

Church History Proves Roman Catholicism False

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Romanism is False

By William Webster

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Lee Meckley: The Roman Catholic Church appeals to Scripture and church history to validate its claim of being the one true apostolic church, but do either Scripture or church history support this claim? Today we will be providing Christian answers.

Welcome to Christian Answers, an outreach of Christian Answers, a nationwide apologetics ministry dedicated to contending for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints, dedicated to getting Christian answers. Glad you joined us for the program today. I'm Lee Meckley, Director of radio outreach for Christian Answers and I have really been looking forward to this program. This is a program that I hope you will be able to catch all of the details that we'll be discussing. We're going to be talking about Roman Catholicism again, but it's, again, this is something you've heard me say before that we are taken an approach that quite often is neglected when the subject is discussed, but, again, if you will simply hear us out and not simply turn this off as just another polemic about Roman Catholicism, I think you will find this a very convincing discussion whether you yourself are Roman Catholic, you have friends in the Roman Catholic Church, or you're simply interested in church history and interested in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are going to be talking today with William Webster about a book that he has written called "The Church of Rome at the Bar of History," published by Banner of Truth Publishers, and William Webster is a businessman living with his wife and children in Battleground, Washington. He is the author of two other books, "The Christian: Following Christ as Lord and Salvation," and "The Bible and Roman Catholicism." William Webster is the founder of Christian Resources, Inc. and himself is a former Roman Catholic. William, thank you very much for joining us for the program today.

William Webster: Thank you, Lee, it's a real pleasure to be with you.

Lee: I wanted to begin the conversation, I guess, by giving you an opportunity to talk about your experiences in the Roman Catholic Church and what caused you to come to the convictions that you have now.

William: I was raised Roman Catholic. I was raised in the South in Tennessee. I went to parochial schools all through grade school. I was sent away from home when I was 13 to attend a high school that was run by a Benedictine monastery in Rhode Island. I had a terrible time adjusting to that school but eventually I did feel at home there, although by the time I got to the age of, I guess around 16 or so, I began to really have some philosophical difficulties with the whole issue of Christianity. I began to really question the whole basis upon which Christianity was formulated and the gist of it was that by the time I was 18, I had, for all practical purposes, become an agnostic. The experience that I had as a Roman Catholic in the high school was not a particularly good experience. It certainly did not engender in me a desire to be a Christian.

I left that school and attended Southern Methodist University in Dallas when I went to college. Throughout my experience there, I was basically asking the same types of questions that I had begun to ask about my sophomore year in high school and found that I could not find satisfactory answers. I did not carte blanche except by faith the authority of the church, the authority of Scripture, any of the basic reasons that I had been given in the past that I should be a Christian. I turned my back on all of that and basically wholesale went into the world, and it's very clear that I was not converted. I did not know Christ. I was not a Christian. I simply had a form of religion. I should say that I had been very devout as a Roman Catholic at one point. I used to attend Mass on my own. When I was 12 years old I would get up early and ride my bike to go to Mass before I went to school. I was an altar boy before the Latin Mass was changed to English.

But, be that as it may, when I got into my college experience, it led me in a very frustrating search for what I thought would be truth. It was from a philosophical standpoint, I could not find answers. It was after my college experience, I basically had the ambition of being a songwriter and I was involved in a small music group that I began to really seek the Lord. This came about out of a very strange experience because I came face-to-face with the occult and having rejected any idea that there is a spiritual dimension to life, I was pretty basically, pretty much a materialist. In coming face-to-face with this reality because it is very real, I had no categories for this; I did not know what to do with this. It was obviously spiritual in nature and I concluded that if there is literally a spiritual dimension to reality, there must be a God, so I began to seek the Lord as best I knew how and I began to get back into the Scriptures. A pastor in Washington state gave me some tapes by Walter Martin dealing with the occult and it was through his tapes and through my own exposure to the word of God that I was converted and was brought to Christ. I was truly converted. My life was fundamentally radically changed because I came face-to-face with the reality of Jesus Christ and realized that he is not just a person of theology, a myth; he's a living person, he's the living God and I committed my life to him, and the Lord very graciously changed my life and saved me and converted me.

That led, then, to a very different ambition in my life. I was, at the time, living in Washington state; I had been married about a year; we moved back to Tennessee. At that point, I got a job and got very involved in a church. Now, this was an evangelical church. I did not go back into Roman Catholicism. I had had some very bad experiences with Roman Catholicism and being converted basically in an evangelical setting, I went into Protestantism, but I did not really have a fundamental understanding at that point of what Roman Catholicism really stood for. It was some years later after I had been involved in ministry and in sharing the Gospel with individuals and in having dialogue with different Roman Catholics that I began to go back into my roots and began to really seek out what the Roman Catholic Church really stood for because I had Roman Catholics telling me that they believed that the Roman Catholic Church had fundamentally changed; that it was no longer what it used to be; that its doctrines had changed. So I began to go on a personal search to try to understand what it is the Roman Catholic Church officially stands for, what does it officially teach.

And having been saturated with Scripture, I began to compare those teachings with the word of God and this led me to write a book, after a great deal of study, the first one I did about five or six years ago that Banner of Truth published called "Salvation, The Bible and Roman Catholicism," and that book deals primarily with the salvation teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. And what my heart in that was to, after having studied the salvation teachings of Rome, was the realization that I did not believe that the Gospel that the Roman Catholic Church stood for could be validated by the word of God. I believe that these teachings were fundamentally contradictory to what the Scriptures actually teach about the Gospel and the work of Jesus Christ.

Having written that book out of a desire to give truth to Roman Catholics, to help them understand what the official teaching of their own church is because I have found that many Roman Catholics really do not understand the teachings of the Roman church, to help them understand what those teachings are officially because I had documented those teachings from the official documents of the church, to help them understand not only those teachings but also how they compare to the word of God. Subsequent to that, a friend of mine gave me the book by Karl Keating called "Fundamentalism and Catholicism or Catholicism and Fundamentalism," I guess, is the actual title. And I was very intrigued with Keating's work because Keating basically came at Catholicism in criticism of fundamentalism from an historical standpoint and I was not prepared, I was not very well prepared for that argument because I had very little training in church history and it was enlightening to read the book because I found myself challenged page after page with the teaching of early church fathers and with the claim that the Roman Catholic Church could claim a 2,000 year consensus for its teachings and that the Reformation and evangelical Protestantism stood as an aberration to the historical consensus of the one true church supposedly that was established by Jesus Christ.

And there were many arguments formulated by Keating which are not new, they are very common arguments, but it caused me to think, it caused me to take up a challenge which was to begin to go back into church history to really investigate what Keating was saying because I realized that if I'm going to be able to adequately and intelligently dialogue

with a person like Karl Keating, 1. I'm going to have to know history; and 2. In order to reach a literate Catholic if in fact I am right in what I believe and Keating is wrong in what he is stating, I'm going to have to be able to refute these arguments from history because a Roman Catholic has the basic presupposition that the church is infallible and their implicit faith is in a church which cannot err so any argument that you elicit from the fundamental basis of Scripture with a literate Roman Catholic, will simply be met with the objection, "Well, that's your opinion. We are part of an infallible church and your interpretation simply cannot match against the infallible interpretation of a church, and besides that, the church has shown it is consistent in its interpretation throughout the history of the church." So it has led me on about a six or seven year venture into church history to try to meet the challenge of Karl Keating and other men like Scott Hahn and Gerry Matatics, and the result of that study is the book "The Church of Rome at the Bar of History."

Lee: You're listening to Christian Answers. I'm Lee Meckley and we're speaking with William Webster who is the author of the book "The Church of Rome at the Bar of History," published by Banner of Truth. And, William, we were talking about, you were talking about your experiences as growing up Roman Catholic and then your conversion later on at which point you became involved in the evangelical world, so to speak, and then basically your writings about Catholicism and the beliefs of Catholicism and, of course, what you just got through talking about, your experiences after reading authors like Karl Keating who were spending a tremendous amount of energy vindicating the Roman position on the basis of church history, what the church fathers had to say. And before we get into discussing what your book has to say, the fruit of these experiences that you had, I wanted to say something that I thought is rather sad about the contemporary evangelical scene and this was what I was alluding to earlier is that so many times you hear people dealing with Roman Catholicism, whether pro or con, from an evangelical perspective, and they are ignoring or, at least it would seem that they are conceding the Roman Catholic position that church history and the church fathers have always held to these viewpoints and that the Protestant viewpoint is a novelty, and the response is quite often, "Well, okay, that may be true but we have to go with what the Scriptures say," and, of course, that's accurate but historically that's not been the way that this issue has been dealt with. Going back to the Protestant Reformation, the appeal was not just to Scripture, the appeal was to church history and to the church fathers, that the position that the Reformation was setting forth was something that was not invented at the time of the Reformation, but that was, for want of a better way of putting it, recovered; that it was something that could be supported by appealing to the church fathers. Is that not the case?

William: It is the case in many aspects of what the Reformation deals with. If you read through the "Institutes" of John Calvin you will find all throughout that work many allusions to a vast array of different church fathers and church councils, and he garrisons those authorities as arguments against the basic Roman Catholic medieval scholastic Catholicism of his day to basically demonstrate the fact that the church of Rome, rather than being a consistent witness to the history of the teaching of the early church, was itself, in fact, a departure in much of the broader teachings that the Reformation was

dealing with. It's a departure from the teaching of the early church, it is not consistent with it at all. Such teaching, for example, as Sola Scriptura, this, if you go back and read the church fathers which I have done, you will find a consistent witness to the truth of Sola Scriptura as it was formulated by the reformers which is that the word of God, the written Scriptures, are the final and ultimate authority for all matters that relate to faith and doctrine; that we are never to teach any dogma, any doctrine, that cannot be validated by the word of God, and that is a fundamental principle of the Reformation which could be validated by the writings of the church fathers and which is repudiated by the Roman Catholic Church. But in so doing, it repudiates, first of all, Scripture because I believe Scripture very clearly teaches Sola Scriptura, and then secondly, it repudiates church history because I think we can prove very clearly that the church fathers and the church as a whole operated on the basis of Sola Scriptura for centuries.

Lee: Okay, we've got about six minutes left in this segment and I want to go ahead and get right into your book so we don't run out of time. You mentioned the authority of Scripture, that the Scripture teaches Sola Scriptura, and that historically the church has taught Sola Scriptura, so that is how your book begins. You have the first two chapters of your book, chapter 1 called "The Authority of Scripture," where we look at the scriptural references themselves to see what Scripture has to say about that, and then we go to the second chapter which is, "Scripture and Tradition." Now, starting at the beginning of your book, let's look at Scripture and see what it has to say about this topic of Sola Scriptura. I've heard so many people that are leaning in a Catholic direction say, "Well, I'm not convinced that the Scripture itself teaches Sola Scriptura, so therefore we should not be teaching that dogmatically as a doctrine." Is that the case, or does Scripture support the idea that the word of God in the written form of the Scriptures is our sole authority?

William: Well, I believe the Scriptures teach that they alone are our sole authority. You know, you find as you look at different controversies in the church, for example, the whole controversy of the Arian heresy and the Trinitarian nature of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, the word "Trinity" is never used in Scripture but the word "Trinity" is a term that is used to sum up the overall teaching of the nature of God that is embodied in Scripture. The term "Sola Scriptura" will not be found in Scripture. That obviously is a Latin term, but even as a Greek term, you're not going to find that particular phrase. What you will find is the declaration that the word of God is adequate for all that we need for faith and morals. 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 are clearly the basic Scripture that is used as the fundamental authority for our teaching that Scripture alone is our final authority. It says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Now, it says "all Scripture is inspired by God," that is fundamental because what it teaches us is that Scripture is inspired; Scripture is inherently authoritative because it is inspired. Now, if you go through the word of God and you look at all the descriptions that you find with respect to Scripture, I think that that is great proof in and of itself that the Scriptures are sufficient; that the Scriptures are authoritative. For example, I'll just read

off some descriptions in the word of God about itself. It says that the word of God is: pure; it is perfect; it is eternal; it is sure; it is truth; it is forever settled in heaven; it sanctifies; it causes spiritual growth; it is God breathed; it is authoritative; it gives wisdom unto salvation; it makes wise the simple; it is living and active; it is a guide; a fire; a hammer; a seed; it is the sword of the Spirit; it gives knowledge of God; it's a lamp to our feet, it's a light to our path; it produces reverence for God; it heals; it makes free; it illuminates; it produces faith; it regenerates; it converts the soul; it brings conviction of sin; it restrains from sin; it is spiritual food; it is infallible, inerrant, irrevocable; it searches the heart and mind; it produces life; it defeat Satan; it proves truth; it refutes error; it is holy; it equipd for every good work; and it is the final judge of all tradition. Now, that sounds pretty sufficient to me, and the question that I have is, 1. I know Scripture is inspired because Scripture says it is. 2. I am never told that tradition is inspired. Secondly, where am I ever told anything about tradition that would compare to what I have just read about the written word of God? It is totally absent. In fact, the majority of references in the word of God about tradition are negative; they are warnings against tradition.

