

WORLD RELIGIONS

History, Authority, and The Pope of Roman Catholicism Lesson #8

Roman Catholicism is huge, claiming over one billion followers. Over half of the world's professing Christians claim to be Roman Catholic. About 25% of professing Christians in America claim to be Roman Catholic. The Roman Catholic religion is supposedly infallible and claims to be the true Christian church, condemning all Protestants as heretics, destined for hell and accursed. Most everyone knows or has encountered those who are of the Roman Catholic faith. I myself was baptized into Roman Catholicism. But what exactly do Roman Catholics believe? Asking a question like that is like asking, "What do Protestants believe?" The fact is Protestants believe many different things and so do Roman Catholics. The difference is that the Roman Catholic religion claims to be infallible, to have infallible doctrines, and requires its members to adhere to the teachings of Roman Catholicism. This is where things get sticky.

Most Roman Catholics don't know what the Roman Catholic religion teaches. I have had discussions with self proclaimed Roman Catholics who are shocked to hear what they are supposed to believe. I have even had professing Roman Catholics argue with me, denying key doctrines of Roman Catholicism. There are so many teachings within Roman Catholicism that many Roman Catholic priests don't even have a general grasp of all that Roman Catholicism believes. Many, without knowing it, reject doctrines which the Roman Catholic church says their members must believe. What do we call these passive rebels within Roman Catholicism? Are they still Roman Catholics if they don't believe what Roman Catholicism says must be believed by its members? They go to Roman Catholic churches and attend Roman Catholic mass. Surely they are Roman Catholic – right?

The fact is most Roman Catholics are committed to a religious system that they don't care to learn about. They hope the Roman Catholic faith is the right one. They enjoy the mass, sacramentalism, the great cathedrals, and "high church" ritual of Roman Catholicism. Yet they never stop to consider what exactly the Roman Catholic religion believes. Part of this is because Roman Catholicism has labored to obscure what they truly believe.

All you need to do is open a Roman Catholic book on doctrine or go to www.newadvent.org and read a few articles on Roman Catholic beliefs to realize that it is very difficult to figure out what the Roman Catholic church teaches. There are so many extra-biblical terms, specialized systems of thought, and Roman Catholic jargon based on Latin that you need a Roman Catholic dictionary to interpret almost any given sentence. If you get a Roman Catholic dictionary, that too, you discover, is difficult to understand and loaded with jargon. It wasn't until the Second Vatican Council that permission was given to utter the words of mass in the common language of the people! Before that, it was only uttered in Latin, so no one understood nor was anyone edified by any truth that was uttered. The truth was kept from the people. Concerning the fog that surrounds Roman Catholic doctrine James White has written:

Politicians use it to their own benefit all the time. Lawyers value it as one of the most powerful weapons in their arsenal. What is it? The technical term is “obfuscation,” defined as the process of confusing, making unclear, and darkening. The more common term is “the fog.” Everyone has experienced it. Sometimes it is unavoidable. Some topics are so complex, so convoluted, that we can’t avoid being in a fog about them. But many times the fog is man-made. When someone doesn’t want his or her audience to see the facts of the case clearly, the “fog” is extremely useful. By throwing out all sorts of irrelevant facts, inconsequential arguments, and pious platitudes, the skilled speaker can misdirect the attention of his audience and obscure the fact that he is in the wrong and his position is lost.¹

We have Roman Catholics who are not aware of what they are supposed to believe, Roman Catholics who clearly do not believe official Roman Catholic doctrines, and Roman Catholics who can’t understand Roman Catholic doctrine, because it is shrouded in a fog of technical jargon. The Roman Catholicism you see practiced in America is different than that practiced in Brazil, which is different than that practiced in Rome. Roman Catholicism tends to be “syncretistic” and combines Roman Catholic doctrines with local pagan beliefs. Though there is one official view of the church, there are many views represented by people, parishes, and cultures. What this means is that there are professing Roman Catholics who are born again believers, but only because they reject what Roman Catholicism teaches.

