

Into this world add a total spiritual darkness, a complete void of truth, add in the unbridled lusts of the flesh. Now you have a picture of Germany in the early days of the 1500's (the 16th century) when Martin Luther was in his late teens and early twenties.

Life was at a low ebb. Most of the peasant, farm working men drank to drunkenness and lived a rough life. The Roman Catholic Church condemned all but a few saints to an endless labyrinth of fire called purgatory. The souls of the sinful were burned in great painfulness until the price of their sins was finally paid and they were purged. So life was even more hopeless, it was bad here and bad there.

Then to town comes a stream of ancient objects called relics. These are items found during the Crusades in the Holy Land. These relics are said to possess wonderful powers. The most talked about power was to reduce a person's years in Purgatory.

Add to this the fact that in Luther's day, the Roman church was enduring a playboy pope, Leo X of the house of Medici. Leo came to the papal chair by great price to his family who bought him the position. He paid them back by selling the offices of the church to whomever could pay well for the privilege. The archbishop of Mainz, the primate of Germany, having borrowed the money to buy his office, was allowed to issue indulgences to recoup his expenses.

An indulgences promised the complete and perfect remission of all sins to those (or their dead relatives or friends) who subscribed to the building of Saint Peter's Cathedral in Rome (though only one half the money went for this purpose, the rest repaying the archbishop's loan). A popular jingle of the time phrased the promise well:

As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.

The Incredible Relics of the Middle Ages

Do you see what so deeply offended Martin Luther? In Martin Luther's time, if you would go through the elector of Wittenberg's Castle you would hasten your entrance to Heaven by upwards of several million years! The Elector was a political leader in Germany in the late 1400's and early 1500's. In his castle, he had collected almost 30,000 relics. Now what is a relic? Let me read from the final decrees of Trent:

The "Creed of Pope Pius IV" contains a summary of the doctrines taught in the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, and was promulgated in a bull by Pope Pius IV., A. D. 1564. It is subscribed to by all grades of Papal teachers and ecclesiastics, and by all converts from Protestantism. It is as follows:

I, A. B., believe and profess with a firm faith all and every one of the things which are contained in the symbol of faith which is used in the holy Roman Church . . . I constantly hold that there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained therein are helped by the suffrage of the faithful. Likewise that the saints reigning together with Christ are to be honored and invoked, that they offer prayers to God for us, and that their relics are to be venerated. I most firmly assert that the images of Christ, and of the mother of God ever Virgin and also of the other saints, are to be had and retained and that due honor and veneration are to be given to them. I also affirm that the power of indulgences and left by Christ in the Church and that the use of them is most wholesome to Christian people.[1]

So a relic is a piece of a saint's body or a part of some great event in Biblical History that is venerated as sacred and holds a sacramental (grace giving) power. What would you have found in the Castle at Wittenberg almost 500 years ago?

He actually had a piece of the Burning Bush. He had a piece of the Ark of the Covenant. He had a piece of Noah's Ark. He seemed to have collected a piece of everything. The best part was that if you would walk all the way through his castle and pay an admission you would get 1,900,000 years out of Purgatory.

How long is a normal sentence to be served in Purgatory? It must be long if you can get 2 million years out by going to a shrine. You say, well, that's Martin Luther's time, the Church has changed. No it hasn't. We just came back from the Holy Land a few months ago. There's a gigantic brass door in the Vatican today that has a plaque on it that says in the year of Jubilee, every 50 years, those doors will open. And they're opening them more often, I think it's every 25 years. But when they open, every time you walk through that door you get several hundred years out of Purgatory. Where did that come from? It comes from human religion. It comes from us trying to accommodate people and get them to heaven. It comes from a heart that's compassionate, but not grounded on the Bible.

The Folly of Relics

Now you know that's what Martin Luther broke with the Roman Church. It's because it was told to those dear people in the Dark Ages, that if they would spend their last money to come through and see the relics. And did you know every Roman church in the whole world has a relic under the high altar under the place they do the Mass. Every church has to have a relic under the altar. The relic usually has something to do with name. So if the church is named Francis of De'Salles, there is some part of his body, a bone or some object of his over there. Saint Bernard's the same and so on.

But there's a superstition attached that you cannot actually have the grace of God unless this relic is under the altar. And if you take a compendium of all the Roman relics in the world, they have, the relics claimed to be in possession of churches is astounding. The great majority of the relics are spurious. It could be shown by comparison that every apostle has more than four bodies and every saint two or three.

