

WHY THIS CONFUSION



ABOUT LIFE AFTER DEATH?

About the Cover: 1 Thessalonians 4:13 states, "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." There is real and certain hope for those who have died, because God desires that all should come to repentance and be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Just how God is working this out is explained in this booklet.

This booklet is a free educational service, provided by the "Church of the Eternal God" in the United States of America, in collaboration with the "Global Church of God" in the United Kingdom and the "Church of God, a Christian Fellowship" in Canada.

Printed in the USA 2021. This booklet is not to be sold.

Scriptures in the booklet are quoted from the New King James version ((c)1988 Thomas-Nelson, Inc. Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

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Introduction

In the *Vatican News*, there was a report on August 2, 2020, which read as follows:

“Speaking at the Angelus on Sunday, Pope Francis invited everyone to receive the ‘Pardon of Assisi’, which can be obtained from the evening of 1 August until midnight on 2 August.

“St. Francis obtained this spiritual gift from God through the intercession of the Virgin Mary. ‘It is a plenary indulgence that may be received by partaking of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist and visiting a parish or Franciscan church, reciting the Creed, the Lord’s prayer and praying for the Pope and his intentions,’ the Pope pointed out.

“He recalled that the indulgence can even be obtained for a deceased person. ‘How important it is to always put God’s forgiveness, which “generates heaven” in us and around us, back at the center!’ he said.

“The ‘Pardon of Assisi’ dates back to 1216, when Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and angels appeared before St. Francis. The apparition took place in the tiny Portiuncula, the chapel Francis had built in the Italian town of Assisi.

“When Jesus asked him what [that is, what] he desired for the salvation of souls, St. Francis asked for God to grant a plenary indulgence for all those who enter the chapel. The indulgence was later extended to anyone who visits a parish or Franciscan church on 1 August or 2 August.”

We should bear in mind that according to Catholic teaching, an indulgence is partial if it removes part of the temporal punishment due to sin, or plenary if it removes all punishment. This wrong concept will be discussed in much detail in this booklet.

A further article by “*CruX*”, dated October 23, 2020, is worth mentioning in this regard. It has the headline, “Vatican extends time to obtain full indulgences for souls in purgatory,” and continues to read, in part:

“Plenary or full indulgences traditionally obtained during the first week of November for the souls of the faithful in purgatory can now be gained throughout the entire month of November, the Vatican said. Also, those who are ill or homebound and would not be able to physically visit a church or cemetery in the prescribed timeframe still will be able to receive a plenary indulgence when meeting certain conditions...

“The new provisions were made after a number of bishops asked for guidance as to how the faithful could perform the works required for receiving a plenary indulgence given the ongoing pandemic and restrictions in many parts of the world limiting the number of people who can gather in one place... Traditionally, the faithful could receive a full indulgence each day from Nov. 1 to Nov. 8 when they visited a cemetery to pray for the departed and fulfilled other conditions, and, in particular, when they went to a church or an oratory to pray Nov. 2, All Souls’ Day...

“The Vatican decided to extend the time one can receive a full indulgence to include the whole month of November... Typically, only a partial indulgence is granted after the first week of November. The full indulgence traditionally offered Nov. 2 for those who visit a church or an oratory and recite the Our Father and the Creed can also be gained any day in November... Those who cannot leave their homes or residence for ‘serious reasons,’ which includes government restrictions during a pandemic... also can receive a plenary indulgence after reciting specific prayers for the deceased or reflecting on a Gospel reading designated for Masses of the dead before an image of Jesus or the Blessed Virgin Mary, or by performing a work of mercy...

“The church teaches that prayer, particularly the Mass, and sacrifices may be offered on behalf of the souls in purgatory. The feast of All Souls differs from the Nov. 1 feast of All Saints precisely because it offers prayers for the eternal peace and heavenly rest of all those who died in a state of grace, but not totally purified. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, ‘All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.’”

We will discuss all of these false ideas, and many more, in this

booklet. Rightly understood, the concept of obtaining indulgences is thoroughly unbiblical and ungodly, as it is predicated on many false doctrines. Therefore, we do need quite a lot of background as indulgences include those who have died and are in Purgatory, according to the Roman Catholic Church, and this is an extension to the belief that man has an immortal soul and the dead go to Heaven or Hell after death.

We will discuss at great length the concept of Purgatory, and we will see, by quoting Catholic sources, how confusing and confused the Catholic Church itself is regarding their own teaching. But it will become clear that in Catholic teaching, Purgatory is a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are expiating their sins before going to Heaven. We can simplify it by saying that Purgatory is a temporary Hell. "Martin Luther objected to the selling of indulgences in his '95 Theses' because he felt that it was wrong to promise that souls would be relieved from Purgatory based on a simple monetary contribution, and he also felt that the pope did not have the right to grant a pardon from God" (compare *reference.com*).

While this booklet contains much information, it is just a small sample compared to so much that is available. It also shows the people of God how blessed they are to have had their minds open to the Truth and not just an acceptance of what we are told, without biblical proof, by those in leadership positions in mainstream Christianity.

This booklet will show how incredibly unbiblical certain Roman Catholic teachings are. It is so sad that millions upon millions of people believe these ideas without even realizing the absolute absurdity contained in them. Very soon, the Roman Catholic Church, which is described in the Book of Revelation as a fallen or apostate church which has rejected God's Truth, will inspire the political powers to impose the "mark of the beast" on people readily willing to accept it. This will be the culmination of satanic blasphemy. Protestants have for a long time identified the Catholic Church as the "Babylon" of the book of Revelation, without fully realizing that they are thereby including themselves in that description, as the fallen church is depicted as the "mother church" which has "daughter churches" or "harlot daughters" (Revelation 17:5).

When reading the following, those with open ears and eyes could

easily become very angry at the blasphemous concepts depicted and believed by traditional Christianity. But we must understand that, ultimately, it is Satan, the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air, who has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9) and who has found an easy target in Roman Catholic and Protestant concepts which are really nothing else but pagan ideas which have been given a “Christian” mantle. We are not fighting against flesh and blood—people—but against wicked spirits in high places—the devil and his demons.

For all text copied from Catholic websites, we will show this in *italics* so that it can be more easily recognizable as compared to the comments and information that we make.

On the website *vatican.va*, we can find the “Catechism of the Catholic Church.” In this booklet, we will be quoting selectively the appropriate sections from this Catechism as relative to the concepts discussed herein. The numbers at the beginning of each section are their own reference as are other numbers within the text. The definition of “catechism” is “a text summarizing the basic principles of a Christian denomination, usually in question-and-answer form.”

We will mostly use the Roman Catholic “In Brief” writings from their Catechism rather than the fuller version which will still convey their understanding.

Chapter 1

Man Does Not Have an Immortal Soul Which Goes to Heaven

In order to understand the concept of indulgences, we must first address related subjects on which the idea of indulgences is based. One of these concepts is the false teaching of the “immortal soul” which is or will be suffering in Purgatory and which can be freed through indulgences to enter Heaven.

The Roman Catholic “IN BRIEF” (hereafter: “IN BRIEF”) writing states this:

“1051 Every man receives his eternal recompense in his immortal soul from the moment of his death in a particular judgment by Christ, the judge of the living and the dead.”

This presupposes that man has an immortal soul. In our booklet *“Do We Have an Immortal Soul?”* we state the following on pages 4 and 5 under the heading “Orthodox Christianity Embraces the Idea of an Immortal Soul”:

“According to Catholic belief, the immortal soul enters a person at the time of conception, having been directly and individually created by God with free will and consciousness. The individual soul is present in its totality in each and every organ of the person. Proofs for the accuracy of the teaching of the immortality of the soul are mainly given in light of, 1) alleged appearances of dead people; 2) the universal belief in such a concept; and 3) the biblical statement [discussed herein] that ‘man cannot destroy the soul’ (Matthew 10:28). Originally, Catholics believed that the soul of a dead person enters heaven or hell immediately at the time of death—the idea of a purgatory only became dogma in A.D. 590. Most Protestant denominations, following to a large extent the lead of the Catholic Church in this regard, believe in the immortality of the soul as well.

“Orthodox Christianity adopted the concept of an immortal soul from pagan beliefs. The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* points out

in its 1992 edition, on p. 1037, 'Speculation about the soul in the subapostolic church was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy.'

"Again, quoting from *Funk & Wagnall's New Encyclopedia*, Vol. 24, article on 'Soul': 'The Christian doctrine of the soul has been strongly influenced by the [Greek] philosophies of *Plato* and *Aristotle*... 13th century theologian Thomas Aquinas... accepted Aristotle's analysis of the soul and body as two conceptually distinguishable elements of a single substance.'

"One of the early proponents of the concept of the immortality of the soul was a Catholic church father by the name of Origen... Around 200 A.D. he claimed that 'souls are immortal,' stating at the same time that he was a 'Platonist who believed in the immortality of the soul' (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. IV, pp. 314, 402).

"Further, as we point out in our free booklet, '*Don't Keep Christmas*,' followers of the Greek god Mythra believed in an immortal soul as well. Many of those pagan beliefs associated with Mythra were later adopted by, and absorbed into, Orthodox Christianity."

As we explain in great detail in our booklets, and as it will be discussed later as well in this booklet, the concept of the immortality of the soul has no biblical foundation and became part of the body of beliefs of the Roman Catholic faith around 200 AD.

Man Will Not Be Judged at the Moment of His Death

In the above-stated quote by the Roman Catholic Catechism, it is also remarked that a person will be judged by Christ in or from the moment of his death. This is erroneous as well. As true Christians, we are already being judged today (1 Peter 4:17), but we will also appear before the judgment seat of Christ at His return (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10; Matthew 25:14-46)—not prior to that. (For more information on this, see our free booklet, "*The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*.") Others who have died will be judged when they are resurrected; not at the time of their death. Death is a sleep without consciousness out of which one must be awakened. This is more fully explained below and also in our free booklets on the "*Book of Revelation*" and "*Punishment for Sins*."

Man Is a Soul, Not Has a Soul

To continue with quotes from the Catholic Catechism:

"1052 We believe that the souls of all who die in Christ's grace... are the People of God beyond death. On the day of resurrection, death will be definitively conquered, when these souls will be reunited with their bodies" (Paul VI, CPG § 28).

Quoting again from our booklet *"Do We Have an Immortal Soul?,"* we will read that man became a living soul, showing that the human soul is not immortal. The Hebrew word for "soul," "*nephesh*," can refer to dead souls or dead people, and even to animals. We state on page 8:

"When God created man, He created him as a lifeless or a dead person. God then breathed into man's nostrils and man *became* alive. Notice how this is described in Genesis 2:7, 'And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man *became* a living soul [*'nephesh'*].'

"When man was created, he was not yet alive, unlike the animals when they were created. Only when God breathed air into his nostrils did man become alive—he became *a living soul*. Before that, he was *a lifeless soul*."

On page 9 we read: "The concept that persons ARE souls is expressed in many passages, when they are translated correctly. Genesis 12:5 reads, 'And Abraham took... the *souls* [*'nephesh'*] that they had gotten in Haran.' Here the word 'souls' describes people.

"The same is expressed in Genesis 14:21, 'And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the *persons* [lit. 'souls' or '*nephesh*' in the Hebrew], and take the goods to thyself.'

