

# Why I Left The Catholic Church

by David J. Riggs

## Introduction:

In this lesson I want to state some of the reasons I left the Catholic Church. I do not wish to state any of the personal experiences I had as result of leaving. I will mention, though, that I came from a large, devout Catholic family of twelve children. I attended Trinity High School in Louisville, Kentucky. At the time of my intense Scriptural study, I had two brothers who were enrolled in Catholic seminaries studying to be priests. I also want to state I did not leave the Catholic Church because of some evil that I had done or that was done to me. I left the Catholic Church because I came to believe that it was contrary to the Bible. This I will endeavor to show in this study.

## **THE FIRST REASON I LEFT IS BECAUSE THE CATHOLICS DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE TRUTH.**

To illustrate what I mean by this, I will explain the difference in the two sides. Those with the right attitude toward the truth are always willing to test what they teach with others. They invite those of opposite views to work together for truth and unity. They appreciate when those who differ with them point out where they think they are wrong. They have everything thoroughly tested, studying arguments both for and against, looking at both sides of the question.

Those with the wrong attitude toward the truth are not willing to test what they teach in fair and open discussion, privately or publicly. They do not invite others to point out where they think they are wrong, and do not appreciate when others try to do so. They won't allow their members to hear both sides of an issue, and especially they don't want them to examine opposing arguments.

Hopefully, one can now understand what I mean when I said the Catholics do not have the right attitude toward the truth. Catholics are not allowed, and especially are not encouraged to hear both sides regarding truth and error. They are not to read books which differ from their doctrine. Thus, they are encouraged by the clergy to be closed minded to anything which differs from Catholicism. We ask, "Why don't Catholic officials encourage their members to examine opposing Scriptural teaching?" False teachers have learned that when truth and error are examined side by side, some begin to see the truth. False teachers are afraid of being exposed and of losing their members.

## **THE NEXT REASON I LEFT IS BECAUSE THE BIBLE ONLY IS THE ALL SUFFICIENT GUIDE TO SALVATION, BUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES THAT IT IS NOT.**

The Catholic Catechism For Adults on page 52 says, "Can you learn to save your soul just by reading the Bible? No, because certain things in the Bible can be misunderstood, and because the Bible does not have everything God taught." Notice that the first part of their answer to "Can you

learn to save your soul just by reading the Bible?" is, "No..." However, their own translations of the Bible teach the opposite. All Scriptural quotations that I will be giving are from Catholic translations. 2 Tim. 3:15-17 says, "And because from thy infancy thou hast known the holy scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation, by faith which is Christ Jesus. All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." Thus, the apostle Paul by the inspiration of God, says to Timothy "thou hast known the holy scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation" and make you "perfect, furnished to every good work."

Rom. 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and to the Greek. James 1:21 says, "...With meekness receive the engrafted word, which is able to save you souls." Consequently, the word contained in the Bible is able to save our souls.

The next part of the answer in the Catechism to the question, "Can you learn to save your soul just by the Bible?" is, "No, because certain things in the Bible can be misunderstood..." They are implying that the Bible cannot be understood. John A. O'Brien, the Catholic author of the book, "The Faith of Millions," is much more expressive when he says on page 152, "The Bible is not a clear and intelligible guide to all..." The book, "The Faith of Millions" was given to me before my conversion by my older brother Norman who was at the time a student at St. Meinrad Seminary, St. Meinrad, Indiana.

The apostle Paul said we can understand what he wrote. "If yet, you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me towards you: how that, according to revelation, the mystery has been made known to me, as I have written above in few words; as you reading, may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:2-4). Paul said the mystery had been made know to him by the revelation of God. He then showed that he was writing it e.g., "as I have written above in few words" (in the chapters prior to this) and "as you reading, may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." In other words, when we read what he wrote, we can understand what he understood. Paul also said, "For we write nothing to you that you do not read and understand" (2 Cor. 1:13) and "Therefore do not become foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Thus, the inspired writers taught that we most certainly can understand the Scriptures.

The last part of the answer given in the Catechism to the question, "Can you learn to save your soul just by reading the Bible?" was "No...because the Bible does not have everything God taught." The Faith of Millions, on pages 153-154 says, "The Bible does not contain all the teaching of the Christian religion, nor does it formulate all the duties of its members." The Scriptures contain everything that is necessary to equip the man of God for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). There is not a solitary good work that the Christian can do which is not provided in the Scriptures. The Scriptural proof they give for the Bible not containing everything God

taught, is John 20:30. It says, "Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book." (See Catechism For Adults, p. 10).

In John 20:30, John simply said that Jesus did many other signs (miracles) which he did record. Notice, though, what John says in the next verse, "...But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." Thus, the apostle clearly shows that he wrote sufficient things to produce the faith which brings life in the name of Jesus. Life in the name of Jesus refers to eternal life and it is obtained by belief in the things written by the inspired writers.

We freely admit that the Scriptures do not contain everything Jesus did. John said, "There are, however, many other things that Jesus did; but if every one of these would be written, not even the world itself, I think, could hold the books that would have to be written." (John 21:25). Although we do not have everything Jesus did, we do have every necessary thing. We have enough to give us life in His name.

