

WHAT'S UP WITH ... Protestantism

(a rebuttal of "WHAT'S UP WITH ... Roman Catholicism" from juststopandthink.com)

When we compare the teachings of the Church to the Scriptures and the writings of the Early Church Fathers, it *really* doesn't take long to realize that the Catholic Church is the one and only authority that Jesus left us. It is also abundantly clear that the truths of Christ were blurred and in some cases completely obliterated by the Protestant Reformation some 1500 years later.

Though many of the issues that divide Catholics and Protestants today are very minor, some of them are as different as night and day - as are the ramifications. Our intent is to compare those differences with Scripture, Tradition and the writings and teachings of the Early Church. The articles in this series will compare the Catholic position against the varying Protestant positions – and there are many, many differing opinions among the Protestant denominations.

The Protestant charge against the Catholic Church's "*traditions of men*" is a gross misunderstanding of the promises of Christ combined with a rather acrobatic twisting of the Scriptures (**2 Pet. 3:16**). After considering what is taught in Scripture, it will become clear to the reader this false charge is really an exercise in self-examination for the non-Catholic.

Answering the Critics

The following articles are rebuttals to Protestant positions on the Catholic Church as outlined on the anti-Catholic section of "juststopandthink.com", an Evangelical website that seeks to "reach out" to Catholics by misrepresenting many of our beliefs:

Baptism, A Catholic Response – *A Catholic response to Protestant objections*

Confession, A Catholic Response – *A Catholic response to Protestant objections*

The Mass, A Catholic Response – *A Catholic response to Protestant objections*

The Eucharist, A Catholic Response – *A Catholic response to Protestant objections*

The Priesthood, A Catholic Response – *A Catholic response to Protestant objections*

Tradition, A Catholic Response – *A Catholic response to Protestant objections*

Catholic "Inventions" Debunked – *A refutation of a litany of false or otherwise ludicrous claims about the Catholic Church*

At the end of our earthly life when we stand before God, we will not have anybody to defend us but ourselves. We will have to give an account for what we did and didn't do. Did we trust in our Lord Jesus' promises to his Church or did we count on our own prideful opinions, shunning the authority he left us? For example, Jesus' fervent prayer for the unity of his Church in **John 17** was completely disregarded by the Reformers. This tragedy is clearly evident today by the tens of thousands of constantly splintering sects that continue to grow in number.

The Bible is the written word of God and, as such, is without error. However, it did not fall from the sky. It was written (*the books of the New Testament*), compiled and declared canonical by the Catholic Church at the Councils of Rome (382), Carthage (393), Hippo (397), and reiterated at Trent (1546). In **John 14:6** Jesus said, "*I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" In **Acts 9:4-5**, he equates the Church with his very self. It is of paramount importance to point out that the Church (*in 1 Tim. 3:15*) is also called "*the pillar and foundation of truth*" – since it is the Body of Christ. Likewise, it is essential that we

acknowledge the fact that the Scriptures refer to the **Church** as the truth - not the Scriptures themselves.

Since, by the false doctrine of Sola Scriptura, the varying Protestant denominations declare the Bible alone to be the Word of God and our sole authority, we will compare that with what the Bible **really** has to say about these things.

The confusion that was caused by the Reformation continues to reverberate to this day. The tens of thousands of Protestant “denominations” continue to splinter day after day, year after year. The abandonment of the doctrines and precepts of God have given way to the doctrines and precepts of mere men (**Matthew 15:8-9, Mark 7:6-7**):

Some Protestant denominations believe in baptismal regeneration, while others do not.

Some believe in soul-sleep, *while others do not*.

Some believe in the total depravity of man, *while others do not*.

Some believe in the Holy Trinity, *while others do not*.

Some believe in doctrine of “once saved, always saved”, *while others do not*.

Some believe in a pre-tribulation “Rapture”, *while others do not*.

Some believe that only those who were predestined will make it to heaven, *while others do not*.

Some believe that some were predestined for hell, *while others do not*.

Some believe in a woman’s right to choose abortion, *while others do not*.

Some believe that practicing homosexuality is a sin, *while others do not*.

Most believe in contraception, *while others do not* – and the list goes on.

Finally – while this is in no way an attack on any Protestant denomination – it is a presentation of the truths of God as preserved, protected and defended by His Church with the guidance of the Holy Spirit (**John 16:12-15, 1 Tim. 3:15**). The simple fact, however, is that every single Protestant denomination was started by a flawed sinful human being. In contrast, the Catholic Church was established by none other than Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity – God himself.