"Note how Genesis 46:15–27 equates 'souls' with 'persons': '(15) These be the sons of Leah... with his daughter Dinah: all the *souls* [*'nephesh'* throughout] of his sons and his daughters were thirty and three... (18) These are the sons of Zilpah... even sixteen *souls*... (22) These are the sons of Rachel... all the *souls* were fourteen... (25) These are the sons of Bilhah... all the *souls* were seven. (26) All the *souls* that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the *souls* were threescore and six; And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two *souls*: all the *souls* of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.'"

"Virgin Mary" and Saints Are NOT in Heaven

Granting indulgences requires, as has been stated and as will be

discussed in more detail later, that prayers can be made to the Virgin Mary and saints who have died and are in Heaven.

In this context, the following quote from the *Catholic Catechism* is remarkable:

“1053 We believe that the multitude of those gathered around Jesus and Mary in Paradise forms the Church of heaven, where in eternal blessedness they see God as he is and where they are also, to various degrees, associated with the holy angels in the divine governance exercised by Christ in glory, by interceding for us and helping our weakness by their fraternal concern” (Paul VI, CPG § 29).

Mary, and Everyone Else Who Has Died, Are Still in the Grave

This statement includes many errors and wrong concepts. First of all, it clearly shows that the Roman Catholic Church believes that people go to Heaven after death. It also argues that the dead saints who are allegedly in Heaven are interceding for the living. This last concept is clearly blasphemous. Mary is not in paradise (Heaven), but she is dead and in her grave, awaiting the resurrection from the dead to eternal life at the time of Christ’s return (1 Corinthians 15:50–54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). The idea that Mary bodily ascended to Heaven is a fable derived from paganism. This is true for all the other “saints” (true Christians) who have died. They are not in Heaven either, and NO ONE is interceding for the living except our only Mediator and High Priest—Jesus Christ. He is the ONLY “Man” who was resurrected by God the Father from the dead to eternal life, and it is He—and He alone—who intercedes for us. There is only ONE Mediator between God and Man—the “Man Jesus Christ” (1 Timothy 2:5).

The above-cited comment by the Catholic Catechism is a complete misunderstanding as to what happens after death.

The idea that we will go to Heaven after death is an entirely unbiblical concept. It is derived from paganism.

Man Can Reach Two Heavens But Not the Third Heaven Where God Dwells

As Lewis Brown explains in “This Believing World”:

“In very early times that idea flourished not alone among the Babylonians and Egyptians, but also among the barbaric tribes in and

around Greece... these mysteries [came] down from Thrace or across the sea from Egypt and Asia Minor... they declared that for every man, no matter how poor or vicious, there was a place in heaven. All one had to do was to be 'initiated' into the secrets of the cult."

The Hebrews did not believe that we go to Heaven when we die. Neither did the early Christians. But in time, the concept developed within the Roman Catholic Church that one will be saved and go to Heaven when one has been baptized into the church, including as a little baby.

The Bible does not teach this. Much confusion exists because many do not understand that the Bible speaks of more than one heaven.

When the Bible speaks of "heaven," it may refer to any one of three different locations. The first heaven is the atmosphere, surrounding the earth, where birds can fly and clouds move (Genesis 1:20; 27:28). The second heaven is the universe, with all its galaxies, suns, stars and planets (Psalm 8:3).

It is possible for man to reach these two heavens—at least, to a limited extent. But man cannot reach the Third Heaven, where God dwells—where His angels live and where His throne is located. It is spiritual, not physical. Physical beings cannot enter it—except in a vision—and we won't go there after our death, either.

According to the biblical testimony, the only Being who entered the Third Heaven after death was Jesus Christ. Others saw the Third Heaven in a vision—such as Daniel (Daniel 7:9), Paul (2 Corinthians 12:2), Stephen (Acts 7:56) or John (Revelation 4:2), but they did not enter the Third Heaven in bodily form, or as spirit beings.

Christ said in John 3:13 that no human being—except He Himself—has entered the Third Heaven. The *German Luther Bible from 1964* wrote: "And no one goes to Heaven except for the One who came down from Heaven, namely the Son of Man..." ("Und niemand faehrt gen Himmel, denn der vom Himmel herniedergekommen ist, naemlich des Menschen Sohn...").

Most translations render the passage as, "No one *has* ascended up to heaven...", but even then, it is at least clear that no one before Christ ever went to the Third Heaven. This means that contrary to popular belief, Elijah and Enoch did NOT enter God's Third Heaven.

Elijah Is Still in the Grave Awaiting the Resurrection

We read, in 2 Kings 2:1, 11, that Elijah was taken up “into heaven by a whirlwind.” We also read that the disciples understood that Elijah did not go to the Third Heaven, as they were concerned that “the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley” (verse 16). In fact, God transported Elijah to another place here on this earth, where Elijah continued to live until his death. He wrote a letter and had it delivered to king Jehoram, AFTER he “went to (the first) heaven,” as Jehoram became king right at the time of Elijah’s disappearance (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1). 2 Chronicles 21:12–15 gives us the contents of the letter, referring to the evil deeds of king Jehoram that he had committed after Elijah had been taken away and transported through the air to another place here on earth.

We know, then, from Scripture, that Elijah did not go to the Third Heaven, where God’s throne is. We also know that he was transferred, supernaturally, to another place here on earth. There are several biblically recorded incidents where human beings were supernaturally transferred by God to another place here on earth (compare, for example, Philip’s transfer to another place here on earth, in Acts 8:39–40).

Elijah is dead in the dust of the earth awaiting the resurrection of the just. Elijah, some years after being removed in the whirlwind, went to the grave, but will rise again to live forevermore!

Enoch Is Still in the Grave Awaiting the Resurrection

Hebrews 11:5 lists Enoch among those who were truly faithful to God: “By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him’; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

Now consider verse 13 of Hebrews 11: “These ALL [including Enoch, see again verse 5] DIED in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” This verse conclusively proves that Enoch, one of these faithful, died along with the others.

Genesis 5:23 also conclusively states: “ALL THE DAYS of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.” This same phrase, “all the days,” is used throughout this chapter about generations of people who died.

Paul also said in Hebrews 11:5 that Enoch was “not found.” This does not mean that he lived on forever. Moses died, and God buried him at a secret place, and he was not found, and “no one knows his grave to this day” (Deuteronomy 34:6).

We need to both consider and believe the clear statements of Scripture. Like David and many other people who have faithfully served God, Enoch awaits the hope of the resurrection to righteousness (compare Hebrews 11:39–40), and a time in which he will indeed not see death—the second death of eternal destruction.

The Rest of God’s Faithful People Are Still in the Grave Awaiting the Resurrection

The same must be true, then, for Abraham, the father of the faithful and a friend of God; Noah; Moses; Samuel; Job; the major and minor prophets, including Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel; as well as King David, a man after God’s own heart who will rule in the Millennium under Christ over the nations of Israel and Judah. The Bible stresses expressly that David did NOT go to heaven when he died (Acts 2:34, 29).

The Bible compares death with a dreamless sleep without consciousness, out of which one must awake. Compare John 11:11–14; Ecclesiastes 9:5–6, 10; Psalm 6:5.

Man is not nor does he have an immortal soul. Man IS the soul that can and will die (Ezekiel 18:4, 19–20), and that must be resurrected from the dead. In order to enter into eternal life and the Kingdom of God, man must be changed to immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51–52; Job 14:14–15; Philippians 3:20–21).

The very fact that man is mortal and that he must be brought back to life through a resurrection from the dead PROVES that he does not go to the Third Heaven when he dies. Martin Luther once asked the pertinent question, why there should be a resurrection from the dead if the dead are already living in Heaven. He concluded: “The fact that there is a resurrection from the dead proves that man does not go to heaven when he dies.” Sadly, today’s Lutheran Churches have totally rejected the words of their “founder.”

God promised man the gift of eternal life (Titus 1:2)—here on earth (Matthew 5:5). Abraham was promised eternal life on the earth as an inheritance (Romans 4:13; Galatians 3:29). Until now, no one

has inherited the promises of eternal life and rulership on the earth (Hebrews 11:13, 39–40).

When the righteous enter into eternal life, he will reign under Christ during the Millennium. However, he will not reign from or in Heaven, but he will reign ON the earth and over the earth (Revelation 5:8–10; 11:15; Daniel 2:44; 7:13–14, 21–22, 26–27).

Christ will return to the earth—His feet will stand on that day of His appearing on the Mount of Olives—and He will sit on the throne of David—here on earth (Zechariah 14:1–2, 4, 8–9, 11, 16–19; Isaiah 9:6–7; 2:1–4; Jeremiah 23:5). We read that all nations will appear before the judgment seat of Christ—here on earth (Matthew 25:31–34; 41).

The biblical understanding is not complicated, but pure and simple, and very easy to comprehend. When a man dies, he is dead, but he will live again through the resurrection from the dead. Until then, he will sleep a dreamless sleep, without any consciousness. He will not go to Heaven when he dies, nor will he suffer in a Purgatory or “Hell.” This includes Mary, the mother of Jesus, as well as all the other saints who have died. Praying to them is forbidden by God, but also useless, as they are dead and in their graves, unable to hear us or to do anything for us.

A righteous person who has died is asleep, until Christ awakens him or her out of his or her sleep when He returns. And He will, because as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all will be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Chapter 2

The False Concept of Hell

In the introduction and the previous chapter, we began to discuss the concept taught by the Roman Catholic Church that “indulgences” can allegedly remove, partially or completely (plenary or “in full”), punishment for sin.

In the last chapter, we reviewed, among other questions, the fact that we do not have an immortal soul and that no one goes to Heaven when they die. Let us continue with the next error—the belief that people can go to Hell (or Purgatory) when they die. (As mentioned before, Purgatory can be described as a temporary stay in Hell or a temporary Hell of suffering and pain.)

The Roman Catholic’s Catechism reads regarding Hell:

“1057 Hell’s principal punishment consists of eternal separation from God in whom alone man can have the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.”

As this is a “brief” summation, let us review a slightly enhanced explanation by the Roman Catholic Church, as follows:

“1035 The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, ‘eternal fire.’ The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.”

On the Catholic Answers website: <https://www.catholic.com/tract/the-hell-there-is>, we read the following:

“The doctrine of hell is so frightening that numerous heretical sects end up denying the reality of an eternal hell. The Unitarian-Universalists, the Seventh-day Adventists, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Christadelphians, the Christian Scientists, the Religious Scientists, the New Agers, and the Mormons—all have rejected or modified the doctrine of hell so radically

that it is no longer a serious threat. In recent decades, this decay has even invaded mainstream Evangelicalism, and a number of major Evangelical figures have advocated the view that there is no eternal hell—the wicked will simply be annihilated.

“But the eternal nature of hell is stressed in the New Testament. For example, in Mark 9:47–48 Jesus warns us, ‘[I]t is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ And in Revelation 14:11, we read: ‘And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.’

“Hell is not just a theoretical possibility. Jesus warns us that real people go there. He says, ‘Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few’ (Matt. 7:13–14).”

