

Y B Catholic? ... You're Born Catholic!

A new look at Catholicism and Christianity

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Preface and Notes

It is unusual to have the Preface (beginning) and Notes (which usually come at the end) on the same page. This book was not meant just as a scholarly study in theology but also as a work of faith from the heart as inspired by the Holy Spirit. All of the Scripture quotations, save one from the King James Bible, come from my treasured Bible that I have used for my own study and for Bible Studies that I lead for my parish. It is the Saint Joseph Edition of The New American Bible “*translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources.*” and approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference; published in 1992 by the Catholic Book Publishing Corp., New York, New York. All page references also refer to this same Holy Bible edition. The Scripture quotes all come from this Bible. General information that I have provided about well known historical figures, such as Martin Luther and King Henry VIII, consists of widely known and disseminated facts and is therefore not footnoted either. Much of the information I have included is readily available online. I did this intentionally and urge the reader to go look up what I have said, read the facts, and draw your own conclusions. Read your own Bible and see if you are inspired by the same teachings of Jesus that I have been. As I said, this is not a scholarly work rooted in semantics and sources, but a work of Faith. So even if you do not agree with me, you may, through your own studies, learn something. *Whatever you learn, May God Bless You! Lee Sowers*

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Introduction

Today there are over 2 billion Christian's in the world, all of whom, Catholic or not, believe in Jesus Christ. Could 2 billion people believe in a myth? This is not to say that mere numbers make something right or make it true. No. It is to say that today there are billions of reasons for believing in Jesus. In this book I will set forth the argument, supported by Holy Scripture that if you believe in Jesus, then You're Born Catholic. Surprisingly, perhaps controversially, even if you do not believe in Jesus Christ, you were born Catholic. Because that was His Plan for mankind established in His New Covenant.

Mark 14:24. Jesus said, "This is my blood of the covenant which will be shed for many."

I hope that this book is read and shared by all men, and women around the world. This book is written from the perspective that the reader believes in Jesus Christ. However, even if you do not believe in Jesus, or believe that another prophet, such as Mohammed, has superseded Jesus' teachings, or that other books such as the Qur'an or Torah hold more truth than the New Testament, I urge you to read this book. You may not agree with everything in it, but you will come away with some things to ponder and think about.

As we look around the world today, and see the sad state to which mankind has fallen, wars, famine, sickness, starvation and persecution in all forms, it is obvious that we need help. We need a lot of help. The kind of help that can only come from the Hand of God.

I do not profess to be an expert on all other religions, however through years of study and discussion, I believe I have developed a grasp of their beliefs and hence their objections to Roman Catholic beliefs. And I know that many will at first be put off or even insulted when I state that You're Born Catholic. Humor me. Read on. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. If, by the end of this book, you agree with me, you win. But even if you don't and this book simply serves to deepen your beliefs and your faith, then you still win.

Roman Catholics believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and we know that to be a truth. Jewish people believe that Jesus was not the Messiah. But because they do not believe that Jesus is the Risen Lord, does that make it the truth? Pagan peoples, like the Greeks and Romans, did not believe in one god but in many gods. Did that make it true? Muslims, the followers of Islam, believe that Muhammad and his teachings were delivered to him by the hand of God and supersede those of Jesus. Does that make it true? Non Catholic Christians believe that their many various versions of Christianity are closer to Jesus' teachings than Catholicism is. Does that mean it's true? For our Salvation we should all seek the truth.

One God, many gods, Jesus the Son of God, or Jesus the Prophet. There can only be one truth, and when we die we will discover it. Let us look at Scripture, God's Holy Word, to see if we can discover these important answers now, while we can still act on our discovery.

A Different Point of View

Having long been involved in deep discussions with my Christian, Jewish and Islamic friends, who were not Catholic, about truths and misconceptions regarding the Roman Catholic Church, it struck me that I was looking at this from my perspective as a follower of Jesus. My Grandfather was a ranked chess champion and taught me to play at an early age. One of the tricks he taught me was to turn the board around and look at it from the other person's viewpoint. That simple change often made the difference between missing an opportunity and seizing the initiative. The difference seeing or missing the full picture.

For years I tried to "turn the tables" and place myself in the place of my non Catholic friends. But I still missed the full picture. Recently, it suddenly struck me that I still wasn't looking at this from the proper point of view. And that point of view was Jesus' point of view. To continue my chess analogy, all of us here on earth, whether Catholic, Christian, Jewish, Islamic or other religion, are on one side of the table and God and the Kingdom of Heaven are on the other side. Heaven and Earth. When seen in that context, the view is startling. Because from God's point of view, I believe we were all born Roman Catholic.

Matthew 16:17-18. Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, *[that Jesus was the Messiah]* but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, *[Jesus renamed Simon to Peter, using the word for rock ... "Simon I say to you, you are rock"]* and upon this rock I will build my church."

** in Scripture quotes, italics are the author's comments for better understanding of the passage.*

Jesus proclaimed that Peter was the Rock upon which He would build His Church. He did not qualify that statement. Likewise Jesus charged His Apostles with the mission of going forward and spreading The Word to everyone in the world. Jesus meant everyone, not just the Jewish population of Israel. His purpose was not simply to provide a new covenant with the Jewish people, but with all of mankind, whether Jewish, Gentile or Pagan. If you study the Bible, there is no place where Jesus made exceptions to the mission of the Apostles.

Mark 16:15. Jesus said to them *[his Apostles]*, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned."

Matthew 18:18. *[Jesus said to them]* "Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

This sacred mission of the Apostles continues to this day, and is carried out by the consecrated successors to the original 12 Apostles. This is called *Apostolic Succession*, the method by which the ministry of the Church was passed down from the original 12 Apostles in a continuous succession unbroken by death or time. It is from *Apostolic Succession* that modern Bishops minister with the same ability to "*Bind and Loose*" that the original Apostles had, even though they died almost 2,000 years ago. **Matthew 16:18 ... and the gates of the netherworld *[i.e. the realm of death, often misinterpreted as "evil"]* shall not prevail against it.** *[Jesus' Church]*

We spend much time reading The Bible and the words of Jesus. We study what Jesus taught, what He asked us to do and what He told us not to do. But it is time now to also consider what Jesus *did not* say. What Jesus did not say is so very important because He was so clear and comprehensive in His Teachings and His Instructions to the Apostles. If Jesus did not say it, then it is fair and accurate to conclude that Jesus did not intend it. There is a sacred completeness to Jesus' Teachings, The Word, The Scriptures, The Bible.

Jesus did not tell the Apostles to carry The Word to everyone but the Jews, or the Pagans. He did not say tell everyone except those who in later centuries would choose to follow a prophet named Muhammad. And He certainly did not say that we should follow other men, not prophets, who would come in later millennia and disagree with His Teachings.

Clearly Jesus intended that we follow His Teachings and His Apostles. He showed His Apostles how to break bread and drink wine, His Body and His Blood, in remembrance of him. He appointed Peter "the Rock" upon which His Church would be built and gave him the Keys of His Kingdom. He gave all of His Apostles the power to "bind and to loose" and sent the Holy Spirit to bless them with gifts for their Sacred Mission to go forth and spread The Word to all men of all nations. Jesus clearly created His Church. That Church was the Roman Catholic Church and since that time we have all been Catholic in the eyes of Jesus.

Let us continue to further explore what Jesus did, and did not, say. Jesus sent His Apostles forth to spread The Word to all men and all nations. And he expected all men to believe and change their ways. Jesus did not say it was OK not to believe and to continue with the old ways, the old beliefs and the old covenant. Jesus did not say it was acceptable to God to believe some of His Teachings and not others, to pick and choose beliefs out of convenience.