Lee: Now, before we get any further, we probably better define our terms very precisely, in other words, for example, the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant church would both agree that the word of God is authoritative and is the sole authority for faith and morals, the question is what comprises the word of God. The Protestant position, of course, is that the word of God is contained solely within the written Scriptures; that is, it is contained solely within the writings of the prophets from the Old Testament and from Moses, the teachers of the law, and from the New Testament from the apostles, the teachings that these men inspired, carried along by the Holy Spirit as the Apostle Peter says, to write what God intended to be his word. And the Roman Catholic position being that the word of God is in the Scriptures but it is also, the Scriptures are not complete; that there is more of the word of God that came from the apostles that has been passed down orally by tradition. Now, that's not to say that God is still speaking in the sense that he is still giving divine revelation, but what he did say through the apostles is not contained only within the word of God but it is also contained in a tradition that is held by the church where this word of God was passed down orally from the apostles down through the centuries. The church of Rome put such a stress on what the apostolic fathers had to say. In fact, they stress it to the point of saying that there is actually an oral tradition that has been passed down from the apostles that is as authoritative as Scripture yet is not contained within the holy writ. Is that correct, William?

William: That is correct, Lee. It might be helpful if I were to quote from the Council of Trent and Vatican II to verify what you're saying because there are some in the Roman Catholic church who would dispute that and would try to water down what these councils have actually taught because what they want to say is that tradition actually has more to do with the interpretation of Scripture and that tradition is somehow subordinate to Scripture, but the Roman Catholic church has officially taught that there are really two vehicles, if you will, of divine revelation. There's only one source of revelation, that being God, but that he has chosen out of his Providence to reveal truth through two

means: one is the written word of God, and the other is oral tradition. This is what the Council of Trent says,

"The holy, ecumenical and general Council of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, that the purity of the Gospel may be preserved in the church after the errors have been removed.

"This Gospel, of old promised through the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, promulgated first with His own mouth, and then commanded it to be preached by His Apostles to every creature as the source at once of all saving truth and rules of conduct.

"It also clearly perceives that these truths and rules are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand."

Then Vatican II, you can see there that they affirm the fact that there is both the unwritten oral tradition and the written word of God. Vatican II says this,

"Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. To the successors of the apostles, sacred Tradition hands on in its full purity God's word, which was trusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Consequently it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence. Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God which is committed to the church."

Lee: Now, before we go on with that thought, there is something that I wanted to say, somewhat parenthetically but I do want to spend some time dealing with it, that is also brought up in the Council of Trent is the idea of what even comprises sacred Scripture. There is a dispute between the Protestants and the Catholics on the matter of what comprises the Canon of Scripture, and I want to spend some time with this because even this point can stand a great deal of illumination from church history. You have mentioned in your book that the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent appeals to the Councils of Hippo and Carthage that took place in the North African region, of course, under the leadership of St. Augustine, and Augustine, of course, was a proponent of including the books that are commonly known as the apocrypha in the Canon of Scripture, and they make a big point of saying that the Canon of Scripture was more or

less established at this time and definitely established during the Council of Trent. Could you comment a little bit on these books known as the apocrypha and whether or not there is a question historically about whether they should be included in the Canon of holy Scripture?

William: Sure, the argument is often formulated to Protestants by Roman Catholics, that since supposedly these North African councils officially and authoritatively defined the extent of the Canon for the church, why is it that we then reject the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Well, the simple answer to that is that we don't accept the premise upon which that is proposed to us. The Councils of Carthage and Hippo did not establish the Canon for the church. If you go back into the history of the Canon, and it is a very complicated history but, nonetheless, what you find in a general sense is this: the Septuagint included the writings of the apocrypha and it's the apocrypha that we are really dealing with here, those books that come out of the inter-testamental period and which are disputed between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The writings of the apocrypha came to be included as part of the Septuagint and there was no distinction made between those books in the Old Testament that were considered canonical and those which were considered to be deuterocanonical, if you will, that the inter-testamental books, the apocrypha, that these began to be received by Christian communities because they had no way to distinguish between those that were canonical and noncanonical they began to receive the apocrypha as part of the canonical Scriptures but, 1. This goes against the history of the Jews themselves. The Jews did not accept the apocrypha as part of the Old Testament canon. The New Catholic Encyclopedia makes this statement,

"For the Old Testament, Protestants follow the Jewish Canon. They have only the books that are in the Hebrew Bible. Catholics have in addition seven deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament."

Now, that is an admission by an official organ of the Roman Catholic Church that the Jews in their official Canon did not accept the apocrypha and that the Protestant Bible is consistent with the Jews.

Now, that is very important because it is the Jews who were given the Scriptures and the Jews did not receive the apocrypha as part of canonical Scripture. When you look at the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles, they do not quote from the apocrypha. They quote from many other books from the Old Testament, but they do not quote from the apocrypha. The apocrypha was not authoritative in defining issues of doctrine for the Jews. And when you come up through the history of the church with major church fathers, what you find is that many of them did not accept the authority of the apocrypha. They relied upon the old Canon of the Hebrews which consisted, we are told, of 22 books. Now, they numbered their books differently. All of the minor prophets, for example, were considered to be just one book. So what you have then is the numbering is different but the books basically are the 39 books that we have in the Protestant Bible.

Josephus, who was a first century Jew who witnessed the fall of Rome, is a witness to the fact that the Canon of the Jews consisted of what he called 22 Old Testament books. Those church fathers who were familiar with Palestine such as Origen and Jerome, both rejected the apocrypha as being part of the canonical Scriptures received from the Jews. Melito of Sardis, who was a second century church father, went to Palestine to try to discern what were the canonical Scriptures and we're told in Eusebius, the church historian, that he came back with the exact same number which Origen and Jerome and Josephus had given us. The number is 22.

You'll find that the church fathers such as Gregory Nazianzus, Basil the Great, Epiphanius, Hilary of Poitiers, Amphilochius, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, all of these church fathers reject the apocrypha as being part of the Canon of Scripture. Athanasius makes a list for us. He documents this for us in one of his festal letters and he gives us a list of the 22 authorized Old Testament books, and then he makes this statement,

"These are the fountain of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain, and these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness."

So he is saying that there is one basic fundamental Canon of the Old Testament which does not include the apocrypha. Now, if he did say that certain of these apocryphal books would be useful for edification and for reading in the church. They did not deny that this would be so and they did use those books in that way.

Lee: Now, this is an interesting point that you make in your book that perhaps a lot of the tension that seems to be there between Augustine and Jerome comes from a possible misunderstanding of what Augustine meant when he said Canon, that there might be a distinction between books that he considered within the realm of being in the Canon but some books being authoritative for teaching doctrine, and other books being more inspirational and more for, like you said, reading in the church services and so forth.

William: Let me read, if I could, a quote from Cardinal Cajetan in the 16th century because Cajetan is a witness to how we should interpret our understanding of Augustine and the North African counsel because I really do believe that there was a broad understanding of the word "Canon," as well as a very narrow understanding of the word "Canon," because it's clear from men like Rufinus, for example, Rufinus wrote from Rome. He wrote after the Councils of Carthage and Hippo, and he defines for us the extent of the Canon and he divides the books into two main categories: one is authoritative canonical books which exclude the apocrypha, and he explicitly states that; and then he says there are ecclesiastical books which are received into the church but are not authoritative for defining doctrine, and that's how Jerome basically viewed the issue with the apocrypha. He went back to the Hebrew Scriptures and he refused to accept the apocrypha because it was not part of the Hebrew canon.

Nonetheless, what we find then is that Augustine is expressing a view and the North African church expresses the view that I believe is more encompassing in terms of a

broader understanding of the word "Canon," although I believe they probably had a more narrow view of the real canonical books relative to the apocrypha. This is what Cardinal Cajetan has to say and Cajetan, if you will remember, was the great opponent of Luther. He was one of the leading scholars of his day. Some believe that if he had not died, he probably would have been the next pope. But this is what he says about the apocrypha and this comes from his commentaries on all of the historical books of the Old Testament which he dedicated to the Pope of his day. He says,

"Here we close our commentaries on the historical books of the Old Testament. For the rest (that is, Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees) are counted by St. Jerome out of the canonical books, and are placed among the Apocrypha, along with Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, as is plain from the Prologus Galeatus. Nor be thou disturbed, like a raw scholar, if thou shouldst find anywhere, either in the sacred councils or the sacred doctors, these books reckoned canonical. For the words as well as of councils and of doctors are to be reduced to the correction of Jerome. Now, according to his judgment, in the epistle to the bishops Chromatius and Heliodorus, these books (and any other like books in the canon of the bible) are not canonical, that is, not in the nature of a rule for confirming matters of faith. Yet, they may be called canonical, that is, in the nature of a rule for the edification of the faithful, as being received and authorized in the canon of the bible for that purpose. By the help of this distinction thou mayest see thy way clear through that which Augustine says, and what is written in the provincial council of Carthage."

Lee: So, again, there is less confusion and less disagreement in church history, as far as the Canon goes, than we have been led to believe up until now.

William: It is very clear because if you look at the teaching of the major church theologians throughout the Middle Ages all the way up to the Reformation, what you find is the opinion that was expressed by Cardinal Cajetan. Gregory the Great, this is Pope Gregory the Great, writing in the very end of the sixth century, references the book of 1 Maccabees and this is what he has to say with reference to Maccabees. He says,

"With reference to which particular we are not acting irregularly, if from the books, though not Canonical, yet brought out for the edification of the Church, we bring forward testimony. Thus Eleazar in the battle smote and brought down an elephant, but fell under the very beast that he killed. (1 Macc 6:46)"

He's basically saying that this is a work that is useful for edification but it is not canonical. That is his opinion. That is his, and it obviously would have been the opinion of the church of his day.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia has affirmed the fact that the Councils of Carthage and Hippo did not authoritatively define the extent of the Canon in their day. They make the

statement that it was not until the Council of Trent that this matter was officially settled by the Roman Catholic Church. This is what they say,

"The Council of Trent definitively settled the matter of the Old Testament Canon. That this had not been done previously is apparent from the uncertainty that persisted up to the time of Trent."

And they say this about this uncertainty,

"St. Jerome distinguished between canonical books and ecclesiastical books. The latter he judged were circulated by the Church as good spiritual reading but were not recognized as authoritative Scripture....The situation remained unclear in the ensuing centuries. For example, John of Damascus, Gregory the Great, Nicholas of Lyra, continued to doubt the canonicity of the deuterocanonical books. According to Catholic doctrine, the proximate criterion of the biblical Canon is the infallible decision of the church. This decision was not given until rather late in the history of the church at the Council of Trent."

Lee: Okay, you're listening to Christians Answered. I'm Lee Meckley. We're speaking with William Webster about his book "The Church of Rome at the Bar of History," published by Banner of Truth, and we only have about five minutes left in this segment and I want to go ahead and move on to your second chapter called, "Scripture and Tradition." At this point, obviously, the Catholics will say that Scripture has a great deal to say about the importance of tradition and Protestants would agree that Scripture has a great deal to say about tradition, so before we get into the actual discussion of Romanism and Protestantism, let's for the next five minutes and then after the break we'll continue the discussion, talk about what the Bible has to say about tradition. What does Scripture teach about the kind of tradition that we have been talking about up until this point.

William: Okay, Scripture does teach a certain aspect of tradition. For example, there is a positive affirmation of tradition given in 2 Thessalonians 2:15. Everyone is familiar, well, most likely everyone is familiar with that passage of Scripture, certainly Roman Catholics are, where Paul exhorts the Thessalonians that they are to obey his injunction, the tradition which he has given them either by word of mouth or orally which he has handed on to them. Now, it's interesting that the same word, the word "tradition" is "paradosis." The word "tradition" is also again used by Paul in the third chapter of 2 Thessalonians where he refers to a teaching which he had given the church of Thessalonica that those who refuse to engage in work should not eat, and he's talking about individuals who had forsaken their occupations to go out and somehow wait for the supposed second coming of Christ or what they believed would be the second coming of Christ. That's one issue that he deals with there, but he also deals with those who would refuse to work and would somehow want to live off of the goodwill of the church. What he's saying there is this is tradition, and all the word "tradition" means is "teaching." It means "the handing on either in written form or orally, doctrine." And obviously Paul is an apostle and he has handed on to the church revelation from God and he has done that

orally and he has done that in writing. Now, the issue is when Paul uses the term "tradition," does he mean by that word the same thing that the Roman Catholic Church means, and you have two issues to deal with here: you have to deal with the issue of the concept of tradition historically in terms of what that concept meant to the early church and what it means in Scripture; and then you have to deal with the content, the doctrinal content of that tradition, and whether or not that content in terms of how the Roman Catholic Church today defines that content, would be equivalent to what Paul means when he says that they are to obey the tradition which he has given to the church at Thessalonica.

Lee: Okay, so at this point, we are looking at what Scripture has to say about tradition and we're looking at whether when Scripture speaks of tradition, that we are seeing the same thing that Roman Catholicism is talking about. Now, you mentioned Paul when he talks about tradition and speaking of it in favorable terms, what else does Scripture have to say about tradition along these lines?

