

The Roman Catholic Church in History
by Walter Martin: 3. Mary; 4. Confession, Mass
Catholic History Walter Martin
By Walter Martin

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Bible Text: Mark 7:8; Galatians 1:6-9
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National Radio Show:
Dateline Eternity
with Walter Martin

Walter Martin: This is the Bible Answer Man, Walter Martin, you're on the air.

Caller: I'm calling to find out if there is any scriptural basis for marital separation.

Announcer: Stay tuned for the answer to this and other important questions as the Christian Research Institute presents "Dateline Eternity" with Professor Walter Martin, the Bible Answer Man. Professor Martin is the founder and Director of the Christian Research Institute, San Juan, Capistrano, California and Professor of Comparative Religions at Melodyland School of Theology in Anaheim. The Christian Research Institute is supported through the gifts and prayers of people like yourself who are interested in straight answers from the Bible. We hope that as this program of prerecorded questions and answers unfolds you will find answers to your questions. Of course, the ultimate answer to all questions is Jesus Christ.

Larry Wessels: Who is Walter Martin? Professor Martin, founder and Director of the Christian Research Institute, is widely acknowledged as the outstanding evangelical authority on pseudo-Christian cults and the study of comparative religions in America. He has debated some of the most controversial intellects in this country through his popular radio and television ministry, and is the author of numerous articles in national magazines. His best-selling book, "Kingdom of the Cults," has become the primary reference work in this field.

Walter Martin: As Christians, what ought our attitude to be? There ought to be an attitude of gratitude, an attitude of joy because God has delivered us from this system into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. We are not the descendants of this papacy nor do we wish to be. We do not wish its sacraments, we do not wish its dogmas. We worship only Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, Redeemer and Savior of lost men. We reject a corrupt church, a backslidden church, an apostate church, and reach out to her

people with the love of Christ, holding forth holy Scripture as Strossmayer said, and standing upon the liberty wherein Christ has set us free.

Let us not think that Rome has changed her basic positions. She has not. Her catechisms are essentially the same. Her dogmas uncompromising. It is the same Roman Catholic Church as at the Council of Trent only carefully adapted to American Protestant culture. It is the Roman Catholic Church which today threatens Protestantism in various parts of the world whenever she gains the upper hand.

Larry Wessels: Now we just heard Walter Martin himself say the Roman Catholic Church was apostate. In fact, that comes from Walter's tape which I've already told everybody I bought just about every tape they ever put out by good old Walter, and here it is right here, "Peter the Rock: Catholic Church tradition and the Bible," and he said what you just heard right on this audio cassette.

This is Larry Wessels. Walter Martin says, "Roman Catholicism nullifies the Gospel," page 39 from his book, "The Roman Catholic Church in History." Cross-reference this to Galatians 1:6-9 where having another or nullified Gospel is cursed by God.

Speaker: The Roman church in effect nullifies the good doctrine of the Gospel by adding the traditions or commandments of men. Herein lies the deadly parallel to Judaism mentioned by our Lord in Mark 7.

Christian Answers of Austin, Texas
presents
The Roman Catholic Church in History
by Walter Martin
Chapters Three & Four
Narrated by: Dan Rosema

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The Roman Catholic Church in History
by Walter R. Martin

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The Roman Catholic Church In History
Preface.

The lectures which make up this booklet were delivered in New York City at Calvary Baptist Church in 1958 and 1959. Because so many persons requested copies of them, it

became necessary to put them in printed form. In delivering these lectures, I have endeavored to avoid personalities and have sought only to discuss certain of the theological views of the Roman church.

At the outset, we admitted that the average Roman Catholic practices his religion sincerely. We sympathized with the fact that having been born and reared in Catholicism, he has been so thoroughly imbued with certain teachings that they are woven into the very fiber of his being. We have not sought to be argumentative or bigoted and have concentrated as much as possible upon facts drawn from authoritative Roman Catholic sources.

We trust that if any Roman Catholic reads this booklet, he will understand that we are only obeying the precept of Scripture which tells every Christian Catholic and non-Catholic to, "Test all things; hold fast that which is good," 1 Thessalonians 5:21, Catholic Confraternity Edition. No one who is sure of his convictions need fear an honest appraisal and critique of those convictions for only darkness fears the light and, "the entrance of thy words gives light," Psalm 119:130. We have also made extensive use of the Douay version of the Old Testament and the 1951 Catholic Confraternity version of the New Testament. These lectures were not intended to foster animosity and should not be either construed or used in an unkind spirit, but with the desire to learn and apply the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. "For if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed," John 8:36.

The author wishes to express his gratitude to the many persons whose efforts in typing and proofreading made this publication possible. We have retained as much as possible the style in which the lectures were originally delivered, believing that such a popular and informal approach enhances the presentation and comprehension of an admittedly controversial and provocative subject.

Walter R. Martin
Livingston, New Jersey
August, 1960

Chapter 3

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Before it is possible to fully understand Roman Catholicism today one must come to grips with their position concerning the mother of our Lord. In this connection some background from the Bible concerning Mary, the mother of Jesus, can be very helpful.

In the first chapter of Matthew, the sixteenth verse, we have the Annunciation of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, "And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." Beginning with the eighteenth verse we read, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her

husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Further on in the chapter, we have the fact of this being a fulfillment of prophecy from the book of Isaiah 7:14. Here we learn something important about the woman who was to become the mother of the God-man. The virgin Mary is to be admired from the standpoint that she was a very moral woman. She was, as we first mentioned, a virgin. She herself had said she had never known a man. Her own background, therefore, was that of a spotless moral life.

I want to make it clear at the beginning that I put much emphasis upon knowing the doctrine of the virgin Mary in Catholic theology because if any one doctrine in the Roman Catholic formula of theology would cause us, on biblical grounds, to withdraw from fellowship with them, this would be the doctrine. It is also important to know, not only what Roman teaches concerning Mary, but what the Bible teaches concerning her, for if the Roman Catholic Church is deifying her, they have become guilty of exulting the creature, Mary, above the Creator, Christ, "who is blessed forever," Romans 1:25. We want to study Mary in this context: we have no desire to desecrate her memory or to say unkind things about her. She is the greatest woman to my mind who ever lived; she was the mother of our Savior and she deserves our love, respect and admiration because of this fact. We Protestants sometimes have forgotten this in our zeal to criticize the admitted excesses of the Roman church, but nevertheless, Mary never thought of herself in the terms the Roman church speaks of her and so we must not confuse the issue.

We learn from the first mention of Mary that she was a virgin, that she had found favor with God, and that she was to bear a child conceived by God, the Holy Spirit. This child Jesus, who was to come from her, was to be a direct creative act of the Holy Spirit.

I refer you now to the Gospel according to Luke because we must take all the instances in Scripture where Mary appears if we are to have a well-rounded picture of what they teach concerning the person and position of Mary. In the 26 verse of the first chapter of Luke, we read, "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail, thou art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God and, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and should call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the

angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Verse 37 says, "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

We have real insight from verse 38 into the true character of the virgin Mary. Look at it carefully, "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." This, we feel is definitely not the "Our Lady" of Roman Catholic theology. The Mary of Roman Catholic theology is Queen of Heaven – a title, incidentally, of the pagan goddesses Ashtoreth, Semiramis, Astarte, Isis, Venus and Aphrodite taken over by the Roman Church and bestowed upon Mary, see Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19, 25. The Mary of Catholic theology is also "Co-redemptrix of the Universe."

She has been raised and exalted to the position where, in a recent prayer uttered by the late Pope Pius XII, some of the titles of God himself are given to her. I want to quote that prayer to you to show you what has happened to "The handmaid of the Lord." The Mary of Scripture said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, or happy, For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name." Note Mary's emphasis, she is blessed but he is holy, "Holy is his name," Luke 1:46 and following. This is quite different from the Catholic "Hail Mary" prayer which calls her "Holy Mary, Mother of God," shifting the emphasis of "holy" from God to Mary. Never once in any discourse in the Scripture or any writings of the apostles, did Mary ever attempt to apply to herself the words, "Holy Mary, Mother of God," or the scores of other titles forced upon her by the zealots of Rome. The title "Mother of God," incidentally, though now dogma in the Roman Catholic Church was condemned by a large number of noted church theologians before it was ever pronounced and accepted by the church as a body.

This is the Mary of Scripture, "The handmaiden of the Lord." This is the Mary of Scripture, "I have rejoiced in God my Savior." But here is the Mary of Roman Catholic theology from the prayer recited by Pope Pius XII at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome on the opening of the Marian Year:

"Enraptured by the splendor of your heavenly beauty and impelled by the anxieties of the world, we cast ourselves into your arms, O Immaculate Mother of Jesus, and our Mother Mary. Confident of finding in your most loving heart the appeasement of our ardent desires and a safe harbor from the tempests which beset us on every side; though degraded by our faults and overwhelmed by infinite misery, we adore and praise the peerless richness of the sublime gifts with which God has filled you above every other mere creature from the moment of your conception until the day on which, after your assumption into heaven, he crowned you Queen of the Universe.

"O crystal fountain of faith, bathe our minds with the eternal truths! O, fragrant lily of all holiness, captivate our hearts with your heavenly perfume. O, conqueress of evil and

death, inspire in us a deep horror of sin which makes the soul detestable to God and a slave of hell.

"O, well beloved of God, hear the ardent cries which rise up from every heart in this year dedicated to you. Bend tenderly, O Mary, over our aching wounds; convert the wicked, dry the tears of the afflicted and the oppressed. Comfort the poor and the humble, quench hatreds, sweeten harshness, safeguard the flower of purity and protect the Holy Church.