Jesus said he would return on Judgment Day. But he never said that in the meantime he would send other prophets to change, expand or alter His Teachings. Jesus never said, *"by the way, in case I made any mistakes then seek out others to bring you the true Word of God."*

John 10:16. "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd."

In short, in The Bible we can't find any place where Jesus ever said anything to contradict the fact that everyone should be part of one Church, one Body and one Faith, based on His Teachings and the New Covenant as spread across the world to all peoples and nations by His Apostles blessed with the Holy Spirit. In short, by one Catholic and Apostolic Church. This reality will naturally lead to a chorus of complaints from other religions which disagree with Jesus' teachings and which we will examine further in the next chapter.

1 Corinthians 12 (13). "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given the drink of one Spirit."

An ancient Greek city-state, in the Roman Empire Corinth was a major city in Southern Greece with a mixed population of Romans, Greek and Jews. Paul wrote at least two of his letters there, making Corinth another key location in the formation of the New Testament.

Arguments Against The Catholic Church

Matthew 24:44. “So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” Jesus mentions no other follow-up prophets before Judgment Day. I have scoured the Scriptures. They say Jesus will return on Judgment Day, but there is nothing about interim visits by other true prophets before that time. That’s because Jesus did not need to send other prophets. He planted the seeds of His Church and Covenant and sent His Apostles to all nations and peoples to spread The Word. He created His Church.

Among those that proclaim themselves to be Christian, but not Catholic, many claim that Catholics have it wrong because the Catholics have misinterpreted The Scriptures. There are some who believe Jesus did not build his Church on the Rock of Peter and that he did not intend to give his Apostles power to Bind and Loose. These religious scholars argue that Peter comes from the Greek for ‘stone’, not rock. *[But none of them mention the term boulder]*. Pure semantics. Does it really matter whether Jesus said, “Simon, you are stone (or rock, or boulder) and upon this stone (or rock or boulder) I will build my Church?”

Is our Faith and Salvation to be based on semantics? While I have always maintained that proper translation and context are key to proper interpretation of The Bible, it is clear that whatever the translation here, Jesus intended Peter and the Apostles to start his Church. To enable them to perform this Sacred Mission he sent the Holy Spirit and conferred on them, all of them, the power to Bind and to Loose in God’s name on earth and in heaven.

Again I will apply reverse logic. I will turn the chessboard around. If Jesus didn’t intend to send the Apostles forth to teach In His Name, then why did he spend years teaching them? If he did not intend to give them the powers and gifts needed to create His Church, then to whom did he intend to give these powers? Certainly he could have chosen any, or many, other men from His thousands of disciples, but he chose the 12 Apostles. If everyone could understand all the Mysteries of Faith by just reading the Bible, why didn’t He just tell the Apostles to sit down and write a book? Why did He send them forth *in person* to teach?

Jesus sent His Apostles forth to continue His Teachings just as the Father had sent Him. Many Protestants believe that the power to “Bind and to Loose” given by Jesus to the Apostles refers only to the power to forgive sins. That is incorrect. The broad powers to “Bind and Loose” were given to the Apostles when he first revealed that they were to build his Church, headed by Peter, on earth. The special ability to also forgive sins was only given to them after his Resurrection and shows that these were indeed different powers.

(John 20:21-23) [Jesus] said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them and whose sins you retain are retained.”

Catholicism & Christianity.

Many people who disagree with the Catholic Church proudly proclaim, I am Christian, but not Catholic. There is a contradiction in that statement. Being Christian is widely defined as believing in Christ and His teachings. Can you be a Christian if you do not believe what Jesus taught? I have searched many pages of The Bible, including both the Old and New Testaments, and can find no place where Jesus provided an “alternative” for mankind that led to Salvation. I can find no Scripture that said people could chose to follow part of His Teachings and be partly saved. Jesus presented people with one choice, not a Smorgasbord to assemble a customized faith that better served their lifestyles than His Teachings did.

Let us examine more closely the terms Christian and Christianity. They were first used to describe the disciples of Jesus in Antioch in order to distinguish them and their beliefs from Judaism. (Acts 11:26 and notes page 196). Antioch was founded at the end of the 4th century BC by a general of Alexander the Great and was located near modern day Antakya, Turkey. At the time of the Apostles, Antioch was a major city of the Roman Empire, had a large Jewish population, and became a focal point of early Christianity.

Given the importance of Antioch and its large Jewish population, it is easy to understand why people would seek to distinguish the followers of Jesus by name. At that time, unlike today, there was no question what the term Christian meant. It meant those who believed in the teachings of Jesus as taught by Peter and the Apostles. Peter established the Catholic Church in Antioch. Peter, who would ultimately be crucified for his believe in Jesus, warned other early Christians; “But whoever is made to suffer as a Christian, should not be ashamed, but glorify God because of the name.” (I Peter 4:16) Christianity was named. The term “Catholic” is derived from the Greek for “universal”, and it was first used to describe the “*universal Christian Church of Christ*” in a letter written by St. Ignatius in the 2nd Century, c. 110 AD.

It is disingenuous to reduce the discussion about Christians and Catholics to the level of petty semantics. It is clear that from the time of Peter and the Apostles that the followers of Christ and His teachings were called Christians, and their religion was Christianity, their Church the Catholic Church. In the years after Jesus, Christianity spread across the lands bordering the Mediterranean and grew greatly in size. During this period, Christianity was the *one Holy, Catholic [universal] and Apostolic Church*, comprising all of the followers of Jesus Christ.

During the first centuries of Christianity, the early Christians were widely persecuted by the followers of other religions who viewed Jesus and His Teachings as threats. Remember it was the Jews who persuaded Pontius Pilate to crucify Christ. In the 4th Century AD, the Roman Emperor, Constantine, legalized Christianity and the Catholic Church, which reduced if not completely stopped, the persecution of Christians and the Catholic Church. Constantine also set about to combine all the teachings, Sacred Traditions and Sacred Scriptures into one body of divine revelations (which came to be called the *Deposit of Faith*). He convened councils, the most famous of which was the Council of Nicaea, to coalesce the vast amounts of information. One of the results was the *Nicene Creed* which Catholics and many Christians still say today.

Because Constantine was the Emperor who legalized Christianity within the Roman Empire, and because Christians were striving to build one “universal” (i.e. Catholic) Church as Christ wanted, they came to be called Roman Catholics and their Church, the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, was the Roman Catholic Church; today often shortened to the Catholic Church. For centuries, if you were a Christian, you were Roman Catholic. There was no “I am a Christian but do not believe in the Catholic Church”. That came much later.

Thus the church that Peter, the Apostles and the early Christians founded was called the Catholic, or Roman Catholic, Church. Catholic means “universal” and it was the universal Church of all Christianity for centuries. During these centuries there were many people who were not Christians and there were many people who still practiced pagan religions and yet other peoples in the far corners of the world that still had not received The Word about Christ. Our purpose here is not to examine the beliefs of these other religions, merely to show that there was one Christian Church. And if you were Christian, then you were a Catholic.

Over time, in addition to other religions, there developed splits or schisms in the Roman Catholic Church as new religions sprang up or split off from the Catholics because of doctrinal differences or directional disagreements. One of these was Islam in the 7th Century AD, then the Eastern Orthodox Church in the 9th Century AD and the various Protestant religions of the Protestant Reformation starting with the Lutherans in the 16th Century AD. This formation of new “Christian” or “Catholic Replacement” religions continues up to the present day. Now virtually anyone can buy a “Ministers Degree” online and open a “non denominational” Christian “Church” in a simple rented storefront.