Early Church Teachings on the Authority of the Church

With each response, we will show the solid Biblical evidence for our beliefs as well as the overwhelming support from the written testimonies of the Early Church. The authority of the Church was recognized by the Early Church Fathers, despite the many Protestant objections that exist today:

Ignatius of Antioch

Follow your bishop, every one of you, as obediently as Jesus Christ followed the Father. Obey your clergy too as you would the apostles; give your deacons the same reverence that you would to a command of God. Make sure that no step affecting the Church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop’s sanction. The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is one that is celebrated by the bishop himself, or by some person authorized by him. **Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be; just as, wherever Jesus Christ is present, there is the Catholic Church.**

(**Letter to the Smyrneans 8:2 [A.D. 110]**).

In like manner let everyone respect the deacons as they would respect Jesus Christ, and just as ***they respect the bishop as a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God and***

college of the apostles. Without these, it cannot be called a Church. I am confident that you accept this, for I have received the exemplar of your love and have it with me in the person of your bishop. His very demeanor is a great lesson and his meekness is his strength. I believe that even the godless do respect him
(*Letter to the Trallians 3:1-2 [A. D. 110]*).

The Martyrdom of Polycarp

When finally he concluded his prayer, after remembering all who had at any time come his way – small folk and great folk, distinguished and undistinguished, and the whole Catholic Church throughout the world – the time for departure came. So they placed him on an ass, and brought him into the city on a great Sabbath
(*The Martyrdom of Polycarp 8 [A.D. 110]*).

Irenaeus

The Catholic Church possesses one and the same faith throughout the whole world, as we have already said.
(*Against Heresies 1:10 [A.D. 189]*).

Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. *For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers.* On this account we are bound to avoid them, but to make choice of the things pertaining to the Church with the utmost diligence, and to lay hold of the tradition of the truth. For how stands the case? Suppose there should arise a dispute relative to some important question among us. Should we not have recourse to the most ancient churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary [in that case] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the churches? (ibid. 3:4).

Tertullian

Where was Marcion then, that shipmaster of Pontus, the zealous student of Stoicism? Where was Valentinus then, the disciple of Platonism? For it is evident that those men lived not so long ago – in the reign of Antoninus for the most part – *and that they at first were believers in the doctrine of the Catholic Church, in the church of Rome under the episcopate of the blessed Eleutherus*, until on account of their ever restless curiosity, with which they even infected the brethren, they were more than once expelled.
(*On the Prescription Against Heretics 22,30 [A.D.200]*)

Clement of Alexandria

A multitude of other pieces of advice to particular persons is written in the holy books: some for presbyters, some for bishops and deacons; and others for widows, of whom we shall have opportunity to speak elsewhere.
(*The Instructor of Children 3:12:97:2 [pre-A.D. 202]*).

Even here in the Church the gradations of bishops, presbyters, and deacons happen to be imitations, in my opinion, of the angelic glory and of that arrangement which, the Scriptures say, awaits those who have followed in the footsteps of the apostles and who have lived in complete

righteousness according to the gospel.
(*Stromateis* 6:13:107:2 [post-A.D. 202]).

Hippolytus

When a deacon is to be ordained, he is chosen after the fashion of those things said above, the bishop alone in like manner imposing his hands upon him as we have prescribed. In the ordaining of a deacon, this is the reason why the bishop alone is to impose his hands upon him: He is not ordained to the priesthood, but to serve the bishop and to fulfill the bishop's command. He has no part in the council of the clergy, but is to attend to his own duties and is to acquaint the bishop with such matters as are needful. . . On a presbyter [priest], however, let the presbyters impose their hands because of the common and like Spirit of the clergy. Even so, the presbyter has only the power to receive [the Spirit], and not the power to give [the Spirit]. That is why a presbyter does not ordain the clergy; for at the ordaining of a presbyter, he but seals while the bishop ordains.

(*Apostolic Tradition* 9 [ca. A.D. 215]).

Origen

Not fornication only, but even marriages make us unfit for ecclesiastical honors; for neither a bishop, nor a presbyter, nor a deacon, nor a widow is able to be twice married.

(*Homilies on Luke*, 17 [ca. A.D. 235]).

Cyprian

The spouse of Christ cannot be defiled; she is uncorrupted and chaste. She knows one home . . .

Does anyone believe that this unity which comes from divine strength, which is closely connected with the divine sacraments, can be broken asunder in the Church and be separated by the divisions of colliding wills? He who does not hold this unity, does not hold the law of God, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation.

(*On the Unity of the Catholic Church* 6 [A.D. 251]).

Peter speaks there, on whom the Church was to be built, teaching and showing in the name of the Church, that although a rebellious and arrogant multitude of those who will not hear or obey may depart, yet the Church does not depart from Christ; and they are the Church who are a people united to the priest, and the flock which adheres to its pastor. *Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church*, and that those flatter themselves in vain who creep in, not having peace with God's priests, and think that they communicate secretly with some; *while the Church which is Catholic and one, is not cut nor divided, but is indeed connected and bound together by the cement of priests who cohere with one another.*

(*Letters* 66 [A.D. 253]).