"In your name, resounding harmoniously in heaven, may they recognize that all our brothers and that the nations are members of one family, upon which may their shine forth the sun of a universal and sincere peace. Receive, O most sweet Mother, our humble supplications and, above all, obtain for us that on that day, happy with you, we may repeat before your throne that hymn which is sung today around your altars. You are all beautiful, O Mary. You are the glory, you are the joy, you are the honor of our people."

I want to point out that in the opening verses of the biblical record concerning Mary, in every verse of Scripture which is applied to her, never once is she ever removed from the category of the "handmaiden of the Lord" who rejoiced in the God of her salvation. Yet today after 19 centuries, I make bold to say that the Roman Catholic Church and its theologians have unhesitatingly applied to her sacred titles alone given in the Bible to God the Father himself and to Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Now to prove this and to show what they have done with the Mary of the Bible, we will briefly examine the prayer which the late Pope offered, and then we will further examine what the Bible has to say concerning Mary.

First, "We cast ourselves into your arms, O Mary!" Compare this with 1 Peter 5:7. The best authority we can have is the man who was supposed to be the first Pope, Peter. In his first epistle, Peter says, "Casting all your care upon him, Jesus; for he careth for you." The Bible says that we are to come to Christ; that Christ is our Redeemer; that Christ alone is our Savior. However, the Catholic Church says, "Cast yourselves into her arms," into Mary's arms. This is the prayer of the late Pope. The Scripture says, "Cast yourself upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Cast all your cares upon him." Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matthew 11:28. The Catholic Church says today in her printed posters, prayers and literature, "To Jesus through Mary."

To go a bit further in the prayer of the Pope, she is described as the "Immaculate Mother of Jesus and Our Mother." Transcribed into theological terms, this means "Our sinless Mother."

In the third chapter of Romans, with which all Bible students are familiar, the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, contradicts the decrees of the Roman Catholic Church and this Marian prayer by saying, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no, not one," 3:23, 3:10. Paul uses the inclusive term "all, for all have sinned." He does not exclude Mary or anyone else. Mary herself said, "my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior." Only a sinner needs a Savior. Mary

cried out, "I rejoice in God my Savior." Why? Because Mary was a sinner just like anybody else. She was like David and the whole human race since Adam, "born in sin and conceived in iniquity." This is the teaching of the Scripture, Psalm 50:7, Catholic Bible. Only Jesus Christ himself was conceived without sin and this could only be because he was "God manifest in the flesh," 1 Timothy 3:16.

Let us take another illustration of Roman Catholic teaching from this prayer. "On that day, after your assumption into heaven, he crowned you Queen of the Universe." This is what God did for Mary, according to Roman Catholic theology. The doctrine of the Assumption holds that "the Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed bodily into heaven, and that her body did not see corruption." This literally means that as Jesus was raised from the dead immortal and ascended bodily into heaven, so Mary was raised the same way and was "assumed into heaven." This is the teaching of the Catholic Church. The fact that St. Paul taught that only the return of Jesus Christ could actuate the resurrection of the dead to immortality in glorified forms, apparently escapes our Roman Catholic friends. Paul declared that the resurrection of "those who are Christ's" and that certainly includes Mary, is "at his coming," certainly not before, 1 Corinthians 15:23. This immediately rules out a "private" resurrection (Assumption) for Mary.

In the third chapter of the Gospel according to John, we find some valuable light on the subject. This is not theology according to the Protestant world, this is theology according to Scripture, and even the Roman Catholic Church professes that the final authority is the word of God, even though they claim they have the sole right to interpret it.

"And no man has ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven." Now the word "man" is "oudeis" in Greek and it literally means "no one." Therefore it should read, "No one has gone up into heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven."

John lived the longest of all the apostles, the scholars agree and he wrote at a very late date. Mary must have been dead many years unless she lived to be well over 100 years old, and there is no such evidence anywhere in the Scripture or in history. John then wrote after Mary's death, "No one has gone up to heaven but he that came down from heaven." Who was the one person that accomplished this but "The Son of Man who is in heaven," and Jesus Christ is the "Son of Man." Certainly if Mary was raised or assumed "bodily" into heaven, John would have recorded such a stupendous event. He could not help but know of it, if it were as significant as the Roman Catholic Church maintains.

The dogma that she was "assumed" into heaven as enunciated by Pope Pius, is contradicted then by the testimony of John. "No one has gone up to heaven but he that came down from heaven," and the thought is of resurrection since John was speaking, not Christ. That verse 13 is a parenthetical thought of John inserted in the midst of the narrative of Christ's discourse with Nicodemus, is evident from the change in the Greek tense. In verses 9 to 12, a dialogue is in progress (present tense) but in verse 13, a past tense of narrative occurs which places Christ in heaven, a complete violation of his humanity which is ruled out by Philippians 2:7-8. He could not have been on earth and in

heaven at the same time violating his own self-imposed limitations as a true man. It is clear that John is reinforcing Christ's discourse by citing his conquest of death and ascension to the Father's throne. John continues the dialogue in verse 14 through verse 21, returning to the future tense, "shall be lifted up," verse 14, and recording our Lord's prophecy of his crucifixion and its redemptive significance. We see, therefore, that Mary is definitely excluded by Scripture and so is the dogma of the Assumption itself.

I now want to quote from a pamphlet published by the Roman Catholic Church which bears the imprimatur of Cardinal Spellman which shall make it official for any Roman Catholic. "There is one mediator between Christ and men, the Holy Mother Mary. Mary is the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to Jesus but by Mary." This is not my theology, this is Roman Catholic theology with the official statement *Nihil Obstat*, nothing objectionable to church doctrine, upon it.

"There is one mediator between Christ and men, the Holy Mother Mary. Mary is the way, the truth and the life, and no man comes unto Jesus but by Mary." If you will, look at the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, verse 6 and you will find that the Roman Church took these words out of Christ's mouth, paraphrased them and applied them to Mary. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes unto the Father but by me." The Catholic Church says, "That is true, but no one comes to Jesus except through Mary." They are accomplished masters at turning around what the Scriptures say and reading into the Scriptures what the Scriptures never teach. But in this case, the subterfuge fails utterly since the Bible describes Christ as, "Our great high priest," to whom all believers have direct access, John 14:13, 14; 15:7, 16; Hebrews 4:14-16.

If you turn to 1 Timothy 2:5, you will find there one of the greatest verses in the Scripture bearing upon this subject. "There is one mediator," the Greek means go-between or intercessor, "between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." He is our only intercessor. He is our way into the holiest. He alone made it possible for us to possess eternal life because he, the Son of God, died for our sins. The Scripture says, "He is the way, the truth and the life." He is the intercessor. He is the go-between for us with the Father. Nowhere in the pages of the inspired word of God is Mary spoken of at any time as having any authority, or as having exercised any power over the Lord Jesus Christ except in the parental relationship. On the contrary, she always honored his wishes and advised others to follow her example. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee it will be recalled that Mary asked Jesus for help. Christ then issued an order, "Bring three jars of water," and Mary then stated, "Whatsoever he says to you, do it." It was never so with Mary, not "What I say to you, do it," but "Whatever he says to you, do it." She deferred to his judgment. He made the decisions.

The Mary of Scripture is the "handmaiden of the Lord." She is blessed among women and blessed is the fruit of her womb because it was Christ. Her soul "magnified the Lord. Her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior." She claimed that she was out woman of "low estate," and she declared that she was God's servant or "handmaiden." She would do his will.

In verses 49 through 56 of the first chapter of Luke, she is seen praising God. In the second chapter of Luke, verse 49 which accounts Christ's visit to the temple as a youth, Jesus said to Mary, "Why are you bothering about me? Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" It is rather obvious that his "Father" was not Joseph because Christ was in the temple and they went back to find him. He was, you will remember, sitting in the temple answering and asking questions. Mary asked, "Why have you done this?" Christ's answer to her was the answer of the Creator to a creature and Mary so understood him.

I wanted to consider also another important portion of the Scripture because many Roman Catholics are completely unaware that it is in their Bibles. The position of Mary is here contrasted to that of other believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. "And it came to pass as Jesus spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice," Luke 11:2. She was, we might note, the first devotee of Mary recorded in the Bible because she turned her eyes from Jesus and fastened them on Mary. Look carefully at what she said, "Blessed is the womb that bear thee, and the breasts upon which you were nursed." Jesus, however, turned around and directed her attention to where it properly belonged. "Yes, but rather blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." In effect he said, "More important than the womb from which I came are those who hear God's word and obey it."

What then is Christ's relationship to his mother? He loved and respected her as his earthly mother but he did not worship or venerate her. He did not enthrone her as "Queen of Heaven." There is not one verse in the Bible that substantiates this. It comes solely from Roman Catholic tradition as we shall see, that stands opposed to biblical Christianity.

Further mention of Mary appears in the twelfth chapter of Matthew's Gospel where we find verses of Scripture that are very difficult texts for our Catholic friends to deal with. According to Catholic theology, Mary was "ever virgin," and she never had any children other than Jesus. Added to this is Rome's teaching that Mary can approach Christ for mankind because she is his mother and "a son will honor his mother's wishes more rapidly than those of one who is not related to him."