The founders of these new “Christian” religions did not believe that the Catholic Church has stayed true to Jesus’ teachings. Or they did not like some of the practices or doctrines that the Catholic Church adopted. My question is, where in the Bible did Jesus say; if you don’t like My Church and My Teachings, go start your own? To the many who use The Scriptures to condemn Catholic teachings and practices I would ask them to show everyone where in The Scriptures does it say if you don’t like Jesus’ Church, you are empowered to start your own religion. Did Jesus give every man the power to Bind and to Loose? No.

Quite to the contrary, Jesus proclaimed one God, one Body, one Church. Also of huge importance is the fact that the original Catholic Christian Church was founded by Jesus, that is founded by God. While Muhammad was certainly a great prophet, and Martin Luther and other “Protestors” against the Catholic Church were well intentioned holy men, they were nonetheless men and not God. When in doubt I will “*Go With God*”.

To conclude this chapter, you should realize that saying “I am Christian but not Catholic” makes no sense. If you are Christian then you are Catholic. God recognizes one Church. The one started by His Son who was tortured, crucified, died and resurrected to start it.

Understanding The Scriptures

Since many of my conclusions are based on the Holy Scriptures, and there are many differing interpretations of The Word, I thought I would discuss that in this chapter.

One of the major protests against Catholicism by Protestant Christians (note Protestant is derived from the word “protest”) is that Catholics believe their teachings are “infallible”. This is called *Magisterium*, a fundamental pillar of the Catholic Church, it is the belief that the Church is infallible in its teaching of the truths of Faith based on its interpretation of Sacred Traditions and Sacred Scripture. Many people ask; why must Sacred Scripture be interpreted? Why do traditions play a part in that interpretation? Why can’t a person just read the Bible passage and understand it? Good questions. I will try to answer them here.

I believe that studying, learning and ultimately understanding the Mysteries of Faith is perhaps the most important knowledge anyone can attain. Most of us went to school to gain knowledge. Knowledge about reading, writing, math, and science. In my school we always had a book, our textbook, and a teacher. Oh yes, there were a few students who could just daydream their way through class and seem to know everything in the textbook. But for most of us, we needed the teacher in addition to the textbook to master the subject matter.

Should it be any different for the Holy Scriptures? If we need a teacher to help us learn the basic facts of math and science, then we certainly need one to help us master the Mysteries of Faith. The Church is our teacher. All really good teachers, the favorite ones from my childhood, supplemented “book learning” with their real life experiences. Much of what our teachers taught us wasn’t in “the books”, it came from their experiences and wisdom.

In the Catholic Church we call these experiences Sacred Traditions. They add a richness and completeness to our understanding of Scripture that we could never hope to get from reading the Bible alone. And this concept is even found in The Bible; John (21:25) “There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written.” The “other things” that Jesus did are passed down to us as the Sacred Traditions of the Church.

We have all had great teachers, but who was the greatest teacher of all time? Why Jesus of course. He spent years carefully teaching His Apostles and showing them by example from “the many other things He did”. It would be foolish for us not to incorporate this wisdom and knowledge as part of our Faith. Indeed, just like when we as school students were apt to learn incorrectly or incompletely from merely studying our textbooks, without the help of The Greatest Teacher we risk not properly understanding all of the Mysteries of Faith.

The Deposit of Faith

This complete content of Christ’s divine revelations, as faithfully passed on by his Apostles, is called the Deposit of Faith, and consists of both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Traditions.

(Matthew 28:18-20) Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” It is clear that Jesus intended that the Apostles teach all that He had taught them.

Let us recap. Jesus intended to create one new Church to spread his teachings and the message of His new covenant to the peoples of the world. He appointed Peter as the head of that Church giving him the Keys to Heaven. He appointed the Apostles as its first leaders giving them the power to Bind and to Loose, that is power over all Church matters on earth, and assured them they could count on His support for their decisions in heaven.

John 14: 26. [Jesus at the Last Supper] “The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you.”

Jesus spent years teaching His Apostles, preparing them for their mission, and sent them forth with a body of knowledge that we call the Deposit of Faith. To ensure that Peter and the Apostles had the ability to properly enlighten the world after Jesus ascended to Heaven, on Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to guide them and bless them with the Gifts they needed to carry out their Sacred Mission. This ability of the Apostles and their successors, the Apostolic Succession, to infallibly teach The Word of God and the Teachings of Jesus is called *Magisterium*. *Magisterium*, the Gift of Infallibility in teaching the Word of God.

God intended that all men follow the teachings of His Son and the New Covenant. That is why he sent His Only Begotten Son to be crucified, to suffer death and be resurrected. Did God know that some would choose to stick to their old beliefs from the Old Testament and not adopt the New Covenant with Christ? Did God know that other men, like Muhammad, would appear and claim to usurp the power of Jesus and His teachings? Did God know that others would challenge Apostolic Succession and the power to Bind and to Loose of the Apostles, or the teachings of the Deposit of Faith? Jesus warned us against False Prophets.

Beware of False Prophets

Let us now consider some of the reasons people give for not following Jesus, for not believing that they are Born Catholic. These fall into two groups. In one group are those religions, such as Islam and Judaism, which at worst believe Jesus himself was a “false” prophet, and at best believe that while He may have been a prophet, He was not the Son of God. The second group is comprised of all those who consider themselves to be Christians, but not Catholics due to differences in beliefs and objections against the Catholic Church’s doctrines, teachings and traditions. Scripture warns us against false prophets and false teachers. (Matthew 7:15-16). “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them.”

Looking first at the argument of Jesus being a “false prophet”, let us examine the “fruits” of the Christians and Catholics. According to generally available data, the number of Christians,

i.e. those claiming to believe in Jesus Christ and his teachings, in the world today is over 2 billion. They represent a third of the world's population and are the largest single religious group of mankind. And Roman Catholics comprise the largest single group of Christians. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest religious group in the United States with over 77 million members belonging to its 20,000 churches across the country.

Catholic Schools educate over 2 million students every year at their own expense with a savings to the taxpayers of over 18 billion dollars annually and with a higher graduation and college acceptance rate than most public school systems have. Over 200 Catholic Colleges and Universities have an enrollment of more than 700,000 students. Some 600 hospitals in the Catholic non-profit hospital system treat one in five hospital patients in the United States, not just Catholics, they come from all faiths and walks of life. And the Catholic Church feeds, clothes and houses millions of people, one in five indigents in America is cared for by the Church, without regard to their race, religion or beliefs.

Does that sound like the fruits of a false prophet? I challenge anyone to produce facts and figures that show where any other religion, or religious group, has done as much for its members, *and for mankind in general, including peoples of all races, creeds and colors, who were not its members*, as the Catholics have done over the last two millennia. If God had not intended it, could the Catholic Church have born so much “fruit”? If Jesus were a “false” prophet, surely God would have intervened and the Catholic Church would not still exist.

The Prophet Muhammad

(Mathew 24: 4-6) Jesus said ... “See that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, ‘saying I am the Messiah’, and they will deceive many. You will hear of wars and reports of wars; see that you are not alarmed for these things must happen, but it will not yet be the end ...” Could Jesus have been describing the rise of Islam and the Protestant Reformation? Let us next take a look at the fruits these religions and churches have born.

(Luke 10:23-24) Turning to the disciples in private he [sic] said, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I say to you, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.”