Quite frankly, to quote Matthew 7:13–14 in this context is ridiculous. In fact, the narrow way of keeping God’s Commandments and His Law is in contradiction to Catholic teaching. The 4th Commandment has been “done away with” by replacing the true Sabbath—the seventh day of the week, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset—with Sunday, the first day of the week. God’s Way is a Way of Life; indeed, it is the narrow way, but the way of the world of which the Catholic Church is a key part, keeps Christmas, Easter and saints’ days which are, in no way, enjoined or even permitted in the Word of God. When one understands the identity of the Catholic Church which is clearly seen in the book of Revelation, it is plain that their ways are that of the wide gate and easy way.

An Ever-Burning Hell-fire, After Death, Is Unbiblical

The concept that the wicked go to an ever-burning Hell after their death is nowhere taught in Scripture. In fact, the Bible does not even teach the existence of an ever-burning Hell, torturing wicked souls of departed ones for their evil deeds. The concept of an ever-burning Hell-fire is derived from paganism. Richard Craze explains in his book, *“Hell, An Illustrated History of the Netherworld,”* copyrighted 1996:

“... the old horned gods of the Stone Age people became the new

rulers of hell. There was a sort of logic in locating the place of the dead below ground — the underworld — because that was exactly where the dead were buried... The early [nominal] Christians borrowed Hel's name [the goddess Hel ruled over the place of the 'lost souls' in Viking mythology] for their own place of punishment...

"The early [nominal] Christians borrowed heavily from earlier mythologies, and the generally accepted appearance of Satan is an amalgamation of such things as the horns and shaggy hindquarters of the Greek god Pan, the wings of the Mesopotamian devil Pazuzu, and the scales and dragon skin of the Persian Azhidaahaka... The Greeks borrowed freely from the Babylonians... Pluto, Zeus' brother, governed [hell] with a merciless severity and subjected his poor guests to the most ingenious tortures... [Others] were consigned to the deep bottomless pit... ruled by Kronos. Here they would suffer eternal torment... sinners were tortured for eternity... The Romans knew exactly where hell was located — underneath Italy. Everything else they borrowed from the Greeks."

The author also points out:

"... it was the Synod of Bishops in Constantinople in 543 that... set the seal on hell, when they decreed that 'if anyone shall say or even think that there is an end to the torment of... ungodly persons, or that there ever will be an end to it, then let them be excommunicated.' And they promptly excommunicated Origen, an early Church father, for saying that he thought hell was finite."

Gehenna Fire Explained

It is true that the New Testament speaks about a fiery place, which is translated in some English Bibles as, "hell." The Greek word for this place is "*gehenna*." It does not, however, describe an ever-burning Hell, as commonly understand by many. Craze explains:

"Gehenna — the place of fire. It is probable that it was named after the place just outside Jerusalem where the household rubbish, including the bodies of criminals and animals, was burnt."

Please note the following excerpts from our free booklet, "*Do You Have an Immortal Soul?*", addressing the concept of a fiery Hell:

"The word 'gehenna' and the very concept of it are derived from the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem in which the corpses of dead

people, mainly criminals, would be burned up. It is another expression for the 'lake of fire' in Revelation 20:15, in which all who have acted wickedly, and who have refused to repent, will be thrown into, to be burned up or 'devoured.' (Remember that Hebrews 10:27... tells us that the wicked wait for God's fiery indignation that will 'devour' them.) That is the 'hell' or the 'gehenna' fire that Christ is talking about...—'the second death' from which there will be no resurrection.

"Those who sin deliberately, wilfully and maliciously, God will resurrect to physical life [please note that they were dead — not in heaven, hell, limbo or purgatory—and that they had to be brought back from death to physical life] to throw them—their physical body and their soul or their 'life'—into 'gehenna' or the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13–15; 21:8). They won't burn there forever—rather, they will be burned up. They are the 'chaff,' that will be 'burned up' with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12)—that is, no human can quench it. Notice that this fire will ultimately even burn up or bring to dissolution 'heaven and earth,' so that a 'new heaven and a new earth' can be created by God (2 Peter 3:10–13).

"The wicked, such as the rich man in Christ's parable in Luke 16, will not burn forever and ever, for all eternity, in an everlasting hell fire, but they will be 'burned up' (cp. again Matthew 3:12). The Greek word for 'burned up' is *'katakaio'*—conveying the meaning that nothing of what is burned up will remain. We read in Revelation 18:8 that modern Babylon 'shall be utterly burned with fire.' The word for 'utterly burned' is, again, *'katakaio'* in the Greek. And we are told that 'that great city Babylon [will] be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all' (Revelation 18:21). In the same way, the wicked, such as the rich man in Luke 16, that are [brought back to life from the dead and then] thrown into 'gehenna' or the lake of fire [called the SECOND death!], will be 'burnt up'—they 'shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up... that it shall leave them neither root nor branch' (Malachi 4:1). They will become ashes under the feet of the righteous (Malachi 4:3); it will be as if they had never existed (Obadiah 16).

"The wicked will be burnt up in a temporary gehenna fire, to die the SECOND death, from which there will be no further resurrection to life (Revelation 20:14–15; 21:8)—they will not be tortured forever

and ever in an eternal hell fire, without ever being destroyed. We need to understand, too, that those who will be burnt up will have committed the unpardonable sin. As it is true in regard to the concept of 'hell,' very few understand properly, either, what the 'unpardonable sin' really is."

The Wicked Will Not Be Forever Tormented in Hell-Fire

In the previous quote from the *Catholic Answers* website, [Revelation 14:11](#) was mentioned to show that this Scripture teaches that the wicked will be forever tormented in Hell-fire. This verse reads: "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

In short, the unrepentant wicked will ultimately be burned up. That will happen after the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment. However, the passage in Revelation 14:11 does not address that time period. It merely serves as a forerunner and a warning. Most people who will worship the false political and religious system of Babylon, as well as its human representatives, won't fully comprehend what they will be doing—they will not commit the unpardonable sin leading to the second death, from which there will be no resurrection (Revelation 20:14–15; 21:8). Rather, God will bring them back to life in a Second Resurrection, when the gravity of their wrong conduct will be revealed to them, and when they will be given an opportunity to repent and accept God's Way of Life.

The Beast and False Prophet Were Cast Into the Lake of Fire

Another question which is sometimes asked is in Revelation 20:10, which states, in the rendition of the *New King James Bible*: "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

A superficial reading, especially in many of the modern translations, might indeed lead us to conclude the existence of a never-ending torture of the beast (a military leader) and the false prophet (a religious leader) in Hell. However, analyzing the Scripture carefully, a different conclusion is warranted.

The *Authorized Version (AV)* translates Revelation 20:10, as follows:

“And the DEVIL that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet ARE, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Please note that the subject of the sentence is the devil. It is he who will be tormented in the lake of fire. In regard to the beast and the false prophet, please note that the word, “are” is in italics, in the AV. This means, there is no verb in the Greek language, so that the translators had to ADD a verb—they ADDED the English word “are,” based on how they understood the meaning of the sentence. However, the addition of the word “are” is clearly WRONG in this context.

We read, in Revelation 19:20, that the beast and the false prophet *were* cast, about one thousand years earlier, into the lake of fire, to be burnt up and destroyed. There is no ever-lasting Hell-fire, tormenting human beings forever. Rather, humans who will be thrown into the lake of fire will be instantaneously burned up and destroyed.

Since there needs to be an addition of a word or phrase in Revelation 20:10 (“where the beast and the false prophet...”), the words to be added should be, “were cast,” so that the sentence reads: “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet WERE CAST [namely, one thousand years earlier, as reported in Revelation 19:20]...”

But why does it say then in the *New King James Bible* that “they will be tormented day and night...”?

When we realize for WHOM the lake of fire was prepared, the answer would be obvious. We read in Matthew 25:41 that the lake of fire was “prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Therefore, it will be the devil and his demons who will be tormented in the lake of fire, as long as that lake exists. Since spirit beings can’t die (compare Luke 20:36), they will be tormented—in a spiritual way—while being confined to the lake of fire, when they experience their inability to deceive man anymore, and when they see all their “works” and evil “accomplishments” replaced by the good and prosperous ways of God.

Following this explanation, we need to realize that the fact that the Scripture in Revelation 20:10 only refers to the devil, but then speaks about the devil and demons (“THEY will be tormented”), is a

structure in the Greek language, known as “*metonymy*.” This is a figure of speech, substituting an associated term for the name itself, as in “the crown decrees” for “the ruler decrees.” The Greek word, “*metonymy*,” is derived from the Greek “*meta*,” meaning “altered” and “*onyma*,” “meaning “name.” (Compare *Britannica World Language Dictionary*). It means here that it refers first to the main representative, the devil, while subsequently including those whom he represents, the demons.

But even if we allow for the possibility that the statement “they shall be tormented for ever and ever” would include the beast and the false prophet, that would still not mean that they will be tormented for all eternity. The Greek clause for “forever and ever” is “*eis tous aionas ton aionon*.” It literally means, “to the ages of the ages.” This phrase can refer to a brief period of time, as long as a particular condition exists, or as long as the person lives. If applied in this way to Revelation 20:10, the beast and the false prophet would only be tormented for a very brief period of time, before the fire would kill them and burn them up.

Please also note that in the rendition of the AV, it does not say that “they will be tormented,” but it says: “... and the devil... was cast in the lake of fire and brimstone... and shall be tormented...”

The Revised English Bible states:

“Their seducer, the Devil, was flung into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been flung to be tormented day and night for ever.”

Of course, by not placing a comma after “had been flung,” they give the impression that it is the beast and the false prophet who will be tormented forever and ever. But since the clause, “where the beast and the false prophet had been flung,” is clearly an inserted thought—a relative sentence—the rendering should obviously include a comma after “had been flung,” making it clear that it is the DEVIL who is to be tormented day and night forever.

We see, then, that the translation of the *Revised English Bible* should read:

“Their seducer, the Devil, was flung into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been flung, to be tormented day and night for ever.”

Revelation 20:10 does not teach that human beings, or the souls of evil persons, will be tormented forever and ever in a Hell-fire, without ever dying or being annihilated.

The Wicked Will Be Thrown Into Gehenna Fire to Be Burned Up and Destroyed

In the previous quote from the *Catholic Answers* website, [Mark 9:47–48](#) was cited to “prove” that the wicked, after they die, keep on living in Hell “where their worm does not die” and where “the fire is not quenched.”

However, this passage does not teach an ever-burning Hell.

Jesus was using certain members of our bodies (foot, hand and eye) to illustrate the principle that a Christian must strive to eradicate sin in his life—even if it means, breaking a sinful HABIT which may be as painful to overcome as perhaps losing a foot, a hand or an eye. But Christ said it is better to forgo the passing pleasures of sin (compare Hebrews 11:25)—even if it “hurts”—than to be cast into Hell-fire.

What did Christ mean when He talked about “hell fire that shall never be quenched”?

Please recall that the Greek for “hell” in the phrase “hell fire” is “gehenna.” Gehenna, which designates the valley of Hinnom, is located outside Jerusalem. Trash, animal carcasses and even the dead bodies of criminals were thrown into that fire to be burned up. Jesus applied the concept of that Gehenna fire to the fire awaiting the wicked to destroy them. That fire is referred to in many places as the “lake of fire” or the second or final death (compare Revelation 20:14). The wicked will be thrown into that “hell fire” to be burned up and destroyed—they will not be tortured for ever and ever. The act of their extinction will occur with sudden finality, and the wicked will quickly perish with only a brief comprehension of their empty fate!