But let us consult the record of Scripture to hear Christ's answer to these theories. The text says, "While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brethren were standing outside, seeking to speak to him. And someone said to him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren are standing outside seeking thee. But he answered and said to him who told him, Who is my mother and who are my brethren? And stretching forth his hand toward his disciples, he said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother," verses 46-50. Here Jesus swept aside the Catholic idea that because he was born into a human family, he was bound by family obligations to grant special favors and considerations on the spiritual plane. Christ's teaching was that whoever listens to him and obeys him is to him mother, brother and sister. If you want to be as close to Jesus as Mary, then believe in him and obey him! If you want to be as close to Jesus and have as complete a spiritual relationship

to him as Mary, then hear what he has to say and do it. These are not my words, these are the words of Christ.

An interesting sidelight on this is the fact that in the parallel record of these passages in Luke 8, a footnote in the Catholic Bible contradicts Christ by stating that Mary shared on the spiritual plane of relationship, "more perfectly than any other creature." They were able to do this because Luke's account is a condensation and omits the fact that Christ places his disciples on an equal plane with Mary and his brothers and sisters, i.e. "stretching forth his hand towards his disciples he said, Behold my mother and my brothers." There is no footnote in Matthew's record though, a significant oversight to say the least!

The next glimpse we have of Mary is found in John 19:26, the place where Jesus gives Mary to the care of John. He states, "Woman, behold thy son," a statement made when he was being crucified. Roman theologians make much of this, stating that Mary, at that moment, became the mother of all the faithful. This is a lovely thought but not implicit in the context at all, for since Christ's brothers and sisters apparently rejected him, Jesus had no recourse but to commit her to John's care, a faithful disciple. This he did and only forced exegesis can justify the twist Roman theologians here employ.

The last mention the Scripture records concerning Mary in the Bible is in the book of Acts 1:14. "All these with one mind continued steadfastly in prayer with the woman and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." She then vanishes from the pages of Scripture as if she had never existed. We have no other record of her until a history was carefully manufactured by the Roman Catholic Church, a history for which they have no documentation whatsoever historically. The Roman teaching, however, is based upon oral tradition and hearsay alone. This then is the Mary of the Bible, the "handmaiden of God," the "servant of the Lord," the one who always magnified her Savior, the one who said, "Whatsoever he says to you, do it." But this is not the Mary of Catholic theology who is described as "the mother of God."

To bolster their position, the Catholic argument states that since Mary is the mother of Jesus and Jesus is God, therefore Mary is the Mother of God. This sounds like logical reasoning, for if Jesus is God and Mary is the mother of Jesus, Mary must be the mother of God. But let us use the same logical formulation to see if the reasoning is valid or true.

God is a Trinity. Mary is the mother of God, their own conclusion, therefore Mary is the Mother of the Trinity! We have used their conclusion as a premise but even they will not allow the preceding conclusion derived therefrom. It is just as logical as their own formulations but a different conclusion. If by that kind of logic they attempt to "prove" that Mary is the "mother of God," we will prove by the same logic that she is also the mother of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in this, of course, reason and the Bible emphatically deny.

The term "Theotokos," which refers to Mary as "Mother of God," was not brought into the Christian Church until the fourth century. It was applied to her over the protests of a

number of theologians at that time who said she was not the "mother of God," but the mother of the physical nature of the Lord Jesus Christ – that is, his physical body. In this we completely concur.

Seven Steps to Deity.

The Roman Catholic Church has erected what I term the seven steps to deity where their doctrine of Mary is concerned. Time does not permit our discussing them all in detail but we can make some pertinent and factual observations. The Catholic Church has virtually abandoned the Mary of the Bible and has substituted the Mary of Pope Pius XII's prayer. The Mary of Roman Catholic theology is for them "the crystal fountain of faith." A fountain, as we know, is a source, or in a sense, the author or origin of flowing water and the Pope so used the metaphor in his application of it to Mary. Yet, the Scripture says in Hebrews 12:2 that Jesus Christ alone is "the author and finisher of faith." He is the source of all true faith – not Mary. Yet Mary is so venerated and openly called "crystal fountain of faith."

The Greek in this passage is most explicit and the Holy Spirit has been pleased to give it great emphasis by designating Christ as "the origin or source of the faith." Note that there is particular emphasis – "the faith." Men or woman, in this case Mary, can inspire abstract faith but it is powerless to save or move God to response. Christ is the source of the only faith that saves or that has value. Rome errs when she ignores this and substitutes Mary as the source of true faith in company with or to the exclusion of our Lord.

The Roman Catholic Church has also given to the Virgin Mary the title "Queen of Heaven." This, as we have noted, is an official title given uniquely to her. Jeremiah the prophet, however, points out that the pagan Phoenician goddess, Ashtoreth, who is called "the abomination of the Zidonians," was first called "queen of heaven." The Roman Church merely took the title of this, and other pagan goddesses, and bestowed it upon Mary. This is the origin of the term "Queen of Heaven," not the Bible but pagan religions and pagan goddesses! Remember then where it came from – not from the Bible but from pagan sources.

Let us turn, however, to Rome's systematic effort to raise Mary to deity. Some of the seven steps to deity briefly summarized are as follows.

Step one: "Mother of God." We have already discussed how the Roman Catholic Church has pronounced that Mary is the Mother of God. We have shown that if she is the Mother of God, she is also the Mother of the Trinity, and this reason and logic completely rule out. They have, however, not shrunk back from ascribing divine titles to her, as exemplified in Alphonsus Liguori's volume, "The Glories of Mary." Liguori, incidentally, is the fountainhead for contemporary Mariolatry, placing her as he frequently does, on an equal plane with Christ. For these excesses, we would expect his excommunication for blasphemy; instead he was raised to the rank of a Doctor of the Church and canonized in 1839.

The second step is: the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity. This means, in effect, that at no time did Mary ever have any relations with Joseph or have any other children, see Matthew 1:25 – "till." This whole dogma gained support in the year 337 A.D. when it was defended in a tract by St. Jerome who wrote of her as "Blessed Mary, always virgin." Before the year 337 in the history of the Christian Church, no one seriously challenged the biblical revelation that Mary had no other children. It was commonly accepted that she did. This then, was the second step to deity, to remove her from the realm of marital normality by declaring that she was perpetually a virgin. Scripture, of course, refutes this by mentioning Christ's brothers and sisters, even differentiating James as "the Lord's brother," see Matthew 12:46-50; 13:55-56; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21; John 7:3, 5, 10; Galatians 1:19.

The third step was: the doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception," which was declared in 1854. This doctrine maintains that, "The Virgin Mary was in the first instance of her conception by a singular grace and privilege of God Almighty, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ the Savior, preserved from all stain of original sin." This, then, is the teaching that she was born without any stain of sin. I should like to go to the very authorities that the Roman Catholic Church recognizes and quotes in the teaching materials used in their colleges and seminaries to prove that out of the mouths of men that they have canonized as saints, comes irrefutable evidence that this doctrine is unbiblical and untrue.

1. Clement of Alexandria, writing in the second century of the Christian Church stated, "The Word, Jesus Christ, alone was born without sin." Roman Catholics refer to Clement as a great Christian Church father.
2. Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in the fourth century, "He, Christ, alone being made a man but remaining God, never had any sin nor did he take on him flesh of sin, though he took flesh of the sin of his mother. For what flesh he thence took, he either when taken immediately purified it, or he purified it in the act of taking it." Notice Augustine's statement, "Whatever flesh of sin he took, he took of the flesh of sin of his mother." This is Mary. This is far back in Christian theology and this authority says Mary was born under the curse of sin just as all other members of the human family apart from our Lord himself, Romans 3:10, 23; 5:12; Galatians 3:22.
3. Saint Ambrose, canonized by the Catholic Church says, "Of all that are born of women, the holy Lord Jesus was the only one who experience not the contagion of earthly corruption by reason of the novelty of his immaculate birth." Only Christ, affirms Ambrose, was born without sin.
4. Saint Bernard states, "For this reason our astonishment is not small in seeing that some of you have believed to be able to introduce a new feast that is unknown to the rite of the church, that cannot be approved by reason that is condemned by the ancient traditions, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception." Here another leading Roman Catholic authority testifies that when the Mary worshipers of his day tried to introduce this dogma, it was

resisted because it was contradicted by tradition as well as Scripture! Notice his powerful argument because this is the argument with which Protestants agree – and its source is Catholic. "What honor should we believe of attributing to Mary that honor may be had, you say for her conception, which was anterior to her birth? Because without this conception neither her birth should be honored. Then what would you say if others, according to your own reasoning, were to maintain that it is necessary to hold feasts in honor of her parents? That is also logical. Then it would be necessary to honor her grandparents and her great-grandparents, and thus there would be no end at all, and there would be feasts without number and the earth would be converted into a paradise." This is from another Catholic authority canonized by the Catholic Church. He concludes his argument, "In general, we say that although to a few it was conceded to be born holy, to no one, however, was it granted to be conceived holy. Jesus Christ alone was therefore conceived through the work of the Holy Spirit because he alone was holy before and after conception. Only he being accepted, all the others have to repeat the sad words of David, 'I was conceived in iniquity and in sin did my mother bring me forth.'"

5. Saint Peter Lombard states, "But this is asked, On what account and whence is it that Mary was conceived without original sin? We say that this was impossible." Again, they are refuted from their own sources.

6. Bishop Melchior Cammas, famous professor of Canon Law and Dogmatic Theology at the University of Salamanca, Spain, and a delegate theologian to the Council of Trent, and one of the advisors to the then Pope, stated the following. "The dogma that holds that the Blessed Virgin was free from original sin was nowhere delivered in the Scriptures according to their proper sense. Nay, the general law which is delivered in them embraces all who were descended from Adam without exception." This is from a noted Roman Catholic historian, a Doctor of then Canon Law!

