

WHY I'M NOT A ROMAN CATHOLIC PART FIVE "THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURES"

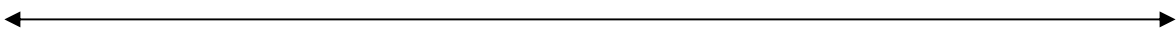
About noon on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk and a professor of theology, posted on the doors of the Cathedral of Wittenberg, Germany, his 95 theses (complaints). These questions were written in Latin on the subject of indulgences, and invited a public discussion about possible errors in the teachings and practices of the medieval Roman Church. At the same time he sent notice of the fact to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz. He chose the eve of All Saints' Day (Nov. 1), because this was one of the most frequented feasts, and attracted professors, students, and people from all directions to the church, which was filled with precious relics.

With this event, the 16th century Protestant Reformation was formally born.

No one accepted the challenge, and no discussion took place. The professors and students of Wittenberg were of one mind on the subject. But history itself undertook the disputation and defence. The Theses were copied, translated, printed, and spread as on angels' wings throughout Germany and Europe in a few weeks.

After serious deliberation, without consulting any of his colleagues or friends, but following an irresistible impulse, Luther resolved upon a public act of unforeseen consequences. It may be compared to the stroke of the axe with which St. Boniface, seven hundred years before, had cut down the sacred oak, and decided the downfall of German heathenism. He wished to elicit the truth about the burning question of indulgences, which he himself professed not fully to understand at the time, and which yet was closely connected with the peace of conscience and eternal salvation. He chose the orderly and usual way of a learned academic disputation.

The rapid circulation of the Reformation literature was promoted by the perfect freedom of the press. There was, as yet, no censorship, no copyright, no ordinary book-trade in the modern sense, and no newspapers; but colportors,



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Only the Emperor was allowed to sit because the hall was absolutely packed full. Eyewitnesses report that Luther stood at the far end, a ray of sunlight lighting him as he spoke with the boldness of a lion. To the questioning of Johann Eck, Archbishop of Trier and his antagonist, Luther refused to recant what he had written. He would take back nothing, he asserted, that his accusers could not prove wrong from Scripture. And then in that place and at that momentous point in history came this famous dialogue:

ECK: Martin, how can you assume that you are the only one to understand the sense of Scripture? Would you put your judgment above that of so many famous men and claim that you know more than they all? You have no right to call into question the most holy orthodox faith, instituted by Christ the perfect lawgiver, proclaimed throughout the world by the apostles, sealed by the red blood of the martyrs, confirmed by the sacred councils, defined by the Church in which all our fathers believed until death and gave to us as an inheritance, and which now we are forbidden by the pope and emperor to discuss lest there be no end of debate. I ask you, Martin—answer candidly and without horns—do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors which they contain?

LUTHER: Since then Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (For I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me, Amen⁴.

WAS PETER THE FIRST POPE?

Tonight we like Luther have some questions we want answered about Roman Catholicism. Who would be better to answer them than the supposed first

⁴ Lewis W. Spitz, *The Rise of Modern Europe: The Protestant Reformation* [New York: Harper & Row, 1985], 75.

Pope, founder of the Roman Catholic Church, the Apostle Peter? First was he really the Pope? Not as the Roman Catholic Church represents him. Why?

1. Peter was married and had a wife and mother-in-law (Mark 2, 1 Cor. 9:5).
2. Peter never thought nor taught that the church was built on him (1 Pet. 2:4-7). Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone.
3. Then, what did he teach? Well, let's ask him by way of the New Testament inspired books and see:

AN INTERVIEW WITH ST. PETER⁵

St. Peter played a prominent part in the early Church. The book of Acts records several of his early sermons. He authored two books in the Holy Scriptures.

A study of his sayings casts much light on his attitude toward the Church and its teachings.

How would he have answered questions both Catholics and Protestants ask in this ecumenical age? We have written and addressed some, as it were, to St. Peter.