Roman Catholicism teaches salvation by works and denies the true gospel of justification by faith alone. It claims that the uninspired works of men, popes, and church counsels are of equal if not greater authority than the Bible. It has as its own head, the pope, other than Christ. It has a co-redeemer in Mary. It denies the once for all sacrifice of Christ in the mass. It has its own atonement in indulgences, penance, and purgatory. It has its own source of grace in the treasury of merit. In every way it qualifies as a cult. Yet most books on cults usually leave it out. Why? Because Roman Catholicism teaches many orthodox and biblical things. Because Roman Catholicism varies between countries and parishes. Because there are those who call themselves Roman Catholics who are truly born again believers.

For our purposes in this lesson, we are going to evaluate Roman Catholicism by what the official books, documents, and resources of the Roman Catholic church say is true and must be believed by Roman Catholics. Granted, the teachings discussed will not be known or understood by most who call themselves Roman Catholics, however, we will be discussing true, Vatican approved, Roman Catholicism. It is also to be acknowledged that some of the statements made in this series would be objected to by Roman Catholics. For instance, many would deny they worship Mary, statues, and icons. They claim to only “venerate them.” Yet in practice, it is clear that many in the Roman Catholic do practice idolatry and it is accepted and taught in Roman Catholicism.

¹James White, *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996) 29.

I. HISTORY OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

- A. The history of Roman Catholicism is difficult to pin down for several reasons. First, after the Apostles died there was only one "*holy catholic church*." The word "*catholic*," as we learned in the first lesson of this series, means "universal" not Roman Catholic. Yet people often use the terms Roman Catholic and catholic interchangeably, but technically they are not the same. There has always been, as the ancient Apostles Creed states, "a holy catholic church" which is the universal or true church of Christ, composed of all true, born again believers.

Secondly, it is hard to pin down the Roman Catholic church because the doctrines of the Roman Catholic have evolved over the centuries. Roman Catholicism did not arrive on the scene fully developed but grew into what it is today. Therefore it is very difficult to establish when Roman Catholicism began because it was a process.

Third and finally, it is difficult to establish the origins of Roman Catholicism because Roman Catholicism claims to be able to trace its origins back to who they claim was the first pope, the Apostle Peter. They believe in what is called "Apostolic Succession," namely that there has been one unbroken string of popes since Peter who reigned on the earth as the head and supreme pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. While it is certain that true Christianity can be traced back to the Apostles and their writings as contained in the New Testament, Apostolic succession is not taught in the Bible, nor is the concept of a pope, nor can we trace from history an unbroken succession of apostles. Many of the popes were pagan, immoral, and wicked monsters who could not be considered "Christian" by any stretch of the imagination.

- B. The "Religion Facts" website notes:

. . .with the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 318 AD, the church began to adopt a governmental structure mirroring that of the Empire, in which geographical provinces were ruled by bishops based in the major city of the area. Soon, the bishops of major cities in the empire emerged as preeminent, including the bishops of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople. It was natural that Rome would eventually become the most important of these. It was not only the capital of the empire, but the city in which the apostles Peter and Paul were believed to have been martyred.

The Roman bishop Leo I (440-461) is considered the first pope by historians, as he was the first to claim ultimate authority over all of

Christendom. In his writings one can find all the traditional arguments for papal authority, most notably that which asserts Christ had designated Peter and his successors the "rock" on which the church would be built.

Leo's claims were strengthened greatly by his own impressive career as Bishop of Rome. In 445 he earned the express support of Emperor Valentinian, who said the Bishop of Rome was the law for all. In 451, he called the important Council of Chalcedon, which put to rest Christological issues that had been plaguing the church.²