7. Saint Antonius, also canonized by the Catholic Church, declared, "If the Scriptures be duly considered and the sayings of the doctors, ancient and modern, who had been devoted to the glorious Virgin, it is plain from their words that she was conceived in sin."

Many more of these sources could be brought out and we could go on quoting them, but now I shall quote some things that come from the papacy itself. I have before me the names of four popes, all of whom pronounced on the Virgin Mary before the 1854 declaration. Notice the words of these popes because they are the ones alleged to be the spiritual leaders of the Catholic Church.

8. Pope Leo I, "The Lord Jesus Christ alone among the sons of men was born without sin."

9. Pope Gallatus, "It belongs alone to the Immaculate Lamb to have no sin at all."

10. Pope Gregory I, "For Christ alone was truly born holy, who in order that he might overcome this condition of corruptible nature, was not conceived after the manner of men."

11. Pope Innocent III, "Eve was produced without sin but she brought forth in sin. Mary was brought forth in sin but she brought forth without sin."

These are statements from four popes of the Roman Catholic Church. All of them contradict the pronouncement of 1854 to the effect that Mary was conceived without the stain of sin.

We see, then, how important it is to understand that this is a great step toward making Mary equal with Christ. I have in my library hundreds of pamphlets, manuscripts and books all published with the official imprimatur of the Roman Catholic Church. In every one of them, language which is applied to God alone in Scripture, is applied to the virgin Mary. She is worshiped. She is given almost every title of Christ. Thus, they are subtly but systematically raising her to a place of equality with our Lord.

Step-by-step in history, they have traced a path which can only, in honesty, be called blasphemy – the elevation, veneration and worship of a creature alongside the Creator. Today, Mary, the sweet, devoted handmaiden of the Lord, the Mary of Scripture to whom we all owe homage as the mother of our Savior, has become, in the words of Catholic Bishop J. G. Strossmayer, "a goddess," Speech before the 85th General Convention of the Vatican Council, July 13, 1870. Worship, prayers, shrines and even altars in churches have been consecrated to her around the earth. The healing grottoes are seldom dedicated to Jesus of Nazareth but to "Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady Saint Anne de Beaupre, Our Lady of Fatima," etc. The statues which are seen in Roman Catholic homes are invariably of Mary. The largest niches in Roman Catholic Churches are occupied by images of Mary. The preponderance of prayers are to Mary and the "Hail, Mary" is repeated in the rosary continually.

Relative to instances of miraculous cures which Roman Catholics claim "prove" Mary's power and the authenticity of the Church's claim for her – a reading of Exodus 7 will reveal that the magicians, priests of the demon gods of Egypt, worked miracles, even duplicating those done by God through Moses. Their intent was to deceive through miracles. Miracles alone, then, are not the seal of divine approval since Satan can work them to shift attention and devotion from God. We must examine the teachings that claim authenticity as a result of miracles. If they glorify Christ and agree with Scripture, they are of God. If they do not, they are not of God.

I agree wholeheartedly with Pope Pius XII when he said of Mary that she is, "The glory and the honor and the joy of our people," for Jesus Christ from the evidence on hand, most certainly is not. This is not vindictiveness or Protestant – this is a matter of pure, cold, logical fact that cannot be denied by anyone who will study the question carefully. If you doubt me, then go to St. Patrick's Cathedral, buy the pamphlets you see there, take them home and read them. Make a notation of the subject of every one of them and see how many prayers are uttered to Mary and how many to Jesus, and how many prayers are directed to the saints. I have done it, so perhaps I can save you the trouble – it's Mary and the saints by a large majority. This is indeed the elevation of a creature to deity and I

plead with you to realize that we are dealing with one of the most dangerous teachings ever foisted upon the Christian Church. It is the widely circulated idea that because Mary is related to Christ after the flesh, that she therefore has some special intercessory power with him. This is not the truth as Jesus himself taught. The Scripture says we are as close to him as is his own mother, "Whoever hears my word and obeys it is the same to me as my mother, brothers or my sister," Matthew 12:46-50.

Still another rung in the Roman Catholic ladder to deity is to make Mary a partner in the atonement – to make her in some sense a redeemer of mankind. This teaching has recently received much publicity, namely Mary as Co-redemptrix of the universe. The doctrine holds that Mary works with Christ, by virtue of the fact that she bore him, in the salvation of man. She is therefore as involved in the forgiveness of our sins as is Jesus Christ himself! This view appears in "The Five Encyclicals," a Catholic publication which can be purchased in any Roman Catholic bookstore. Look carefully at the section headed "Mary Mediatrix" where the dogma is enunciated. This booklet bears the official imprimatur of Bishop Boylan of Paterson. Virtually everything which refers to Jesus Christ is here attributed to Mary, the mother of Jesus. I emphasize these things that we may come to understand that the Roman Catholic dogmas concerning Mary have a tremendous impact on Protestantism, especially because we are led to believe that the Catholic people are giving their devotion solely to Christ. Their devotion, however, is not to Christ half as much as it is to Mary. Their devotion reflected in their novenas, shrines, prayers and literature is to Mary on a grand scale. Even in our subways we read advertisements which state, "To Jesus through Mary."

Mary's prominence is a thing to be reckoned with, especially now that attention is being focused upon her as Co-redemptrix and as Mediatrix. But let me again quote from the Catholic pamphlet, "As mediator, Jesus Christ has a threefold office: he is king, teacher and priest. Mary, as Mediatrix, shares in this threefold office: she is queen, teacher and sanctifier. She rules over us, teaches us and sanctifies us. Next to Christ, she is the foundation of our faith." Friends, there is only one word that I can possibly use to describe what we are reading and studying and that is blasphemy. To attach to a woman, whoever she may be, the honor and titles which belong to God is blasphemy and a violation of the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

St. Paul reminds us that we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. "Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone," Ephesians 2:20. Mary, it should be noted, is not mentioned nor so identified. The Scripture says the Christ alone is worthy as the Lamb for sinners slain, to receive our adoration and praise. Tell me, was it Mary who was born of a virgin? Was it Mary who performed miracles? Did she live a sinless life? Was it Mary who healed the sick? Was it Mary who raised the dead? Was it Mary who cleansed lepers and cast out demons? Was it Mary who went to Gethsemane and dropped sweat like unto blood? Was it Mary who stood in Pilate's judgment hall? Was it Mary who was beaten, bruised and battered for our sins? Was it Mary who went to Calvary and was nailed to the cross? Was it Mary who came out of the tomb the third day? Was it Mary who ascended to heaven to appear in the presence of God for us? Is it Mary who will come back again one day to save the Christian Church?

No, Jesus Christ alone is Redeemer, Mediator and coming King, for it was he who did all this that we might "have life and have it more abundantly." This is the hope of Christianity – not a mere creature but a risen, victorious Savior, the God-man. Thank God we can bow before the cross of Christ and realize it was he who shed his blood there, he who came out of the tomb, he who is alive and we who are alive with him. We need not depend upon the intercession of anyone apart from Christ, even the mother of our Lord or those called "saints." "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Christ Jesus," and it is here that we stand. We can do no other.

The Roman Catholic Church in its official literature, then states that Mary is "queen, teacher and sanctifier," but the Bible declares that the Teacher is the Holy Spirit, of whom Jesus said, "When he comes, he will lead you into all truth." The Scripture represents the word of God as the Sanctifier. Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," see John 17:17 and 1 Timothy 4:5. And Mary is queen only in the manufactured traditions of Catholic mythology, a position she never coveted and one which Scripture never accords her.

Mary is proclaimed to be (1) Mother of God, (2) perpetual virgin, (3) immaculately conceived, (4) assumed bodily into heaven, the counterfeit of Christ's resurrection, (5) queen of heaven, (6) Mediatrix of all graces, which maintains that as Christ dispenses redeeming grace to mankind, so Mary will with him have the final word as to who will or will not receive the grace of God unto salvation, (7) Co-redemptrix of the Universe or, as Christ is Redeemer so as his mother, she cooperates in this work. These are the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church – but not the teaching of the Scriptures. These we must reject as "unscriptural, un-apostolic, and unacceptable" and receive, instead, the testimony of Mary herself, "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Whatsoever he says to you, do it." This is the Mary of the Bible – Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The seven steps to deity are then apparent to all who will search for the truth. However, as Protestants, let us not lapse into the error of "blaming" Mary for the excesses of her devotees and thus speak harshly or unkindly of her role in Scripture. Rather let us pay her the respect due the mother of our Redeemer and heed her advice, "Whatever he says to you, do it."

Chapter 4 Confession, The Mass, Purgatory and Penance

In this lecture, we will be dealing briefly with the subjects of confession, the mass, purgatory and penance, four cardinal doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. I think before we begin we must understand clearly that we are in an area of basic conflict with Roman Catholic theology on these particular subjects.

The doctrine of purgatory was not officially pronounced until the year 1438 which means that up until that time one could either believe or not believe in it. But from 1438 on, one

could not refuse to accept it and remain a good Catholic. The doctrine of penance also dates considerably later than the foundational truths of the Christian message.

The doctrine of confession, which we shall now consider, was taught in the early Christian Church in a vastly different manner than it is taught in the Roman Church today. To fully understand this teaching, we shall quote an authoritative Roman Catholic publication dealing with confession so we will understand what a Roman Catholic means when he speaks of confession. Many people are laboring under misconceptions concerning this subject. Let us do with it as the Catholic Church teaches it.