His replies are all taken from his own speeches and writings as we have them in the Holy Scriptures. We have used only the approved Confraternity edition of the Scriptures in giving St. Peter's replies.

Q. Could you tell us simply, St. Peter, how we can be saved from our sins?

A. "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).
Set your hope completely upon that grace which is brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 St. Peter 1:13).
"To him all the prophets bear witness, that through his name all who believe in him may receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

Q. Do those who have trusted the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins have to anticipate purgatory when they die?

A. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has begotten us again, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto a living hope, unto an incorruptible inheritance--undefiled and unfading, reserved for you in heaven. By the power of God you are guarded through faith for salvation, which is ready to be revealed in the last time. Over this you rejoice" (1 St. Peter 1:3-6).

⁵ Adapted from John Phillips, Interview with St. Peter, Moody Monthly, April, 1982.

Q. But surely, St. Peter, even the true believer has a residue of sins for which he has to make restitution to God in penance?

A. "Christ...has suffered for you,...who himself bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died to sin, must live to justice; and by his stripes you were healed" (1 St. Peter 2:21, 24).

Q. St. Peter, is it possible for grace to be purchased by us in any way?

A. "You know that you were redeemed from the vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, not with perishable things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 St. Peter 1:18-19).

"Thy money go to destruction with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money. Thou hast no part or lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness...and pray to God, that perhaps this thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:20-22).

Q. What is your opinion on baptismal regeneration, St. Peter? Are we brought into the family of God through a sacrament of baptism? Is this how we are born again?

A. "For you have been reborn, not from corruptible seed but from incorruptible, through the word of God who lives and abides forever" (1 St. Peter 1:23).

Q. Do you think all men will eventually be saved?

A. "But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by that same word have been stored up, being reserved for fire against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (II St. Peter 3:7).

Q. St. Peter, do you think a Christian should be expected to keep all the ordinances and traditions which grow up around even the true faith?

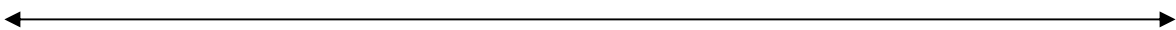
A. *Why then do you now try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 15:10-11).*

**** Q. Should we pray to the Father, or to the Lord's mother?**

A. "Pray to God" (Acts 8:22).

"Invoke as Father him who without respect of persons judges according to each one's word" (1 St. Peter 1:17).

****Q. Who is it that brings us to God,. St. Peter?**



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A. "Christ also died once for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 St. Peter 3:18).

Q. St. Peter, do you think we should give great prominence to the Holy Scriptures in speaking to men about God?

A. "The word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word of the gospel that was preached to you" (1 St. Peter 1:25).

**** Q. Did you ever consider yourself any higher than other Church leaders, St. Peter?**

A. "Now I exhort the presbyters among you--I, your fellow presbyter" (1 St. Peter 5:1).

Q. Is it true Sovereign Pontiff Christ Himself? If so, how will He reward faithful Church leaders, St. Peter?

A. "And when the Prince of the shepherds appears, you [The presbyters] will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 St. Peter 5:4).

Q. Would you subscribe to the teaching that the Church should have a separate priesthood distinct from other Christians?

A. "Be you yourselves as living stones,...a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 St. Peter 2:15).

Q. If we are to regard every true believer as a priest, what is the priestly function of the believer?

A. "You, however, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you may proclaim the perfections of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (First Peter 2:9).

Q. Do I need some other mediator or intercessor?

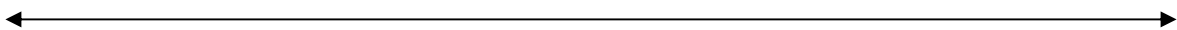
A. "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Q. St. Peter, what should be our proper concept of the Lord Jesus now that He has ascended to God? Should we still think of Him as depicted in the crucifix of as a Babe?

A. "Jesus Christ...is at the right hand of God, swallowing up death that we might be made heirs of eternal life; for he went into heaven, Angels, Powers and Virtues being made subject to him" (1 St. Peter 3:22).