William: Okay, the one passage that I cited is really the only positive passage of Scripture that you will find in all of the word of the God that has to do with tradition. The Lord Jesus Christ is scathing with respect to tradition and what he basically says if you go through Mark 7 and Matthew 15 when he takes issue with the Pharisees who had taken issue with him because he refused to bow to their tradition, what he basically said was, "You have elevated your tradition which you have handed down through the centuries to a position of authority equal to the word of God and you and your tradition are condemned because your tradition has invalidated Scripture." And what he is basically saying is there is a test which you have to apply to any tradition. He is not necessarily voicing a negative opinion about all tradition. What he is saying is that if any tradition, be it a practice or a doctrine, in any way does not conform to the word of God, the written Scriptures, that tradition is to be rejected because if you elevate that teaching which would be contradictory to the word of God which in any way invalidates the word of God, you have then elevated the authority of man over the authority of God. And this is basically what Paul says in Colossians where he says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. You have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition," is what Jesus says.

So Paul is saying and Jesus is saying, "You beware of tradition because church history has taught us, the Jews taught us, that it is a very easy thing for the teachings of men to creep into the life of the church and displace the ultimate authority of Scripture." Jesus makes it very clear that the ultimate standard by which any teaching is to be judged is the authority of Scripture. When Paul came preaching the Gospel to the Bereans, they took his message, his oral message as an apostle and they compared it to Scripture.

Lee: And, once again, William, I want to say thank you for joining us on the program.

William: Thank you, Lee.

Lee: I want to talk a little bit more about what you said was the test to determine whether or not someone is rightly or wrongly holding to Scripture, and some more instances of what Scripture has to say about appealing to either tradition or Scripture.

William: Okay, Jesus, if you recall, he had the conflict with the Pharisees. Jesus always, if you go through his ministry and you look at how he deals with people, he is constantly preaching the word of God, and he is always correcting people with the word of God. In Matthew 22, he was confronted with the Sadducees who had a theological debate with him over the issue of the resurrection and they did not believe in the resurrection, and he says something very significant to them, he says, "You are greatly mistaken because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God." And then he quotes from the Old Testament and he says, "God is the God of the living." He says, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Moses." And he said he's not the God of the dead but of the living, and what he's doing there is he is quoting Scripture. He is using the present tense "I am" to demonstrate to them that there is a resurrection, that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still living. But significantly what he says to them is, "You are greatly mistaken because you don't know the Scriptures." And he uses the Scriptures to correct them with the desire to bring them back to a fundamental submission to the authority of the word of God, and he did that all through his ministry.

In Matthew 15, the Pharisees and the scribes, they come to him and they criticized Jesus. They say, "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" Now, just like what the church fathers are in Roman Catholicism, this is what the tradition of the elders would be to the Pharisees and the scribes of that day. These are the authorities of the past who had handed down authoritative teaching and what they're saying is that, "You are a contradiction to what these authorities have taught." And Jesus turns the guns on them and he says, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" And he begins to go through a litany of things which they have done which are in direct violation to the word of God and he says, "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you saying this people honors me with their lips but their heart is far away from the, but in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." So what he is basically saying is, "You have invalidated the word of God by your tradition." So implicit in what he's saying is that the ultimate standard to determine if a doctrine is correct or not is whether it conforms to the word of God. If it does not conform to the word of God, it is to be rejected.

Lee: Now, something that I wanted to bring up at this point as an observation that I've made and an observation if I'm understanding you correctly it's something that you're bringing out in your book, that there is a discussion of tradition in the New Testament that has been given by the apostles that you mentioned in the quote from Paul, but when we look back to the Old Testament or from the New Testament we look back to the Old Testament, there doesn't seem to be any kind of tradition that has been passed on from that point that is ever spoken of in a positive sense. In other words, when Christ is confronted by Satan in the wilderness, all of his appeals are to Scripture, and there are several other examples that we could cite where when we look from the New Testament

times, the people were supposed to be holding to Scripture and Scripture alone. There was no tradition that I'm aware of that had been passed down from early Judaism that was supposed to be held along with the Scriptures. The only positive references to tradition in the Scripture is tradition and writings of the apostles. Is that correct?

William: That, I believe, is correct. I don't see anything from the lips of Jesus Christ that is a positive affirmation of tradition. I see nothing but criticism. Now, the entire Sermon on the Mount, in one sense, is a criticism of the tradition of the Pharisees where he goes through and he says, "You have heard it stated from the ancients, but I say to you," and he corrects their misinterpretations of Scripture or practices which they have brought into the church which the church in their day which were contrary to the word of God.

Lee: I really want to look at this, to start out by looking at what Rome has to say about itself and the claims that it makes as far as being grounded historically and doctrinally in the teaching of the apostles, not only in written form, but in oral form.

William: Well, basically what they're saying is that all of revelation was not consigned to writing and that there is a body of doctrine that has been handed down from Christ and the apostles to the church which is independent of Scripture but is still revelation. And they will claim, for example, the teachings of Mary, some of the teachings of the papacy, even though they will allude to Scriptures for these, oftentimes these are going to be teachings like, for example, purgatory, which are claimed from tradition. You know, it's interesting because it's very difficult to nail down the Roman Catholic Church to give us a real definitive answer on the actual content of the tradition. What they tend to say is there is such a tradition, these truths have been handed down from the very beginning; sometimes they are not necessarily very apparent initially, they are implicitly held and that they become more explicit as time goes on, but even though they are not found in Scripture, they are still legitimately to be regarded as revelation and are necessary to be believed often according to Rome for salvation.

Lee: Now, the Roman church at this point appeals to the church fathers and says that historically the church has always held this view of tradition and this view of the duality of Scripture and tradition, and this chapter that I'm looking at talks about the view of the church fathers on the subject of tradition versus Sola Scriptura which, again, is a Reformation term, but regardless of that, the idea is, is that concept to be found in the teaching of the fathers of the church. And I want to look at that for the next eight minutes or so. I want to look at the church fathers and what their view of tradition alongside of Scripture was.

William: Okay, the definition of tradition according to the Roman Catholic Church is that it is an oral handing down of a body of doctrine which remained oral in nature until it may have been written down in some later time by the church fathers. The fact of the matter is, as I mentioned earlier, there is oral preaching and teaching. Anyone who stands up in a pulpit or teaches a Sunday school class is teaching oral truth. You are transmitting truth in an oral fashion. Paul did that. All of the apostles did that. The bishops of the early church all did that. They all taught orally, and what they taught was called tradition. But I

want to come back again to what the early church means by tradition because they had three fundamental meanings which developed to define that term. First of all, the word "tradition" had to do with what they called apostolic tradition or the rule of faith. Those were the major doctrines of the church which defined Christianity. Then you had ecclesiastical practices which had been in the church as practices for many, many years. Those were also called tradition and were considered by some church fathers to have been handed down orally by the apostles. Then you have later on in the history of the church, a concept formulated, well, it's formulated by Irenaeus in a not quite explicit way as it was later formulated by Vincent of Lerins in the fifth century, what is called the unanimous consent of the fathers, and that is an interpretive function of the word of God. It's an authoritative interpretation of the meaning of Scripture and what he calls universality, antiquity and consent of the overall view of the church fathers throughout the ages. That is basically a standard of interpretation which is the criterion for determining what is truly Catholic and Orthodox. But that is a standard which is under the authority of Scripture, and what you come back to is when you look at how the early church viewed apostolic tradition, the question is was this an oral tradition? And the answer is no. Irenaeus answers this question for us because Irenaeus says this,

"We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith."

Now, how did Irenaeus know what Paul and the other apostles taught orally? It had been handed down to him in the Scriptures and according to what Irenaeus says, those Scriptures then became the ground and pillar of his faith. The ground and pillar of the church is the word of God, the inscripturated word of God. So even though he will affirm the fact that there was oral teaching, what he says is that we know the content of that oral teaching because we have the Scriptures. He goes on to say, "We also can tell you the doctrinal content of apostolic tradition," and he defines it for us in explicit terms. Tertullian also defines the content doctrinally of what the apostolic tradition consisted of, and basically what it consisted of was the fundamental tenants of the creed: who is God; who is Jesus Christ; the judgment to come. All of those fundamental doctrines that are formulated by the creed is a summing up of the truth of Scripture. There is not a single doctrine which is given in that creed that cannot be rooted and found in the written word of God, and that's how they defined apostolic tradition.

Now, if you look at the practice of the early church and the view of the church fathers with respect to Scripture, let me quote to you from Cyril of Jerusalem. Cyril of Jerusalem is writing in the mid-fourth century. He is the Bishop of Jerusalem, one of the preeminent Sees of the church of that day. This is what he says with respect to the authority of Scripture.

"Concerning the divine and sacred Mysteries of the Faith, we ought not to deliver even the most casual remark without the Holy Scriptures; nor be

drawn aside by mere probabilities and the artifices of argument. Do not then believe me because I tell thee of these things, unless thou receive from the Holy Scriptures the proof of what is set forth: for this salvation, which is our faith, is not by ingenious reasonings, but by proof from the Holy Scriptures....For the articles of the Faith were not composed at the good pleasure of men, but the most important points chosen from all Scriptures, make up the one teaching of the Faith....Now heed not any ingenious views of mine; else thou mayest be misled; but unless thou receive the witness of the prophets concerning each matter, believe not what is spoken; unless thou learn from Holy Scripture....receive not the witness of man."

You could not find a clearer formulation of the doctrine of Sola Scriptura than that statement from this church father.

Lee: And what's interesting about that statement is, as you pointed out in your book, that particular quote is from writings that he was using to catechize new converts.

William: That is correct. That is what is so significant about it because he is passing on to them, and interestingly enough, he quotes 2 Thessalonians 2:15 to confirm everything that he's teaching here, in other words, the teaching of Paul about passing on tradition. This is what he's doing with these catechumens. And what he is telling them is that, "My authority as a bishop is contingent upon the authority of the word of God and my conformity and my teaching to the word of God," and he's saying, "You disregard me and my authority if I contradict the word of God."

The whole issue of oral tradition you will not find one reference in the entire Catechetical Lectures, that's where this comes from, it's a very large volume where he deals with the entirety of everything that is necessary for these catechumens to believe. There is not one single reference to oral tradition. You will also not find one single reference to the Assumption of Mary, to the Immaculate Conception of Mary, or to the papacy. Now, if you go back for a minute and think about oral tradition, Irenaeus had to deal with oral tradition historically. He had to deal with that with the Gnostics. Oral tradition is a concept meaning revelation from God did not begin with the early church, it began with the Gnostics in a heretical system. It's the Gnostics who taught that they had received a revelation independent of Scripture that was oral in nature, and that is what Irenaeus had to fight against.

Lee: The name of his work was "Against Heresies," was it not?

William: "Against Heresies," that's correct. He repudiates the whole notion that there could be truth handed down independent of Scripture that could not be verified by Scripture, that came from the apostles.

Lee: Now, this is rather shocking. You are saying now at this point that there actually was a heresy way in the early time of the early church where a group, specifically the

Gnostics, are teaching that not only is there the Scripture, but there is also an oral law or an oral tradition that came down directly from the apostles, bypassing the written word, and that they alone, I guess, were recipients of. William, what else, what other fathers can we cite to see what they have to say about this particular subject?

William: Well, there are a vast number of different fathers that you can go to because in their writings it is very clear that their constant appeal is to Scripture to document and to validate any teaching which they are setting forth. Tertullian, for example, says, "The Scriptures indeed furnish us with our rule of faith." It's the Scriptures. In giving us the content, the doctrinal content of the rule of faith, he goes through the specific doctrines that that consists of and every single one of them is validated by the written word of God, by the Scriptures. And you will find in his writings in other places, for example, he talks about having to prove your doctrine. In dealing in his work "Against Praxeas," he says this,

"You will then make good your proof of His power and His will (to do even this) when you shall have proved to us that He actually did it.

"It will be your duty, however, to adduce your proofs out of the Scriptures as plainly as we do when we prove that He made His Word a Son to Himself. You must bring forth the proof which I require of you, one like my own, that is, you must prove to me that the Scriptures show the Son and the Father to be the same, just as on our side the Son and the Father are demonstrated to be distinct, for as on my part, I produced the words of God himself, so you, in like manner, ought to adduce in opposition to me some text."

And that is, in essence, basically the same thing which Cyril of Jerusalem taught some 200 years later after Tertullian.

Cyprian does exactly the same thing. Interestingly enough, Cyprian was embroiled in a major conflict with the Bishop of Rome, Stephen by name, over the issue of re-baptizing heretics, and he takes issue with the Bishop of Rome, and the principle upon which he operates is that you are not to rely upon custom or tradition unless you can validate that custom or that practice or that teaching from the written Scriptures. And this is what he says about tradition, "Whence is that tradition," whoever may be presenting a tradition to you, for example, he says, "Whence is that tradition? Whether does it descend from the authority of the Lord and the Gospel, or does it come from the injunctions of the epistles of the apostles?" And all through this particular treatise in which he is dealing with this issue, he is constantly saying, "You have to come back to the head and the original of divine tradition," which he means, the word of God. When he talks about tradition, he always equates it with the written Scriptures, and he constantly calls men back. He called Stephen, the Bishop of Rome, back to the written word of God.