- C. As one surveys church history they can see pieces of Roman Catholicism coming together starting with the rise of the "episcopacy" or hierarchical form of church government with powerful bishops overseeing more than one church (100 AD). The episcopacy gained considerable power at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 and eventually Gregory I called himself the pope in 590. Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) was the first to teach papal infallibility, but papal infallibility was not dogmatically defined and promoted until 1870 and the first Vatican Council.³ During the middle ages the many unbiblical doctrines which were later to be adopted by the Roman Catholic system, crept in to the church. The Reformation and the writings of Martin Luther, John Calvin and others forced the Roman Catholic church to define itself. Thus the history of the Roman Catholic religion evolved. It slowly drifted away from biblical truth until it arrived at its fully grown state, defined at the Council of Trent in 1545-1563, in response to the reformers biblical arguments against Roman Catholic practices and doctrines.⁴

II. AUTHORITY OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

If you have ever had a discussion with a well studied Roman Catholic it can be frustrating. You keep referring to the Bible and they keep on referring to counsels, popes, early church fathers, the apocrypha, and a host of others sources. In your mind you are thinking, "*Let's just stick with the Bible for it alone is authoritative.*" They are thinking, "*What is wrong with these Protestants, don't*

²<http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/catholicism.htm>

³See John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Facts on Roman Catholicism*, (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1993) 38. The authors note that the more recent declaration of the Pope as infallible at the First Vatican Council means that for 1,870 years the church did not officially recognize papal infallibility! In other words, it is a new doctrine, not found in Scripture, not supported by early church fathers or councils, and is a recent invention of men.

⁴In lesson #12 a time line of departures from sound doctrine adopted by the Roman Catholic religion will be given.

they know they are many sources of authority equal to the Bible?" You are operating on the presupposition that your Roman Catholic friend believes in the doctrine of *soli scriptura*, which means that the Scriptures alone are the only authoritative source of doctrine and practice, and that people are saved through the preaching of the Word of God alone. However, he does not believe that for the Roman Catholicism teaches there are many sources of authority equal to that of the Word of God and that salvation is not by the Word of God alone. This is one of the reasons the Roman Catholic religion qualifies as a cult, they add to the Scriptures.

- A. **Roman Catholicism above the Word of God.** The idea of the church being a greater authority than the Word of God is an accusation that has been made against the Roman Catholic church since the earliest days of the reformers. The First Vatican Council states:

These books the Church holds to be sacred and canonical not because she subsequently approved them by her authority after they had been composed by unaided human skill, nor simply because they contain revelation without error, but because, being written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their Author, and were as such committed to the Church.⁵

The First Vatican Council affirms inspiration and that God gave the Scriptures to the church. So why are accusations made against Roman Catholicism that the Roman Catholic religion places itself above the Word of God? The answer is simple, the Roman Catholic affirms the inspiration of Scripture but also claims to be able to add to Scripture, and if the Scriptures prove Roman Catholic to be false, the Roman Catholics also claim to be the only infallible interpreters of the Scriptures. Thus the Roman Catholic is able to interpret the Scriptures in whatsoever way they please so that the Bible never contradicts their unbiblical doctrines. This is to place the authority of Roman Catholicism above the Word of God. The First Vatican Council affirms this when it says:

Now since the decree on the interpretation of holy Scripture, profitably made by the council of Trent, with the intention of constraining rash speculation, has been wrongly interpreted by some, we renew that decree and declare its meaning to be as follows: that in matters of faith and morals, belonging as they do to the establishing of Christian doctrine, that meaning of holy Scripture must be held to be the true one, which Holy Mother Church held and holds, since it is her right to judge of the true meaning and interpretation of holy Scripture. In consequence, it is

⁵First Vatican Council, 24th April, 1870, Section 2 "On Revelation" point #7. This statement affirms that the Bible derives its authority from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and is given by God to the church.

not permissible for anyone to interpret holy Scripture in a sense contrary to this, or indeed against the unanimous consent of the fathers.⁶

So in other words, no one has a right to interpret Scripture contrary to what the Roman Catholic says is true, which means the Roman Catholic places itself above the Word of God.