The *Nelson Study Bible* states: “The imagery of hell (frequently called gehenna) comes from a garbage dump outside the walls of Jerusalem. Jesus’ hearers were familiar with the smoldering fires that always burned there.”

For further information on the concept of “Hell” or “Gehenna,” please read our free booklets, “*Do You Have an Immortal Soul?*” and “*God’s Commanded Holy Days.*”

But why did Christ say that the fire would not be quenched? Does this “hell fire” burn forever?

Note that Jesus does not say that the fire will burn forever, and that it will never go out. He said that it would not and could not be

“quenched”—that is, nobody would (be able to) put it out as long as there was fuel to keep it burning. Once there is no more fuel, it will cease to burn.

The same terminology is used throughout the Bible for fire—or God’s wrath burning like a fire—but this does not mean that that fire or the wrath of God will burn forever. It burns as long as there is reason or “fuel” to burn. Note Jeremiah 4:4: “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings.” Compare, too, Jeremiah 21:12 and Amos 5:6.

But we also read that God’s wrath, even though no one can quench it, will not “burn” forever. Psalm 30:5 says: “For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life.” And Micah 7:18 adds: “He does NOT retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy.”

God uses the same terminology of “unquenchable fire” for the ancient destruction of Jerusalem at the time of Jeremiah. We read God’s words in Jeremiah 17:27: “But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.”

We read that this prophecy came to pass in the days of King Zedekiah of Judah, when King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem under his captain Nebuzaradan. We read in 2 Kings 25:9 that he “burned the house of the LORD and the king’s house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire.”

But that fire is not burning any more today. Jerusalem was rebuilt. It existed at the time of Jesus. The fire was never quenched, that is, deliberately put out, but it went out on its own when there was no longer any fuel to keep it burning.

The same is true for the Gehenna fire—the lake of fire. We read that it will ultimately engulf and burn up the surface of the entire earth—we are told that “both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). In fact, even the “heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat” (verse 12). But after that, God will create “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (verse 13). At that time, there will be no more a

burning lake of fire, because nothing will exist anymore which needs to be burned. Revelation 21:4 tells us that at that time, there will be “no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain.”

For more information on the new heavens and the new earth, please read our free booklets, “*Angels, Demons and the Spirit World*” and “*Biblical Prophecy—From Now until Forever*.”

The Gehenna fire will apparently be burning throughout the time of the Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment and the Third and Final Resurrection to “damnation” or “the final destruction” of the wicked. Why does Jesus say that during that time, the worms of the wicked will not die?

Their Worm Does Not Die

Again, Christ uses language pertaining to the fire of Hinnom, which was burning outside Jerusalem, to illustrate a point. When some animal or body of dead criminals caught on the ledges below the rim, it would be devoured by “worms” or maggots. However, the maggots would not live forever—they would develop into flies. Those flies would deposit new eggs, and maggots would hatch from these eggs, eat the flesh, continue in the larval form for a few days, go through a metamorphosis and emerge as flies. Nothing would exterminate the maggots—as nothing or no one would extinguish or quench the fire. But without fuel to burn or without flies to deposit new eggs, the fire would go out and maggots would cease to develop. Technically, Christ’s point is well taken, as maggots in fact did not die—they developed into flies—which would ultimately die. But His spiritual application is much more telling: The fate of the unrepentant wicked is inescapable. As no one quenched the fire or prevented maggots from developing into flies, so no one can change the fate of the unrepentant sinner.

Jesus quoted from a future prophecy in Isaiah 66:24, which says: “And they shall go forth and look Upon the CORPSES of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.” Please note that the “worms” or maggots are those developing on the corpses of dead people—they are NOT the dead people themselves.

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* agrees, stating as follows: “Hell with its unquenchable fire is ‘Gehenna’... Gehenna historically was a

valley at the western edge of Jerusalem. Used at one time by worshippers of Molech as a place where their sons or daughters were offered in sacrifice, the valley was defiled during King Josiah's religious reformation... Since that time it had been used as a dump for all kinds of refuse. Therefore it was correctly described as a place where maggots continually fed and multiplied ('their worm does not die') and where fire was always smoldering ('the fire is not quenched!')."

Christ's statement in Mark 9:43–48 is a warning to all of us. He cautions us to be very careful about how we live—and to break any sinful habits which we might have—even if that process hurts and is painful. If we are neglectful in our efforts to overcome sin, we might end up in the lake of fire. We are told in Hebrews 2:1–3: "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we NEGLECT so great a salvation." Again, we read in Hebrews 4:11: "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience." And finally, note this warning in Hebrews 10:26–27: "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and FIERY indignation which will DEVOUR the adversaries."

Therefore, as we are admonished to do, "... be even more diligent to make your call and election SURE... for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the EVERLASTING KINGDOM of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10–11).

If a Man Die, Shall He Live Again?

A booklet by the (now defunct) *Worldwide Church of God* from 1972, titled, "*After Death... Then What?*", asked the question as to whether there was any life after death. The answer given was as follows:

"Remember what Job was inspired to say? 'O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come' (Job 14:13, 14).

"Job knew about the resurrection of the dead. And so does anyone

who knows the promises of God. Your Bible speaks in both Old and New Testaments of a resurrection of the dead — a re-creation of life!

“Daniel was inspired to write: ‘And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt’ (Dan. 12:2).

“Later, Christ quoted these same words. Read John 5:21 through verse 29. Jesus said: ‘For as the Father raiseth up the dead... even so the Son quickeneth [makes alive] whom he will... Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live... Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [judgment — margin].’

“Christ spoke of more than one resurrection! Notice the proof. Turn to Revelation, chapter 20. Now read verses 4 and 5. ‘And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them [Greek word: *psuche* — meaning same as *nephesh* in the Hebrew] that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.’ And the ‘souls’ John saw in this vision were dead! Notice the proof. ‘But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished’ (Rev. 20:5).

“John saw a vision concerning the resurrection of the just. Christ promises rulership with Him to those who overcome (Rev. 2:26; 3:21), which He will give at His return (I Cor. 15:23; Phil. 3:20, 21).

“The resurrection of the dead was the whole hope — the heart and center of the message — of the early Church. Notice how it completely dominates the sermons of Peter and Paul in early Church history. Read all of the following verses in context in your own Bible. ‘Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up...’ (Acts 2:23, 24). ‘This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses... For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself... The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool’ (verses 32–35).

“Peter continually emphasized Christ’s resurrection as proof of the future resurrection of all mankind. ‘And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead...’ (Acts 3:15). ‘Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus...’ (verse 26). ‘... The Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead’ (Acts 4:1–2).

“Notice. Peter preached the resurrection. He said nothing about the completely pagan doctrines of a supposed ‘immortal soul’ or going to ‘hell’ or ‘heaven’ when one dies.

“Rather, he emphasized how even David, a man after God’s own heart, was dead and buried (Acts 2:29) and showed the believers that David had not gone to heaven (Acts 2:34), but was waiting in his grave, just as the Bible says, until a resurrection of the just.”

The Dead Know Nothing

We read in the Word of God that, “For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing, And they have no more reward, For the memory of them is forgotten” (Ecclesiastes 9:5). It is clear from this passage of Scripture that when we die we simply cease, as a human being, to exist. Those who are dead can’t breathe, eat, drink, speak, act, think, or feel anything.

The Bible is clear on this issue—we will return to dust. Because of his disobedience, God told Adam: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19).

When Adam died, he returned to dust and ceased to exist. The same happens to those who die now. “For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust” (Ecclesiastes 3:19–20).

In the above-quoted excerpts from the Roman Catholic’s Catechism, death was defined as “separation from God” or even as “eternal separation from God.” This idea is false. Life and death are opposites. Death is not merely separation of a dead person from God, while the person who died is supposedly still alive. As we stated earlier, the “first death” is a dreamless sleep without consciousness. We said that a person will

not go to Heaven when he dies, nor will he suffer in a Purgatory or “Hell.” Rather, he is asleep, until Christ awakens him out of his sleep. We showed above that when we die, we know nothing. (Of course, the “second death” constitutes utter and total destruction of the person.)

We read in Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

When Christ died, He was not merely “separated” from God. He was DEAD—without any life or consciousness. He said in Revelation 1:18: “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.”

Chapter 3

The Spirit in Man

In the previous two chapters, we began to discuss the concept taught by the Roman Catholic Church that the “immortal souls” of departed ones may be in Hell or Purgatory, and that “indulgences” or prayers for the dead can allegedly remove, partially or completely (“plenary” or “in full”), punishment for sin, so that their souls can be freed from Purgatory (a temporary Hell) to go to Heaven. In order to answer the question regarding indulgences, we reviewed, among other questions, related issues such as the fact that we do not have an immortal soul; and that we neither go to Heaven (where we, as immortal saints in Heaven, could allegedly receive prayers from the living and intervene on their behalf), nor do we go to Hell or Purgatory when we die.

Some, however, confuse the concept of the “immortal soul”—which does NOT exist—with Scriptures talking about the spirit in man—which does exist—claiming that, regardless as to whether one refers to the soul or the spirit in man, it would be helpful to pray to God in respect to that “spirit” in man which allegedly does not “cease to exist” but continues to exist “with consciousness,” when the person dies.

In this chapter, we will therefore explain what the spirit in man is, and that it can in no way be used as an “excuse” or a “justification” for the concept of “indulgences.”

As we have seen, at death, man who IS the soul, dies. But what about his spirit?

We discuss the biblical concept of the “spirit in man” extensively in our free booklet, *“The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults”*. Let us quote the following excerpts from pages 19–23:

“Mr. Armstrong (the former Pastor General of the now defunct Worldwide Church of God and author of many articles, booklets and books, including *“The Incredible Human Potential”*) explains that, according to the Bible, each human being has a non-physical

component in his brain, called ‘the spirit in man.’ On page 81 of his [above-mentioned] book, he points out, ‘[T]his spirit is not the man—only something in the man... This spirit cannot see, hear, or think. The man sees, hears and thinks through his physical brain and the five senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling. The spirit in man imparts the power of physical intellect to the physical brain, thus forming human mind.

“This spirit acts, among other things, as a computer, adding to the brain the psychic and intellectual power. Knowledge received in the brain through the eye, ear and the senses is immediately “programmed” into the spirit computer. This “computer” gives the brain instant recall of whatever portion of millions of bits of knowledge may be needed in the reasoning process. That is to say that memory is recorded in the human spirit, whether or not it is also recorded in the “gray matter” of the brain. This human spirit also adds to man a spiritual and moral faculty not possessed by animals.’

Most People Have No Knowledge About the Existence of the Spirit in Man

“Most people know nothing about the existence of the spirit in man—even many religious people—lay persons and theologians alike. When they read passages in the Bible describing the spirit in man, they assume the Bible is talking about the soul. But the soul is not a non-physical component of the human being. The soul, according to the Bible, is totally physical. The Bible does not teach the concept of an immortal soul. Rather, we read in Ezekiel 18:4, ‘The soul who sins shall die.’