"When a Catholic commits a grave sin called in theology a mortal sin to distinguish it from lesser offenses which are termed venial sins, he is under obligation to confess that sin to a priest. Before his confession held by the church to be of any value, however, he must be truly sorry that he committed the sin. He must resolve not to repeat it. He must agree to make restitution to any person whom his sin may have injured. And he must be willing to accept the penance imposed by the priest. When these conditions prevail and he makes his confession, the priest gives him absolution. This means that the priest acting as God's representative, forgives him in God's name for the offenses against God." This, in summary, is the Roman Catholic doctrine of confession. One must do four specific things: first, you must be truly sorry; second, you must resolve not to repeat it; third, you must agree to make restitution to the person whom you have injured; and you must be willing to accept penance imposed by the priest.

What is the difference between mortal and venial sins? Mortal sins are the sins of great offense that can send the soul directly to hell. If you die in a state of unconfessed mortal sin, according to Roman Catholic theology, you go immediately to hell since you have not confessed that sin, received absolution or said an act of contrition prior to your death. Venial sins are sins which cannot send you to hell unless they multiply voluminously, but they can send you to purgatory.

Purgatory, according to Roman Catholic theology, is a place of departed spirits where only the saved go after they have died, there to be tormented and punished for sins which they have not confessed or atoned for while here on earth. This is designated temporal punishment.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of penance is known to everyone who knows anything at all about Catholicism. It involves the repetition of prayers, rosaries, and the making of contributions in one way or another to the work of the church, or by doing these and other specific things assigned by the priest. These things you do in order to "make up" for the sins which you have committed, as one Catholic put it to me. Even though one has confessed the sin and the sin has been forgiven by the priest, one still must do penance to "make up" or, in a sense, "atone" for the sin. This is essentially the teaching of penance.

Now, let us deal with the biblical position on these subjects, particularly confession, which must involve the doctrines of forgiveness and justification by faith. I shall be referring to the Roman Catholic version of the Bible, please use your Bible for

comparison. I want you to see how some of the very best translations of the New Testament by Roman Catholic scholars teach the doctrine held by Christians through the ages, namely, that when God forgives us of our sins, he cancels the sin and abolishes it and thereby freely forgives us.

This is the teaching of the Scriptures. Quoting from the Roman Catholic Bible in the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, a very familiar passage. The Roman Catholic translation gives a crystal picture concerning the real justification and forgiveness that comes to a believer in Jesus Christ. We all know that the Lord Jesus Christ was specifically discussing eternal life in this context and that those who trusted in him already have eternal life. "Amen, amen I say to you. He who hears my word and believes him who sent me has (present tense) life everlasting and does not come to judgment, but has passed from death to life." Very significant, is it not? In their own translation of the words of Jesus concerning forgiveness, Christ says that he who hears his word and believes the testimony of his Father concerning him has (right at this present moment) life everlasting and shall not come to judgment but has passed immediately from spiritual death to spiritual life.

According to the Roman Catholic doctrine, you must assume that one has passed from spiritual death to life and back again to death if one commits a mortal sin. Even if you admit, as Catholics will not, that you can be "saved" right now, they maintain that should you commit sin, you could be lost. That is, if you die in a state of mortal sin. But I want to take the Scriptures concerning what God says about forgiveness and about the necessity of trusting him. "He that believes, does not come to judgment." That's the Catholic translation, "Does not come to judgment." It says, "but has passed from death to life." Those who are resting in Christ's grace know that their judgment was upon him at Calvary and they are safe in his keeping.

In the fifth chapter of the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul writes on the great theme of justification. As it is translated in the Roman Catholic version, Paul speaks in unmistakable terms. "Having been justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have access by faith into that grace in which we stand, and exult in the hope of the glory of God." Two very interesting things are taught by this passage: we do not have to interpret, we just have to read.

What does it mean to be justified? According to biblical language, to be justified is "to be accounted righteous," to be accounted in God's eyes completely forgiven. We know the Scripture teaches that when we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, God justifies us before himself as a legal act. God says that he counts the person who believes in Christ justified just as if he never sinned because Christ upon the cross has fully borne the punishment of his sins. That this is no way involves works which are the evidence of saving faith is clear from the fourth chapter of Romans which states, "What then shall we say that Abraham our father according to the flesh acquired? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has reason to boast, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as justice. Now to him who works, the reward is not credited as a favor but as something due. But to him who

does not work, but believes in him who justifies the impious, his faith is credited to him as justice. Thus David declares the blessedness of the man to whom God credits justice without works: Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not credit sin," Romans 4:1-8.

Justification, therefore, is not something in the future, justification is something which has already taken place. Justification cannot be invented, it is a gift of God. The past tense of the Greek verb which the Catholic Bible translates so correctly, teaches us of present salvation, "Having been justified therefore by faith." It seems, then, that the "horrible" doctrine for which, among other things they excommunicated Martin Luther, is taught by the very Greek out of which Luther preached!

If we adhere to Scripture closely, then we discover that what people say the Bible teaches and what the Bible actually says are sometimes found to be at great variance. For instance, Romanism would tell us that justification by faith has no effect at all upon us if we commit a mortal sin, but the Scripture says that God has judged us innocent because Jesus Christ died in our place, though one may lose his heavenly rewards and even his earthly life if he persists in unrepentant sinning. It is just as simple to understand as courtroom procedure. Our own law in the United States states that a man may not be tried for the same crime twice – an accepted judicial principle. Even if it should be found out afterwards that a man did commit the crime for which he had been acquitted, he can never be tried again for the same crime. The Bible teaches that God put Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross for our sins. In our place he stood as accused, guilty and condemned. When he died, he said, "It is finished." The price was paid for our sins, "God hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God by faith in him," 2 Corinthians 5:21.

The Apostle Paul states, "Having been justified therefore by faith in Christ, let us have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ." We make bold to say, however, that no Roman Catholic who really believes the teachings of his Church has that peace with God – and I believe it can be proved. If you ask any Roman Catholic, "Do you know that God has completely forgiven you of your sins? Do you know that because Christ died in your place as the Bible says, you have eternal salvation now? Do you know right at this moment that you have passed from death to life?" The answer is negative. Every Roman Catholic whom I have ever spoken to on this subject, be he priest, theologian or layman, has said to me, "I hope I will be saved. I truly hope so."

Friends, there is no peace in just hoping! There is only peace and security in certainty. For example, one might hope that he won't be arrested because he is not sure his income tax return is what it should be. How much peace does he have hoping that? Really very little or none at all. There is no peace of mind or soul in hope alone; there is peace only in certainty of knowing. When I know something, I have the assurance of knowledge, something which I possess as a fact – a present possession of your will. According to the Scriptures, we have already been justified by faith and we possess peace with God. He who does not possess peace with God has little ground for supposing that he has been justified by God. He who has been justified "has the witness within himself," 1 John 5:10.

Romans, the eighth chapter, verse 1 in the Roman Catholic Bible reads, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, for the law of the spirit of the life in Christ Jesus has delivered me from the law of sin and death." Notice again the past tense of the Greek, "There is therefore now (present tense) no condemnation." The word "condemnation" in the Greek literally means "judgment." Let us read it as it is in the Greek, "There is therefore now no judgment to those who are in Christ Jesus." If we are in Christ by faith, God has waived judgment because Jesus bore it in our place. The Bible assures us "we know we have passed from death to life... you may know that you have eternal life," 1 John 3:14.

Let us go on to more texts and then into the real application of this, the problem at hand. In the epistle of Titus, the Holy Spirit gives us a great deal of insight into this very problem of justification before God, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." You may ask why I am making such a point of the doctrine of justification. I am making the point because if there is full justification, there is no need for confession to a priest, forgiveness by a priest or penance from him. If God has already justified us on the basis of Jesus Christ's death, there is no necessity to come to God and ask him to justify us again, for Christ has already done this.

If, for instance, I went down to a court in New York City after I had been acquitted of certain charges and I met the judge outside his chambers one morning and I said, "Your Honor, please acquit me. Please acquit me of the charges against me," the judge would say to me, if he were an efficient judge, "Acquit you of the charges again? The jury has acquitted you. You are already absolved." The judge might even be indulgent to say, "All right, you are forgiven." However, the next morning if I'm down there all over again and I say, "I still don't have that assurance, Judge. Acquit me again of these charges," the judge would probably say, after the third or fourth time if he hadn't sent me to Bellevue, "Why are you constantly asking me for forgiveness of these charges when you have been adjudged innocent on the basis of the law?" And I would have to say, "I know you are right, Judge, but I just don't feel that I'm forgiven."

This, then, is the key to the whole problem of confession and absolution. The devil has succeeded in persuading a large number of people that if they do not "feel" they are forgiven, they are not forgiven and must do penance to "atone" for this feeling. Feelings, however, have nothing to do with forgiveness. When God forgives, it is a judicial act – just as a jury brings in a verdict. The Scripture says, "There is therefore now no judgment to those who are in Christ Jesus." We do not have to go to a priest on Saturday morning, genuflect, make the sign of the cross and list all of the things we have done. We are to confess directly to our Lord, 1 John 1:7, 9, and he forgives us of those sins committed after we have received Christ. Christ's death absolves us of the full penalty of sin, eternal death. His death also makes provision for our daily deliverance and cleansing from the

power of sin in our lives, and finally, it will free us one day from the very presence of sin when we meet him face to face.