- B. **The Magisterium** is the living and teaching authority of the church composed of the pope, cardinals, and bishops. The high ranking leadership of Roman Catholicism is a living group of men, who make infallible decisions for the church. When a decision is made, even after their death, that decision, because it is infallible, is added to the corpus of Roman Catholic doctrine. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* states:

The Council of Trent, even while implying in its decisions and anathemas the authority of the living magisterium (which the Protestants themselves dared not explicitly deny), while appealing to ecclesiastical tradition and the sense of the Church either for the determination of the canon or for the interpretation of some passages of Holy Scripture, even while making a rule of interpretation in Biblical matters, did not pronounce explicitly concerning the teaching authority, *contenting itself with saying that revealed truth is found in the sacred books and in the unwritten traditions coming from God through the Apostles; these were the sources from which it would draw. The Council, as is evident, held that there are Divine traditions not contained in Holy Scripture, revelations made to the Apostles either orally by Jesus Christ or by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and transmitted by the Apostles to the Church.*

Holy Scripture is therefore not the only theological source of the Revelation made by God to His Church. Side by side with Scripture there is tradition, side by side with the written revelation there is the oral revelation. This granted, *it is impossible to be satisfied with the Bible alone for the solution of all dogmatic questions.*⁷ (Italics mine)

Thus it is clear that Roman Catholicism denies the doctrine of *sola scriptura* which says that the Bible alone is the only authoritative source of doctrine and practice and that salvation comes through the Scriptures alone.

⁶First Vatican Council, 24th April, 1870, Section 2 "On Revelation" points #8-9.

⁷New Advent on line *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15006b.htm> under "Divine traditions not contained in Holy Scripture; institution of the living magisterium; its prerogatives".

- C. **Apocrypha** is a group of books written in the intertestamental period (between the last book of the Old Testament and the first book of the New Testament) which are not inspired. Some of the apocryphal books have been accepted as inspired by the Roman Catholic Church and are included in their Bible.⁸

It wasn't until after the reformation started that the Roman Catholic church, in reaction to Luther's 95 theses (Oct. 31st, 1517), officially recognized the apocrypha as inspired. At a session on April 8th, 1546, fifty-three Roman Catholic priests gathered together and declared the apocrypha to be inspired.⁹ The reason for the Roman Catholic Church's desire to include some of the apocryphal books is that their doctrine was under attack by the reformers and they could not support their beliefs from the Scriptures. Their solution to the problem was to declare that the Apocrypha was inspired and add to the Word of God so that they would have more material to draw from to support their beliefs. Contrary to what some have claimed, the apocrypha was removed from the accepted inspired books of the Bible but it was added later on in reaction to the reformation.¹⁰

- D. **Infallible Papal Utterances** are also part of the infallible magisterium and have become part of infallible Roman Catholic tradition. When the pope speaks "*ex-cathedra*," literally "from the chair," his declarations are said to be infallible. The Roman Catholic Encyclopedia says:

[*Ex Cathedra*] Literally "from the chair", a theological term which signifies authoritative teaching and is more particularly applied to the definitions given by the Roman pontiff. Originally the name of the seat occupied by a professor or a bishop, *cathedra* was used later on to denote the magisterium, or teaching authority. The phrase *ex cathedra* occurs in the writings of the medieval theologians, and more frequently in the discussions which arose after the Reformation in regard to the papal prerogatives. But its present meaning was formally determined by the Vatican Council, Sess. IV, Const. de Ecclesiâ Christi, c. iv: "We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic

⁸For a more detailed study of the apocrypha go to www.calvarybiblechurch.org under classes/Doctrine of the Bible/Lesson 12 "The Apocrypha."

⁹Robert L. Reymond, *The Reformation's Conflict with Rome*, pg. 22.