Catholic officials follow up their claim (that we cannot understand the Bible) by stating that one can get the true meaning only from the Catholic Church. The Catechism For Adults on page 10 says, "How can you get the true meaning of the Bible? You can get it only from God's official interpreter, the Catholic Church." The Catholics have no passages which mention an official interpreter and, thus, they try to support their claim through human logic and reasoning. Anytime men do such, it amounts to nothing more than human philosophy rather than Scriptural proof. The Bible says, "Let God be true, but every man a liar..." (Rom. 3:4). It also warns, "See to it that no one deceives you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to human traditions, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ." (Col. 2:8).

The doctrine of the "infallible interpreter" implies that God did not make Himself clear. It implies that God gave us a revelation that still needs revealing. Did God fail in His attempt to give man a revelation? Do the Catholic officials want us to believe they can express God's will more clearly than God Himself? We believe that God made the mind of man and is fully capable of addressing man in words which man can understand.

### **THE THIRD REASON I LEFT IS BECAUSE CHRIST DID NOT MAKE HIS CHURCH INFALLIBLE AS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES.**

The Catholic writers try to teach that the church could never go into error and is preserved from error. The Catechism For Adults on page 56 says, "Why can't the Catholic Church ever teach error? Because Jesus promised to be always with His Church to protect it from error." The book, "My Catholic Faith" which is based heavily on materials from the Baltimore Catechism, was given to me by my father not long after I was converted. I think his intentions were that somehow it would cause me to return to the Catholic Church. It says on page 144, "Jesus Christ promised to preserve the Church from error." On page 145, it says, "Jesus Christ commanded all men to listen to and obey the Church, under pain of damnation. If His Church can teach error

then He is responsible for the error, by commanding all to obey." On page 54 the Catechism For Adults says, "Does everyone have to obey the Catholic Church? Yes, because she alone has the authority of Jesus to rule and to teach." It is easy to see that Catholics have the authority in the wrong place. The authority is not in the body, but in the Head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The ruling is not in the kingdom, but in the King (Heb. 7:1-2; Rev. 1:5-6). The authority is in not in the church, but in Christ (Matt. 28:18; 1 Pet. 3:22). The church is not the Savior, but simply the body of the saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:22-24).

There are many passages in the New Testament which reveal that the church would not be preserved from error. Acts 20:17, 28-30; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:3-11. We see from these passages that there was to come a great falling away from the truth. In Acts chapter twenty we learn that perverse things would come from the bishops of the church. Peter said (2 Pet. 2) that false teachers would arise among you (working from within) and there would be many who would follow them. Paul tell us (2 Thess. 2) that the apostasy was already underway, "for the mystery of iniquity is already at work..." (Verse 7). It started in Paul's day and was to continue until the second coming of Christ. He added, "...Whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth and will destroy with the brightness of his coming." (Verse 8).

We cannot harmonize that which the inspired apostles said (there shall arise false teachers among you) with that which the Catholic writers say (shall be preserved from error). Furthermore, we call your attention to the fact that the characteristics of the departing group are identical with those of the Catholic Church. Everyone knows that the Catholic Church has forbidden its people to eat meat on Friday and at the present it forbids some from marriage. Also, the only way for the wicked one to last from Paul's day to the second coming of Christ is to have a continual succession. It could not be some wicked person of the past because he will not be here for the Lord to slay when He comes. Furthermore, it could not be ones in the future because their iniquity would not have started in Paul's day. It must, therefore, be a continual succession from the beginning until now. The Catholic Church is the only group which perfectly fits the apostles' description of the great apostasy.

The seven short epistles to seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation reveal the relationship the church sustains to Christ (See Rev. chapters 2 and 3; see especially 2:1-5, 12-14, 18-20; 3:1-3, 14-15). Those verses plainly reveal that when a church continues in Christ's word, it keeps its identity as His church, but when it fails to abide in His word, it is not longer regarded as His church. Also, they reveal that Christ did not establish His church as one that could never fall into error, because some of those churches went into error. Someone might say that the passages in Revelation referred to the various parishes or congregations rather than the whole church. It is true that the verses were speaking of local churches; nevertheless, the same principle that applied to them relates to the whole church. The Lord does not have a rule for one congregation which is not equally applicable to all. If one church is rejected for embracing error, all others who likewise embrace error are rejected. The early churches had to earnestly contend

for the faith, and to continually be on guard against error arising from within. The doctrine of an "infallible church" causes the Catholic Church to fail in this. The Catholic Church is a church which neither recognizes nor corrects its errors.