“The word ‘soul’ in the Bible refers to the living body of both man and animals. In Revelation 16:3, we read that every living soul—both men and beasts—died in the sea. The soul does NOT distinguish man from animals. Rather, the spirit in man is THE distinguishing factor between man and animals. It explains man’s superiority over the animals and totally disproves the concept of evolution. In Romans 8:16, and in 1 Corinthians 2:11, more fully discussed below, it is expressly stated that there is a spirit in each man, which spirit is different from God’s Holy Spirit.

“In the book of Isaiah we are told that each human being has a

spirit within him. ‘Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it’ (Isaiah 42:5).

God Can “Stir Up” This Spirit for His Purpose

“We also learn that God sometimes influences man’s spirit for His purpose. We could say that God inspires or motivates a person by ‘stirring up’ the spirit in that person. Note 1 Chronicles 5:25–26, ‘And they [Israel] were unfaithful to the God of their fathers, and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria...He carried the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh into captivity.’

“Another example is found in 2 Chronicles 21:16–17, ‘Moreover the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabians...And they came into Judah and invaded it, and carried away all the possessions that were found in the king’s house, and also his sons and his wives.’

“Later, when God saw to it that His word and promise would be fulfilled to rebuild the destroyed city of Jerusalem and the temple, He inspired King Cyrus of Persia to issue a decree, permitting the Jews who were captured in Babylon, to return to Jerusalem. Both 2 Chronicles 36:22 and Ezra 1:1 record what exactly happened. ‘Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.”’ Even King Cyrus realized that God had influenced his spirit to make this proclamation.

“But the work of rebuilding the destroyed temple progressed very slowly. There was a lack of leadership to motivate the people to accomplish the task at hand. Let’s read how God intervened, in Haggai 1:4, ‘So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel..., governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua...and the spirit of all the remnant of

the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God.’

The Spirit In Man Is Received at Conception

“The Bible strongly indicates that God gives the human spirit at the time of conception, and then takes it back at the time of death. We read in Zechariah 12:1, ‘Thus says the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him.’ Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, ‘Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.’ When the spirit in man leaves a person, that person is dead. James 2:26 says, ‘For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.’

“Jesus Christ Himself, at the time of His death, cried out to the Father to receive His spirit. What exactly did He say? Let’s read in Luke 23:46, ‘And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit.” Having said this, He breathed His last.’ When He died, His human spirit returned to God, as we read in Ecclesiastes. Hebrews 12:22–23 also confirms that the spirit of man returns to God in heaven when the person dies. ‘But you have come to... the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem [when we pray, we appear before God in heaven], to an innumerable company of angels,... to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect...’

“In the book of Job, Elihu, under God’s inspiration, tells us, ‘If He [God] should set His heart on it, if He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath [since God gives both breath and spirit, they both belong to Him and are His. But the spirit being talked about here is the spirit in man, not the Holy Spirit, which is altogether different], all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust’ (Job 34:14 and 15).

“When God decided to destroy man in the flood, He made this statement in Genesis 6:3, ‘And the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive [or abide] with [or in] Man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”’ What God is saying here is that He would destroy man through a flood within 120 years from then. This spirit abiding in man cannot be a reference to God’s Holy Spirit, as man was to be wiped out because of his own evil doings.

We know, on the other hand, that God gives His Holy Spirit only to those who obey Him, as we read in Acts 5:32. So, the spirit referred to in Genesis 6:3 is a reference to the spirit of man, which is temporary. Isaiah 57:16 tells us, 'For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry; for the spirit [of man] would fail before Me, and the souls which I have made.'

When a Man Dies, His Spirit Returns to God

"Understand though, that when a man dies and his spirit returns to God, that spirit does not continue to live consciously, apart from the body. Rather, God 'stores' it, so to speak, in heaven, until He unites it at the time of the resurrection of man with a new spiritual or physical body. The concept that man's soul is immortal is as wrong as the concept that man's spirit continues to live consciously after death. Rather, the body—or soul—dies, and the spirit of man returns to God to await a resurrection.

"Note Ecclesiastes 9:4–6, 'But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope... For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing... Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished... And verse 10, 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.' In other words, there is no conscious activity after a person dies. The spirit does not continue in the realm of consciousness.

"Jesus Christ also made it clear that dead people do not continue to live on. Rather, the dead will have to be brought back to life through a resurrection from the dead. In Matthew 22:31–32, He asked the Sadducees, since they did not believe in the resurrection, 'But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' If the dead persons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had somehow continued to live consciously after their death, including a conscious existence of their spirit that had returned to God, then Christ's words to the Sadducees would have been without sense...

"WHY does God give each human being a spirit? The spirit in man records all the human characteristics of the person, as well as his or her

outward appearance. At the time of the resurrection, the spirit of the dead person is combined with a new body of the dead person. This means, all the experiences and memories and ideas of the former life are back in the resurrected individual, and the resurrected person will also look the same way he or she did in their former life...

“When a person dies, his body returns to dust. But the spirit of man in him has recorded the appearance of the person, the personality, the personal attributes, and God gives the spirit of that person back into the newly created physical body.”

There is much more explained about the spirit in man in our booklet on Evolution, mentioned previously.

We can summarize that the spirit in man has no consciousness apart from the “soul” or the person; and that it will go back to God in Heaven when man dies—not to Hell or Purgatory. Therefore, the concept of the spirit in man cannot be used to justify indulgences and prayers to God for the departed ones suffering and being “purified” in Purgatory.

It might also be helpful to briefly address the question as to when the spirit in man begins to exist, and whether it can be destroyed or extinguished.

The Bible Tells Us WHEN God Creates the Human Spirit

Isaiah 42:5 says that God, after having created the heavens and the earth, gives breath to the people on it, and “spirit to those who walk on it.” But there is no breath in a particular person prior to his existence, and by extension, there would not be any spirit either. That is, neither the breath nor the spirit of man exist prior to the “creation” of that particular person. We also read in Zechariah 12:1 that God FORMS the spirit of man within him. Again, this implies that God actually creates in man the human spirit when man comes into existence [at the time of conception].

What about the fate of those who did commit the unpardonable or unforgivable sin and who therefore will die the second and final death in the Third Resurrection? A strong hint at the final fate of the spirit in man of those who are going to be destroyed in the Third Resurrection can be found in Isaiah 57:16. The *New King James Bible* translates: “For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry;

for the spirit would fail before Me, and the souls which I have made.”

Isaiah 57:16 implies, then, that the spirit in man could fail. But what is meant with the word, “fail”? Could it mean, “cease to exist”?

The Hebrew word is “*ataph*” and has a variety of meanings. According to *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, it conveys the thought of “to be feeble” or “to be covered.” The *Authorized Version* translates this word at times also as, “to be overwhelmed,” or “to hide self.”

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible states that the word actually means, “to shroud, i.e. to clothe... hence (from the idea of darkness) to languish—cover (over), fail, faint, feebler, hide self, be overwhelmed, swoon...”

It is obvious that very few of these meanings would make any sense in the context of the statement in Isaiah 57:16. After all, it is both the soul AND the spirit that could “fail” or “faint.” We know that the (incorrigible, corruptible) soul, when God contends with it forever, will die the eternal death and will be extinguished. But what about the spirit?

German translations point out that the word “*ataph*” can also mean “cease to exist, get destroyed, become annihilated.” For example, the German *Luther Bible*; the *Elberfelder Bible*; the *Menge Bible*; the *Schlachter Bible* and the *Pattloch Bible* all use the expression, “*verschmachten*,” which is a word describing the death of a person in the desert, who is dying of thirst.

Some English-speaking translations agree. *The Amplified Bible* renders Isaiah 57:16 as follows (brackets in the original): “... for [where it not so] the spirit [of man] would faint and be consumed before Me, and [My purpose in] creating the souls of men would be frustrated.”

Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible comments regarding Isaiah 57:16: “The simple meaning seems to be, that if God should continue in anger against people they would be consumed. The human soul could not endure a long-continued controversy with God. Its powers would fail; its strength decay; it must sink to destruction.”

If the concept of “dying” is conveyed in this passage in Isaiah 57:16, then it would indicate that not only the soul, but also the spirit in man CAN be extinguished and cease to exist; and if so, that would have to be the obvious “fate” of the human spirit of those in the Third Resurrection.

From this it follows then that not only the soul but also the spirit in man is not immortal.

Chapter 4

Purgatory

In this chapter, we will review in detail the idea of Purgatory and we again refer to the Roman Catholic “In Brief” writings from their Catechism:

“1054 Those who die in God’s grace and friendship imperfectly purified, although they are assured of their eternal salvation, undergo a purification after death, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of God.”

The website *catholic.com* adds the following explanation:

“The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines purgatory as a ‘purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven’ which is experienced by those ‘who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified’ (CCC 1030). It notes that ‘this final purification of the elect ... is entirely different from the punishment of the damned’” (CCC 1031).

“The purification is necessary because, as Scripture teaches, nothing unclean will enter the presence of God in heaven (Rev. 21:27) and, while we may die with our mortal sins forgiven, there can still be many impurities in us, specifically venial (that is, easily excused or forgiven; pardonable) sins and the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven.”

Wrong Understanding of Revelation 21:27

Revelation 21:27 is quoted, but this Scripture is talking about the New Jerusalem on a New Earth (not Heaven) when no more human beings nor anything physical will exist. Rather, the New Jerusalem will descend to a New Earth, composed of spirit, where God’s immortal people will then dwell. Applying this verse to the need for Purgatory is completely erroneous.

The First Resurrection

In 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17, we read: “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming

of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

This applies to true Christians only, and those asleep in Christ are the dead who will be resurrected as spirit beings at the return of Christ along with those, still living, who have the Holy Spirit of God, and who will be changed into immortal spirit beings as well at that time. They will then rule with Christ here on earth for a thousand years. Nothing is mentioned that they will go to Heaven, Purgatory or Hell; or that they will have to be purified in any way.

Rather, when they are resurrected as or changed into God beings at the time of Christ's return, they will be resurrected or changed as PERFECT beings—not imperfect and in need of purification or perfection. As the Father is perfect and has no need of purification, so we will be (Matthew 5:48; Colossians 1:28; Luke 6:40; Hebrews 13:20–21; 11:40; 12:23). In this life, we will never attain perfection in the flesh, but we must work toward it so that at the time of Christ's return, we will be resurrected or changed as perfect beings; and it is this godly perfection which God will grant us at that time.

We Will Not Have Attained Perfection at Death

We must understand that when we die, we will not have attained perfection but we do not need a period of time in Purgatory in order to achieve this state of perfection. In Philippians 3:12 we read: "...not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me."

A key to understanding is Matthew 24:13: "But he who endures to the end shall be saved." We will be saved at the end of our lives, even though imperfect and without a painful visit to Purgatory! In 2 Timothy 4:6–8—the apostle Paul's valedictory—we read: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me

on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Paul looked forward to a crown of righteousness even though he would not have attained perfection in his life. In fact, in Romans 7:15, he pointed out his physical frailties: “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.”