The priest according to Roman Catholic teaching says, "Are you truly sorry for your sin?" I say, "Yes." The priest says, "Do you resolve not to repeat it?" I say, "Yes." The priest says, "Do you agree to make restitution?" I say, "Yes." The priest says, "Do you agree to do penance?" I say, "Yes, I agree to do penance." Then the priest absolves you, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." I am then forgiven of the sins confessed. This is the Roman Catholic doctrine of absolution from sin. In effect then, the priest is in the same position as the judge whom I was going to see every day seeking assurance of forgiveness. The priest is "forgiving" me of the same sins for which Jesus died on the cross to absolve me. There is no necessity of confession to a priest for forgiveness because when we come to Christ, he has already accounted us righteous by the shedding of his own blood. In the quiet of our homes then, in our church on bended knee, between us and Christ, we confess our sins to him.

Notice what the Holy Spirit says in 1 John 1:7, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sins." Jesus Christ, God's Son, "cleanseth us from all sins." There is no taint of sin upon the believer who claims the blood of the Lamb. There is no curse for those who are trusting in him who was cursed for us. There is no remainder or remembrance of sin for the individual who completely casts himself upon the mercy of the Son of God.

An interesting fact in passing is found in the ninth verse of the same chapter where the Catholic Bible says, "If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us." Isn't it interesting how the Catholic translators use the word "acknowledge" in place of "confess"? The same word they translate "acknowledge" is literally "confess" in Greek and is so translated in almost all other versions. Any good lexicon will establish this. However, they do not use the word "confess" here because that would be a very telling blow to the doctrine of auricular confession.

"If we confess our sin, he is faithful." Who is faithful, the priest? Is the priest faithful and just to forgive us our sins? No! John says, "If we confess our sins, he (Christ) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity." It is Christ who cleanses. It is Christ to whom we directly confess – we do not confess to a man. No matter how noble, no matter how just or how good he may be, he is a sinner born under the same curse and no power was ever given him to forgive sins.

The Scripture says that we are to confess to Christ and Christ forgives us. Catholics almost always point to John 20:21-23 as "proof" of the priest's power to forgive. It says, "He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them and he said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." The only difficulty is that it was said in the context of preaching the Gospel. All Christians have this power, the power to assure a true convert

that "your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake," 1 John 2:12. And conversely, the power to assure those who reject Christ that their sins remain, are retained. This is not the Catholic doctrine of perpetual confession to a priest for repeated absolution. Christians are also told to "confess their faults to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed," James 5:16. But there is no priest-laity relationship even hinted at here or anywhere else in Scripture.

The Holy Spirit declares in 1 John, "If anyone sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just," 2:1-2. When dealing with Catholics, I invariably add, "If anyone sin, we have an advocate with the Father, the Virgin Mary, the priest, the saints and the Church." When they hear this, they vehemently object. It says, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just." I counter, "Oh, this then is the biblical teaching. If any one of us sins we have an advocate with God, and it is Jesus Christ alone." This is generally met with silence.

The word "advocate" means "one who speaks in our behalf to God," and he is identified in this verse as "Jesus Christ, the just. He is the expiation for our sins and not for ours only, but he is the expiation for the sins of the whole world." We need not confess or prostrate ourselves before men, we need only to go in the solitude of our own devotion to the foot of Calvary's cross and there be cleansed afresh by that "fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." He, Christ, cleanses us from all sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all unrighteousness."

There are so many more verses we could cite, for instance, 1 Peter 2:24. What did Peter understand concerning forgiveness? We should consider what Peter understood concerning the disposition of our sins, for if the Roman Catholics' claim is true, that Peter is the first Pope, then they ought to heed him. Speaking of Jesus Christ, he declares, "Who himself bore our sins in his body upon the tree that we having died to sin, might live to justice, and by his stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep who are gone astray but now you have returned to the shepherd and the guardian of your souls," 1 Peter 2:24-25. The shepherd and guardian of our souls is not declared anywhere in Scripture to be the Bishop of Rome but the Son of God. The Scriptures teach us here that Christ bore "in his own body our sins upon the tree." No priest can forgive what Jesus Christ has already forgiven. No priest can give absolution for what Christ has already absolved unless we are willing to assume that when Jesus died for our sins, he did not complete the task and more must be done by man.

In reading the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews in the Greek one time, I checked it with the Roman Catholic translation and I was arrested by the clarity of the rendition. Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, in verse 3, the Catholic translation said, "Who being in the brightness of God's glory, the image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, Christ has effected man's purgation from sin and taken his seat at the right hand of the majesty on high." Here from the Douay Bible is a wonderful phrase, "purgation from sin." I looked through my Greek reference books and found that the word in Greek, "katharismos," is the Greek verb from which we get our word "catharsis."

As you know, a catharsis is a purgative. The writers of the New Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, chose the word "katharismos" to express what Christ did for and to our sins. We shall read it as it is in the Greek, "He has by himself effected man's catharsis from sin." Christ, by his death upon the cross, completely erased the whole blackboard upon which sin was written against us, nailing it to his cross. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." He has completely "by himself effected man's purgation from sin," and "taken his seat at the right hand of the majesty on high."

Jesus finished the atonement when he died on the cross. He purged us of the penalty of our sin – hell. All we have to do is come to him and accept what he has already done for us. There is no necessity for the humiliating degradation of the confessional, no fear that one may not perform the acts of penance properly, no worry or confusion about obligations to the church, and no terror of purgatory necessary.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of confession therefore is unbiblical and untrue because it teaches that a man must go to another man to receive forgiveness, while Jesus Christ has already provided our forgiveness fully on the cross. For the penalty of our sins, Christ offered himself as the sinless one for our daily sins. He appears in the presence of God now for us. When we confess to him, he hears us. He is our advocate with the Father. He cleanses us and restores us to fellowship. Scripture irrefutably teaches this especially the writings of John and Paul and the author of Hebrews. Oh, the great truths that are here recorded, the things which God would have us to know. We are redeemed solely by the blood of Jesus Christ, which truly cleanses us from "all sins."

Here is true forgiveness, true confession, true absolution, full and free forever. Christ has administered a "cosmic catharsis" for all sin we only need appropriate by faith the events for the act.

The Mass

The book of Hebrews overflows with the fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross for all our sins and "saved" (complete action) us by his blood. Also it contains the most detailed refutation of the Catholic doctrine of the Mass extant in Scripture. In the tenth chapter and fourteenth verse of Hebrews, the Bible speaks about the fact that Christ "by one offering perfected forever those who are sanctified." That is indeed a wonderful text. He has "by one sacrifice perfected (or completed his work) forever." But who are the ones sanctified? Verse 10 tells us, "We (Christians) have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Just link those two verses together for a moment – Hebrews 10:14 and 10:10, "For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified. We have been sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all."

What terrible verses these are for the doctrine of the Mass, 1215 A.D. The Roman Catholic Church declares that at the consecration of the Mass which they teach is a "bloodless sacrifice," the bread and the wine literally become the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine, transubstantiation, was codified in its present form by

St. Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274, who taught that Christ's "body and blood – soul and divinity – is present under the appearance (or accident) of bread and wine."

Catholic theologians make much of such passages as John 6:48-58, Matthew 26:26 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-30 in an attempt to teach that Christ and the apostles taught this doctrine but the evidence is not as one-sided as might first appear. In the sixth chapter of John, Christ speaks of himself as the "bread of life" that "came down from heaven" to "give life to the world," verse 48, 50, 51. He further identifies his flesh with that "living bread," verse 51, and states that "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you," verse 53. That our Lord was using highly figurative language is evident from the fact that both the Jews and his disciples were interpreting his words literally, verse 52, 60, 61, and he deliberately went out of his way to contradict such a literal interpretation, "The words that I am speaking to you are spirit and they are life: the flesh does not profit anything," verse 63. Our Lord clearly taught that belief in him was the metaphorical equivalent of "eating" his flesh and blood, verse 35, 36, and as we have seen, he expressly stated that the words "bread, flesh, blood and eat" in a fleshly or literal interpretation, profited nothing. They must be interpreted spiritually for as he said, "they are spirit and they are life."

Jesus Christ frequently used such earthly words, of human experience after the flesh, verse 63, to convey profound spiritual truths and metaphors were not uncommon to him. For example, "I am the door. I am the good shepherd. I am the vine. I am the light of the world. I am the way," John 10:9, 11; 9:5; 14:6, are all metaphors and Roman Catholic scholars so understand them. Yet when he speaks of himself as "bread" and represents his "flesh and blood," or life, metaphorically as "bread and wine," John 6:52-58, they reverse their own accepted procedure and insist upon a literal application which Christ himself ruled out, John 6:35, 36, 63. This is neither good exegetical procedure nor sound theology and we must therefore reject it.

But the Scripture does say that "He has offered one sacrifice for sin forever," and it was fully accomplished on the cross. There is neither need nor warrant for the teaching of a perpetual "bloodless sacrifice" of the so-called "Mass" since Christ has entered heaven himself with his own blood "having obtained eternal redemption for us," Hebrews 9:12. Those who trust in him have (present possession) this redemption which he obtained for us. For Roman Catholics, the Mass is a dominating factor in their worship as evidenced by the statement, "Every day in the sacrifice of the Mass, he renews that sacrifice. The Mass is the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of the cross," "A Practical Catholic Dictionary," page 145.

Scripture, however, refutes this, declaring of Christ that "He dies no more," Romans 6:9, and that his sacrifice was "once for all," Hebrews 7:27; 9:26, 27, 28; 10:10; 1 Peter 3:18, "one sacrifice for sin forever," Hebrews 10:11, 12, 14.