**A FOURTH REASON I LEFT WAS BECAUSE CHRIST DID NOT MAKE PETER A POPE.**

In the books of men, the following titles are commonly used with reference to a man: "Pope," "Holy Father," "Vicar of Christ," "Sovereign Pontiff." All of these are titles that rightly belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God the Father. There is not a single instance in the Scriptures where any of the above titles are applied to a man. The term, "Holy Father" is used only once in the entire Bible, and it is used by Jesus in addressing God the Father. (John 17:11). Among the above titles is the bold assertion that the Pope is the "Vicar of Christ." A "vicar" is "One serving as a substitute or agent; one authorized to perform the functions of another in higher office." (Webster). When one searches the Bible from cover to cover, he finds only one passage which gives an indication of a vicar of Christ or God. It is 2 Thess. 2:3-4 and is worded as follows: "Let no one deceive you in any way, for the day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and is exalted above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God and gives himself out as if he were God."

Some religionists today advocate that man is saved by faith only. However, there is only one passage in the entire Bible that has the words "faith" and "only" together and it says, "not by faith only" (James 2:24). The Catholics today speak of the Pope as vicar, taking the place of God (Christ Himself is God, Matt. 1:23; John 1:1), yet there is only one passage in the entire Bible which speaks of a man doing such and it calls him "the man of sin."

James Cardinal Gibbons, a Catholic Archbishop said, "Jesus our Lord, founded but one Church, which He was pleased to build on Peter. Therefore, any church that does not recognize Peter as its foundation stone is not the Church of Christ, and therefore cannot stand, for it is not the work of God." (The Faith of Our Fathers, p. 82). The apostle Paul said, "For other foundation no one can lay, but that which has been laid, which is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 3:11). There is no other foundation but Christ! Therefore, any church which does not recognize Christ alone as the foundation stone cannot be the church of Christ.

Catholic writers often speak of "the primacy of Peter" and "the primacy of the Pope." However, Col. 1:18, speaking of Christ, says, "And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he may hold the primacy..." Thus, with reference to the authority in the church, the Lord Jesus Christ holds the primacy in all things. This leaves nothing for the Pope!

Catholics claim that the Pope is the visible head of the church. The Catholic book Answer Wisely, by Martin J. Scott says on p. 49, "The pope, therefore, as vicar of Christ, is the visible head of Christ's kingdom on earth, the Church, of which Christ Himself is the invisible head."

The book *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*, by John F. Noll and Lester J. Fallon, on page 42 says, "According to the will of Christ, all its members profess the same faith, have the same worship and Sacraments, and are united under the one and same visible head, the Pope." Catholic officials always use the word "visible" no doubt thinking that it removes the thought of the Pope standing in opposition to the headship of Christ, and removes the apparent problem of having a church with two heads. Nonetheless, the Scriptures nowhere teach the idea of a visible and invisible head. Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matt. 28:18; Emp. mine D.R.). Luke 17:20-21 says, "And on being asked by the Pharisees, 'When is the kingdom of God coming?' he answered and said to them, 'The kingdom of God comes unawares. Neither will they say, 'Behold, here it is,' or 'Behold, there it is.' For behold the kingdom of God is within you.'" The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom and therefore needs only a spiritual head or king.

Eph. 5:23-25 shows that Christ is the only head of the church. "Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord; because a husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church, being himself savior of the body. But just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things." Consequently, the wife is subject to her husband as the church is to Christ. Just as the wife is subject to only one head--her husband, the church is subject to only one head--Christ. Just as the husband does not send a substitute to rule over his wife, Christ does not authorize a substitute to rule over His bride, the church.

Catholics often use the expression, "One fold and one shepherd" to sustain the doctrine of the papacy. (See *Catechism For Adults*, p. 59). They teach that the "one shepherd" is the Pope and the "one fold" represents the Catholic Church. Hear what Jesus said about it: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep...I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." (John 10:11, 14-16). Jesus is that one good shepherd. If one can understand that one and one equals two, he can understand this. If one is subject to Christ as the one shepherd--that's one. If one is subject to the Pope as the one Shepherd--that's two!

The church is often compared to the human body in the Scriptures. The members of the church are represented as the various parts of the body. Christ is always said to be the head. (See 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16). Our question is: "What part of the body is the Pope?" Also, "How does one get the idea of a sub-head into the body?"

One of the greatest arguments against the primacy of Peter is the fact that the apostles had an argument among themselves as to which of them should be the greatest. Luke 22:24-26 says, "Now there arose a dispute among them, which of them was reputed to be the greatest. But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they who exercise authority over

them are called Benefactors. But not so with you. On the contrary, let him who is greatest among you become as the youngest, and him who is chief as the servant'." The very fact that the apostles had an argument among themselves shows they did not understand that Peter was to be prince. Also, the occasion of the argument was the night of the betrayal--the last night of the Lord's earthly ministry--and yet the apostles still did not understand that Christ had given Peter a position of primacy. The Lord settled the argument, not by stating that He had already made Peter head, but by declaring that the Gentiles have their heads, "But not so with you." Thus, Jesus very plainly taught that no one would occupy any such place as a Benefactor (or Pope) to exercise authority over the others.

**Conclusion:**

There are other reasons why I left the Catholic Church. I have simply tried to list some of the ones that made the greatest impression on me at the time of my conversion. I hope and pray that these things will be of some benefit to those who are making an honest inquiry regarding truth. I beseech and invite all my Catholic friends and relatives to examine these things in the light of God's holy Word. May God be with you in your endeavors to serve Him.