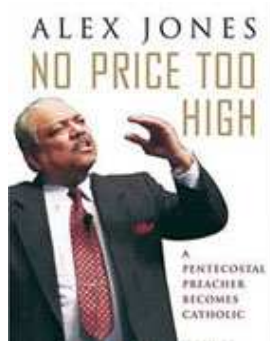
The Capital Virtues

immorality and decadence, relativism, radical feminism and other falsehoods. The church of tomorrow may be smaller but only because she has been purged and sanctified in evangelical poverty. Her children will be called out to witness for Christ in spirit and truth. The Charismatic Renewal Movement (See "*A New Pentecost?*" by Cardinal Suenens, and "*The Spirit Bade Me Go*" by the Pentecostal David du Plessis who became the first non-Catholic to be awarded with the Benemerenti Medal by Pope John Paul II in 1983) is one example of the abundant outpouring of graces which renews the Church today. There are more like Opus Dei, Legionaries of Christ, Regnum Christi, Cursillo, Focolare, Sant'Egidio, Couples for Christ, Divine Mercy, Legio Mariae and an abundance of blogs and websites dedicated to evangelization, bible study and apologetics. This spiritual renewal is timely for a Christian who is now living in a world which has turned its back on its heritage and is hostile to Christ. It is not a time for complacency or tepid faith (Rev 3:15) when millions of aborted babies are crying out for justice because we live in a culture of death. Catholicism is the only constant and consistent voice to raise the conscience for the need to protect the sanctity and dignity of life in areas like abortion, euthanasia and embryonic stem-cell research.



Another phenomenon is the mass exodus of the best and boldest Protestant ministers and intellectuals into the Church since the mid-1980. Alongside them are the *reverts* (former Catholics) who are also returning in droves, many of them come home with an evangelical zeal and a new

appreciation of the bible. This is a new *Oxford movement*, like its nineteenth-century namesake except bigger and even more robust, which is witnessing many who are rediscovering authentic Christian roots. They have all "crossed the Tiber" and are coming home with a holy vengeance! In the process, many have to face the ridicule and rejection by family and friends ("I have not come to bring peace, but a sword", Mt 10:34), and pay a hefty price of their reputation, image, career and livelihood ("He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me", v: 38). What possess these people to be so courageous like St. Stephen and the martyrs? Like it or not, here they come bearing gifts of their great faith, knowledge, talents and skills for the enrichment of the community of the



faithful. As by a renewed holy fervor, they stand united with the Church to present the good news of salvation in a cogent and most compelling way to a new world of fundamentalist and practical atheism. The trail blazers included Fr. Richard Neuhaus, Malcolm Muggeridge, Dietrich and Alice von Hildebrand, Thomas Howard, Walker Percy, Sheldon Vanauken, John Talbot, Dan O'Neill, Noah Lett, Rosalind Moss, Al Kresta, Peter Kreeft, Jeff Cavins, James Pinto, Francis Beckwith, Bruce

Sullivan, Paul Thigpen, Alex Jones, and the list goes on and on (See EWTN website for an audio archive of the guests on [The Journey](#)

Humility, Liberty, Kindness,
Meekness, Chastity,
Temperance, Diligence

Act of Faith

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became flesh, died for our sins, and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths that the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.

Act of Hope

O my God, relying on your almighty power, infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon for my sins, the help of your grace, and life everlasting through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen

Act of Love

O my God, I love you above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because you are all good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of you. I forgive all who have injured me and ask pardon of all who I have injured. Amen

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins, because of your just punishments, but most of all, because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more, and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Almighty Father, you are lavish in bestowing all your gifts, and we give you thanks for the favors you have given to us. In your goodness you have favored us and kept us safe in the past. We ask that you continue to protect us and to shelter us in the

[Home](#) weekly live shows and the three-volume compilation of conversation stories in [Surprised By Truth](#).

Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done

What enormous sadness and eternal grief to hear the words, "I NEVER KNEW YOU" (Matt 7:23). The bible tells us that there will be Christians who will protest: "Did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out



demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" We have to steadfastly guard against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:11-12) and the one who will "show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matt 24:24). It is thus very important to belong in the Church established by Christ instead of

entering through the wide gate and broad highway that leads to destruction (Matt 7:13). As a faithful Jewish son, Christ wills his mother to the care of St. John who is called the "disciple whom Jesus loved", Jn 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 21:20) at Calvary. The fact that St. John is the "Beloved Disciple" is not coincidental. The clear message here is for all Christians who love Christ to also behold his mother as his or her own (thus "henceforth, all generations shall be blessed", Lk 1:48). Instead, all Protestants have been indoctrinated to slight and ignore Mary in rebellion. It is only in Catholic Christianity where Christ's mandate is being followed, where Mary is given the proper honor, love and respect being the *Theotokos*. Catholicism is a divine gift where the fullness of faith resides, and that which gives us the surety of salvation by knowing and doing the perfect *Will of the Father*.

EWTN, Catholic Radio, Vatican-YouTube channel, Ignatius Press and Saint Joseph Communications are just the beginning of the effective use of mass communication media. Never before, all Christians can now easily access the *Majesterium* (Teaching Office) of the Church and a host of priestly and lay ministries. Apologists and teachers like Fr. Benedict Groeschel, Fr. Mitch Pacwa, Fr. John Corapi, Fr. Frank Pavone, Fr. Michael Scanlan, Ralph Martin, Karl Keating, James Akin, Colin Donovan, Scott Hahn, Mike Aquilina, Tim Staples, Steve Ray, Raymond de Souza, Steve Wood, Patrick Madrid, Marcus Grodi, Richard and Danielle Borgman, Curtis Martin, Jesse Romero, Terry Barber, Phil Porvaznik, Ray Guarendi, John Martignoni, Karlo Broussard, Mark Shea, Gary Michuta, Gerry Matatics, Bob Sungenis, Dave Armstrong, Michael Cumbie and countless others are blazing a new wave of Catholic Evangelism. All questions of "authority" ultimately lead to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Dissenters and malcontents in the church are called to humility and repentance.

There is reason to be hopeful. The late *Harald Bredesen*, a founding member of the 700 Club and an ordained Lutheran minister who had led many into a "Spirit-filled" charismatic experience, wrote a letter on September 29, 1988 to Pope John Paul II. In it, he expressed how he wanted "Evangelical Protestants and Catholics joining together to single out the Pope of Rome as the man most worthy of receiving the

and to shelter us in the shadow of your wings. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women. And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God. Pray for us sinner. Now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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Prince of Peace Prize." He continued, "My heart is moved by a dream, Your Holiness. It is this: that what has already been discovered by men such as David and Justus DuPlessis, Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, Richard Neuhaus... regarding the riches and depth of Catholic piety, must become common knowledge among Evangelical Protestants everywhere." (From the March 1990 CIB Bulletin). In 1966, *Billy Graham* stated, "I find myself closer to Catholics than the radical Protestants. I think the Roman Catholic Church today is going through a second Reformation" (Philadelphia Evening Bulletin 24 May, 1966). On the occasion of Pope John Paul II's visit to USA, he said: "I think the American people are looking for a leader, a moral and spiritual leader that believes something. And the Pope does ... Thank God, I've got somebody to quote now with some *real* authority" (Phil Donahue Show on October 11, 1979).

Protestants are called to cast aside their tinted eye glasses and "come home" so that we can witness more faithfully and effectively in a postmodern secular culture. We have to lift the veil from our eyes so we can know the will of the Father. All Christians must be joined together in union with the Vicar of Christ on earth so we can proclaim the coming of the reign of the Kingdom of God with one voice and convincingly ("Our love for JESUS and for our neighbor impels us to speak to others about our faith", *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para 166). Catholic Christianity will never be the same. All glory to God —1 Cor 10:31.

Wrap not yourself round in the associations of years past; nor determine that to be truth which you wish to be so, nor make an idol of cherished anticipations. Time is short, eternity is long ("An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine" by John Henry Newman).

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You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you"
(St. Augustine)