¹⁰ See *The Code of Canon Law*, 978, section 1; *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, pgs. 885-886; Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," no. 10.

authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the church irreformable."¹¹

And

It should be observed in conclusion that papal infallibility is a personal and incommunicable charisma, which is not shared by any pontifical tribunal. It was promised directly to Peter, and to each of Peter's successors in the primacy, but not as a prerogative the exercise of which could be delegated to others. Hence doctrinal decisions or instructions issued by the Roman congregations, even when approved by the pope in the ordinary way, have no claim to be considered infallible. To be infallible they must be issued by the pope himself in his own name according to the conditions already mentioned as requisite for ex cathedra teaching.¹²

E. **Tradition of the Church** is said to be of equal authority to the Word of God.¹³ When the Word of God reveals that Roman Catholic tradition is wrong, Roman Catholic tradition is more authoritative than the Word of God. The Roman Catholic approved New Advent web site states:

Must it be admitted that Christ instituted His Church as the official and authentic organ to transmit and explain in virtue of Divine authority the Revelation made to men. The Protestant principle is: The Bible and nothing but the Bible; the Bible, according to them, is the sole theological source; there are no revealed truths save the truths contained in the Bible; according to them the Bible is the sole rule of faith: by it and by it alone should all dogmatic questions be solved; it is the only binding authority. Catholics, on the other hand, hold that there may be, that there is in fact, and that there must of necessity be certain revealed truths apart from those contained in the Bible. . .¹⁴

¹¹Broderick, ed, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 292 or <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05677a.htm>

¹²New Advent online Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07790a.htm> under explanation of papal infallibility.

¹³Broderick, ed, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 581 or <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15006b.htm>.

¹⁴<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15006b.htm> See also "Magisterium" above and the First Vatican Council, 24th April, 1870, Section 2 "On Revelation" points #8-9.

- F. **Interpretations of the Roman Catholic Church** are said to be infallible. When the living magisterium determines the correct interpretation of Scripture, traditions, etc., the interpretation is said to be infallible.¹⁵

The church, according to St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy, is the pillar and ground of truth; the apostles and consequently their successors have the right to impose their doctrine; whosoever refuses to believe them shall be condemned, whosoever rejects anything is shipwrecked in the faith. This authority is therefore infallible. And this infallibility is guaranteed implicitly but directly by the promise of the Saviour: "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." Briefly the church continues Christ in its mission to teach as in its mission to sanctify; its power is the same as that which He received from His Father and, as He came full of truth no less than of grace, the church is likewise an institution of truth as it is an institution of grace.¹⁶

A survey of where Roman Catholicism derives its authority is very helpful in understanding why they believe and teach the things they do. They have many sources of authority which they believe are equal to the Bible. If the Bible alone, *sola scriptura*, is held to and one uses the Bible to disprove Roman Catholic doctrine, then the church claims infallible interpretation and places itself over the Word of God instead of under its scrutiny.

III. THE POPE OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

- A. As stated in lesson #3 of this series, **The Pope** is referred to in Roman Catholicism as Bishop of Rome, successor to Saint Peter, Prince of the Apostles, Pontifex Maximus, Vicar of Christ and Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church.
- B. The *Catholic Encyclopedia*, speaking of the pope, states:
1. "The title pope, once used with far greater latitude (see below, section V), is at present employed solely to denote the Bishop of

¹⁵Broderick ed, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 581.

¹⁶New Advent online *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15006b.htm>.

Rome, who, in virtue of his position as successor of St. Peter, is the chief pastor of the whole church, the Vicar of Christ upon earth.”¹⁷

2. The pope supposedly derives his authority from Peter, who is said to be the first pope. The pope receives power from the “Holy See” (also called “Apostolic See”). The *Catholic Encyclopedia* defines the Holy See as (notice the obfuscation):

A term derived from the enthronement-ceremony of the bishops of Rome. The seat or chair in question must not be confounded with the ancient *sedes gestatoria* in the centre of the apse of St. Peter's, and immemorially venerated as the *cathedra Petri*, or chair of Peter; the term means, in a general sense, the actual seat (i.e. residence) of the supreme pastor of the church, together with the various ecclesiastical authorities who constitute the central administration.