Muslims claim God sent the prophet Muhammad to found the religion of Islam and to set straight His message distorted by Christians in the centuries after His Son, Jesus, had died. However, I am hard pressed as I view the world today to see the Islamic peoples and their countries as better “fruits” than we see from Jesus. And I am not referring to the terrorist acts of a fanatic few. I refer instead to the general regard for human rights, dignity, as well as the standards of living, health and freedom found in Islamic nations around the world. I also refer to the Jihad, the Islamic belief in the holiness of a religious war against those who do not believe in Muhammad. Like Jews, Catholics, Christians. “You will hear of wars.”

Christian groups that have split off from the Catholic Church certainly have no issues with Jesus being a false prophet. However, they do have serious issues with the teachings, traditions

and doctrines of Catholics. Many go so far to claim that it is the Catholics that have misinterpreted Christ's teachings and that many of the Roman Catholic traditions and doctrines have no support from the Scriptures. Let us next review some of these arguments to see how they hold up in light of The Scriptures and the Deposit of Faith.

One of the most interesting arguments is that the Catholic Church use its own dogma, such as that of *Apostolic Succession*, the *Deposit of Faith* and *Magisterium*, to justify its own teachings and traditions that otherwise would have no Scriptural support. Catholic Apologists will then quote many fragments from Scripture that seemingly justify their positions, while non Catholic Christians claim that the Catholics have misinterpreted and misread the Scriptures to further their own legitimacy. This is a zero sum game, a no win situation for either group, and for mankind. Each side can always claim the other is wrong.

One can argue Scriptural interpretations, translations and just plain semantics endlessly. *Ad Nausea*. As I said in the beginning, you can't factually prove "Faith". That's why it's called Faith. So let me take an entirely different approach to resolve these centuries old arguments of Christianity versus Catholicism. Let me use Logic, Teachings and Beliefs. Think of it as Spiritual Detective Work. In the great murder mysteries we read and relish, the detective is always confronted with a crime where there are no suspects, no hard evidence, and very few clues to go on. Yet in the end they use these few clues get their man by clever deduction. I am going to use clues provided by Christian teachings and beliefs.

In studying "false" prophets, the "storefront" variety of Christianity is fascinating. It's very loose in its teachings and beliefs. Join and believe whatever you want to. Jesus loves you. You are saved. Just be sure to put money in the collection basket on your way out. Religion of convenience. Believe whatever you want, pray however you want, worship when it suits you. You will be saved as long as you put your tithe into the church coffers. Do we really believe that Jesus intended that we could be saved just by saying "Jesus I love you" and putting money into the collection? Or did He intend that we must follow His footsteps and teachings to be saved? In fact isn't "selling salvation" what drove Martin Luther from the Catholic Church almost 500 years ago? Let us examine the history of "selling salvation".

Martin Luther - Founder of The Protestant Reformation

Martin Luther founded the Lutheran Religion in the 16th Century. He strongly disagreed that temporal freedom from punishment for sin, called an *Indulgence*, can be "bought" with money. *Indulgences* could be purchased from the Catholic Church during Medieval times. The practices of prayer and acts of charity had always been accepted as penance for the forgiveness of sins by the Catholic Church. Very early on, this process evolved to where, as an act of charity, money could be given to help people, a project, or special cause like the Crusades. By Medieval times the process had become scandalous and widely abused. Selling *Indulgences* was abolished a number of years after Luther's death by the Council of Trent and Pope Pius V. While wrong, was this practice sufficient cause for Luther to launch the Protestant Reformation? Surely he must have had other reasons.

(James 2:17,24) “So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead ... a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” [for context read “Faith and Works” pg 350]

Martin Luther instead believed that salvation was not earned by good deeds, but as a free gift of God’s Grace by faith in Jesus alone, that The Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge, and that all Christians become part of the holy priesthood when baptized. These beliefs directly challenged the Catholic Church beliefs in the *Deposit of Faith*, *Magisterium* and *Apostolic Succession*. The Pope called on Martin Luther to recant his positions, and when he did not, he was duly excommunicated and founded the Lutheran religion in Germany. Not as widely publicized as his revolt against the Catholic Church is the violent anti-Semitism that Luther preached in his later years in several of his writings.

In these writings, Martin Luther advocated that Jewish homes be destroyed and their Synagogues burned. For centuries, Germany and Central Europe have had a strong tradition of anti-Semitism, culminating in The Holocaust of WWII. Is it possible that this tradition had roots in Martin Luther’s teachings? Long before WWII, the Thirty Years War ravished Central Europe. It began as a religious conflict resulting from the Protestant Reformation started by Martin Luther. What fruits did Luther’s tree bear? Do you believe Jesus would have condoned the death and destruction of so many? “You will hear of wars”.

Looking past Luther’s anti-Semitism, his writings and teachings disagreed with the writings and teachings of hundreds of Holy Men over hundreds of years, and indeed even with the teachings of the Apostles themselves. Luther’s version of the Bible was translated into German from the original Hebrew and ancient Greek works and was the first widely disseminated Bible because the printing press was just coming into use. Since he disagreed with the Catholic Church and authored the first widely used non Latin Bible, it is not surprising that he believed that the Bible alone revealed the Lords divine teachings.

(Romans 16: 17-18) I urge you brothers, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles, in opposition to the teaching that you learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent.

Which Bible?

For those who would use the Bible alone as God’s Word, there is a problem. Recall that Catholic’s believe that you must study the Sacred Scriptures in conjunction with Sacred Traditions to understand God’s divine revelations and the Mysteries of Faith. My example of the teacher and the textbook. If you would use the Bible alone, the question becomes which Bible, in which language, and what translation? If you are bi-lingual and speak two languages, you know that there are difficulties in precise translations of concepts between languages. If you don’t speak two languages, take my word for it, or ask a friend who does.

In the Bible, the problem is compounded by the fact that Jesus and his followers most probably spoke Aramaic, while Hebrew was the language of the Jewish peoples, Greek the language of

scholars, and Latin the language of the Roman Empire. The original writings that comprised the Bible were all done in these ancient languages where terminology, concepts and meanings differed significantly from those in use today. For example in Aramaic, there are words for mother and father, brother and sister, but none for aunt, uncle, niece or nephew. That's why we find so many references to Jesus' "brothers and sisters" in the Bible. And why Catholics believe the Bible needs to be studied in keeping with the teachings and traditions of the *Deposit of Faith* as handed down by the Apostles.

Today there are dozens of widely used Bible translations of which billions of copies have been produced in thousands of languages. And these translations differ. Consider the following two quotes from John 3:3 [*Jesus speaking to the Pharisee named Nicodemus*] as translated in two different Bibles;

Catholic: St. Joseph's edition, New American Bible: "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Amen, Amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above'."

Protestant: King James Bible: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The notes in the Catholic Bible (which incorporate the teachings and traditions from the *Deposit of Faith*) go on to clearly explain how Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus to have said "born again", so Jesus continued on to explain what he really meant by "born from above".

Whole Protestant Religious movements have been founded on this concept of Born Again. But is that what Jesus really meant? So I restate the question concerning Martin Luther's teachings, if you are going to use the Bible alone as your only source of studying and understanding of God's divine revelations, which Bible do you use? Roman Catholics do not face that question because we combine our Sacred Traditions with Sacred Scripture.

King Henry VIII and the English Reformation

Consider one of the other pillars of the Protestant Reformation, King Henry the VIII. The King had been an ardent supporter of the Catholic Church during his younger years, but grew displeased in later life when the Pope would not annul his marriage to his first wife Catherine so that he could marry Anne Boleyn. Since King Henry the VIII had been granted a Papal Dispensation to allow him to marry Catherine (because she was his late brother's wife) in the first place, Pope Clement VII refused to annul the marriage.