Clement of Alexandria says,

"For we may not give our adhesion to men on a bare statement by them, who might equally state the opposite of what we are saying. But if it is not enough merely to state the opinion, but if what is stated must be confirmed, we do not wait for the testimony of men, but we establish the matter that is in question by the voice of the Lord, which is the surest of all demonstrations, or rather is the only demonstration; in which knowledge those who have merely tasted the Scriptures are believers. We give a complete exhibition of the Scriptures from the Scriptures themselves from faith persuade by demonstration."

So he says what we teach has to be confirmed and how is it confirmed? He says, "The basis upon which any doctrine is confirmed is the word of God. It's the written Scriptures."

Origen, says that no one should use for the proof of doctrine books not included among the canonized scriptures. So he, again, talks about proofs and the necessity for proofs.

Chrysostom says,

"These then are the reasons; but it is necessary to establish them all from the Scriptures, and to show with exactness that all that has been said on this subject is not an invention of human reasoning, but the very sentence of the Scriptures."

Athanasius, if you look at the history of his conflict with the Arians and his stand for orthodoxy, he never appealed to oral tradition. He always appealed to the written Scriptures. This is what he says,

"Since then your Piety desired to learn from us the faith of the Catholic Church, giving thanks for these things to the Lord, we counselled above all things to remind your Piety of the faith confessed by the Fathers at Nicæa. For this certain set at nought, while plotting against us in many ways, because we would not comply with the Arian heresy, and they have become authors of heresy and schisms in the Catholic Church. For the true and pious faith in the Lord has become manifest to all, being both 'known and read ' from the Divine Scriptures."

He says,

"But our faith is right, and starts from the teaching of the Apostles and tradition of the fathers, being confirmed both by the New Testament and the Old. While the Apostolic tradition teaches in the words of blessed Peter," now notice what he says, "The Apostolic tradition teaches in the words of blessed Peter," and now he quotes Scripture, "'Forasmuch then as Christ suffered for us in the Flesh'; and in what Paul writes, 'Looking for

the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,
Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity."

So what is apostolic tradition according to Athanasius? It is Scripture, what Peter and Paul have written.

And you can go on and on with other fathers. Augustine says,

"What more shall I teach you than what we read in the apostle, for holy Scripture fixes the rule for our doctrine lest we dare be wiser than we ought. Therefore I should not teach you anything else except to expound to you the words of the teacher."

Lee: Now, you're listening to Christian Answers and if you've just joined us, we're talking to William Webster who is author of the book "The Church of Rome at the Bar of History," and we're talking about what the church fathers had to say about tradition as it relates to Scripture. Now, if you were to get a hold of this book, you would find that a good third of it, almost a half of it at the end, is devoted to appendices, the first one of which is simply a list of quotes from the fathers on the meaning of tradition and its relationship to Scripture. There are also several other appendices in the book: Vatican I and Vatican II on papal infallibility; an interesting letter of Gregory the Great which was one of the early popes, to John of Constantinople which was the patriarch of the Eastern church, objecting to his adoption of the title of Universal Bishop. Now, here is an interesting letter from a Pope basically condemning this Bishop for adopting a title of Universal Bishop and, interestingly enough, actually refers to him as, or to anyone who would take this title for himself as being precursor to the antichrist. Now, quite often that's thrown around nowadays and it's often considered to be inflammatory and unnecessary and unsupportable, but here you have a Pope that is saying this.

But speaking of the subject of, we're running out of time and there are two other chapters that I want to talk about before we run out of time. By the way, we are going to be having another interview with William Webster on the last five chapters of his book that deal more with what Scripture has to say about salvation and what, again, the church fathers had to say about salvation, and you'll definitely want to be with us for that. But as we wrap up today's show, I want to talk about chapter 4 and chapter 5 of your book, chapter 4 being entitled "The Papacy and the Rock of Matthew 16." Tell us about this particular chapter where you look at what the Roman Catholic Church has to say about its leader.

William: Well, the Roman Catholic Church historically has always claimed that its authority is derived from the commission of Christ to Peter, and they interpret the commission to mean that in his words to Peter, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Prior to that, by the way, Peter obviously had made a confession of faith in Christ as the Son of the living God, and Christ turns to him and gives this blessing to him in terms of this commission. But the church of Rome has always claimed historically that

the Roman authority as the church, was established by Christ in Peter, that Peter is the rock, and that when he established Peter as the rock, he also established a papal office with successors who would be the Bishops of Rome, and it is through the Bishops of Rome as successors to Peter, who carry on the rock foundation of the church; that the church is built upon the Bishops of Rome as successors of Peter. But this is the fundamental basis of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and it is the interpretation of this passage which historically has been used as the basis upon which they have made the claims. It is the basis upon which Vatican I, for example, if you take the three major passages of Scripture, that being Matthew 16:18, Luke 22:32, which is where Christ says, "Peter, I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail," and then John 21:15 to 17 where Peter is commissioned as a shepherd, those three passages of Scripture are united together to form a triumvirate of passages which form the basis of the authority of the papal office as enunciated by Vatican I.

Lee: Now, you make the point here about Vatican I, you actually say that there are 10 points that are made about papal rule, the right of papal rule, and infallibility, and an intriguing one is the 10th one. It says that it is necessary for salvation that everyone, and apparently this is a retroactive statement going back to the founding of the church, "It is necessary for salvation that everyone who professes to be a Christian must be submitted to the authority of the Roman Pontiff in all areas of faith, morals, and discipline, and if anyone disagrees with these teachings of Vatican I, they are anathematized." Again, that's from Vatican I which met from 1869 to 1870. So here in the 19th century, we have this proclamation, among others, being set forth about the right of papal rule and papal infallibility. So apparently what the Roman church is saying at this point is that it has always been necessary to believe this and to submit to papal authority in order to be saved. Am I interpreting that correctly?

William: You are interpreting that correctly. In fact, Vatican I makes the statement after it makes its teachings about papal infallibility and papal rule, it says, "This is the teaching of Catholic truth from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and salvation." And most people are not aware of that. I would grant that probably very few Roman Catholics, and practically no evangelicals, have ever read Vatican I. Vatican I is a very hard-hitting, in-your-face council and they laid it on the line. They affirmed the Council of Trent, and then they went on to define the issues of papal infallibility and papal jurisdiction in terms of salvation. These are not just doctrines that they're saying are really necessary for Roman Catholics, they're saying these are necessary for anyone who would embrace Christ and be saved; who would come into a saving relationship with him, because it impinges upon the whole issue of what saving faith is, and this enters into the doctrinal content of what they consider to be saving faith.

Now, there is, what we can say is that going back historically, starting, let's say about the 14th century, you will find affirmations of this teaching from the Bishops of Rome. Boniface VIII in 1302 or 1303, I've forgotten which date it is, but he makes this statement, he says, "Every human creature," he says, "furthermore that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff, this we declare, say, define and pronounce to be altogether necessary to salvation." So there is some historical legitimacy to what they're

saying but what they say is that this has been true from the very beginning. That's what we take issue with.

Lee: Okay, well, now this particular chapter you divide into two parts: you deal with their arguments exegetically from Scripture and then you look at the pattern of authority in the church after the time of the apostles to see whether the pattern conforms to what we see and is defined in the Scripture exegetically or whether it conforms to what we find in Vatican I. Now, I want to go ahead and let you talk about, first of all, exegetically why this interpretation that Rome takes of Matthew 16 is unlikely.

William: Well, 1. Without getting into the worn out arguments about petros and petra, the differences between the two Greek terms, when you look at what Scripture teaches about the rock, you go back into the Old Testament and the Old Testament teaches us that the rock is God himself. He is the Lord. All through the Old Testament, in the Psalms in particular, you find the designation of the rock as being descriptive of Jehovah. In the book of Daniel in the prophecy of the end times where we have this stone which decimates the kingdoms of the world and then fills up the world, that stone is the person of Jesus Christ. When we look at the preaching of Paul and the preaching of Peter, Peter in particular does not point to himself in any way as the rock. He never refers to himself as the rock. Now, some would say, "Well, that's just humility." But when you talk about preaching and when you talk about ecclesiology, this is not an issue of humility, this is an issue of fact. Peter never refers to himself as the rock, he refers to Jesus Christ as the rock and foundation, and he establishes that fact from the Old Testament because he quotes the Old Testament when referring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, when you come into an exegesis of this passage and you look at the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," that is the foundation upon which the entire church of Jesus Christ is based. Who is the foundation of the church? Ephesians 2:20 tells us that he is the cornerstone and that the other apostles and prophets are stones or foundations in an indirect sense, a secondary sense, but the main foundation stone is the Lord Jesus Christ. And the confession of faith that Peter made in Christ as the Son of the living God, that confession historically in the patristic age was considered to be the rock upon which the church would be built. So if you want to talk about exegesis, you can look at it from the standpoint of looking at the analogy of Scripture, how does Scripture really interpret the rock throughout the entirety of Scripture. But then you ask the question: how did the early church interpret this passage? And surprisingly enough what you find as you do a study historically of the exegesis of Matthew 16, is that the vast majority of church fathers do not interpret this in a Roman Catholic sense. In fact, you could almost say that there is practically no church father who would interpret this in the way Vatican I has interpreted it.

The greatest theologian of the entire church age is Augustine. He has more to say about Matthew 16 than any other church father and I want to say before I get into this that I think I have been able, I have spent six years researching this specific topic, and I have been able to document what I believe is to be one of the most extensive English documentations of the patristic interpretation of Matthew 16, and I have come to the

conclusion that the unanimous consent of the fathers is utterly opposed to the teaching of Vatican I and its exegesis, its understanding of Matthew 16, that Peter is the rock, and that in saying that there is a papal office that has been built upon Peter with successors in the Bishops of Rome. Augustine says this in interpreting the Matthew 16 passage. He says, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of the underworld will not conquer her. To you shall I give the keys of the kingdom. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he goes into a commentary. He says, "In Peter, rocky, we see our attention drawn to the rock." Now, the Apostle Paul says about the former people, they drank from the spiritual rock that was following them but the rock was Christ. So this disciple is called rocky from the rock like Christian from Christ. "Why have I wanted to make this little introduction? In order to suggest to you that in Peter, the church is to be recognized. Christ, you see, built his church not on a man but on Peter's confession. What is Peter's confession? You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. There is the rock for you. There is the foundation. There is where the church has been built which the gates of the underworld cannot conquer."

And he goes on, I have documented page after page after page of quotes from Augustine saying precisely the same thing, that Christ did not build his church on a man meaning Peter, he built it on Peter's confession of faith. He separates the person of Peter from Peter's confession and he says that the rock and foundation of the church is Peter's confession which points to Jesus as the rock, because in other places, Augustine does say that the rock is Jesus Christ. And he views Peter as a symbolic representative of the entire church. He says Peter was built on Christ and Peter represents the church therefore the church in its entirety is represented in Peter, the church is built upon Christ as the rock.

And you can go through, for example, in the writings of Chrysostom. Chrysostom also does exactly the same thing. He identifies the rock to be Peter's confession of faith, not the person of Peter. Ambrose does exactly the same thing. He says that the rock is not the person of Peter, the rock is Peter's confession of faith. Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian. Now, let me say this about Cyprian. You will find fathers like Cyprian who will say that the rock is Peter, but when you ask what is the interpretation that they give to that word when they say that the rock is Peter, do they mean that in the same way the Roman Catholic Church means that in terms of how Vatican I has defined it, the answer is no. Cyprian is a forerunner to Augustine. They are both North African bishops. Augustine basically expresses the view of Cyprian, and Cyprian's view is Peter is symbolic of all bishops. There is not a papal office in his mind. All bishops are the successors of Peter. All bishops hold the chair of Peter, the authority of Peter, and are independent of one another. They are on equal footing with one another. That's why he could do what he did in his controversy with the Bishop of Rome. He was in conflict with him. He did not submit to him. He opposed him, and he died out of communion with the Bishop of Rome.

And you can go on throughout the patristic age to the greatest theologians of the patristic age, Cyril of Alexandria does not interpret the rock to be the person of Peter, but the confession of faith of Peter. The same can be said of all the great Eastern bishops like Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Athanasius, Epiphanius, he

himself also says that the rock upon which the church would be built is not the person of Peter but his confession of faith. And over and over again this is what these fathers have said. What this proves to me is that from an exegetical standpoint, the Roman Catholic Church claims to be an infallible interpreter of Scripture, when you look at the interpretation of the fathers of Matthew 16, the most important passage of Scripture for the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, what you find is a Protestant Orthodox interpretation, not a Roman Catholic interpretation, and therefore it proves that the Roman Catholic Church today is certainly not an infallible interpreter of Scripture because it contradicts the interpretation that was a consensus of interpretation of the early church.

The greatest theologian in the entire church age was Augustine. He has more to say about Matthew 16 than any other church father and I want to say before I get into this that I think I have been able, I have spent six years researching this specific topic, and I have been able to document what I believe is to be one of the most extensive English documentations of the patristic interpretation of Matthew 16, and I have come to the conclusion that the unanimous consent of the fathers is utterly opposed to the teaching of Vatican I and its exegesis, its understanding of Matthew 16, that Peter is the rock, and that in saying that there is a papal office that has been built upon Peter with successors in the bishops of Rome.