In simple terms, each pope takes over Peter's chair or throne as king or head of the church. This is why the pope wears the “triple crown.” Though the symbolism of the triple crown and its origins are debated, various views are that it represents “Supreme Pontiff: Universal Pastor (top), Universal Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction (middle) and Temporal Power (bottom)”. Others suggest its three tiers represent “Father of princes and kings, Ruler of the world, Vicar of our Savior Jesus Christ”. When the pope is crowned words are uttered in Latin which translated mean, “*Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns and know that thou art Father of Princes and Kings, Ruler of the World, Vicar of Our Savior Jesus Christ in earth, to whom is honor and glory in the ages of ages.*”¹⁸

C. “The Great Papal Schism” and Ungodly Popes

Though the pope is to be a godly man, representative and vicar of Christ, apostle, infallible when speaking *ex cathedra*, head of the church, and king of the world appointed by God, history reveals that many popes were children and pawns of Satan. E. R. Chamberlin in his work, *The Bad Popes*, gives a candid and shocking survey of seven of the most evil Roman Catholic popes. The dust jacket reads:

¹⁷<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12260a.htm>

¹⁸http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_Tiara

Against the background of this turbulent era, E. R. Chamberlin explores the lives, both private and public, of John XII, the dissolute Roman prince, Benedict IX, who subjected the Papacy to its greatest indignity; Boniface VIII, who carried the temporal claims of popes to supreme heights and was destroyed by them; Urban VI, the wild man from Naples, whose grotesque savageries widened and maintained the scandalous gap of the Great Schism; Alexander VI, who brought to the See of Peter the intrigues of Borgias; Leo X, civilized, urban, indifferent to the pleas of Augustinian preacher from the North, Martin Luther; and Clement VII, the unskillful fox, who fell tricked by the Holy Roman Emperor, bringing down Rome itself.¹⁹

1. Robert Morgan discusses this, the Great Papal Schism in Roman Catholic history, saying:

Two heads aren't always better than one—and three heads can get downright ridiculous. For example ... During medieval days, the pope reigned as the most powerful figure on earth, a superleader combining religious and political authority in one gilded role. But between 1,300 and 1,500 political leaders in England and France began defying the papal father.

The harshest conflict arose when troops of France's King Philip burst into the bedroom of 86-year-old Pope Boniface, more or less frightening him to death. A Frenchman, Pope Clement V, replaced him and moved the papal residence to France. Thus began a 72-year period of six successive French popes, all of whom chose to live in the small town of Avignon, France, rather than in Rome. This "exile" has been called the Babylonian Captivity of the papacy. Tensions between France and Italy eventually led to the election of two popes, one chosen by the Italian faction and the other by the French. This "Great Papal Schism" lasted for 39 years, each pope having his own College of Cardinals, each claiming to be the true vicar of Christ.

In 1409 a majority of cardinals from both camps agreed to end the schism by deposing both popes and electing a new one from scratch. The result? When neither of the old popes resigned, the number increased to three. The ridiculous spectacle of three popes led to the Council of Constance

¹⁹E. R. Chamberlin, *The Bad Popes*, (Barns and Nobel Books) front dust jacket.

convening on November 5, 1414—the largest church council in history and the most important since the Council of Nicaea in 325. Constance, a village of 6,000, swelled with 5,000 delegates along with an army of servants, secretaries, peddlers, physicians, quacks, minstrels, and 1,500 prostitutes. The council met for three years and at length persuaded one of the popes to resign and deposed the other two. In 1417 it chose a new leader, Pope Martin V, thus effectively ending the Great Schism and the Babylonian Captivity.

But the damage to the Vatican's prestige had been wrought, helping pave the way for the Reformation exactly 100 years later.²⁰

2. Robert Morgan describes one of the most ungodly popes of all times, Alexander VI:

The history of the church tells lessons good and bad. Its heroes include the noblest saints who ever lived, but its rosters also record scoundrels who have blackened its name. For example ...

In 1460 29-year-old Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia of Spain fumed as he opened the letter from the reigning pope. Pius II was upset over news of another wild Borgia party. "None of the allurements of love was lacking," the pope complained. He condemned Borgia's orgies, warning him of "disgrace" and "contempt."