This led to King Henry's breaking ties with Rome and the Catholic Church so that he could marry Anne Boleyn. He founded the Church of England over which he as English Monarch, not the Pope in Rome, would have complete power. How much of this was a power grab by Henry VIII and how much was out of true love for Anne Boleyn and the desire for a male heir to the throne has been a subject of much debate for centuries. But the facts remain and are with us today. Unlike the Catholic Church, the Church of England was created by an Act of Parliament called the Act of Supremacy. Man's law. Whether the chief reason for King Henry's

break from the Roman Catholic Church was the matter of divorce or not, the facts are that before this time divorce was a relatively rare occurrence.

In modern times, divorce, in all religious denominations, has run rampant. Some who study the trends estimate that as many as 1 in 3 or even 1 out of every 2 marriages in the United States today will end in divorce. True, this data is for all religions, not just the Church of England. But in so far as that Church was a Pillar of the Protestant Reformation and that divorce was a cornerstones of its creation, it's relevant. Again look at the fruits produced.

(Romans 16: 17-18) I urge you brothers, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles, in opposition to the teaching that you learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent.

King Henry VIII's English Reformation, which divided the "United" Kingdom, and Northern Ireland, into Protestant and Catholic factions, was the root of much strife and struggle, and at times even open warfare. "You will hear of wars." There have been many religious wars, The Crusades, the many wars caused in whole or in part by the Protestant Reformation, and the decades of fighting in Northern Ireland. While not a religious war per se, the genocide of The WWII Holocaust also had religious roots. Had not other religions such as Islam and the various Protestant Religions been founded by "prophets" and had the Jewish peoples become Catholic as Jesus intended, how many of these wars would have been averted? How many millions spared? Is war the "fruit" of false prophets?

If, as Jesus commanded, all of mankind was of; One Faith, One Body, One Spirit and One Church, would the past two thousand years have been filled with so much war and death?

All Men Sin

So far we have seen that the fruits produced by other Christians, such as Martin Luther and King Henry VIII, who broke away from the Catholic Church to form their own religions, have definitely been questionable. Divorce rates run rampant. Anti-Semitism in Germany led to tens of millions of deaths in The Holocaust. Bad fruits from false teachers?

However, critics of the Catholic Church will be quick to point out that some of its "fruits" are equally bad. They point to pedophilia among its Priests and a long history of much bloodshed and torture during the Inquisitions. The question we must ask is whether these failings are the foundations of religious belief, like anti-Semitism for Martin Luther and divorce for King Henry VIII, or the sins of a group of errant members of the Church. As Church founders, it would be hard to call King Henry and Martin Luther errant members.

The pedophilic problems of a relatively few priests are the unforgiveable actions of a small number of sinners acting illegally in both the eyes of the law and the Church. It is not a movement within the Church, nor a cornerstone of its beginnings as divorce was for the Church

of England. There are sexual transgressors in every group of every religion, which doesn't excuse or justify these actions. It does mean that there are sinners in every Church.

There are those who sexually sin not only among Catholics and Christians, but also among the followers of Islam and Judaism. Scripture is full of examples of those who choose to stray from God's path and sin. While there are no comprehensive statistics, putting the anti-Catholic media hype aside, there is no evidence that the Catholic Church has a higher proportion of its clergy who are sexual sinners than do other religions in the world. The fact that there are sexual sinners in every Church, doesn't make it a "fruit" of that Church.

While rooting out heresy and excommunicating heretics was a mission of the Catholic Church, especially in the Middle Ages, the popularized view of widespread torture and executions has changed some with modern research. The number of people tortured and executed was less than previously believed and was likely carried out by a small number of overzealous Inquisitors, such as Bernardo Gui. In his roughly 15 years of service as an Inquisitor, 42 people were executed. Actual history offers a sharp contrast to the popular myth that has lines of people waiting to be burned at the stake. Nonetheless, a single death is unacceptable, and a mortal sin. The Catholic Church cannot deny its support of the Inquisitors. Pope John Paul II made a public apology asking forgiveness for the sins of the Catholic Church, including the Inquisition. No Church is without its sin or its sinners.

So let us return to the discussion of fruits. We must acknowledge that all faiths will have sinners among their followers, even their clergy, ministers and holy men. Because all of us, all mankind, are sinners at one time or another. The members of no Church are immune to sin, nor are they infallible. Recall that the Catholic doctrine of Papal infallibility covers only a very limited scope of Papal actions and pronouncements. The Pope can error and can commit sins. Peter denied Jesus three times. Various Popes supported the Inquisitions.

All men sin. Thus the fruit of all men will have blemishes and be imperfect. Have you ever seen a perfect piece of fruit? No, of course not. Only God is perfect. The Catholic Church holds no claim to perfection. However, while I believe that the Inquisition is the blemished fruit of the Catholic Church that led to the deaths of thousands over several centuries, the Holocaust led to the deaths of tens of millions in just ten years. That fruit is totally rotten.

Popes Are Not Perfect

Catholics do not believe the Pope is perfect. Many people mistake the Catholic belief in *Papal Infallibility* with the belief that the Pope is perfect and cannot sin. Another myth perpetrated by many from other faiths. Nothing is further from the truth. Men sin. Only God is perfect. *Papal Infallibility* applies only to a narrow range of circumstances when the Pope speaks "*ex cathedra*" exercising his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians.

When speaking "*ex cathedra*", as Peter did, the Pope solemnly declares that a given teaching of faith or morals, such as the ban on Abortions, is to be held by the whole Church. Such teachings must not contradict Sacred Traditions and Sacred Scripture. This doctrine of being infallible

does not extend to a Pope's "normal" statements, discussions, documents or actions. Indeed, Popes ordered the Inquisitions which were acknowledged by Pope John Paul II to be sinful. Popes are not perfect. Popes can make mistakes and sin.

Having raised the thorny topic of abortion, I will include it in this discussion because it is one of the more controversial topics in the Catholic Church today. While no religion advocates abortion, many critics of the Catholics are opposed to the Church because of its staunch "Pro-Life" position against abortion. I have looked for support in Scripture for abortion, or for the "Pro Choice" movement, and can find none. There is no passage that says one person may dispose of the unwanted life of another, under any circumstance.

Proponents of abortion, the Pro Choice Lobby, set arbitrary limits on the length of time during which it is "OK to Kill". I do not recall anything in the Ten Commandments that said it was OK to Kill anyone at any time, including unborn babies. Unborn does not mean "un alive". Just ask any mother who has seen an ultrasound scan of her baby. It is alive!

It's OK Pro Choice people and politicians say, to kill an unwanted baby up until it is three months old, but after that you are stuck with it. Using that logic, imposing one's own limits on The Commandments, limits that God never intended, what's to stop people from one day deciding that killing right up until the time of birth is OK? Or how about at birth? Or if you like, how about even after birth? Do we go back to killing the newborn like Herod?

Scripture makes it clear that God intended life to be sacred from the moment of Creation. Consider that both the sperm of the man and the egg of the woman are alive at the instant during which new life is created. Life from life. That's why it's the miracle of conception. It is clear the Miracle of Life, God's Miracle, is created at conception. Thou Shalt Not Kill.

What if Mary had decided to have an abortion? What if she thought, I am a virgin and I don't want children, they would not be convenient at this time in my life? The Scriptures make it very clear that the sanctity of life is protected by the Commandment "Thou Shalt Not Kill". It covers everyone, even the unborn. Jesus told us to follow the Commandments.