Purgatory – Devotion For The Dead

The doctrine of purgatory is fairly well-known due to the prominence given it in Catholic literature, but it can be summed up in the following Roman Catholic pronouncement, a statement written for consumption by Protestants, "When I am dead, I shall not go straight to hell unless I die with the blackest unforgiven sins on my soul. I shall not go straight to heaven either because I have sinned many times, and although my trespasses may have been wiped out by confession and penance, I must endure a period of punishment to atone for those unforgiven sins, and of cleansing to wash away any remaining venial sins or imperfections." This is what purgatory is for – to cleanse of the guilt of your forgiven sins and to take care of the sins you have already confessed, but for which you have not atoned.

I need only quote two verses in answer to this doctrine. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." No one need go to purgatory to be cleansed of sins that Jesus has already cleansed him from in his own blood upon the cross of Calvary. Secondly, the Scriptures say, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin." What a promise! He forgives us our sins. His blood is our peace with God, 1 John 1:7, 9.

I would also like to quote the closing paragraph of this Catholic statement which says that, "your Protestant forebears were robbed of this beautiful doctrine of the communion of saints 400 years ago by Martin Luther, but Catholics are convinced that there is such a place and that if you pray, prayer will be invaluable. If there isn't such a place as purgatory, no sincere prayer is wasted anyhow, so some good will come of it."

This reminds me of the story of the man who asked me to baptize him. I asked him why he wanted me to baptize him because as a Christian Scientist, he didn't believe in the deity of Christ, his death on the cross for our sins, or his bodily resurrection. His answer is classic, "Well, I've heard you can't get into heaven without it and I want to have all bets covered!" This is the same line of reasoning as the statement, "Even if there is no such place as purgatory, no good prayers are wasted anyhow." This is another attempt at the "no harm done, have all bets covered" psychology and it finds no basis in Scripture whatever.

Further than this, it should be carefully observed that for Catholics "the communion of saints" is sufficient warrant for believing in purgatory. The statement, however, comes from the Apostles' Creed and refers to the "fellowship, communion, of saints" or all true believers on earth – not in the mythical purgatory of Roman Catholic tradition. The Apostles' Creed is not Scripture anyway and was not written by the apostles at all but is a second century document.

For Catholic theology, the priest is the dispenser of grace to the suffering souls in purgatory. In fact, through the offering of prayers and Masses, he claims enormous power as the following quotation from a leading Catholic source demonstrates, "That he should let us do with his satisfactions what we, priests, will and sprinkle his precious blood as if it was so much water from the nearest well? That we should limit the efficacy of his

unbloody sacrifice and name souls to him and expect him to obey us and that he should do so? Beautiful was the helplessness of his blessed infancy. Beautiful is his helplessness in his most dear sacrament. Beautiful is the helplessness in which for the love of us he mostly wills to be with regard to his dear spouses in purgatory whose entrance into glory his heart is so impatiently awaiting.... with our, priests', only venturous touch, wave the sceptered hand of Jesus over its broad regions, all richly dropping with the balsam of his saving blood!"

To any student of Scripture, it is of course unthinkable that a man should "sprinkle his, Christ's, precious blood" or "limit the efficacy of his unbloody sacrifice," the Mass. The concept that any "spouse" of Christ, member of his body, should suffer for what he alone fully bore in our stead, Hebrews 10:12, 14, is repugnant. No one can with a "venturous touch wave the sceptered hand of Jesus" over purgatory, "all richly dropping with the balsam of his saving blood." As Scripture reminds us all too well, Christ's blood was shed "once for all," and as we have observed, contrary to Roman Catholic theology, "he dieth no more – death has no more dominion over him," Romans 6:9.

Those who have put their trust in Christ need fear no isolation from him after death for, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," not present in purgatory, 2 Corinthians 5:8. Paul reminds us that death for a true Christian is, "to depart and be with Christ; this is far better," Philippians 1:23. He knew of no such place as purgatory.

The Double View of Purgatory

The Roman Church entertains two concepts of the nature of purgatory which are very enlightening and which bear repetition if only as spiritual shock therapy for Christians.

1. "There have always been two views of purgatory prevailing in the Church, not contradictory the one of the other, but rather expressive of the mind and devotion of those who have embraced them. One is the view met within, by far, the greater number of the lives and revelations of Italian and Spanish saints, the works of the Germans of the Middle Ages, and the popular delineations of purgatory in Belgium, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico and elsewhere. The other is the view which has been made popular by St. Francis of Sales, though he drew it originally from his favorite treatise on purgatory by Saint Catherine of Genoa, and it is also borne out by many of the revelations of Sister Francesca of Pampeluna, a Teresian nun, published with a long and able censure by Friar Giuseppe Bonaventura Ponze, a Dominican professor at Saragossa. Each of these two views, though neither denies the other, has its own peculiar spirit of devotion."

2. "The first view is embodied in the terrifying sermons of Italian Quaresimali, and in those wayside pictures which so often provoke the fastidiousness of the English traveler. It loves to represent purgatory simply as a hell which is not eternal. Violence, confusion, wailing, horror, preside over its descriptions. It dwells, and truly, on the terribleness of the pain of sense which the soul is mysteriously permitted to endure. The fire is the same fire as that of hell, created for the single and express purpose of giving torture. Our earthly fire is as painted fire compared to it. Besides this, there is a special and

indefinable horror to the unbodied soul in becoming the prey of this material agony. The sense of imprisonment, close and intolerable, and the intense palpable darkness, are additional features in the horror of the scene which prepare us for that sensible neighborhood of hell, which many saints have spoken of as belonging to purgatory. Angels are represented as active executioners of God's awful justice. Some have even held that the demons were permitted to touch and harass the spouses of Christ in those ardent fires! Then to this terribleness of the pain of sense is added the dreadfulness of the pain of loss. The beauty of God remains in itself the same immensely desirable object it ever was. But the soul is changed. All that in life and in the world of sense dulled its desires after God is gone from it, so that it seeks him with an impetuosity which no imagination can at all conceive. The very burning excess of its love becomes the measure of its intolerable pain. What love can do even on earth we may learn from the example of Father John Baptiste Sanchez, who said he was sure he should die of misery if any morning when he rose he should know that he was certain not to die that day. To these horrors we might add many more which depict purgatory simply as a hell which is not eternal."

3. "The spirit of this view is a holy fear of offending God, a desire for bodily austerities, a great value put upon indulgences, an extreme horror of sin, and an habitual trembling before the judgments of God. Those who have led lives of unusual penance and the severer Orders in religion, have always been impregnated with this view and it seems to have been borne out in its minutest details by the conclusions of scholastic theologians, as may be seen at once by referring to Bellarmine, who in each section of his treatise on purgatory, compares the revelations of the saints with the conclusions of theology."

"It is remarkable also that when the Blessed Henry Suso, through increased familiarity and love of God, began to think comparatively lightly of the pains of purgatory, our Lord warned him that this was very displeasing to him. For what judgment can be light which God has prepared for sin? Many theologians have said not only that the least pain of purgatory was greater than the greatest pain of earth, but greater than all the pains of earth put together. This then is a true view of purgatory but not a complete one. Yet it is not one which we can safely call course or grotesque. It is the view of many saints and servants of God, and it is embodied in the popular celebrations of All Souls' Day in several Catholic countries."

4. "The second view of purgatory does not deny any one of the features of the preceding view but it almost puts them out of sight by the other considerations which it brings more prominently forward. It goes into purgatory with its eyes fascinated and its spirit sweetly tranquilized by the face of Jesus, it's first sight of the Sacred Humanity at the Particular Judgment which it has undergone. That vision abides with it still and beautifies the uneven terrors of its prison as if with perpetual silvery showers of moonlight which seems to fall from our Savior's loving eyes. In the sea of fire, it holds fast by that image. The moment that in his sight it perceives its own unfitness for heaven, it wings its voluntary flight to purgatory like a dove to her proper nest in the shadows of the forest. There need no angels to convey it thither. It is its own free worship of the purity of God. This is beautifully expressed in a revelation of Saint Gertrude related by Blosius.

"The saint saw in spirit the soul of a religious who had passed her life in the exercise of the most lofty virtues. She was standing before our Lord clothed and adorned with charity but she did not dare to lift her eyes to look at him. She kept them cast down as if she were ashamed to stand in his presence and showed by some gesture her desire to be further from him. Gertrude marveled at this and ventured to question him, 'Most merciful God, why dost thou not received this soul into the arms of thine infinite charity? What are the strange gestures of diffidence which I behold in her?' Then our Lord lovingly stretched out his right arm as if he would draw the soul nearer to himself, but she with profound humility and great modesty, retired from him. The Saint lost in still great wonder, asked why she fled from the embraces of a spouse so worthy to be loved and the religious answered her, 'Because I am not yet perfectly cleansed from the stains which my sins have left behind them, and even if he were to grant me in this state a free entrance into heaven, I would not accept it for all resplendent as I look to your eyes, I know that I am not yet a fit spouse for my Lord.'"

5. "In that moment, the soul loves God most tenderly and in return, is most tenderly beloved by him. To the eyes of those who take this view, that soul seems most beautiful. How should a dear spouse of God be anything but beautiful? The soul is in punishment, true, but it is in unbroken union with God. It has no remembrance, says Saint Catherine of Genoa, most positively, no remembrance at all of its past sins or of earth. Its sweet prison, its holy sepulcher, is in the adorable will of its heavenly Father and there it abides the term of its purification with the most perfect contentment in the most unutterable love."