Lee: You originally yourself were in the Roman Catholic Church and in time came to leave that church and if you could briefly tell us about your experiences in that church and what eventually led to your exodus, and then we'll go ahead and get on to the discussion in your book of the Roman Catholic view of papal primacy.

William: Well, I was, as you mentioned, raised Roman Catholic. My mother, in particular, my father was really not Roman Catholic, but my mother was and is a very devout Roman Catholic. All through grade school I attended parochial schools. I was sent away from home at the beginning of my high school years when I was 13 to attend a Benedictine monastery that also had a high school attached to it, a considerable distance from my home in the Northeast, and I attended that school for 3 1/2 years. My early experience in Roman Catholicism was not necessarily an unpleasant experience. My later years in Roman Catholicism were not a good experience at all. I began to question, to have very deep questions, about the relevancy of Christianity, about the validity of the Scriptures. I ended up basically becoming an agnostic. I saw nothing in Catholicism that would draw me to Christ. I was obviously not a Christian at any point during my experience as a Roman Catholic. I had been devout at one time. I was an altar boy when there was still a Latin Mass. I used to faithfully attend Mass, but it was empty. It was religion. There was no life there. And as a result, when I became older and began to really question the validity of it, I jettisoned it. I jettisoned it on the basis of intellectual arguments which really don't hold any water but they seemed to me at the time to hold water. And I went into the world and began to embrace every form of philosophical answer I could find and that I found to be empty as well. There came a point in my life when I came face-to-face with the occult and the reality of the occult which made me realize that there is more to existence than that which is material, which drove me back to

the Scriptures, and to a search for God, if you will, and I came face-to-face with the reality of Jesus Christ as a living person, and through the teaching ministry of Walter Martin who founded the Christian Research Institute, he greatly influenced me through some tapes that a friend of mine had given me and as a result of getting back into the word of God and understanding the Gospel, I came into an experience of salvation through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ when I was 24 years old.

So I became a believer, not because of any church, but because of the word of God and because of the work of the Spirit of God in my own heart, that becoming a Christian is a matter of response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is authoritatively proclaimed and taught in the word of God, and as a result of that truth, the Lord saved me in a very direct sense. My life radically changed. There was life that I had never experienced before because I had come to know the living God by his grace, and as I began to grow and as I began to study the Scriptures, I obviously had a very sincere desire to understand my roots and to understand Roman Catholicism in light of what I had learned relative to the Scriptures that led me into a study of the Gospel in more depth and into the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, to try to understand if this church was in fact true or was it in fact false. In my study, both biblically and historically, has led me to the conviction that the Protestant Reformation was necessary. It was right. It is true to Scripture, and that it is an attempt, I believe, it was an attempt by the Spirit of God to bring the church back to its roots which is the premier authority of the word of God and what that authority teaches us with respect to ultimate salvation in Jesus Christ.

Lee: Now, last week we were talking about your chapter in the book, chapter 4, which deals with Matthew 16 and, of course, the passage where Peter confesses Jesus to be the Christ and then Christ tells Peter that he is calling him or he is named Simon and he is calling him Peter the rock, and that he is giving to him the keys of the kingdom and that whatever he binds on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever he looses on earth will be loosed in heaven and, of course, again, we spent a lot of time talking about the exegesis of this chapter. I guess without going over the whole discussion again, suffice it to say that half of the Catholic Church even today, I guess you could say, probably not numerically but at least geographically, doesn't agree with Rome's interpretation of this particular passage either. The Eastern Orthodox Church is always excluded in these discussions but I quite often ask people that I know that are Catholic that give so much credence to Rome being the apostolic church and wanting to get back to the church that was started by the apostles, I ask them, "Why didn't you go into the Eastern Orthodox Church?" And none of them are able to give me an answer. It's just basically they heard about the Catholic Church, they spent time talking to these people in the Catholic Church that told them that we are the apostolic church, and they never bothered to check, I guess, history even enough to discover that there are two churches claiming to be the original apostolic church. So certainly one of the major disagreements between the East and the West is this interpretation of Matthew 16 and the idea that the Roman bishop is being given this status that Rome claims that the Roman bishop has, and there's no reason for just simply tossing aside the claims of the Eastern Orthodox Church at this point without actually looking further into whether or not these claims are true. So my point with all that is that certainly even today among people that claim to be Catholic in the sense that

they claim to be the unbroken line of succession or whatever from the time of the apostles, even today among those that make that claim, we do not have a consensus on the interpretation of Matthew 16. So going beyond that, we need to look at historically, of course we talked about exegetically last time, and we need to start looking at historically whether this doctrine holds up as being true.

Now, before we get into that, I would like for, you have a place in your book where you offer, in my view, a very credible theory as to how the doctrine of papal primacy evolved in the Roman Catholic Church, and perhaps if you could in the process of explaining that theory give us a brief thumbnail sketch of what the doctrine of papal primacy is in the Roman Catholic Church, and then, of course, tell us how you feel like it evolved.

William: Well, the doctrine of papal primacy within the Roman Catholic Church according to Vatican I and according to some of the Roman Pontiffs who have preceded Vatican I is that Christ has established on this earth his vicar in the Bishop of Rome, and that this vicar is head of the church visible, although Christ is the ultimate head of the church, subordinate to him in this hierarchy is the Bishop of Rome who is the spiritual head over the church universal, and not only is he the spiritual head, he is also head over all temporal authority on the earth. There are two fundamental authorities which he exercises, one is the spiritual authority, the other is a temporal authority, and that all authority on this earth is ultimately subject to the Bishop of Rome. And it's interesting that Vatican I states, now this would be with respect to the church in particular, that from the very beginning in its practice, it was necessary for salvation that every bishop, every professing Christian, would be subject to the Bishop of Rome in areas of morals and faith and discipline. So they are not only talking here about an understanding of Scripture which forms the basis of in their exegesis of the claim for this authority, but what they're doing is they are saying that in history, we can validate this claim by the practice of the church from the very beginning all the way up through the ages, and that is quite a claim to make. We can say without a doubt that many of the popes have made the claim with respect to ultimate authority, but it's one thing to make the claim, it's another thing to validate it in the practice of the church on a universal basis.

Lee: So, you say in your book that you feel like a very significant event occurred with the fall of Rome and that there was a tremendous political vacuum formed by this taking place, as one would imagine. Now, how do you feel like this contributed to the rise of, assuming, again, that, of course, looking at the early church, we find, again this is a discussion that we can't go over again from last week, but that the early church did not hold to the Roman Catholic view that there is, that Peter, there is an apostolic line or secession being established in Matthew 16 specifically for the Bishops of Rome down through the ages. Now, the early church did not believe that. I mean, that cannot be substantiated from their writings. But if that is the case, then how is it that this particular event, the fall of Rome, possibly contributed to the rise of the current view within Roman Catholicism that, in fact, that was what Christ was teaching.

William: Well, you have within the early church two strings of exegesis basically taking place with respect to Matthew 16. You have a papal interpretation which is very strongly

set forth by one, for example, like Leo I in the middle of the fourth century, very strong papal statements, but contrary to Leo, you have the vast majority of church fathers who teach an antithetical view to this papal view which is that the keys were not given to Peter exclusively, they were given to all of the apostles; that all legitimate bishops are successors of Peter, that this is not an exclusive right or experience of the Bishops of Rome. That in Matthew 16, Christ is not establishing a papal office, what he is doing is establishing the basis of the foundation of the church which is Peter's confession of faith, that he is the Son of God and that it is on that foundation, on that rock upon himself personally, that the church would ultimately be built. Be that as it may, you do have historically claims from the Bishops of Rome that Christ did in fact establish a papal office that is established in the Bishops of Rome as successors of Peter, and they view themselves in a very real sense as the exclusive successors of Peter.

Now, the early fathers did not hold that view. They viewed all bishops to be successors of Peter, all legitimate bishops who hold to the chair of Peter. That was not something Rome held in and of themselves. However, what you have with the Empire, Constantine obviously at one time, Rome was the center of the Empire politically. The church of Rome was located in the center of the Empire in the capital where the Imperial power was, where the Senate was. This is what the church councils basically stated was the reason for the honorary position that Rome held, the primacy of honor that they held within the church because Rome had been the place where Peter and Paul had been martyred, Rome was the central place of authority politically within the Empire, and Rome therefore had a position of primacy within the church which was a primacy of honor. When the Empire's capital moved, when Constantine moved it from Rome to Constantinople and established the Eastern Empire with the capital in Constantinople, the Western portion of the church was left without a direct influence by the Empire in terms of its capital, and the Bishop of Rome became somewhat independent of the strong influence of an Emperor. When the Empire, the Western portion of the Empire collapsed, politically you were left with a vacuum and just by the fact that you have a spiritual leader who is the ruler who has jurisdiction over the entire Western portion of the Empire, he rules over the Western part of the church, he came to rule over the Western part of the church, you have this man who, in many cases, was a very strong leader. Leo was a very strong leader, and he stood up to the rulers and the leaders who were coming in to take over the Empire. He filled a vacuum and men looked to him as a leader, as a spiritual leader, and just by default he became a political leader as well. Over time, when you have an Eastern Empire, the eventual dissolution of the Eastern Empire, you have elevated to a position of ultimate authority then the Bishop of Rome who in the course of history had declared himself to be the ultimate ruler theologically over the entire world, and men received what he said on the basis of an interpretation of Scripture and because also of certain forgeries which had become prominent in the church in later centuries which seemed to give credence historically to the claims of the Roman bishops of that day.

Lee: Yeah, excuse me, I was going to, I'd like for you to talk a little bit about the pseudo-Isidorian decretals of the ninth century because I found that particular portion of your book very fascinating.

William: The pseudo-Isidorian decretals are a number of forged, spurious, papal decretals from the early centuries, supposedly decretals of popes of early centuries establishing, if you will, a precedent of papal rule in the church. They are a complete fabrication but they were received within the church as being historically valid. They became the basis of Canon law in the church through Gratian's decretum a number of centuries after the ninth century when they were first formulated, and they were used consistently by popes, by Roman bishops, to validate their authority. You will find that Thomas Aquinas in his section on the papacy when he defines dogmatically the authority of the papacy and the ecclesiology of the church, he quotes from these forged decretals to verify, to validate the claims of the papacy. And these forged decretals were used for centuries throughout the church as the fundamental basis upon which papal authority was raised, basically going back to validate itself historically, much like the Roman Catholic Church will do today to claim a consensus, historical consensus, throughout the history of the church in the writings of the church fathers to give credence to this claim. And it was a forgery which had immense implications for the church. It solidly grounded the medieval church in the ultimate authority of the papacy.

Lee: And again, I don't want to, I don't want the significance of what we were talking about earlier to be lost. If we are simply going to look at the Roman Catholic Church as a church that is descended from the church that was started by the apostles, we also have to view the Eastern Orthodox Church in the same sense and these two churches have the same claims that they are both churches that have descended from the apostles, an unbroken line of succession from the apostles, and yet the Eastern church does not at all acknowledge the Roman Catholic claims that are made about the papacy and about the primacy of the popes, so it's not just simply disgruntled Protestants that are making these claims. And in order for the church to, part of the church's epistemology is that these claims come from a consensus of the church fathers over the centuries of the church since, ever since the first century, and yet even today such a consensus does not exist, and that needs to be taken into account and all that we're left with is to look and to see whether this particular viewpoint is valid.

In your book is a chapter, chapter 5 entitled "Papal Authority and Infallibility: The Test of History." Now, this is a very significant chapter and our listeners need to definitely pay heed to what will be said next. In this chapter, you devote the bulk of it to an analysis of the historical facts as they relate to Vatican I's claims for papal infallibility and, of course, talked about earlier about what Vatican I says about papal infallibility. So let's simply look at some case histories and find out historically how this doctrine holds up and so if you want to go ahead and begin with your discussion of that topic.

William: Well, it's interesting when you look at the claim that Vatican I makes, obviously it's going to make a claim, it does make the claim, first of all, on the basis of what it considers Scripture to teach. The interesting thing about this claim because they refer primarily to Luke 22:32 where Christ says to Peter, "Peter, I pray for you that your faith may not fail." That's the primary passage of Scripture upon which the whole doctrine of papal infallibility rests. Implicit in their teaching, however, about Matthew 16 and the

rock, is also this view of papal infallibility which is that the church, the gates of hell will not prevail against the church since the church is founded upon the rock which is Peter, which is continued throughout history by being founded upon the Bishops of Rome, then the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Bishops of Rome. Therefore the doctrine of papal infallibility is grounded solidly in, in their view, upon Scripture. The problem with that view is that there is not one church father in the entire patristic age who ever interpreted those Scriptures to mean that. They never refer to the Bishop of Rome as being infallible in any sense in interpreting those passages of Scripture. And Vatican I has stated that it is unlawful, this is their word, it is unlawful to interpret Scripture contrary to the unanimous consent of the fathers. Now, that is a decree that was given by Trent so they are renewing a decree that was given by the Council of Trent, and what they are saying is that there is a general consensus of opinion with respect to the meaning of these verses of Scripture, we are in the tradition of that consensus and it is unlawful to contradict that consensus. But what they have done is give a novel interpretation to those passages which are utterly contrary to any interpretation of those passages that you find in the early church. That is well documented by Brian Tierney, a Roman Catholic historian in his book "The Origins of Papal Infallibility." If anyone cares to read that book, they will find it very enlightening.