It is obvious from these examples that through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit throughout and to the end of our lives, true Christians will be resurrected or changed to immortal spirit life which will ensure perfection, thus revealing that any imperfections that we may have at death or at our change if still alive at Christ’s return will count as nothing and be dismissed by God.

Limbo and Purgatory Are Not Biblical Concepts

The concepts of “limbo” and “Purgatory” have their origin in pagan mythologies. Richard Craze points out these most incredible facts in his previously quoted book, “*Hell, An Illustrated History of the Netherworld*,” copyrighted 1996”:

“The early [nominal] Christians... introduce[d] the concept of a sort of waiting-room, where souls would stay for [a while]. They found a ready-made idea — limbo — that they freely borrowed from the Romans, who had borrowed it from the Greeks. Limbo became a place where anyone who did not quite fit could be put... Purgatory... was a cross between limbo and hell... Jesus’ mother, the Virgin Mary, was called back from heaven, where she had been asleep (the Dormition). She was given the keys of hell to look after, and the running of the purgatory. She does not administer any punishments — in fact, her main job seems to be protecting the souls of the sinners from the wrath of her son [Jesus Christ!!!]. Purgatory became a sort of temporary hell — but one from which sinners could be rescued.”

As we have seen, the Bible does not teach the concepts of Limbo, Purgatory or of an ever-burning Hell. In the meantime, the Catholic Church has given up the idea of “Limbo” as a doctrine and recognizes it, if at all, as mere human tradition. And, we have already seen, “the Virgin Mary” is not in Heaven, Hell or Purgatory. Mary, the mother of Jesus, died and is awaiting her resurrection from the dead. In

addition, the very thought that she is running Purgatory and that she is protecting the souls of the sinners from the wrath of her Son is quite frankly blasphemous.

Continuing with the website *catholic.com*, we read the following:

“What Happens in Purgatory?”

“When we die, we undergo what is called the particular, or individual, judgment. Scripture says that ‘it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment’ (Heb. 9:27). We are judged instantly and receive our reward, for good or ill. We know at once what our final destiny will be. At the end of time, when Jesus returns, there will come the general judgment to which the Bible refers, for example, in Matthew 25:31–32: ‘When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.’ In this general judgment all our sins will be publicly revealed (Luke 12:2–5).

“Augustine said in The City of God that ‘temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment’... It is between the particular and general judgments, then, that the soul is purified of the remaining consequences of sin: ‘I tell you, you will never get out till you have paid the very last copper’ (Luke 12:59).”

Let us look at the Scriptural “evidence” that is given in the piece above to “prove” the existence of Purgatory.

Hebrews 9:27, one of the Scriptures cited in the above quote, states: “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” Nowhere here does it mention anything about purification in Purgatory, and to even imply that Purgatory is part of a purification process in judgment is simply twisting Scripture to fit in with an unscriptural belief.

It is true, of course that we all have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive our reward (Romans 14:10–12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Luke 19:16–17; Revelation 22:12; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 2 John 8). This has nothing to do with having to go through a judgment period of purification. The concept of obtaining our reward when we appear before Christ at His return is fully explained in our free booklet, *“The Gospel of the Kingdom of God.”*

The Second Resurrection

It is also true that those who will be resurrected as human beings in the Second Resurrection will be given a certain amount of time (the Bible indicates a period of 100 years, compare Isaiah 65:20) to qualify for the Kingdom of God. At the end of that Great White Throne Judgment period, judgment will be pronounced (Revelation 20:11–12). But again, this has nothing to do with some kind of Purgatory and burning in a Hell-fire for a certain amount of time; rather, people will be given the chance to qualify for God's Way of Life then, so that their names can be written in the Book of Life (verse 12), just as this opportunity has been given to true Christians now whose names are already written in the Book of Life (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 21:27).

Matthew 25:31–32, another passage quoted above, reads: "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats."

This passage refers to the time when Christ rules mankind (physical human beings) living here on earth. A separation will take place during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment, based on how men will live at that time.

In our booklet *"Is That in the Bible? The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation,"* we read the following on page 41 under the heading, "Jesus Will Return to This Earth":

"Christ is coming in all His glory, with His holy angels, to begin a Millennial rule upon the earth (Matthew 25:31–32). The saints of God, who will have been resurrected from the dead at that time, along with those saints still living, who will be changed to spirit at that time, will be given power to rule with Christ (Revelation 2:26–27).

"The saints will have positions as Kings and Priests, and will reign with Christ during the 1,000 year period on the earth. The rest of the dead, who had no part in this resurrection, will await in their graves for a future resurrection (Revelation 20:5).

"No biblical passage tells us that we go to heaven when we die. Rather, Christians will rule with Christ here on earth, when He resurrects those who died, or when He changes those, who are still alive at His Coming, from mortal to immortal."

As we saw, the Catholic Church quotes Luke 12:2–5 to prove the concept of Purgatory. But there is really no way that a concept of Purgatory for “departed ones” could be applied to this passage of Scripture.

Luke 12:2–5 states: “For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!”

Explanation Again for the Word “Hell” in Luke 12:5

As we mentioned earlier in this booklet, it is true that the New Testament speaks about a fiery place, which is translated in some English Bibles as, “hell.” The Greek word for this place is “gehenna.” It does not, however, describe an ever-burning hell, as commonly understood by many. We quoted Craze who explained: “Gehenna — the place of fire. It is probable that it was named after the place just outside Jerusalem where the household rubbish, including the bodies of criminals and animals, was burnt.”

In the above-quoted passage in Luke 12:2–5, reference is also made to the killing of the body, and God’s power to “cast into hell.”

In the parallel Scripture, let us notice what Matthew 10:28 does say: “And fear not them which kill ... the body [“soma” in Greek], but are not able to kill... the soul [“psyche” in Greek]: but rather fear him which is able to destroy... both soul [“psyche”] and body [“soma”] in hell [“Gehenna”].” We need not fear man who can only kill us, taking away our physical lives. That is all man can do—man cannot prevent God from resurrecting us from death to give us life again. Instead, we must fear God, who not only can take away our physical lives, but who can also throw us—both “body and soul”—into “hell” [“Gehenna”], taking away our opportunity for eternal life.

Luke 12:59 is another passage quoted above to “prove” the concept of Purgatory. It reads: “I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.”

The subheading in the *New King James Bible* is “Make Peace with

Your Adversary," and this short parable shows what we should do in this life if we were taken to court to settle a matter for which we had a financial liability, and the reading from the last verse is that we, as debtors, should make every effort to settle the case with our creditor, lest we are convicted by a judge and, depending on the situation, would even be thrown in jail.

It has a spiritual message too. Those of us called by God need to realize that this is our one and only calling that we will have, and we need to make sure that we are prepared for Christ's return. It will be too late for those who have turned their back on God, for whatever reason, and who have not been faithful to the end of their lives (compare Matthew 24:13). The message is: Seek the LORD while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6). There is no way that a state of Purgatory can be read into this passage except by those who look for Scriptures to try to defend an indefensible doctrine.

The *New Bible Commentary* says in connection with Luke 12:59 that "the parable cannot be pressed to teach a doctrine of purgatory."

Silence No Proof for Purgatory

The website of *catholic.com* also says this in regard to the Catholic teaching of Purgatory, falsely attempting to "prove" that the early Christian Church believed in it:

"Why No Protests?"

"A study of the history of doctrines indicates that Christians in the first centuries were up in arms if anyone suggested the least change in beliefs. They were extremely conservative people who tested a doctrine's truth by asking, Was this believed by our ancestors? Was it handed on from the apostles? Surely belief in purgatory would be considered a great change, if it had not been believed from the first—so where are the records of protests?"

"They don't exist. There is no hint at all, in the oldest writings available to us (or in later ones, for that matter), that 'true believers' in the immediate post-apostolic years spoke of purgatory as a novel doctrine. They must have understood that the oral teaching of the apostles, what Catholics call tradition, and the Bible not only failed to contradict the doctrine, but, in fact, confirmed it.

"It is no wonder, then, that those who deny the existence of purgatory tend to touch upon only briefly the history of the belief. They prefer to claim

that the Bible speaks only of heaven and hell. Wrong. It speaks plainly of a third condition, commonly called the limbo of the Fathers, where the just who had died before the redemption were waiting for heaven to be opened to them. After his death and before his resurrection, Christ visited those experiencing the limbo of the Fathers and preached to them the good news that heaven would now be opened to them (1 Pet. 3:19). These people thus were not in heaven, but neither were they experiencing the torments of hell."

There are several matters to address in the above statements, in addition to the fact that it hopelessly confuses the concepts of "Limbo" and "Purgatory" (two *different* concepts), as according to Catholic teaching, one DOES experience the torments of Hell on a temporary basis in Purgatory (while the concept of "Limbo" has been abandoned by the Catholic church).

The following assertion is also patently wrong: "A study of the history of doctrines indicates that Christians in the first centuries were up in arms if anyone suggested the least change in beliefs." The Catholic Church brought in the change of Sunday worship instead of the weekly seventh-day Sabbath and we don't read of protests at all at that time.

Apostolic Christianity Very Different to Mainstream Christianity

In an old *Global Church of God* booklet from 1995, we read about what happened to the true Church.

"When we look at the story of the mainstream, professing Christian church throughout the centuries, it appears to be a vastly different church from the one described in the pages of your New Testament. In the book of Acts we find that God's church celebrated 'Jewish' holy days (Acts 2:1; 13–14, 42, 44; 18:21), talked about the return of Jesus Christ to judge the world (Acts 3:20–21; 17:31) and believed in the literal establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth (Acts 1:3, 6; 28:23).

"Yet, less than 300 years later, we find a church claiming apostolic origination, but observing the 'venerable day of the Sun' instead of the seventh-day Sabbath. When that church assembled its bishops to discuss doctrinal matters at the council of Nicea, the meeting was presided over by, of all people, a Roman Emperor – Constantine! How could such an amazing transformation have taken place? What happened?

"Protestant author Jesse Lyman Hurlbut acknowledged the dramatic change that took place in his book, *The Story of the Christian Church*.

He wrote, 'For fifty years after St Paul's life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when it at last rises, about 120 A.D. with the writings of the earliest church-fathers, we find a church in many aspects very different from that in the day of St Peter and St Paul' (page 41).

"The story of the Christian church between Pentecost of 31 A.D. and the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., almost 300 years later, is an amazing story. It is the story of how yesterday's orthodoxy became today's heresy and how old heresies came to be considered orthodox Christian doctrine. It is the story of how church tradition and the teaching of the bishops came to supersede the Word of God as a source of doctrine. It is a story that is stranger than fiction, yet it is very much historically verifiable."

The True Church Was Persecuted

That explains why this heretical church changed the weekly Sabbath day to the first day of the week and why there were no protests. The fact of the matter is, the true Church became persecuted and had to go into hiding, while the false church produced and published a narrative to its liking. Dissenting viewpoints were systematically suppressed and dissenters declared to be "*anathema*" and killed. However, the true Church of God remained intact keeping the doctrines that had been given to it and has remained faithful down through the ages. Although small, apostolic Christianity is today taught by the Church of God which is comprised of those who have the Holy Spirit after repentance and baptism (compare Acts 2:38).