"As it is not teased by any vision of self or sin, so neither is it harassed by an atom of fear or by a single doubt of its own imperturbable security. It is impeccable and there was a time on earth when that fight alone seemed as if it would contain all heaven in itself. It cannot commit the slightest imperfection. It cannot have the least movement of impatience. It can do nothing whatever which will in the least degree displease God. It loves God above everything and loves him with a pure and disinterested love. It is constantly consoled by angels and cannot but rejoice in the confirmed assurance of its own salvation. Nay, it's very bitterest agonies are accompanied by a profound unshaken peace such as the language of this world has no words to tell."

6. "There are revelations which speak of some who are in purgatory but have no fire. They languish patiently detained from God and that is enough chastisement for them. There are revelations too which tell of the multitudes who are in no local prison but abide their purification in the air or by their graves or near altars where the Blessed Sacrament is, or in the rooms of those who pray for them, or admit the scenes of their former vanity and frivolity. If silent suffering, sweetly, gracefully endured, is a thing so venerable on earth, what must this region of the church be like? Compared with earth, its trials, doubts, exciting and depressing risks, how much more beautiful, how much more desirable that still, calm, patient realm over which Mary is crowned as Queen and Michael is the perpetual ambassador of her mercy."

7. "The spirit of this view is love, and extreme desire that God should not be offended, a yearning for the interests of Jesus. It takes its tone from the soul's first voluntary flight into that heritage of suffering. As it took God's part against itself in that act, so is it throughout. This view of purgatory turns on the worship of God's purity and sanctity. It looks at things from God's point of view and merges its own interests in his.

It is just the view we might expect to come from St. Francis of Sales or the loving Saint Catherine of Genoa. It is the helplessness rather than the wretchedness of the souls detained there which moves those who take this view to compassion and devotion, but it is God's glory and the interests of Jesus which influence the most of all.

8. "How solemn and subduing is the thought of that holy kingdom, that realm of pain. There is no cry, no murmur. All is silent, silent as Jesus before his enemies. We shall never know how we really love Mary till we look up to her out of those deeps, those vales of dread mysterious fire. Beautiful region of the church of God! Lovely troop of the flock of Mary! What a scene is presented to our eyes when we gaze upon that consecrated empire of sinlessness and yet of keenest suffering! There is the beauty of those immaculate souls, and then the loveliness, yea, the worshipfulness of their patience, the majesty of their gifts, the dignity of their solemn and chaste sufferings, the eloquence of their silence, the moonlight of Mary's throne lighting up there land of pain and unspeaking expectation, the silver winged angels voyaging through the deeps of that mysterious realm and above all, that unseen face of Jesus which is so well remembered that it seems to be almost seen. What a sinless purity of worship is here in this liturgy of hallowed pain! Oh, world, oh, weary, clamorous, sinful world! Who would not break away if he could like an un-caged dove from thy perilous toils and unsafe pilgrimage and fly with joy to the lowest place in the most pure, most safe, most holy land of suffering and of sinless love?"

Our only comment upon these statements is to point out that they are a denial of the completed work of the cross, of justification by faith and of salvation as a free gift of grace, Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 3:25-27, 5:1, 8:35, 37-39; Hebrews 10:10, 14, etc.

The statement of Saint Gertrude concerning her vision is quite revealing, "Even if Christ were to grant me in this state a free entrance into heaven, I would not accept it; for all resplendent as I look in your eyes I know I am not yet a fit spouse for my Lord," page 11. The heart of the doctrine of purgatory is mirrored here. Sin remains upon the soul despite the sacrifice of Christ. Temporal punishment must be meted out if this is to be atoned for – hence purgatory, prayers, masses, and indulgences. In the midst of it all stands Mary to whom they look for deliverance as the statement, "We really love Mary," pathetically demonstrates. Thank God the hope of true believers is not in the flames of purgatory, in the mercy of Mary, or the "revelations of saints," but in the certainty of God's word and the testimony of his Spirit. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," Matthew 11:28. Yet despite all this, Scripture tells us that our Lord fully paid for all sin, Isaiah 53; 1 Peter 2:24, 25, and that we have been saved by grace alone through faith, "The righteousness of God" by our faith in him, 1 Corinthians 1:30.

Scripture knows no purgatory. In fact, it contradicts the dogma repeatedly for what Christ died to forgive, men need not atone for. Yet this is the tragedy of purgatory, a dogma invented to create a place for souls "not good enough for heaven and not bad enough for help." Billions of dollars have swelled the coffers of the Roman Catholic Church, money given to secure indulgences and initiate Masses and novenas to alleviate the suffering of "the souls of purgatory."

Penance

In answering the Catholic doctrine of penance, please direct your attention to Scripture – the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. We have here what I think is the greatest illustration against the doctrine of penance that we could find anywhere in the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ made the correct interpretation for us so there is no doubt as to its meaning. This is the parable of the prodigal son.

Just prior to it in the seventh verse, Jesus said these words, "I say to you even so there will be rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over 99 just people who do not need to repent." The word "repent" here was translated up until the new revision of the Catholic Bible as "do penance," but it was condemned by so many scholars as inaccurate that they were forced to change it to the true meaning, "repent." There is a difference between "repent" and "do penance." Billy Graham has aptly said that repentance means that "when you are walking in one direction, you stop, turn around and go in the opposite direction." This is exactly what the Greek word means, "metanoia," "about face" or "change your mind."

In the Latin Vulgate, the basis of the Douay Bible, "do penance" means "to produce works or perform works of an atoning character." This is not the Greek meaning at all. God does not demand that you work your way to heaven or atone for sin. God demands that you reverse your course of action, your direction of life, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that salvation which is a gift of God, may be received, Ephesians 2:8-10. In the case of a Christian who sins, repentance means forsaking the sin and confessing it to Christ who promises to forgive it completely and restore to fellowship, 1 John 1:7, 9.

In the parable of the prodigal son, which I want to give in condensed form, we find the true teaching about repentance and forgiveness and it is not in line with the Roman teaching of penance. The young prodigal had gone off into a far country. He had taken what his father had given to him, the inheritance which was rightfully his, and had lived among harlots, spent his money and wasted himself in drinking and carousing. Finally, he exhausted his money. He was at the end of his rope, tending swine and eating husks of corn.

Let us see what happens to a man who reaches that position. The Scripture says, "When (1) he came to himself he said, how many hired men in my father's house have bread in abundance while (2) I am perishing here in hunger. (3) I will get up and I will go to my father and I will say to him, (4) Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee and am no longer worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of the hired men. And he

arose and went to his father." Please notice three things. First of all, "he came to himself." Something happened. His mental processes started to function clearly. He came to himself. He realized the position he was in. Reason began to dawn. Secondly, his emotions spoke to him. He analyzed the situation, "I am perishing. Look what's happened to me. I'm in a pigpen feeding pigs. I'm starving. I've got to do something." Thirdly, "I know what I'll do. I will go up and I will go to my father." The fourth thing, "I will say to him, Father, I have sinned."

Now notice, if it had ended there, we would have no illustration against the Roman Catholic doctrine of penance from this parable. However, the illustration goes on, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am no longer worthy to be called thy son." Here at this juncture, he is ready to do what is certainly penance, "Make me as one of the hired men." That is penance – human effort expended to atone for sin.

But let us see what happened to the prodigal and if his attempted penance was needed or accepted. In verse 20 we read, "But while he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion and ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am no longer worthy of to be called thy son." He confessed his sin. His father forgave him. He resolved not to do it again, just the steps that are followed in the confessional. However, to be consistent, he should have done penance as a hired hand because he had failed God, failed his father and wasted his father's goods. But what really happened? His father said to his servants, "Fetch quickly the best robe, put it on him. Give him a ring for his finger, sandals for his feet, bring out the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and make merry because this my son was dead but has come to life again. He was lost and he is found, and they began to make merry."

I want to go back to Christ's statement in that same chapter, "I say to you, that even so there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over 99 just people who have no need to repent." This is the teaching of Scripture. This is the teaching of the Son of God. We recognize our condition, we repent, we change our minds, we change our direction, we confess our sins, then we are freely and completely forgiven by God and re-created or restored, whatever the need may be. We do not mean that restitution should not be made to our fellow man if we have robbed, cheated or hurt them and it is within our power to make restitution. Rather, we protest against penance assigned to make restitution to God or any church, for this Scripture rejects since it contradicts, justification which is by faith alone in Christ, see Romans 5:1. The Christian has complete forgiveness. God has said, "I am he that blots out thy iniquities for my own sake; I will not remember thy sins," Isaiah 43:25, the Douay version.

In concluding our lectures on Roman Catholic teachings, I think it would be wise to sum up with statements taken from Scripture, for God's word covers the entire subject. We are counseled to, "Test all things, hold fast to that which is true," 1 Thessalonians 5:21. But how are we to ascertain the truth? By "studying and showing ourselves approved unto God, workman that need not be ashamed, rightly handling, interpreting Greek, the word of truth," 2 Timothy 2:15.

It is worthwhile to note that the Holy Spirit did not instruct us to have Scripture interpreted for us by anyone as is the Catholic position. We are to interpret it under his guidance, the person of the Holy Spirit, John 16:13, who will keep us sound in the great truths of divine revelation. With the Reformers then, we can declare, and this is the cry of every Christian who lives in and by the word of God, "The Scriptures alone. The Scriptures the supreme authority. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ, the just shall live by faith," Romans 1:17.

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