If you believe it's OK to murder the unborn, at what point does it become expedient or convenient for society to permit killing of newborn babies? Killing the newborn was certainly done during the time of Christ, Herod was having babies killed when Jesus was born. Then of course it's a small step to begin killing the old, the infirm, the sick. Anyone.

Conflicting Christian Beliefs

What do you do if you *Go With God*, but you really feel the Catholic Church is wrong? And there are many that feel that the Catholic Church is wrong in various areas of its doctrines, traditions and teachings. First, ask yourself do you disagree with a practice or doctrine because it is inconvenient for you? King Henry the VIII of England founded the Church of England because he was inconvenienced when the Pope would not annul his marriage to Queen Catherine. Certainly that's not a very good reason to reject the teachings of Jesus!

Perhaps you honestly believe that the Catholic Church has strayed from the teachings of Jesus. Such was the case with Martin Luther. The problem is, search as I might, I can't find any Biblical passage where Jesus says "if you don't like what Peter or my Apostles say, change The Word, or My Teachings to the way you like them and start your own Church.

Many Protestants claim that the Catholic Church has deviated from Jesus' teachings. First we must make a distinction between individuals who stray and sin and The Church as a whole. Just because one, or many, people fall into sin does not mean The Church caused it. Let's look at some of the Catholic practices that Protestants feel deviate from the Bible.

One oft cited deviation from Scripture is worshipping the Saints and having statues of them in our Churches. God told us we should only worship him, not men or idols. Of the many myths and misunderstandings regarding the Catholic Church, this is one of the more pervasive and is simply not correct. We don't worship Saints or their idols. We don't pray to them instead or in lieu of God. We ask them to intercede for us. What's the difference?

One Body, the living and dead 'so we, though many, are one body in Christ' (Romans 12:5)

Catholics, and many Christians, believe that through Baptism we are all united into One Body with Christ. We are One Body with Christ, along with the Saints and all members of our Catholic Church, including our parents, brothers, and sisters. Did you ever ask your mom or dad, brother or sister, to "say a prayer for me" when you faced some important event in your life? Mom, "I have an important exam today, say a prayer for me". Or did you ever say a prayer for a family member? Dad's going in for heart surgery today, dear God please protect him. Of course you did, because we are all One with the Body of Christ. The Saints, even though dead, are our Brothers and Sisters united with us as the One Body.

But you don't worship your parents, or brothers or sisters. As another part of the Body of Christ, you simply ask them to intercede with God and pray for you. I'll bet you have pictures of your family at home and at work. And if your parents, sadly, have passed on as mine have, I'll bet you occasionally still look at that picture and ask them to say a prayer for you. Even after death we are part of the One Body. Nobody truly believes that they are worshipping their parents, or that their pictures are idols. We ask them to pray with us.

(Matthew 18:20) "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The Church, the living and the dead, are One Body with Christ. So we ask our friends and relatives, living and dead, to pray with us. Every Sunday at Mass we all pray for the sick and the homeless, for our soldiers, our priests and priestly vocations. It is completely natural and normal for the members of the One Body to pray together, to pray for each other, and even to pray for others to ask for God's Help. In the Catholic Mass we call these prayers the *Intercessions*. Likewise the Saints. As Saints we know that they were members of the One Body, and that they have been received into The Kingdom of Heaven. So we ask them to pray, or *intercede* for us with prayer, just as we would our parents. Not worship, but an example of the Body of Christ praying together as one just as Jesus taught.

The final point I will cover is a question I have been asked; “if we are Born Catholic, why do we need to be Baptized”? That answer is simple. We are Baptized because Jesus Christ commanded us to be Baptized in order that we might be filled with the Holy Spirit. This indeed is why Children are Baptized as soon as possible, so that they may live and grow filled with the Holy Spirit. Being born Catholic does not mean that we do not partake of the Sacraments, of which Baptism is only one. We are also Confirmed, get Married and receive Holy Communion, and a chosen few earn the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Being born Catholic does not remove the reason for the Sacraments, it allows us to receive them.

Matthew Chapter 28,verse 19, he said, "Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost".

There are other examples of misunderstandings about Catholicism and of religions that have split from the Catholic Church for one reason or another. I realize that here we have only examined a few. There were many others. The Church of Later Day Saints (Mormons being the largest sect) founded by Joseph Smith; the Presbyterian Church based on the theology of John Calvin; and the Methodist Church founded by John Wesley. All great men, but men nonetheless. Today, there are 30,000 churches founded by men unhappy with Catholicism.

My purpose here is not to examine the founding of every religion, nor the refutation of every argument against Catholicism. Instead, let us return to the chessboard and continue to understand why God considers all of us to have been *Born Catholic* regardless of our religion.

We have seen that the Catholic Church can make mistakes and sin such as with the Inquisitions. But is there any alternative to forming another Church? There are many Catholic doctrines and much dogma that has been challenged, and indeed changed, over time. When I was young, Masses were said in Latin as they had been for centuries. Now they are said in our native language. Change. When I was young Catholics could not eat meat on Friday. Now we can. Change. Yes, the Catholic Church can and does change.

Two Paths

When confronted with conflict regarding the doctrines and dogma of the Catholic Church, there are two paths. One path is to start a new Church, creating yet another schism with Christianity. The other path, chosen by many who achieved Sainthood, is to form a new Catholic Order, like the Franciscans or Jesuits, and work *within the Church* to practice as they have been inspired by the Holy Spirit, with Papal blessing and approval. In lieu of forming a new religion, we can work *within the Church* to make sure its stays true to Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Which path do you think Jesus would approve?

Consider the case of Franciscan Friar Matteo de Bascio who believed he was inspired by God *to reject the manner of life led by other friars* and return to the lifestyle of solitude and penance practiced by St. Francis of Assisi. At first, the Church suppressed Friar Matteo and his followers. They were forced into hiding, wearing hoods and beards and living with monks. However; Friar Matteo persevered and his followers eventually won the permission of Pope

Clement VII to practice their beliefs and go about serving the poor. Friar Matteo was inspired by God, and his perseverance in the face of persecution, just as practiced by early Christians, eventually inspired the Pope who exercised his power to Bind and Loose. In modern times the Vatican Councils also provide examples of working *within the Church*.

Jesus intended us to work *within the Church*. How different would the world be today if Martin Luther had worked *within the Church* to change Church practices the way Friar Matteo did? Could it be that the Holy Spirit inspired Martin Luther to have him *change the Church from within*, not to flee the Church and create another “Christian” religion?

Jesus knew that Peter, his Apostles, and all of the future Church Leaders of the Apostolic Succession who followed them, would face all manner of persecutions and challenges over the coming millennia until His return on Judgment Day. . That is precisely why he gave all of them the power to Bind and to Loose. With that power goes the power, ability and the responsibility to keep the Church true to the Sacred Scriptures and Sacred Traditions.

Jesus knew that men would sin and make mistakes, which is why he empowered them to keep His Church on His Path. Nowhere did Jesus advocate the forming of new religions.

(Ephesians 4:4,6) “one body and one Spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Jesus taught that we were all united with him in One Body, which shared One Faith, that of His Church. This is taken from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. Originally a major Greek city, at the time of Christ, Ephesus was part of the Roman Empire and one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean world with an estimated population of 250,000. It was located in Asia Minor, in what today is the West Coast of Turkey. As a major city, it was a focal point of the early Church. The Gospel of John may have been written in Ephesus and early Church councils were held there. Thus, Paul’s letter is an important part of the New Testament.