When you come also to the test of history with respect to practice, you find the same, basically the same situation. You do not find historical validation of the claim of Vatican I as to papal infallibility. Now, we need to understand when Vatican I talks about papal infallibility, they are not saying that the Bishop of Rome is perfect in his behavior. That is indefectability, they are not teaching that he is going to be perfect in behavior. It is amazing to me that given the behavior, however, of some of the Bishops of Rome, that they can pardon that, thinking that it would be more difficult for the Spirit of God apparently, to cause the Bishop of Rome to somehow be infallible in his teaching, but incapable of preventing the Bishop of Rome from leading a holy life because it's one thing to be perfect, it's another thing to be holy. There have been numerous popes who have been anything but holy, not even mentioning the word "perfect."

But be that as it may, when it comes to the issue of practice in the early church, we do not find that the early church viewed the bishops of Rome to be infallible in their pronouncements. Vatican I defined the infallibility to be defined by the term *ex cathedra* which means when the Bishop of Rome speaks as the official, in his official capacity as Christ's vicar on earth, as universal head of the church, as the one who is given authority to teach, when he teaches from the chair, a truth which is to be given for the church universal in his official capacity as Pope, as the Bishop of Rome, he will be prevented from error and he will not err. That is the teaching of Vatican I. But you do not find this particular point of view in any way subscribed to by the early church.

There are a number of examples historically of bishops of Rome who have failed this test, who have, in fact, subscribed to heresy. I'll mention two in particular. One is Pope Liberius. Pope Liberius was embroiled in the Arian controversy in the middle of the fourth century. He made a courageous stand early in his conflict with the Emperor in this whole issue of the Arian heresy. He was exiled from Rome and sent off to the mines. He

suffered because of his stand but he succumbed. He was allowed to come back and to resume his position as the Bishop of Rome because he signed a semi-Arian formula which basically allowed him back into the graces of the Emperor, back into the graces of the Arian section of the Eastern and Western church, and he was allowed to take his position again as the Bishop of Rome. Now, we have historical validation of the fact that he did succumb from the writings of Athanasius, from Hilary, and from Jerome, who have indicated that he did in fact apostatize and he succumbed under suffering. Now, it is true that he was suffering and that he did succumb, however, if the Spirit of God is able to keep a man infallibly from erring, he would've been able to do that with Pope Liberius. There have been other martyrs in the church who have stood faithfully without succumbing to heresy and have suffered terrible persecution and torture and have not succumbed. Surely the Bishop of Rome, if the Spirit of God would indeed keep him from embracing error, would have prevented this. That is not the case with Liberius.

Another historical incident which is famous in the history of the church which few people are aware of is an incident that took place in the seventh century at the third Council of Constantinople which is the sixth ecumenical Council. This was a Greek Council in which the Greek fathers and also it was not only a Greek Council, I believe this Council was presided over by the legates of the Bishop of Rome at the time. This Council condemned Pope Honorius who had reigned just prior to this Council in the, I believe he had reigned in the sixth century. Honorius was condemned as a heretic by this Council. Now, there are Roman Catholic apologists who want to downplay it, for obvious reasons, this issue with the sixth ecumenical Council, because if in fact Honorius is a heretic and has been condemned as such as the Bishop of Rome, then the whole doctrine of papal infallibility is in ruins. Obviously for historical reasons, it's in ruins, but also theologically it's in ruins. It simply is not true. It's obvious that if the sixth ecumenical Council which is considered infallible from a Roman Catholic standpoint can condemn a Pope of Rome as a heretic, then there are serious problems there theologically because it's very clear that the Eastern church did not believe that the bishops of Rome were infallible. The thing that you never read in any of the histories, or at least I have never read from a Roman Catholic perspective, when they begin to deal with this issue with Honorius, is the actual text of the sixth ecumenical Council and what they said when they condemned Honorius because we are told from a Roman Catholic perspective that, "Well, you know, Honorius was confused. Honorius probably taught doctrine that was not really true," because the error of his day at that time was the error of Monothelism which teaches that Christ only had one will which is a denial of the two natures of Christ. Christ is one person, two natures, and Monothelism basically is a denial of that truth. Honorius embraced the doctrine of Monothelism along with the patriarch of Constantinople and some other bishops.

Now, the sixth ecumenical Council in its decree, I want to read exactly what they say because we are told, first of all, by Roman Catholics that, "Well, he was not teaching in his official capacity as the Bishop of Rome. He was teaching as a private theologian. We are told that he actually did not teach anything at all. He was just expressing a point of view and it was a private opinion." The question I have and that I have researched and have wanted an answer to is: is that what the sixth ecumenical Council viewed, is that

how they viewed this situation? Is that their perspective? I want to read their words and these can be found from the series that is put out on the church fathers by Erdman's and it has been edited by Philip Schaff. This is what the Council says,

"After we had reconsidered, according to our promise which we had made to your highness, the doctrinal letters of Sergius, at one time patriarch of this royal god-protected city to Cyrus, who was then bishop of Phasis and to Honorius some time Pope of Old Rome, as well as the letter of the latter to the same Sergius, we find that these documents are quite foreign to the apostolic dogmas, to the declarations of the holy Councils, and to all the accepted Fathers, and that they follow the false teachings of the heretics; therefore we entirely reject them, and execrate them as hurtful to the soul. But the names of those men whose doctrines we execrate must also be thrust forth from the holy Church of God, namely, that of Sergius some time bishop of this God-preserved royal city; also that of Cyrus of Alexandria, of Pyrrhus, Paul, and Peter, who died bishops of this God-preserved city, and were like-minded with them; and that of Theodore sometime bishop of Pharan, all of whom we define are to be subjected to anathema. And with these we define that there shall be expelled from the holy Church of God and anathematized Honorius who was some time Pope of Old Rome, because of what we found written by him to Sergius, that in all respects he followed his view and confirmed his impious doctrines."

Then they say this in a decree,

"To Theodore of Pharan, the heretic, anathema! To Sergius, the heretic, anathema! To Cyrus, the heretic, anathema! To Honorius, the heretic, anathema! To all heretics, anathema! To all who side with heretics, anathema!"

And they go on to say this,

"The holy and Ecumenical Synod further says, this pious and orthodox Creed of the Divine grace would be sufficient for the full knowledge and confirmation of the orthodox faith. But as the author of evil, who, in the beginning, availed himself of the aid of the serpent, and by it brought the poison of death upon the human race, has not desisted, but in like manner now, having found suitable instruments for working out his will (we mean Theodorus, who was Bishop of Pharan, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul and Peter, who were Archbishops of this royal city, and moreover, Honorius who was Pope of the elder Rome, Cyrus Bishop of Alexandria, Macarius who was lately bishop of Antioch, and Stephen his disciple), has actively employed them in raising up for the whole Church the stumbling-blocks of one will and one operation in the two natures of Christ our true God, one of the Holy Trinity; thus disseminating, in novel terms, amongst the

orthodox people, an heresy similar to the mad and wicked doctrine of the impious Apollinaris, Severus, and Themistius, and endeavouring craftily to destroy the perfection of the incarnation of the same our Lord Jesus Christ, our God, by blasphemously representing his flesh endowed with a rational soul as devoid of will or operation."

Now, it's interesting that Leo II, Pope Leo II, confirmed the decrees of this Council and he made this statement with respect to Honorius. He said of Honorius, "He was one who did not eliminate the apostolic See by teaching the apostolic tradition but by an act of treachery strove to subvert its immaculate faith." Now, it's very clear from the actual wording of the Council itself that Honorius is condemned not as a private theologian, but in his official capacity as the Bishop of Rome. He is condemned for teaching a doctrine which they say, that Satan had used him to raise up an heretical doctrine to be disseminated throughout the entirety of the church. So they condemned him then as the, and in his official capacity as the Bishop of Rome for embracing and for disseminating a doctrine which they said was novel and heretical and which they said was Satanic in origin.

Now, those basic criteria that they give in their condemnation, meet the criteria for what is defined by Vatican I as an ex cathedra statement, even though that term did not exist at the time of the sixth ecumenical Council. That term was nonexistent, there was no such thing as ex cathedra. That is basically a condition that is imposed by Vatican I, nonetheless in these definitions, the condemnation does meet with those basic criteria of what it means to pronounce something ex cathedra.

Lee: You have an interesting quote in here from a Roman Catholic historian, Johan von Dollinger, he says, "This one fact," speaking of this particular incident that you have mentioned, "This one fact that a great Council universally received afterwards without hesitation throughout the church and presided over by papal legates, pronounced the dogmatic decision of a Pope heretical and anathematized him by name as a heretic is a proof clear as the sun at noon day that the notion of any peculiar enlightenment or inerrancy of the Popes was then utterly unknown to the whole church."

William: Dollinger, just as a matter of interest, Dollinger was a Roman Catholic historian. He was the most renowned Roman Catholic historian in his day. He lived in the 19th century. He wrote this as part of a book, this quote that you just gave is part of a book called "The Pope and the Council," in 1869, just prior to the passing of the decree by Vatican I on papal infallibility. He taught church history as a Roman Catholic for 47 years and he was literally the most renowned historian, one of the most at least, renowned historians, Roman Catholic historians of his day. He was immensely respected for his knowledge. He had written that book in an attempt to dissuade the Council from committing what he considered to be intellectual suicide and theological suicide in light of the facts of history, and he was impelled to write that book and make that statement.

Lee: And this by no means is an isolated incident. You, in your book in this particular chapter, you list a number of similar incidences of Popes down through the ages. One of

them is kind of interesting. You mentioned earlier Pope Liberius, of course, obviously in the history of the church, probably the two biggest heresies possibly were the Arian controversy that you mentioned Pope Liberius ended up siding with the Arians for a time. Also, the Pelagian controversy with Pelagius and his disciple, Celestius, going up against Augustine on the doctrine of original sin and the grace of God and salvation. And here again, in this second major heresy in the church, we have a Pope, Pope Zosimus, who ends up siding with the Pelagians.

William: That is correct. What you find historically is Innocent I was Zosimus' predecessor predecessor and the North African church with Augustine had condemned Pelagius and Celestius. Innocent I had sided with their declaration of condemnation and they had basically, they had hoped that the Pelagian heresy would come to an end because the church had, at least the Western church, had authoritatively defined the issue of the Pelagian teaching to be heresy. It was a definitive definition that Innocent had given. Pelagius was unorthodox in his teaching. He was a heretic in his teaching, and this was clearly defined as well by the North African church. Well, when Innocent died, Zosimus, Pope Zosimus reigned as the Bishop of Rome. Celestius made an appeal, that is Pelagius' disciple made an appeal to Zosimus to review his case and in so doing he came into Rome and he made an appeal to Pope Zosimus. He was more or less interviewed by the Bishop of Rome and a number of clergy there in Rome. He was hoodwinked, if you will, by Celestius. Zosimus became incensed. He declared Celestius and Pelagius both to be Orthodox. He wrote to the North Africans an encyclical letter declaring his opinion that they had been falsely accused, falsely judged, and that they were to be received as Orthodox. In other words, he reversed the decision of his predecessor, Innocent.

Well, this caused quite a stir obviously. The North Africans refused to submit to the Bishop of Rome. They sent their representative back to Zosimus. They wrote letters to him saying that he had been deceived. They implored him to stand firm with the decision that had been made by Innocent I and not to reverse his decision. He wrote them again saying that he had fully reviewed the case, that in his opinion the judgment should stand and not be rescinded. The North Africans called a council. They renewed their condemnation of Pelagius in light of the decree of the Bishop of Rome, Zosimus. They did not submit to him. They stood their ground, demonstrating obviously that the Bishop of Rome in their mind was not infallible. He decreed that they should submit to him. They refused to do so. It got to the point where the Emperor himself got embroiled and got involved, rather, and he decreed that Pelagius and Celestius were indeed heretics. It's at that point that some historians feel that Zosimus saw the light, felt the heat, if you will, and decided it would be in his best interest if he submitted to the judgment of the North African bishops, most significantly Augustine himself, which he did, and he reversed his decision and he basically ended up upholding the decree of Innocent and condemning Pelagius and Celestius as heretics.

Lee: Now, this is, by the way, you're listening to, if you've joined us in the past hour, you're listening to Christian Answers and we're talking about the Roman Catholic Church and we're talking about the claims of the Roman Catholic Church and so often in these discussions, many will say, "Well, the Roman Catholic Church is the apostolic church.

It's the original church. I mean, why would we want to, if we're going to be Christians be a member of anything else but the original church?" And this is my view and certainly others are welcome to agree or disagree, but my view is that I have no problem with saying that the Roman Catholic Church is what's left of the original church started by the apostles, but that does not alter the fact that a church can apostatize. We see that in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation and we see that in, well, among other things, the book of Galatians where we have churches that are constantly being rebuked for adopting false doctrine.