- Three completely preserved right hands and index fingers of John the Baptist. Three! (I only have one right hand and index finger) That he pointed at Jesus Christ when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the..."
- The blood of Christ which Nicodemus is said to have received in a handkerchief or a bowl, is exhibited in Rochelle, in Mantua, in Rome, and many other places.
- The manger in which he laid at his birth, his cradle, together with the shirt which his mother made,
- The pillar on which he leaned when disputing in the Temple,
- The water-pots in which he turned water into wine,
- The nails, and pieces of the cross, are shown in Rome, Ravenna, Pisa, Cluny, Angers, and elsewhere.
- The table of the last Supper is at Rome, in the church of St. John in the Lateran; some of the bread at St. Salvador in Spain;
- The knife with which the Paschal Lamb was cut up, is at Treves. What semblance of possibility is there that that table was found seven or eight hundred years after?

- Fragments of the cross found by St. Helena are scattered over many churches in Italy, France, Spain, etc., and would form a good shipload, which it would take three hundred men to carry instead of one. But they say that this wood never grows less! Some affirm that their fragments were carried by angels, others that they dropped down from heaven.
- There is still a greater controversy as to the three nails of the cross: one of them was fixed in the crown of Constantine, the other two were fitted to his horse's bridle, according to Theodoret, or one was kept by Helena herself, according to Ambrose. But now there are two nails at Rome, one at Siena, one at Milan, one at Carpentras, one at Venice, one at Cologne, one at Treves, two at Paris, one at Bourges, etc. All the claims are equally good, for the nails are all spurious.
- There is also more than one soldier's spear, crown of thorns, purple robe, the seamless coat, and Veronica's napkin that was laid on His face in the tomb (which at least six cities boast of having).
- A piece of broiled fish, which Peter offered to the risen Saviour on the seashore, must have been wondrously well salted if it has kept for these fifteen centuries! But, jesting apart, is it supposable that the apostles made relics of what they had actually prepared for dinner?[2]

What was all this relic and indulgence business about? That is our 3rd element as we study "Why I am not a Roman Catholic". Please open now to Romans 1:17-18

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Seven Deadly Poisons of Romanism & Seven Reasons to Not Work Together with Roman Catholics

But there are seven biblical reasons why I cannot associate with, promote, recommend or even consider, as being a part of the Christian faith, the Roman Catholic church. Seven reasons.

I'd like to even more emphasize that this is not my testimony of how I feel, but it's my testimony to you of a whole lifetime of studying the scriptures, of reading through the Bible four dozen times and looking intently for what the Bible teaches about salvation, about the church, about the nature of redemption, about the atonement, and about the God that we love. And I'd like to share with you my testimony, but my testimony based on the scripture.

Well, what are those seven traditions? We are on the third tonight.

1 The Mass: The first one is the Mass, and I've already gone through this in detail. If you haven't been with us, you need to specifically look in the book of Hebrews, because the truth of the scripture, starting in Hebrews 9 tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission, vs. 12, of sin. Hebrews 9:22-28...

The thing that's wrong with the Mass is that Jesus Christ said, My death, one time paid the total price of the totality of sin of the world. Jesus Christ died once for all. Now you can be the jury tonight, okay? And I'll just be the lawyer presenting the evidence. Jesus Christ, Hebrews 9:22-28 and repeatedly through the scriptures says,

"He offered himself once for all."

The Roman Church says, and I quote,

“That in this divine sacrifice is contained and emulated the unbloody matter, the same Christ. He, Himself, has offered Himself not only for His sins, or for the sins of the people and the faithful who are living. But also of those who are departed and are not yet fully purified.”

And that sacrifice of the Mass is propitiatory sacrifice repeated over and over. Those, by the way, are the documents of the Council of Vatican II, volume 1, and page 149. I mean, that’s what they believe today. Jesus Christ said once and for all the Roman Church says 200,000 times a day we have to sacrifice Christ, and even that’s not enough to get you to heaven. You still have to go to Purgatory. That’s the first error.

2 False Worship of Mary: The second error I shared with you is the false worship of Mary. Some people say we don’t worship Mary, we venerate Mary. They say we don’t venerate Mary, we just say she’s great. But actually, if you read their doctrine, the Roman Catholic Church teaches, again in the articles from Vatican II: “Mary, co-redemptrix of the human race because of Christ she ransomed mankind with Him from the power of Satan Jesus redeemed us with His blood from His body, Mary with the agonies of her heart.”

The Bible says Hebrews 1:3...Jesus paid it all. It all. He did it all, nobody helped Him. That’s what the Bible says and the Roman Church says Mary has to aid in the redemption. Which one’s right? Only one person can be right, it’s Jesus. In an argument, there are two people that are right. If they’re diametrically opposed, only one is right. It’s not am I right or are you right? Is Jesus telling the truth, or is the Roman Church telling the truth? And you can’t say yes, one of them isn’t, because they’re saying two opposite things. And that’s the error.

3 Purgatory: Well, thirdly, not only the Mass and Mary, but the Roman Catholic Church has perverted the marvelous message of salvation and substituted the road to purgatory.