Wrong Understanding of 1 Peter 3:19

We also need to address the assertion that "*After his death and before his resurrection, Christ visited those experiencing the limbo of the Fathers and preached to them the good news that heaven would now be opened to them (1 Pet. 3:19).*" This is in error. This is not a reference to dead human beings. Jesus went to preach to the spirits in prison who were the angels who sinned. In 2 Peter 2:4 we read: "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment."

We are told in 1 Peter 3:19–20: "... by which [the Spirit] also he

[Christ] went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (*Authorized Version*).

Jesus Christ Preached to the Spirits (Demons) in Prison at the Time of Noah

The correct understanding of this passage is that Jesus Christ preached to the spirits in prison—the demons—at the time of Noah, when God was about to protect Noah from destruction. Christ used this example to show that the demons who had sinned “sometime”—before the creation of man—were still awaiting their judgment.

This was not after Christ’s death but more than 2,000 years earlier and it is talking about “in the days of Noah”. When Christ died, He was in the grave for three days and three nights without any consciousness. He—or His “soul”—did not keep on living. Christ could not have gone anywhere after His death and before His resurrection. He could not have gone to “spirits” to preach to them about the past or the good news that “heaven was open to them” or the coming judgment—because we read that those who are dead know NOTHING. To try and say that this describes the limbo of the Fathers AND that heaven would now be opened to them is a blatant twisting of Scripture. As we proved earlier, no one ascends to heaven after death.

Traditions From Paganism

There is also no hint that any “oral teachings of the Apostles” and the Bible, confirm the concept of Purgatory and/or Limbo. As we have seen, the Bible totally rejects the concept of Limbo and Purgatory. And God’s true apostles would not have preached something which is so diametrically opposite to foundational biblical teachings. The “tradition” of the Catholic Church is just that—human ideas which deny the Truth of God. These traditions, as so many others, have been adopted, as we saw, from paganism and are strongly condemned by God. Compare Matthew 15:3, 6; Colossians 2:8.

Returning to the website *catholic.com*, it tries to give more “reasons” as to why “Purgatory [Is] Not in Scripture”:

“Some Fundamentalists also charge, ‘The word purgatory is nowhere

found in Scripture.' This is true, and yet it does not disprove the existence of purgatory or the fact that belief in it has always been part of Church teaching. The words Trinity and Incarnation aren't in Scripture either, yet those doctrines are clearly taught in it. Likewise, Scripture teaches that purgatory exists, even if it doesn't use that word and even if 1 Peter 3:19 refers to a place other than purgatory."

The existence of Purgatory has never been a part of the teaching of the true Church of God and is not mentioned in Scripture, although the great false church has adopted this as they have in many other areas. The trinity is not mentioned in Scripture either as they rightly say because it has never been a doctrine of the true Church of God. For a thorough explanation on this subject, please see our booklet, *"Is God a Trinity?"*

The third area they mention that is a teaching but not mentioned in Scripture is Incarnation. *Wikipedia* gives this explanation of the word Incarnation: "Incarnation refers to the act of a pre-existent divine person, the Son of God, in becoming a human being." Also, in the incarnation, as traditionally defined by those Churches that adhere to the Council of Chalcedon, the divine nature of the Son was united but not mixed with human nature in one divine Person, Jesus Christ, who was both 'truly God and truly man'. This is central to the traditional faith held by most Christians."

There Is a Difference Between the True Incarnation of Jesus and the Catholic Version

The concept of the TRUE incarnation is indeed taught in Scripture, but not the concept of the false incarnation, as erroneously taught by the Catholic church and most Protestant churches. It would have been impossible that Jesus was fully God and fully man. It is impossible to be both at the same time, when both concepts are in opposition, in spite of mainstream Christianity's belief that it is so.

The Truth is that Christ was fully man. He became fully flesh and blood. The biblical concept of the Incarnation means, simply put, that it teaches that God became Man.

Jesus Christ was God before He came to this earth. He was and had to be God—the "Immanuel" or "God with us"—when He came to this earth during His First Coming. God clearly tells us that the

Word—Jesus Christ—who was God before His human birth, BECAME flesh. Christ came in the flesh by BECOMING flesh. This means that He became totally and fully flesh and blood, like you and I are fully flesh and blood! This is CRUCIAL for you to understand! When Christ BECAME flesh, He was no longer Spirit. He was no longer fully God, because He had become fully man!

When Mary became pregnant with Jesus, how did that happen? We read that the Holy Spirit of God, the Father, came upon her—that the power of God overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). From this we can understand that through the Holy Spirit, God, the Father, changed the all-powerful Spirit being, Jesus Christ, into a tiny physical human sperm, fertilizing the egg in the womb of Mary, thus impregnating her. The fetus grew within Mary's womb like any other human fetus. Jesus was born as a little baby like every other human baby. He was fully flesh, just like you and I are fully flesh.

Jesus Became Fully Man to Become the Savior of Mankind

The Bible teaches clearly that Jesus Christ—the God of the Old Testament—“emptied” Himself and became a human being (compare Philippians 2:7, *Revised Standard Version*). It was absolutely NECESSARY for Christ to become FULLY MAN, because only in that way could He become the Savior of man. The only way that Christ—who had been GOD since all eternity—could die, was to become flesh. When He became flesh, He was totally human! When Christ became flesh, He gave up all of His divine attributes and powers. Simply put, He became a man so that He could die! He was no longer a Spirit being, He was no longer God as we think of God, since God, a Spirit being, cannot die (compare Luke 20:35–36; Isaiah 57:15; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 Timothy 1:17).

Christ became flesh so that He could overcome sin in the flesh. He had to prove that it is possible for man, with the help of God's Holy Spirit within him, to overcome sin! Christ was tempted in all points, as we are, but He stayed sinless (Hebrews 4:15, “[He] was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”). He overcame sin in the flesh, resisting temptation (Revelation 3:21). God, a powerful perfect Spirit being—cannot be tempted (compare James 1:13). But we read that Christ WAS tempted. This proves that He was not the all-powerful

perfect Spirit being when He was here on this earth that He HAD been prior to His birth as a human being.

Christ had been an immortal God being. He was changed into a human being, but He was still the same personage He had been since all eternity. Christ, who became human, was still the personage He had always been. He was still the One who created Adam and Eve, the One who had previously met with Abraham, and the One who spoke to Moses face-to-face. He lived as a human being—growing as children do, developing into a young man, and then becoming a rabbi, or teacher, in Judah. But He was still the same individual that He had always been. He had been an immortal God being and He knew that He would become an immortal God being again, subject to qualifying by being and remaining sinless. Christ, when He was here on earth, was, quite literally, Immanuel, or, “God with us.”

Discussing the concept of Purgatory, we read the following on the website *equip.org*:

“The interpretation of Scripture (called *hermeneutics*) is built on three preliminary laws. The first is this: Scripture interprets Scripture, called ‘the rule of analogy.’ The second law of hermeneutics is this: The plain meaning of Scripture is usually the true meaning. The third rule is this: Simple passages of Scripture help explain complex passages of Scripture—the simple informs the complicated. Roman Catholic hermeneutics concerning supposed proof texts for purgatory violate all of these laws of hermeneutics. There is no clear, plain, and simple text about purgatory, as there is about both heaven and hell. The Apocrypha cannot be placed equal to inspired Scripture. The Bible plainly speaks about life, death, and judgment: ‘And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment’ (Heb. 9:27)... There is no mention of postmortem purgation at all. Purgatory is an extrabiblical idea, imported into the church in the Middle Ages—a product of tradition but not Scripture. And the Catholic efforts at grasping for hermeneutical straws to support this false belief—‘fire,’ ‘the age to come,’ ‘souls in prison’—betray a lack of clear, precise, and biblical evidence for that place called purgatory.”

Let us also quote from *Wikipedia*, as follows:

“Catholic doctrine on purgatory is presented as composed of the same two points in the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic*

Church, first published in 2005, which is a summary in dialogue form of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It deals with purgatory in the following exchange:

“210. What is purgatory?”

“Purgatory is the state of those who die in God’s friendship, assured of their eternal salvation, but who still have need of purification to enter into the happiness of heaven.

“211. How can we help the souls being purified in purgatory?”

“Because of the communion of the saints, the faithful who are still pilgrims on earth are able to help the souls in purgatory by offering prayers in suffrage for them, especially the Eucharistic sacrifice. They also help them by almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance.”

Wikipedia also states the following under their comments on “the history of purgatory”:

“The idea of Purgatory as a physical place (like heaven and hell) became Roman Catholic teaching in the late 11th century. Medieval theologians concluded that the purgatorial punishments consisted of material fire. The Western formulation of purgatory proved to be a sticking point in the Great Schism between East and West. The Roman Catholic Church believes that the living can help those whose purification from their sins is not yet completed not only by praying for them but also by gaining indulgences for them as an act of intercession.”

If there is no Purgatory, there is no need for indulgences. In fact, indulgences would be worthless and a waste of time (and money). This will become much clearer in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Indulgences

With this extensive background, we will now begin to show the connection between the erroneous concept of Purgatory and the erroneous concept of indulgences.

According to Catholic tradition and theology, indulgences are required to ensure that help and assistance is given in Purgatory (a place that doesn't exist and has no validity from Scripture), so that humans can go to Heaven (which Scripture clearly shows is not the place for the dead, nor is Hell, as commonly understood in orthodox Christianity)! However, understanding the mind of man at work in setting up an elaborate and unnecessary system in an apostate church, which it has been throughout its existence and which it will continue to be at the end of this age, helps us to realize from where many of our future problems will emanate.

Three Different Ways of Using Indulgences

To better understand the concept of indulgences, we should point out that it applies in at least three different ways: It addresses those who are in "Purgatory" (a temporary "Hell") and for whom prayers and "indulgences" are given by firstly, the living or secondly, the "saints in Heaven" so that they can be freed from Purgatory; and thirdly, it can apply to people in this life who give indulgences for themselves so that they do not have to suffer in Purgatory [or Hell] for as long as they otherwise would have to.

The distinction above is important because according to Catholic thinking, one can be prevented from going to Hell through indulgences, but cannot be freed from eternal Hell once in there (but one can be freed from the temporary Hell of Purgatory).

On the website *aboutcatholics.com*, we read the following:

"The History of Indulgences

“Indulgences have a controversial place in the history of the Catholic Church. The buying and selling of indulgences is what helped to launch the Reformation.

“Indulgences began in about the ninth century A.D. as a means to substitute a set of tasks for a difficult to fulfill penance. Since the time of the early Church, penance for sins was usually long, difficult, and severe. Someone might do penance for years. So sometimes praying a particular prayer or performing an act of piety could substitute for a penance altogether or take some time off the assigned penance. This type of practice created a sort of Church currency by which people could exchange a difficult penance for a calculated number of prayers or alms. Indulgences showed the mercy of God, exercised through the authority of the Church.”

A Reduced, Unbiblical, “Opt-Out” Clause

It is interesting to read that *“people could exchange a difficult penance for a calculated number of prayers or alms.”* We read in Matthew 7:13–14: *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”* Those who are looking for an easier way out are not those who expect to live a difficult way of life because of the opposition to the true Way of God. It is a reduced “opt-out” clause which cannot be sanctioned by the correct reading of Scripture!