Now, with all haste getting back into your book, we want to start with chapter 6 which deals with Marian dogmas. Now, again, this is an area which, I think, has really been almost beat to death in polemics in the past of Protestantism versus Roman Catholicism, but it is a significant area because it is an essential in the Roman Catholic faith. It does have to do with salvation, or at least certain aspects of it. So let's talk about, first of all, what we want to demonstrate, the question that we want to answer is: is the Roman Catholic view of Mary, first of all, the question we want to ask is: what is the Roman Catholic view of Mary? And then is that a view that is held universally by the church as Rome claims?

William: Well, the basic doctrines that relate to Mary, the mother of Jesus, is that she was born, immaculately conceived. Now, in the immaculate conception, many believe that that doctrine has to do with Jesus Christ being born free of sin. Even Roman Catholics are confused on this issue, but the doctrine has to do with the person of Mary herself. The teaching is that Mary herself was born free of original sin. It is further taught that she was a virgin throughout the entirety of her life. That is the doctrine of perpetual virginity. It is further taught that she was raised at her death. This is not clearly defined by the papal decree on the Assumption, but that she was assumed after death and raised bodily into heaven and has been established as the queen of heaven and earth. Subsidiary to this teaching on the Assumption of Mary is the teaching that she is also a Mediatrix with Jesus Christ in salvation, that she is herself a mediator of grace. Now, this has not been officially defined but it is popular teaching and it is very much in line with the way the teaching of her assumption was, evolved over time and accepted within the church and then eventually defined as dogma. Even though it has not been defined as dogma yet, there are papal teachings which affirm this teaching and it is very quickly moving to the point where it most likely will become defined as a teaching by the church at some point, probably in the not-too-distant future. But these are the basic teachings that Mary has been raised to a position of authority, of supreme authority as the queen of heaven and earth; that she is immaculate in her being; that she was a perpetual virgin; and that she is in fact a co-Redemptrix and co-Mediatrix with Jesus Christ in the scheme of salvation.

Lee: Now, first of all, what does Scriptures say about these doctrines? Do we find any basis for these claims in the word of God?

William: Well, we certainly do find that Mary is the mother of God, that she was a virgin in giving birth to Christ. That was predicted by Isaiah in Isaiah 7. She is obviously a great model to us of humility and godliness. There is absolutely no doubt about that at all. But

when you ask the question, do the Scriptures teach that Mary was immaculately conceived, that is an absolute contradiction to Scripture which teaches us that every human being on the face of the earth are sinners, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." All who are conceived in the seed of Adam receive a sin nature, are tainted by original sin, and there is no exception. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Mary herself in the Annunciation in her prayer expresses the fact that she had need of a Savior and she was a sinner. Only a sinner would need a Savior.

You'll find, likewise, that in the teaching of the Assumption, there is no word, not one syllable in Scripture that teaches the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. You don't find in the history of the writings of the church fathers an affirmation of the teaching of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. What you find, in fact, is a repudiation of that doctrine. That doctrine historically started, had its inception with Pelagius and Celestius. That doctrine did not begin with the official dogma of the church. It was repudiated in the early church. If you read the commodity of Vincent of Lerins written in the mid-fourth century, you will find that he makes the statement that prior to Pelagius and Celstius no one ever denied that every human being, none excepted, every human being had the contagion of original sin. It was Pelagius who conceived of the idea that there were men who were born free from original sin, he did not teach original sin, and who lived a sinless life on this earth, and he included Mary in that list of people that he would consider to have been born free of original sin. This doctrine was repudiated by Augustine. He garrisoned none other than the theologian Ambrose to support his position because Ambrose had been used by Pelagius in support of his view that men are born free of original sin and Augustine basically came back with the true writings of Ambrose to show that this was not the true point of view of Ambrose; that he considered none to be free from the contagion of original sin; that all men born of woman, all women, all men, are in fact under the curse of Adam in terms of original sin. That is a doctrine that throughout the ages, throughout the early church, was repudiated by the early church. In fact, the Roman Catholic Mariologist, Juniper Carol, makes this statement, he says, "From the extant philological data, it does not seem that the personal sinlessness of Mary or her immaculate conception were explicitly taught as Catholic doctrine in the patristic West. It was denied by Leo I, Pope Leo I, by Gregory the Great, by Bernard of Clairvaux, and by St. Thomas Aquinas."

You find a similar situation when you come to the doctrine of the Assumption. There is nothing in the word of God about the Assumption. There is not one single word in the patristic writings about the Assumption of Mary. In fact, the first father to talk about the Assumption and the possibility of the Assumption was Epaphanius in 377 AD and he said that no one knew what had happened to Mary. Now, that was the consensus, patristic consensus in the day in which he lived. No one had any idea of what had happened to her. There was no Assumption.

L. got points out that the, L. is a world-renowned Roman Catholic Orthodox Roman Catholic conservative theologian, he makes the statement that the origin of the teaching of the Assumption was with a work from the Transitus literature. It is a piece of literature in which they formulated this doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. The interesting thing

about this historically is that when this doctrine first appeared in the fifth century, it was condemned by Pope Gelasius and by Pope Omistus in the fifth and sixth centuries as being heretical. In papal decrees, they explicitly pronounced heretical the teaching promulgated by the Transitus literature on the Assumption of Mary. That's where it originated and when it originated it was condemned, forcefully condemned, by these two popes. It only came in through the church by Gregory of Tours in 590 AD, the first Western father to explicitly begin to teach the Assumption of Mary. He did it on the basis of the Transitus literature mistakenly thinking that it was the work of an early church father. And through the influence of Gregory, it began to find its way into the de fide teaching of the church and very slowly it became a popular belief in the church and was only defined as dogma in 1950.

Lee: You're listening to Christian Answers. I'm Lee Meckley and we're speaking with William Webster about his book, "The Church of Rome at the Bar of History," published by Banner of Truth, and we're talking about the Roman Catholic doctrine of Mary and we've talked about the various views that the Roman church puts forth, the Immaculate Conception and the other views that they have. Also, before we get too far off this, I understand from your book that despite the fact that the view that the Immaculate Conception seems to have originated in the East, this is one of the areas where the Eastern orthodox church does not go along with Rome. Is that correct or is that, am I mistaken?

William: It is my understanding that the Eastern church, that is one of the areas of contention between itself, in addition to the papacy and a couple of other doctrines that, purgatory for example. They do not agree with the Roman Catholic Church on that particular aspect of their teaching. They do have a very high view of Mary, one that I believe is a great embellishment over what the Scriptures teach but, nonetheless, they do reject and repudiate this teaching of the Immaculate Conception.

Lee: Now, another view that the Roman church puts forth of Mary is the perpetual virginity of Mary, that she did not have a, for want of a better way of putting it, a normal marital relationship even after the birth of Christ, and you point out several things in Scripture that would definitely seem to indicate that that is not the case.

William: If you look at what the Scriptures teach, the Scriptures do not teach that Mary in her relationship with her husband, continued to be a virgin after the birth of Christ. In fact, the Scriptures say that she remained a virgin until, the word "until" in Greek, she had given birth to the Lord Jesus Christ at which time she entered into a normal marital relationship with her husband. Culturally, it would go against everything in the fiber of that woman as a Jewish woman to embrace an ascetic ideal such as perpetual virginity in marriage. That's unheard of in the culture of Judaism. One of the greatest blessings of being a wife would be that you could be a mother. That was one of the penultimate experiences in your social experience and the life and culture of Judaism of that day, and that would run counter to everything that she would have been taught as a young woman growing up in the culture of Judaism.

But in addition to that, what we are told in Scripture is that Jesus had brothers and sisters. Now, the common argument that we will hear from Roman Catholic apologists is that the word really means cousins when we have reference to the relations of Jesus, that it really doesn't say that he has blood brothers and sisters. But the Scriptures are very explicit when they use words to describe family relationships. When the Scriptures want to use the term, the term which describes a blood relationship within a family as a brother and sister, it uses the Greek term adelphos. When it wants to use a word that defines a near relative but not one in your immediate family such as a niece or a nephew or a cousin, it uses the Greek term syggenes. And in every situation where we are told about the brothers and sisters of Jesus, the scriptural term that is used is the term adelphos. The word syggenes, for example, is used where we are told that after the Annunciation when Mary is told that she will bear the Christ child and become the mother of Jesus, that she goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Well, the word "cousin" there is the Greek term syggenes and it is not the word adelphos. Adelfhos means someone who is your brother or sister. It's used, for example, spiritually to relate to all those who are truly in the church who are brothers and sisters in the church. It talks about a spiritual relationship there who all of us who are children of God. But in a physical family relationship, brothers and sisters mean brothers and sisters. Mary had other children and Jesus was their half-brother, and that's very clear from what the Scriptures teach us.

Lee: Now, lest we be accused of not distributing the blame equally, if I'm not mistaken, both Calvin and Luther also held to the perpetual virginity of Mary.

William: You know, I have read that. I think it may be true but I don't know in an absolute sense if it's true. I would need to do more research in that area to really ascertain if that is true or not. I have heard that said but I have not seen any real solid documentation to point to that fact. It could be true. I don't know if it is or not.

Lee: Something else I want to mention and this is without getting, spending too much time on a theological soapbox, I've quite often heard many contemporary theologians bristle when the Theotokos or Mary as being the mother of God is brought up, and they continually think that that is a Catholic or a doctrine introduced by the Catholic Church to exalt Mary and yet it actually came out during the time of the Council of Nicaea to refute Nestorian theology and quite often when I hear modern Protestant scholars talk down this doctrine of Mary as being the mother of God, they actually begin to sound very Nestorian in their thinking. And so I think my view is that this is a doctrine that shouldn't be tossed out simply because it's been used by, or it has evolved into some wrong thinking in the Roman Catholic Church. But I wanted to give you the opportunity to respond with your view on that.

William: Well, I think the term Theotokos, if we define it correctly, there should not be a problem in using the term if we understand what it really means and what the Council of Ephesus was really trying to preserve in declaring Mary Theotokos. Nestorius objected to the term. He thought that rather than being called the mother of God, Mary should be called the mother of Christ, and it seemed to the people of that day, the fathers of that day, to be a denigration of the majesty of Christ as God, that Mary is indeed the mother

of the God-man. Now, obviously God doesn't have a mother. Jesus Christ in his pre-incarnate state had no mother. In being incarnate, obviously he is impregnated, and he grows in the womb of Mary as the God-man. Strictly speaking, she is the mother of his human nature, not his divine nature, but Jesus Christ is the God-man and as such, she is bearing God. So in that sense we can say that she is Theotokos, that we can affirm the deity of Jesus, the full deity of Jesus Christ. He is God in human form and as such he was born of the Virgin Mary and she bore God. You can say that legitimately. She did not conceive God, however, in terms of God having a mother. The God-man has a mother, so we must be careful in how we define it but we can exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and all the word Theotokos means without necessarily exalting the person of Mary at the same time illegitimately.

Lee: Now, speaking of doctrines involving the Roman church, before we leave this topic, I want to mention that we may be witnessing the evolution of a particular doctrine and where it's going to me, seems somewhat frightening. But at the end of your chapter on Marian dogmas, you mention that it's right now being taught that Mary is also the co-Redemptrix in the sense that she also cooperated with the Lord Jesus Christ in making atonement for sin. You cite Leo VIII saying that when Mary offered herself completely to God together with her Son in the temple, she was already sharing with him the painful atonement on behalf of the human race at the foot of the cross. She was a co-worker with Christ in his expiation for mankind and she offered up her Son to the divine justice, dying with him in her heart. You also cite Pope Pius XI and Benedict XV making similar statements. Now, you said earlier that the Marian dogma is not completely defined at this point but do you see it moving in a direction where we might have a very frightening doctrine developing in the Roman Catholic church in centuries to come?

William: Oh, it is, I think if you look at the decrees on papal infallibility, you will find a similar situation; the decrees on the Immaculate Conception, you find a similar situation; the decree on the Assumption of Mary, you find historically a very similar situation where you have a popular belief which over a long period of time is held by a large segment of the Roman Catholic population, it eventually will become defined as dogma. This is simply the natural next step of the exaltation of the virgin Mary in terms of de fide doctrine defined by the church of Rome. I see no reason why historically this would not, at some point, probably take place because historically this is what has happened with other dogmas related to herself as well as to other areas such as papal infallibility.

Lee: And, you know, I keep thinking about a, I believe it was a postcard or something from, I think it was Ecuador, a Roman Catholic church in Ecuador, where you see a picture within the church of a cross with Mary on the cross and, again, Rome would certainly, I would think, repudiate this and say, "This is not what we're teaching," but my point is that this is precisely how the doctrines that Rome is teaching has evolved in the past and, as you just said, there is no reason to expect that that's not what we're seeing with the doctrines of Mary.

Let's just start out by defining what Rome teaches about justification and what the Bible teaches about justification.

William: Okay, just to define what the Roman Catholic church means by justification, let me just read what the Council of Trent says.

"This disposition, or preparation, is followed by Justification itself, which is not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man.

"As regards those who, by sin, have fallen from the received grace of Justification, they may be again justified, when, God exciting them, through the sacrament of Penance they shall have attained to the recovery, by the merit of Jesus Christ, of the grace lost. For, on behalf of those who fall into sins after baptism, Christ Jesus instituted the sacrament of Penance...the penitence of a Christian, after his fall, is very different from that at (his) baptism."