PURGATORY

Roman Catholicism describes purgatory as “a place or state in which are detained the souls of those who die in grace, in friendship with God, but with the blemish of venial sin or with temporal debt for sin unpaid. Here the soul is purged, cleansed, readied for eternal union with God in Heaven.

The suffering in purgatory is twofold: physical pain and separation from God. The suffering in purgatory is necessary because the person has not made complete satisfaction for sins and is not ready to see God because of imperfection. The length of suffering in purgatory is determined by the person’s degree of sinfulness. The time of suffering can be shortened through the prayers and good works of living adherents. This is based on 2 Maccabees 12:43-45, 56. The souls of the departed are purified by fire in purgatory, as suggested in 1 Corinthians 3:14–15, according to Catholic interpretation.[3]

IN THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

The medieval period existed from a.d. 590 to 1517 when the Reformation began. The period from 500–1500 is frequently called the Dark Ages because of the ecclesiastical corruption. It was, in fact, this corruption that sparked the Protestant Reformation under Martin Luther.

Roman Catholic doctrine developed considerably during the medieval period:

- Purgatory in 593;
- Prayer to Mary, saints, and angels in 600;
- kissing the pope's foot in 709;
- Canonization of dead saints in 995;
- Celibacy of the priesthood in 1079;
- The rosary in 1090;
- Transubstantiation and confessing sins to a priest in 1215;
- And the seven sacraments in 1439.

Other doctrinal views emerged as the Roman Catholic church increasingly moved away from Augustinian doctrine. Man was viewed as cooperating with God both in salvation and sanctification. Works became an important part in salvation and sanctification, especially with the adoption of the seven sacraments. The authority of the papacy also emerged during this time, the pope being termed "vicar of Christ." Submission to the pope was essential in both religious and political matters. [4]

The Error of Purgatory and Indulgences

Although Rome teaches that there must be a purging by suffering for one's own sin, it offers indulgences to reduce the suffering and eliminating some of it. Indulgences can thus discharge what Christ's death could not. And in Vatican II, there are 20 complex rules telling you when and how indulgences may be obtained.

Remember the door in the Vatican that every 50 years in the year of jubilee they open it? And if you walk through that door you get an extra 120 years out of purgatory? Can you imagine that by walking through some door in the city of Rome that's only opened every 50 years? Do you know that if I had that door over here I'd leave it open all the time? Go through it all you can if that's true.

Why would you shut it and make it available only every 50 years to people that come on Pilgrimages? I mean, if the Pope really can dispense indulgences, I say, give them all out to everyone. It's really hard, it's really sad.

Well, it says also in Vatican II:

"The faithful who use with devotion an object of piety," (and they designate what that is: A crucifix, a cross, a rosary, a scapular, or a medal.) "After it's been duly blessed by a priest can gain a partial indulgence. But if this object of piety is blessed by the Pope or a bishop the faithful who use it with devotion can also gain a plenary [or a full] indulgence at the Feast of the Apostles or Peter and Paul provided there also and make a profession of faith using the approved formula."

Let me read to you another thing: Indulgences, that's what you get out of purgatory with, are dispensed from, I quote, from the articles of Vatican II, Indulgences are dispensed from

"a treasury entrusted by Christ to the blessed Peter and his successors Christ Vickers on earth, to distribute to the faithful for their salvation." Volume I, page 70.

Do you know what that says? That when Christ left the earth, he gave Peter this treasury of merits of the saints and Peter could dispense that cupful by cupful to worthy people. And thus,

“distribute to the faithful for their salvation.”

Where does stuff get into that treasury from? Well, just in case we didn't know, they explain it.

“The treasury includes the prayers and good works of the blessed Virgin Mary plus the prayers and good works of all the saints who attained their own salvation.”

You know that's amazing to think of. You know what the Bible says? We were all born in sin,

“there's none righteous, no not one, for all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God, neither is their salvation in any other than in Jesus Christ.”

Do you know what the Roman Church says?

“That the treasury of those who attain their own salvation and at the same time”, and I continue quoting, “cooperated in the saving of their brothers. Those who believe in Christ, have carried their crosses to make expiation for their own sins and the sins of others.”

Most of Rome's Church is Not in the Bible

But there are many things that aren't in the Bible that the church teaches, the Roman church.

- In the Bible there was no pope,
- In the Bible there's no papal authority,
- In the Bible there's no papal infallibility,
- In the Bible there are no prayers to Mary,
- In the Bible there's no doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception nor of her body's ascension to heaven,
- In the Bible there's no penance,
- In the Bible there are no indulgences,
- In the Bible there's no confession to priests,
- In the Bible there are no orders of monks,
- In the Bible there are no nuns.