Many people search the Scriptures for passages which support Catholic practices and when they can’t find these specific practices in Scripture, they claim that it is not God’s Will but merely Catholic Dogma. That is incorrect. We do know God’s Will. Jesus expressed it when He gave to Peter and the Apostles, and hence to all future Bishops of Rome through *Apostolic Succession*, the power “to Bind and to Loose”. Power to make Church doctrine.

Thus, when Peter and his successors “bind” priests to celibacy, or “bind” us to attend Sunday Mass, or do not allow us to get divorced or have abortions, by Jesus’ own words it is also “bound” in Heaven. In order for it not to be so, we would need to find passages in Scripture that supported married priests, not attending Mass or condoning divorce and abortion. Jesus gave Apostles this power. We do not need to challenge Catholics to “prove” their practices with support from Scripture. Instead if we disagree with Catholic practices then we need to find positive proof where these practices are forbidden in the Scriptures.

Jesus Exists

Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, who came down from Heaven and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered death, was buried and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended in Heaven and sits at the right hand of God and He will come again to judge the living and the dead. If you don't believe in Jesus, it will be hard to grasp why You're Born Catholic, but in trying to grasp why, you will be Blessed. And all of us, regardless of race, religion or creed, believe in the Holy concept of being Blessed by God. It is Jesus that many question.

We should all believe in Jesus Christ. To me, believing is not an option. Jesus was a reality. To claim that He never existed, or was a mere prophet, or that He is simply a myth or legend, a figment of peoples imagination, is to ignore reality. Do people believe that Julius Caesar, or Plato or Alexander the Great existed? There are thousands more surviving documents testifying to Jesus' existence, His life and His works than there are for Caesar, Plato, Alexander or any other "historical" person from antiquity. Certainly no mass conspiracy could have created such a widespread and enduring myth or legend as Jesus.

I know that Jesus exists. How can I know that? Do you love your mother and your father? If they have passed away and gone to Heaven, don't you still love them? Of course you do. You loved them while they were here on earth and you still love them now that they are in Heaven. But answer this, do you love Mickey Mouse, Superman or Spiderman? Of course not. You may like these fictional characters, but you can only love that which is real. Like your parents. And that's how I know Jesus exists. Because I love Him. Even though he is not here on earth, I love him just like I love my parents who are now in Heaven with Him.

Peter said; "although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy," (1 Peter 1:8)

I know I loved my parents and I know they loved me. There is no gauge, no digital readout, no dipstick to let you measure and quantify that love, but I know that it was real. True, you could look for evidence of that love by the way we treated and took care of each other, but you could not grab hold of it and measure it. We can see the same evidence of our love for Jesus and his love for us. Those who can look at the world and not see evidence of Jesus' love are truly blind. Those that look and can see only the pain and suffering are missing the point. My parents would be disappointed with me when I let them down and punish me if I deserved it. Likewise we can disappoint and be punished by Jesus. But their love was there and so is Jesus'. To know that Jesus is real and not myth, you only have to know His Love.

Questions (And Answers) of Faith

Some ask, if Jesus loves us, why does God permit hunger, sickness and war in the world? I ask why do we bring these unto ourselves? We have it in our power to end all of the wars, feed the hungry, and cure almost all of the sick. When someone like my father dies of lung cancer, was it because God had forsaken him? Or because he smoked 3 packs of poisonous cigarettes a day?

How much of the bad things in our lives do we bring on ourselves? How much of the killing, starvation, privation and devastation has the world brought on itself? The fact that mankind has made a mess of things doesn't in the least bit shake my Faith.

Perhaps it doesn't shake my Faith because I don't believe these horrors exist because Jesus has failed us, but because we have failed Jesus. We have failed to follow Jesus' teachings. The world has had two thousand years from the time of Christ to get it right and follow Jesus' footsteps, but even counting all of the Christians, not just Catholics, less than half the world follows Jesus today. And we have even seen how many of the various Christian religions differ in major beliefs from the Catholic Church that the Son of God founded.

And the fault lies mostly with us, the Roman Catholics. Jesus intended us to be more than just Sunday Church Goers. An hour a week, \$20 in the collection basket, a prayer before bedtime and Salvation Here I Come. Do you honestly believe that? You have got to be kidding. Not me. Not God. You are kidding yourself and risking your eternal Salvation.

And that's assuming you are a practicing Catholic. Many, many Catholics do not even go to Mass every week, give nothing to the Church and pray infrequently. I've talked to many experiencing a "lapse of faith", and they almost always blame it on some life event, a death in the family, a divorce, the loss of a job, when they felt that Jesus Christ or The Church did not come to their rescue. Jesus never said "follow me and you will have a perfect life".

In fact, all through Scripture and History we see where it is precisely those who follow Jesus through good times and bad, through happiness and sadness, through "thick and thin", that reap the rewards of Faith. And those are Salvation and Happiness in Heaven. Not riches and wealth on earth. Do you recall Jesus' words about a rich man entering Heaven? If you think Jesus has abandoned you, then try *practicing a little more Faith*.

That's right, I said *practicing a little more Faith*. Try adding a few more minutes of prayer each day. Not for you, but for the sick and hungry and the homeless in this world. Put one more can of food into the Charity Collection at your Church on Sunday. Wear your Cross outside of your shirt instead of hidden inside it. Afraid that's not "politically correct", then shame on you! If you stopped going to Mass, start again. Now. This Sunday. If you go to Mass, take a non Catholic friend by the hand and bring them to Mass with you on Sunday.

There are over 1 billion Catholics in the world today. If we each took one non Catholic friend by the hand to Church with us this week, we'd have 2 billion Catholics in no time. If each of us billion Catholics started to actually live as Jesus wanted us to and to spread the Word and His Teachings as he instructed us to do over two thousand years ago, then we would start to see a new world that was filled with peace and love just as Jesus intended.

We need active, not passive, Catholics. If those people born into other religions are not practicing Catholics when they grow up, it's the fault of those of us who are practicing Catholics. We need to be more active and aggressive in spreading The Word as Jesus told us to. We must be more visible in our good works and healing for all of mankind to see.

Ban Abortions, Clerical Celibacy, No Divorce, Go To Sunday Mass, Love Your Neighbor.

No one ever said the path of the Roman Catholic Faith would be easy to follow or would be a journey without sacrifice. However, let's put it into proper perspective. What's at stake is your Salvation. Christ intended there to be "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism" and The Church that Jesus created upon The Rock of Peter to spread that message across all men and nations was The Roman Catholic Church. Jesus intended that we be Roman Catholic. Therefore when we are born, we are born into Jesus' Church, the Roman Catholic Church.

Jesus is alive and well and waiting for you at your Church. Go out and spread The Word.

My Personal Experience With The Catholic Church

My first memories of the Catholic Church are from when I was very young and my mother became a single parent after my dad got sick and died from lung cancer. Society did not have all of the single parent support systems in those days like it has today and times were very tough. The Catholic Church stepped in to help us out and even gave my mother a job teaching in the Catholic School. Without The Church we could not have made it. Now I am certain that many other religions could have done the same thing, however the point for me and my Faith is that it was the Catholic Church that actually did it. The Church saved us.

My early years were filled with religion. I went to Catholic school through 5th grade and was treated to lively discussions on religion and theology at an early age. My grandfather was a staunch Catholic and used to carry a Breviary, a book with the Psalms, prayers and hymns that priests and bishops say as part of the Liturgy of the Hours. We would be out shopping and he would stop in the middle of the store to pray. We lived across the street from a nice little Presbyterian Church, the Hope Chapel, and the newly ordained Pastor was our next door neighbor. This Pastor went on to become a major figure in his Church.