And they go on to talk about the need to expiate sin through penance. The church of Rome teaches that justification is received by faith, by grace initially completely apart from human works. It teaches that a man is brought into a state of grace when God communicates grace based upon the merits of Jesus Christ which is communicated to that individual through the sacrament of baptism which effects regeneration and it infuses sanctifying grace in the soul of that individual, and justification, then, is defined in terms of being in a state of grace, that is, that you have a substance, if you will, a quality that is a divine quality infused within you which gives you a state of acceptance before God. And what is included in this definition of justification is forgiveness of sin up to the point of baptism; renewal of the inward man, which is regeneration; and sanctification, the works of sanctification that a person will then, by grace, begin to do works which become the basis of justification. Now, it is very important to understand that in Roman Catholic teaching, justification is not a once-for-all completed work. Justification is a process that is dependent upon infused grace which enables an individual after he is baptized to do works of righteousness which become the basis of justification and earn and merit eternal reward before God which is eternal life. So justification then is a cooperative effort between God and man.

Now justification can be lost. If an individual sins, commits a mortal sin, he loses sanctifying grace. His soul is cut off from the life of God and in order to be brought back into a state of grace and in communion with God, he must receive grace. Saving grace, then, is mediated by Christ through the priests through the sacraments of the Roman Catholic church. They are mediated through the sacrament of confession and penance, as I read in the definition that Trent gave. Sanctifying grace is also mediated and sin is dealt with through the sacrament of the eucharist and the Mass so that the issue in Roman Catholic theology as far as salvation is concerned and one's standing before God is concerned is grace, sanctifying grace. If I die in a state of sanctifying grace according to the Roman Catholic church, I will go to heaven, or I will go, if I still have temporal punishment due to my sin, if I die in venial sin but in a state of grace, I will go to

purgatory, and in purgatory I will need to expiate further through punishment imposed upon me by God, I will need to expiate sin.

Now, sin is the issue. How is sin dealt with in a Roman Catholic situation? Sin before baptism is dealt with by baptism and by coming in faith. Now, what does Roman Catholicism mean by faith? It means that you have received and have accepted every teaching of the Roman Catholic church and you reject none of it. It's an intellectual assent to the teachings of the Councils and to the authoritative teachings of the Roman Catholic, or the papal teachings of the Roman Catholic church. That involves the papacy. That involves the teachings on Mary. It involves everything that the Roman Catholic church throughout its history has defined as dogma. If you reject anything, one dogma, you are considered to be excommunicated and are a heretic and you do not have saving faith. That is the teaching of Vatican I; it's the teaching of leading theologians such as L. and John Harden; it's the teaching of Trent, all through the history of the church.

You come by faith, you receive justification in baptism, and then you begin to work. If you sin, you must expiate sin. Sin has to be dealt with. What they believe Christ has done on the cross is to win grace and that grace, then, is mediated through the sacraments. On the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ did not fulfill a full atonement; he did not accomplish a completed salvation because sin must continue to be expiated. And within the Roman Catholic system, that is done through good works; that is done through penance; that is done through participation in the Mass, because the Roman Catholic church at Trent has taught that the Mass is the ongoing sacrifice of Jesus Christ which is propitiatory for sin. It teaches that the Mass, in and of itself, is a sacrifice that is equated with the sacrifice of the cross, of the sacrifice of Calvary. The Roman Catholic church officially states that no less than Calvary, just as Christ was emulated, given over in death as a propitiation for sin in a bloody manner, just so in the sacrifice of the eucharist, of the Mass, Christ is physically present and he is emulated again. He is offered again. He is sacrificed again for sin in an ongoing way because sin, they say, must continue to be expiated in order to deal with the punishment that is due to it.

Now, what they will say is that there is no difference between the sacrifice of the Mass and the sacrifice of the cross. They are one sacrifice. Biblically that cannot be true for this reason: the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the word of God is declared to be a full and complete atonement for sin. Everything that needed to be done to bear the just punishment of God against sin was meted out by God to Jesus Christ when he became a propitiation for the sin of the world. He went to the cross. He bore the sin of man on the cross and in bearing the sin of man as our substitute, he bore the wrath of God. That's what it means to be a propitiation, and when we are told that he gave himself in death, that it is by his blood that we are cleansed and redeemed and justified and saved, what it means is that by blood, it's talking about Jesus Christ has lay down his life; he has paid the penalty of the law which says that the soul that sins, it shall die. And Scripture teaches that all of my sin was laid upon Jesus Christ as my substitute. This was predicted in Isaiah 53, "All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him." All my iniquity fell on Jesus and in falling upon him, he identified with me, the sinner, and in doing that, he

became the propitiation before God the Father and God the Father poured out his wrath upon his Son and Jesus Christ has borne the full fury of the wrath of God.

All the punishment that I should have borne for my sin, Jesus Christ has borne. That's what Scripture teaches and it teaches something very important about the death and the sacrifice of Jesus. It teaches that his sacrifice is once for all. Now, the importance of that phrase "once for all" just cannot be over emphasized because it teaches us that just as the death of Jesus Christ cannot be repeated and the Roman Catholic church affirms this, Jesus died one time, his death cannot be repeated, it cannot be perpetuated through time. It's an historic, once for all death that took place in history. It's finished. He's been raised from the dead. He can never die again. And significantly, the term "once for all" is used in Romans 6 to describe that death. In the book of Romans, Paul makes the statement in chapter 6, in verse 9, he says, "Knowing that Christ having been raised from the dead is never to die again, death no longer is master over him, for the death that he died he died to sin once for all, but the life that he lives, he lives to God." You see, his death is once for all and the significance of this is that if his death is once for all and he cannot die again, that means that his death cannot be perpetuated in any way. It is finished. It is completed. It's done.

That same Greek term that is used to define the nature of his death also defines the nature of his sacrifice because we are told in the book of Hebrews over and over again that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ occurred once for all, and it's the same Greek term that is used to define the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, it is also significant that in the book of Hebrews in the tenth chapter, in verse 12, it says, "But he having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time sat down at the right hand of God." And in verse 10 it says, "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Now, notice the significance of this: the offering of the body of Jesus Christ is also once for all. The offering of his sacrifice is once for all. His death is once for all. Just as his death cannot be perpetuated through time, so his sacrifice cannot be perpetuated through time, the offering of his body cannot be perpetuated through time.

Now, in the doctrine of the eucharist, the Roman Catholic church teaches in transubstantiation that the element of bread and wine are literally transformed into the literal body of Jesus Christ, his body and blood, and that body and blood is then offered up again as an emulation before God as a propitiatory sacrifice before him for the sin of men. That is an absolute direct contradiction to the teaching of the word of God which teaches us that the offering of his death, the offering of his sacrifice, the offering of his body, is once for all and can never be repeated and therefore the conclusion of Hebrews is that where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. All sacrifice for sin has ceased. All offerings have come to an end.

Lee: Now, in regard to this, you have a quote from Karl Keating in your book where he claims that this idea of this kind of view of the eucharist or communion is something that has been universally accepted by the church, by all the church fathers and there is no disagreement in the history of the church. But you point out that there has always been disputes about the nature of the eucharist and about exactly what takes place and exactly

what the function is. Briefly, could you talk about what the church has said about these things?

William: If you read through the church fathers and if you read historians who document the writings of the church fathers, I would just mention one, J. N. D. Kelly, "The Early Christian Doctrines." If you can get that book, it's an excellent volume and it's not that lengthy. It is well documented. He clearly demonstrates that there were two major themes of teaching about the eucharist throughout the patristic age all the way up to the time of the Reformation. What you find in the early church is what you would call a very literal materialistic view of the Lord's Supper, and then you have, what you might call, a symbolic or figurative or spiritual view of the Lord's Supper, and you will find fathers, major fathers, who are on one or the other side of that teaching. You will find some who were very, very literal in their teaching. Cyril of Jerusalem, for example, has a very literal view of what happens at the consecration of the bread and the wine. Chrysostom has a very literal view. Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory of Nazianzus. However, you also find in other writings of fathers such as Tertullian or Eusebius and Augustine an opposite view. They do not have the view that the eucharist changes, materially changes at consecration. They believe that the elements are symbols or figures of the realities of the body and blood of Jesus Christ and that they are to be taken spiritually. They have a spiritual perspective of the whole issue of the Lord's Supper.

In fact, let me just give you a quote from Augustine in one of his writings where he is giving principles for the interpretation of Scripture and he's dealing with an issue where he is dealing with a difficult of when do you take something to be figurative and when do you take it to be literal. And he uses an illustration to make a point and what I want to do is bring up the illustration because it bears directly upon what we're saying here. He makes this statement, he says, "If the sentence seems to enjoin a crime or a vice, it is to be taken figuratively." Then he gives this illustration, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man," says Christ, "and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." He says, "This seems to enjoin a crime or a vice; it is therefore a figure, enjoining that we should have a share in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable memory of the fact that His flesh was wounded and crucified for us." Now, that flies right in the face of what Karl Keating states in his book where he makes the statement that there is no documentation of any church father in the entire history of the patristic age who taught a figurative or spiritual view of John 6.

Lee: Now, we've talked about the finished work of Christ, what does Rome say about salvation whether it's by faith or by works, and what did the Reformation say, and caricatures of what the Reformation said, and what does the Bible say about how we're justified?

William: What the Bible, or let me just back up. The Reformation, the great clarion calls of the Reformation were Sola Fide which is faith alone, in Christ alone, Sola Christos, by grace alone and Scripture alone, Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gracia, Sola Christos. What this is emphasizing is there is one authority to teach me what salvation is and that is the word of God and he has effected a salvation in Jesus Christ alone. Now, the Roman

Catholic church would affirm that, it is by Jesus Christ alone in an ultimate sense, but that's not what the word of God teaches when the Roman Catholic church begins to define what it means by salvation. What the Scriptures teach us about salvation is that Jesus Christ is salvation, the person of Jesus Christ. Man's sin is so enormous, he is so in bondage to sin, he can do nothing to save himself; he is under a curse, as we are told in the book of Galatians, because we have rebelled against our God as our Creator and we have no hope because the law of God, the moral law of God is over us as a judge, as a standard, and we have failed. The only hope we have is righteousness. We have to have righteousness to stand before a holy God, and what the word of God teaches us is that God in his grace has done a work for us that we could never do for ourselves and that in Jesus Christ he offers forgiveness for sin. He offers an eternal standing before him, and it's eternal. He offers an eternal forgiveness, an eternal redemption, an eternal inheritance is what the word of God teaches us, and it is all found in Jesus Christ.

And what the Scriptures teach us about justification is that justification is a legal declaration of God on the authority and the accomplishment of the work of Jesus Christ, that the law of God has been fulfilled. That in dying for us, God has fulfilled his law. He has become just before the bar of his own law, and that he has fulfilled in himself the requirements of the law of God against sin because a death has taken place. And he has raised up Jesus Christ from the dead as the source of life, and that he promises that for all who will come in repentance and faith to Jesus Christ alone and will trust in him alone and commit their lives to him alone to be their Lord and Savior, that he will justify them by the righteousness of Jesus. Now, by the righteousness of Jesus, he means he will give us a gift of righteousness. The Roman Catholic church teaches you're justified by grace and righteousness but it's not the righteousness of Jesus, it's your righteousness. It's grace which you have been given and you have to work it out. It is yours to work. It is your righteousness. The Scriptures teach us that it is the righteousness of God, that when a man comes to Jesus, what he receives as a gift is a full-fledged righteousness and that righteousness, according to the book of Romans, is the atonement of Jesus Christ in the cross when he gave his life as a propitiation for sin. We are told that we are justified by his blood. That means we're justified by his atonement. His atonement is a once for all finished work because he died for the sin of all the world. It's a finished work therefore justification is a finished work. It is not a process. And when a man comes to Christ, he receives righteousness from God, not grace to do righteousness. He receives actual righteousness and it is not based upon human works because the work has been done.

There is nothing I could ever do to pay God back for my sin because my sin requires death and Jesus Christ has fulfilled that. So when I come to Christ and I am united to Jesus Christ, God will save me and what that means is that I am justified. I have a standing before him because of imputed righteousness, that's the word that the Scriptures use, *logizomai* is the Greek term and it means to be imputed, and in receiving that righteousness, I am declared just before God forever because it's a righteousness I receive in union with Jesus Christ.

Now, not only am I justified, part of the work of salvation is justification but it is not the totality of what salvation means in Scripture, I'm also regenerated. I am a new person. I

have been given a new life, a new heart. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That I am declared to be just. I am separated unto him and sanctified and one day I shall be glorified and it all takes place at the instant an individual comes to Jesus Christ and he is fully forgiven and completely delivered from all condemnation.

Lee: Amen. Okay, and, again, thank you very much for being on the program and we would definitely like to have you on again.

William: Thank you very much, Lee.

Lee: You're listening to Christian Answers. We've been talking to William Webster who is author of "The Church of Rome at the Bar of History," and very quickly, want to let you know how you can get a hold of us at Christian Answers. You just write Christian Answers, P. O. Box 144441, Austin, Texas, 78714. You can call us at (512) 218-8022. Until next time, have a great week.

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