But Borgia, ever more unrestrained, advanced in office until he purchased the papacy itself in 1492. He called himself Pope Alexander VI. His sinful exploits increased with age, and he always kept a stable of women.

But Pope Alexander was upstaged by his illegitimate daughter, Lucrezia Borgia. What we know of Lucrezia is sketchy but vivid. She was charming, shrewd, and bewitching. Her long, golden hair crowned her angelic face and reached almost to her feet. She inherited her father's lustiness as a teenager.

²⁰Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day : 265 Amazing and Inspiring Stories About Saints, Martyrs & Heroes*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000) Nov. 5th.

Her brother Caesar had become a cardinal who mixed church work with immorality and murder. And another Borgia brother, Juan, was equally immoral.

In the 1490s Rome gossiped that Lucrezia was sleeping with her father and both her brothers—incest upon incest and that the brothers were violently jealous. On the morning of June 15, 1497, Juan’s corpse was found in the Tiber, bearing nine dagger wounds. Caesar was suspected, though nothing was proven.

Lucrezia became pregnant. The Vatican sought to hide her condition, but word filtered out. The child was named Giovanni. But who was his father? On September 1, 1501 Pope Alexander VI issued two extraordinary edicts. The first, which was made public, identified Giovanni as Caesar’s child. But the second, hidden in church vaults, identified Giovanni as the pope’s own son, making Pope Alexander both the child’s father and his grandfather. A young monk named Martin Luther was watching.²¹

3. Robert Morgan discusses Benedetto Gaetani saying:

Gaetani, a clergyman, carried himself with aplomb, serving the Vatican well in various capacities across Europe. When he became Pope Boniface VIII in 1294, he determined to raise the papacy to its highest point. His crown contained 48 rubies, 72 sapphires, 45 emeralds, and 66 large pearls. The Roman pontiff, he said, “is most high over princes, and monarchs receive their light from him as the moon receives its light from the sun.” He sometimes appeared before pilgrims crying, “I am Caesar. I am emperor.”

France’s young King Philip IV would have none of it, and he continually outmaneuvered Boniface in diplomatic skirmishes. Things came to a head when Philip arrested the pope’s legate. Boniface roared back with a document known as *Ausculta fili*—Give ear, my son—charging Philip with arrogance toward the clergy and with plundering church property. Philip assembled the French Parliament and asserted independence from the church.

²¹ Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day : 265 Amazing and Inspiring Stories About Saints, Martyrs & Heroes*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000) Sept. 2nd.

The pope then issued another edict, the most extreme assertion of papal power in church history, called *Unam sanctam*. The pope is the vicar of Christ, it said, and every human must obey him. The pope further announced that on September 8, 1303, he would appear at the church of Anagni, Italy, near his summer residence, and with great solemnity pronounce a ban on Philip.

September 8th never came. On September 7 Philip's commandos attacked the papal residence and burst in on the 86-year-old pope. He was roughly treated. His palace was looted and the cathedral was burned, its relics destroyed. Its most priceless possession, a vase reportedly containing milk from Mary's breasts, was shattered.

Boniface remained prisoner for three days till forces loyal to him retook the palace. But the old man never recovered. He lost his mind and began beating his head against the wall. He refused to eat. A month later he died. The event is known to history as the "Terrible Day at Anagni," and it marked the beginning of the decline of the papacy in medieval Europe.²²

Thus the history, authority, and popes of Roman Catholicism provide a sad story indeed. For a religion that claims to be the true church, claims to be the infallible interpreters of Scripture, having unbroken apostolic succession from Peter, the Holy See, and Magisterium, the fact is that Roman Catholicism, as defined and defended by the Roman Catholic religion itself, promotes the doctrines of demons. This will become even more evident in the following lessons as we bring the Word of God to bear on the many false doctrines of Roman Catholicism. Jesus said, "*You will know them by their fruits.*"

²²Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day : 265 Amazing and Inspiring Stories About Saints, Martyrs & Heroes*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000) Sept. 8th.