My mom was a great cook and my grandfather and the Pastor would usually join us for Sunday diner. The favorite topic of discussion was, of course, theology. My grandfather the devout practitioner versus the superbly educated rookie Pastor. Interesting. My grandpa's version of Catholicism was rigid, rule ridden and based more on the fear of rotting in Hell than the Priests taught rather than living in love as Jesus taught. On the other hand the Presbyterian Pastor had a more lenient and loving approach regarding all Christians. I found the contrast very interesting and thought the Pastor was a wonderful and caring man. While I wasn't ready to abandon my beliefs, neither could I envision him in Hell.

I've always had an inquiring mind. As I grew up I learned about my Protestant and Jewish friends' religions. Many Protestants did not believe in the Virgin Mary or the Saints. My Jewish friends did not even believe that Jesus was the Son of God. In college I was exposed to even more religions through friends and my studies, including most of the Eastern and Asian Religions and even Islam. I was shocked to learn that many of my fellow students from Communist Countries were atheists. I can't contemplate living a life without Jesus.

These were all interesting views, but I have seen the workings of the Saints, especially St. Jude, in my own life during my childhood. Some believed that Communion was simply a representation of the Body of Christ. But I know that when I receive the Holy Eucharist at Mass it is truly the Body and Blood of Christ. I believe in the Virgin Mary, mother of God. My mom's middle name was Mary. Most of all I believe in Jesus. The full set of beliefs the Holy Spirit had blessed me with did not fit any other religion except the Catholic Church.

All good reasons to be a Catholic. But I am Catholic for a more simple reason. Because I believe in the Resurrection and Salvation of Jesus Christ and that Roman Catholics are the only religion founded by Jesus Christ. One can even go further and state that Roman Catholicism is the only religion started by God, who sent His Son Jesus, as its founder.

Judaism, Islam and all the Protestant religions were started by men. True, some were great Holy Men and even prophets. It is also true that God had contact with Holy Men in the Old Testament, when He told Noah to build the Arc and when, as the vision of a Burning Bush, He spoke to Moses. But the origins of the oldest monotheistic religion, Judaism, are usually attributed Abraham, the founding of Islam to Muhammad, and the various Protestant religions, as we know, to Martin Luther, King Henry VIII and other men. Men. Not God.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, founded the Catholic Church. The only Church founded by God. With all the different religions in the world today, I choose to *Go with God* because;

“I believe in one God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his Kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

Conclusion

As I said in the beginning, fundamental to my argument was the fact that I believe in Jesus. And I believe in the Sacred Scriptures and the Sacred Traditions. In The Word and The Teachings of Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God who died for our Salvation. If you don't believe in Jesus, this book may not convince you. But perhaps, just perhaps, it will get you to think and look deeper into your own faith and beliefs. And that's a good start.

If you believe in Jesus and the Bible, then it is very clear that he started one Catholic and Apostolic Church based on Peter who was The Rock in the foundation of that Church. Jesus gave His Apostles and His Church that the power to Bind and to Loose. He intended that the Sacred Scriptures and Sacred Traditions of His Church be spread to all men of all nations, to all of mankind. Jesus created only one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, a universal Church for all of mankind, based on His Teachings, and led by His Apostles.

So if you don't agree with the Catholic Church aren't you really disagreeing with Jesus?

Does anyone really believe that God sent his Only Begotten Son to earth for mankind's Salvation so that centuries later they would still be arguing about what Jesus meant? While wars rage and millions die. Or who had the most "authority" to teach His Message? While millions more starve. Or whether Priests should be married? While we in civilized nations murder babies by the tens of thousands. Or whether Bishops and Priests really give us the Body and Blood of Christ or mere symbols of it? While epidemics such as AIDS scourge the world. Or whether Mary was really the Virgin Mother of Jesus? While all around us mankind is destroying the world God blessed us with. Is it not high time now, finally after a thousand years, to put aside our differences and follow Jesus for the Salvation of Mankind?

If you study Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition it is clear to me that from Jesus' point of view He started one Universal Church for all of Mankind. The Roman Catholic Church. Which is why if you believe in Jesus Christ, our Savior, then You're Born Catholic. Amen.



Epilogue

I believe in Jesus Christ and my study of the Holy Scriptures has taught me to believe:

- 1. Jesus was the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary for mankind's Salvation**
- 2. He made a New Covenant which supersedes the old covenants of Judaism**
- 3. He intended to spread His Teachings to all mankind through His Church**
- 4. He intended that there be only one Church, one Flock, and one Shepherd**
- 5. To create His Church, He spent years teaching and mentoring His Apostles**
- 6. He named Peter the head of His Church with Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven**
- 7. He gave all of His Apostles the power to Bind and to Loose, to run His Church**
- 8. Because Jesus had to leave earth, the Holy Spirit came to inspire the Apostles**
- 9. Peter and the earliest followers of Christ's Church were all called Christians**
- 10. In the beginning there was one universal 'Catholic' Church for all Christians**
- 11. In the 4th Century, the Emperor Constantine legalized 'Roman' Catholicism**
- 12. For centuries Roman Catholics were the Church of Christ and Christianity**
- 13. Centuries later schisms developed as different sects left the Catholic Church**
- 14. These sects included Islam, the Eastern Orthodox and Protestant Churches**
- 15. Regarding these other religions Jesus warned us to beware of false prophets**
- 16. Today, the Roman Catholics remain the one true Church founded by Jesus**

Because Roman Catholics are the one Church founded by Jesus, You're Born Catholic.

About the Author

Lee was raised Roman Catholic and attended St. Joseph's Catholic Elementary School and Public High School in New Jersey, receiving an ROTC Scholarship to Rice University. He was honorably discharged from the ROTC at the end of the Vietnam War and graduated from Rice with both a Bachelors and a Masters degree in business and accounting, with honors for original computer modeling simulations.

After graduation, Lee joined Price Waterhouse & Co. CPA and worked on mergers and acquisitions for companies such as Hughes Tool, Shell Oil and Shell Pipeline. Lee also worked in education in both Public Schools and colleges, including Rider College and Georgian Court Catholic University as an Assistant Professor of Business. Lee has also worked for IBM, AT&T, H-P, J, Crew, Gillette and Prudential.

Currently an executive with a national real estate services company, Lee has also led a very active life in his parish and community. Lee has worked in fund raising for various non-profit organizations, including; the New Jersey Museum of Transportation, and the Sunshine Kids, dedicated to providing activities and events for children with cancer. Lee was a member of his Parish's Pastoral Council, leads parish Bible Study Classes and is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion taking the Holy Eucharist to the sick, elderly and disabled. He is now working on writing additional historical books.



Mom and I at the Last Thanksgiving

Mom's Story

Lee has also published other works, including **Mom's Story**, the story of his Mother's courageous fight against Congestive Heart Failure and Cancer. This book not only profiles her faith and courage as a single parent when younger, but delves into the deadly details of medical malpractice and mispractice while she fought for her life during her Golden Years.

Mom's Story is available as an E-Book from Kindle Publishing and in paperback from Xlibris.

Y B Catholic?

A New Perspective on the Age Old Debate of Catholicism vs. Christianity, Judaism & Islam

(Matthew 16:18-19)

“And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ...”

“... Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”



(Mark 16:15-16)

He (Jesus) said to them, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.”



(Ephesians 4:4-6)

“ ... one body and one Spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all”

Wars

Plagues

Famines

Genocide

Abortions

Greed before God ... the path to ...



(1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Y B Catholic? *Because You are Born Catholic!*