Q. And Peter, what about the church being built on you?

A. "And coming to Him as a living stone (Jesus Christ) chief cornerstone". (1 Pet. 2:4-7). And as St. Paul said: 1 Cor. 3:11 -- Other foundation can no man lay....



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POINT TO CHRIST

It is so easy to get lost in the complexity of the Catholic religion. Therefore, avoid any trails that lead you away from the saving power of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). Proclaim the sufficiency of Christ -- His perfect and finished sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10-14), His grace (Rom. 11:6), His word (2 Tim 3:15), His righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30) and His intercession (Heb. 7:25). This is of utmost importance because Rome adds so much that denies Christ's sufficiency. To His word they add tradition; to His headship they add the pope; to His unique role as mediator they add Mary; to His finished and complete sacrifice they add the Mass; to His high priestly office they add the confessional box; to His righteousness they add their own; to grace they add merit; to faith they add works and to heaven and hell they add purgatory. It is only when Jesus is presented as the all-sufficient Savior that Catholics can be called to repent of these ungodly perversions of the Gospel and be saved by Christ alone.

EXPLAIN THE FREE GIFT

There are three promises Jesus offers to repentant sinners which are totally foreign to most Catholics. They are: 1) the complete forgiveness of sins; 2) the imputation of His perfect righteousness; and 3) the assurance of eternal life. These promises are foreign to Catholics because their church opposes them with a vengeance. Any Catholic who believes these promises of God is condemned with anathema by his church councils (Trent and Vatican II). Rather than trust Jesus for the complete forgiveness of sins, Catholics look to purgatory and indulgences to pay for the residual sin and punishment that still remain. Rather than receive the perfect righteousness of Christ by faith, Catholics seek their own righteousness through good works and sacraments. And finally, rather than believe God's promise of eternal life, Catholics are taught they are committing the "sin of presumption" if they claim to know with certainty they have eternal life. By offering Catholics what Jesus offers, we are proclaiming the Good News which has never been proclaimed from their church. Clearly, for a Catholic to believe the Good News, they must repent of the false gospel of works. Only then will Jesus save them completely and forever and only then can they stand before a Holy God in the perfect righteousness of His Son.

EMPHASIZE BY GRACE ALONE

Since grace is the only means by which God saves sinners, anyone who attempts to merit salvation actually nullifies God's grace (Rom. 11:6). We must, therefore, persuade Catholics to come to Jesus with empty hands of faith. One illustration that has been effective in doing this is to imagine a set of monkey bars suspended over hell. Catholics are hanging and swinging from different rungs labeled baptism, good works, sacraments, indulgences and the Mass because they are taught that these things will keep them out of hell. Now picture Jesus suspended between them and hell saying: "I am the only one who can save you but I can't until you first let go." For Catholics this is a giant step of faith because it goes against everything they have been taught. If they are still hanging on when they die, it will be too late. They must let go and believe Jesus will save them before they perish. This is a picture of the very first command of Jesus when He said, "Repent and believe the Gospel (Mark 1:15).

STICK TO GOD'S WORD

Finally, always remember to use the word of God. It is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). Let it speak for itself. Avoid using your own words because they are void of power. Ask Catholics to read selected Scriptures out loud and then ask them to



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tell you what God is saying through His word. This eliminates your interpretation and removes you from the middle. A good way to get them into the Bible is to ask them how they hope to get to heaven. If they give the wrong answer, ask them if they would like to know the only way, according to their own Bible. If they say "yes", take them to The Roman Road, an excellent outline to follow because it presents the bad news first, then the Good News!

**The Roman Road
from the eternal lake of fire. . . to eternal life with Jesus**

The Bad News

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).

There is none righteous, not even one (Rom. 3:10).

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

The second death is the eternal lake of fire (Rev. 20:14)

The Good News

But God demonstrated His own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8)

God justifies (believers) as a gift, by His grace, through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24).

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved, for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. (Rom. 10:9-10, 13).

Those God justifies He glorifies. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:30, 35-39).