A Short Course in Romanism

I'll give you a little course in Roman Catholic theology. Here's how it works: You want to be justified, made right with God? Here's the process: God infuses grace into you, they use a term “infused grace”. God infuses it into you, it's grace or /righteousness and it's the grace of Christ and the righteousness of Christ and it's dumped into you.

- The first dose you ever get you get at infant baptism. That's why infant baptism is absolutely required because it is the first dispensation of infused grace. And according to Catholic Theology, at that point, grace is infused into you.

- Next, that grace becomes an energy in you moving you toward justification, toward righteousness as you cooperate by good works.
- Every time you go to a Mass, every time you do penance, every time you say your beads, every time you go to confession, every time you do any of that you get more infused grace. That's why some Roman Catholics go to church seven days a week because they need lots of infused grace. They operate under fear that's why they go to confession. Not because they want to tell the priest all their sins, but because they want the infused grace that perpetuates them on the process to righteousness.

If, per chance, as you move along the road you're getting closer and closer, you commit a mortal sin. Two kinds of sin in Catholic theology, venial sins which don't count like big ones and mortal sins which are really big. Any time you commit a mortal sin you're back to zero again in the process of justification. It's as if you just had infant baptism, you go all the way back to ground zero. Most Catholics don't know these nuances at all. All they know is they're working real hard hoping they can get to Heaven. But I'm giving you the inside stuff. This is Catholic Theology. Commit a mortal sin you're back to square one again and you start the process. Do that when you're 75 years old and you die when you're 76 and you've got a long time in Purgatory.

The Problem of Purgatory

What is required of a person in order to be saved? In the evangelical idea it says this. That if a person places their trust truly on the perfect righteousness of Jesus and the work that Jesus has done for us in his atonement and in his life of perfect obedience, that the second we put our trust in that, God counts us righteous. He imputes to us somebody else's righteousness. The righteousness of Jesus and on the basis of Jesus' righteousness God adopts us into our family. Our sins are forgiven and we are translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light and we are saved now and forever. So that if you truly believe in Jesus and put your trust in Him, when you die, you will go to heaven and you will get to heaven by virtue of His righteousness, not your own. Now that's one way of telling the good news of the gospel to people.

The "Romanism" Road of Salvation

Now let's look at it another way. You say to me, what do I have to do to be saved in the Roman Catholic Church? Well, first of all you need the sacramental grace of the church. To pour into your soul the grace of the righteousness of Jesus. Now if you cooperate with that grace that God has put in your soul freely and kindly, and assent to it, so that you become inherently righteous, and stay inherently righteous, when you will die, you will go to heaven. But, if after you receive this gift of grace, you commit a mortal sin, that saving grace that has been poured into your soul will be killed. It will be destroyed. You may still have faith, says the Council of Trent, and while you still have faith, your faith is intact but you commit mortal sin, you will lose the grace of justification. So there you have the clearest repudiation of justification by faith alone because Rome clearly says you can have faith and not have justification.

So if you commit mortal sin, then you have to be justified again through the work of the sacrament of penance. Now, if when you die, you don't have mortal sin on your soul, you won't go to hell but if you're not yet inherently righteous, actually just in the sight of God, no matter how much grace you've received, when you die you will not be ready for heaven. You will go to purgatory. And purgatory is called the place of purging, where the fires of purgatory are not as hot as the fires of hell, they are designed to cleanse you of your

abiding impurities. And you may spend three hours in purgatory, three days, three years, or 75,000 years, until finally you're cleansed to the degree that your righteousness is inherent enough to get you into heaven. Now you may get some relief from that sentence in purgatory if the church grants you indulgences by which they borrow from the merits of the great saints who actually had more merit on their account than they needed. Like Saint Thomas or Saint Francis or so on, so you may get a certain reduction in your sentence in purgatory.

Two Ways: Heaven's and Hell's

Now we're where we meet people in their real lives. Now to hear those two different messages, the one I say to you what must you do to be saved? Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and God will receive you into his heaven today. Or I say cooperate with the grace that God gives you in the sacraments and maybe after 30,000 years in purgatory you'll get to heaven. Now when I hear those two views and their whole systemic underpinning:

- I hear one of them as glorious news and the other one as terrible news.
- One is good news, the other is bad news.
- One is the gospel and the other one is not the gospel.

And one thing you have to know for sure they cannot both be the gospel.

If the evangelical gospel is true, then the Roman Catholic understanding of the way of salvation, the Roman Catholic understanding of the gospel is not true.

And conversely, if the Roman Catholic understanding of the gospel is true, the evangelical doctrine of the gospel could not possibly be true.

Because they are not differing at the fine points, at trivial levels. But they are differing at the heart and core of disparate systems of religion.

To close listen to Jesus Matthew 7:21-23

“Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.22 “Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’