One Cannot Buy Himself, or Others, Out of Punishment

Christ asks the timeless question, in Matthew 16:26: *“... what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”* The answer is, he cannot buy himself or others out of their destiny. David adds: *“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require... I delight in Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart”* (Psalm 40:6, 8). In Psalm 51:16–17, we read: *“For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, you will not despise.”* Again, the thought is conveyed that one cannot buy himself or others out of punishment by giving God (or the church) money or “sacrifices.”

The concept of “penance” is another false idea. The Bible does not speak of penance, but of repentance. It does not require certain actions—such as going on a pilgrimage—but a change of heart and mind—a deep recognition as to how wrong one has been and has acted, and to acquire a new heart, to leave the false way behind and to go the Way of God.

Continuing with the above-mentioned quote:

“During the Crusades under Pope Urban II (1088–1099) Christians who could not participate in the Crusades personally could do so vicariously by almsgiving. Those who personally took part received a plenary indulgence upon death.

“In 1343 Pope Clement VI officially sanctioned the view that Christ had left the Church a treasury of satisfactions that Church officials could dispense (an indulgence) for the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. By this point indulgences usually were associated with time in Purgatory rather than public penance on earth. One obtained an indulgence, usually granted by the Pope, by performing some good work, sometimes a donation of money. Official doctrine always required internal repentance by the recipient, even if the practice of donating money was often abused.”

We must stress that our good works do not save us from death, nor do they abolish punishment. Eternal life is a gift from God—we do not receive it because of our works—and punishment for sin (eternal death or physical consequences because of sin) can be mitigated or avoided upon deep and sincere repentance of the wrong which we might have done.

Catholicism Manufacturing Its Own Power and Authority

There is no biblical evidence “that Christ had left the Church a treasury of satisfactions that Church officials could dispense (an indulgence) for the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin.” This is simply the Catholic Church taking to itself power that it has not received in the first place and Scripture has to be manipulated to make this an official (false) doctrine.

Continuing with the above-cited quotation:

“The Controversy Surrounding Indulgences

“Martin Luther objected to indulgences because the common practice of his day did not fit well with his view that good works could not take away

the punishment due to sin. Indulgences also set up the Church as a mediator of God's grace, a role that Martin Luther thought the Church could not and should not play. Furthermore, although Catholics would disagree with Martin Luther's theology, it is undeniable that abuses were occurring at the time.

"With the abuses of indulgences in his day, often the only thing that was officially preached by Church leaders was offering indulgences in exchange for making a donation to the church. Often there was little emphasis on Christ's sacrifice and the forgiveness of sin which only comes from God. Luther did not initially seek to strike down indulgences altogether (although by the end of his theological career he was entirely against indulgences), but he challenged the common practice at the time.

"The practice of trading indulgences for money wrongly de-emphasizes the need for interior conversion and repentance. Although donating money is a pious action, it is easy to see how this practice devolved into people believing they could buy their way out of Purgatory."

It is true that ONLY the supreme Sacrifice of Jesus Christ can free us from eternal death, upon our repentance and belief in His Sacrifice. In addition, donating money is not necessarily a pious action; it can be given for personal enhancement. People could not buy their way out of a place that didn't exist in the first place (Purgatory), but it helped the finances of the church, a very rich church, to increase their wealth through an unproved and unscriptural way.

Continuing:

"The Council of Trent, which was held to respond to the challenges of the Reformation, addressed indulgences. The Council affirmed that the Church has the right and the power to grant indulgences. However, the Council agreed with the Protestant reformers that there were many abuses surrounding indulgences that needed to be corrected."

Self-Serving Council at Odds With True Biblical Teaching

The concept that *"The Council affirmed that the Church has the right and the power to grant indulgences"* shows that this was a self-serving council who either had no real biblical knowledge or were complicit in deceiving their membership. No wonder they didn't want the Bible to be available to the masses, in English or in any other "common" language spoken and understood by the people, as their fraud could have been discovered by those with sufficient learning at that time. It

is abhorrent, but true, to realize that the Catholic Church FORBADE their members to possess or read the Bible and that even today, Catholic priests do not have to study the Bible to become priests.

Continuing:

"Later History of Indulgences

"Pope Paul VI changed the norms around indulgences by seeking to eliminate the commercial aspect they had acquired over the centuries. He described it as a treasury of merits. Indulgences are now designed to spur Christians to spiritual tasks such as devotion, penance, and charity."

We then read about the types of indulgences from this same website.

A Man-Made List of Partial and Plenary Indulgences

*"A **partial indulgence** removes part of the temporal punishment due to sin.*

"Some ways to gain a partial indulgence are by

Praying the Magnificat or Hail, Holy Queen;

"Praying the Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love, and the Creed;

"Making the sign of the cross;

"Visiting the Blessed Sacrament; or

"Visiting a cemetery.

*"A **plenary indulgence** removes all temporal punishment due to sin.*

"The conditions for a plenary indulgence are

"Receive the sacrament of Reconciliation;

"Receive Holy Communion; and

"Say a prayer for the Pope.

"Some ways to gain a plenary indulgence are through

"Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for at least one-half hour;

"Reading Scripture for at least one-half hour;

"Reciting the Way of the Cross; or

"Praying the rosary in a church or with a family group or religious community.

"There may be other ways not listed here that the pope or a local bishop could authorize as a means to gain a partial or plenary indulgence. Often plenary indulgences are attached to actions Catholics can do appropriate to particular feast days.

"Note that the ways to obtain an indulgence all involve prayer or an act of piety. This is because our sins hurt the world, and our prayers can help the world heal from the hurt our sins cause."

When you read some of the requirements as listed above, it would be humorous if it were not so serious! We have quoted these requirements on purpose to show the reader the absolute absurdity and blasphemy behind the Catholic concept of indulgences.

Making the sign of the cross, visiting a cemetery, saying a prayer for the pope, reading Scripture for at least one-half hour, praying the rosary, plus much more! All made up from the mind of man—and of course no Scriptural references whatsoever. In addition, many of the concepts associated with the way as to how to obtain indulgences are blatantly blasphemous—such as praying to Mary, “the holy Queen” (whereas the true Mary, the mother of Jesus, is dead and in her grave).

There was a comment from someone who had read all of these “rules and regulations” as listed above, who wrote:

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Only God can forgive sin, and only by his grace through Jesus Christ — nothing that we can do. Making up all these rules to ‘pray this’ and ‘read scripture for at least a half hour’ makes a mockery of the free gift that Jesus gives.”

Numerous Catholic Myths

On the website *catholic.com*, we can read about a number of myths that the Catholic Church addresses. We will quote just a few of these.

“Myth 1: A person can buy his way out of hell with indulgences.

“Since indulgences remit only temporal penalties, they cannot remit the eternal penalty of hell. Once a person is in hell, no amount of indulgences will ever change that fact. The only way to avoid hell is by appealing to God’s eternal mercy while still alive. After death, one’s eternal fate is set (Heb. 9:27).”

Again, we see that the Catholics believe that people go to Hell which we have proved by our many writings over many years is not a biblical concept.

In addition, it is not true that when a person dies, his or her fate is sealed. This is only correct for those who died in Christ (as true Christians)—they will be resurrected to eternal life in the Kingdom and Family of God—and for those who have committed the unpardonable sin. In the Third Resurrection, they will be cast into the lake of fire, to be burned up.

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man shows that at that time, nothing can be done to change that fate; no amount of prayers or indulgences will save the unrepentant sinner from total annihilation. But for those who were not called in this life and who did not commit the unpardonable sin, they will be resurrected to a physical existence in the Second Resurrection, and then they can determine their fate—whether they are willing to live God’s Way of Life, or whether they are willing to die the eternal death. But again, indulgences won’t help them in regard to their fate.

Continuing with another “myth”:

“Myth 3: A Person can ‘buy forgiveness’ with Indulgences

“The definition of indulgences presupposes that forgiveness has already taken place: ‘An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven’ (Indulgentarium Doctrina 1, emphasis added). Indulgences in no way forgive sins. They deal only with punishments left after sins have been forgiven.”

The belief is that indulgences can be for people still alive and who are “in purgatory,” neither of which have any Scriptural support.

The Temporary Torture and Punishment of Purgatory Is Totally Unbiblical

When the Catholic Church speaks of “temporal” punishment, they mean the time of torture in Purgatory. This concept is blatantly false and blasphemous. But it is true, of course, that sins can have physical consequences. We discuss this in great length in our free booklet, *“Punishment for Our Sins.”* A person who drinks and drives might have an accident and lose a leg. His sin will be forgiven upon true repentance, but the physical consequence—the lost leg—is something he will have to live with, and indulgences won’t restore the person to his former state in this life. (Of course, certain physical and spiritual consequences can be mitigated or even eradicated in this life, due to prayer and faith in Christ’s Sacrifice and in God’s almighty power, subject to the Will of God, such as the consequence of depression due to sin or the contraction of a disease due to sinful conduct.)

On the other hand, once a person dies and then is resurrected, he is NOT resurrected with only one leg if he lost the other leg prior to his death, due to his sin. This kind of “temporal” penalty does not exist either.

The website of *catholic.com* then lists another myth pertaining to the teaching of the Catholic Church:

“Myth 5: An indulgence will shorten the time in purgatory by a fixed number of days.

“The number of days which used to be attached to indulgences were references to the period of penance one might undergo during life on earth. The Catholic Church does not claim to know anything about how long or short purgatory is in general, much less in a specific person’s case.”

As there is no Purgatory where the soul will suffer, the whole concept of trying to figure out as to how long the person (the “soul”) would suffer in Purgatory without indulgences, and how to shorten that time through indulgences, is just ludicrous. It would also certainly compound a grave error if the Catholic Church were to claim the length of any case of [a non-existent] Purgatory.

Finally, we are quoting this myth, as stated by *catholic.com*:

“Myth 6: A Person Can Buy Indulgences”

“The Council of Trent instituted severe reforms in the practice of granting indulgences, and, because of prior abuses, ‘in 1567 Pope Pius V canceled all grants of indulgences involving any fees or other financial transactions’ (Catholic Encyclopedia).”

At least the Catholic Church acknowledges abuses although it would be difficult to do otherwise as history shows that Martin Luther made a great play of their unscriptural basis.

The website of *catholic.com* also states the following:

“How Many of One’s Temporal Penalties Can Be Remitted?”

“Potentially, all of them. The Church recognizes that Christ and the saints are interested in helping penitents deal with the aftermath of their sins, as indicated by the fact they always pray for us (Heb. 7:25, Rev. 5:8). Fulfilling its role in the administration of temporal penalties, the Church draws upon the rich supply of rewards God chose to bestow on the saints, who pleased him, and on his Son, who pleased him most of all.”

Erroneous Use of Scripture

Both Scriptures mentioned above have nothing to do with indulgences [or the “saints in heaven” praying for the living or for those who are “suffering in Purgatory or Hell”]. Hebrews 7:25 is an

affirmation of the fact that Jesus Christ is our High Priest and shows that we don't need to use a Catholic priest to have access to God the Father. In 1 Timothy 2:5 we read: "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus..."

We read in *Wikipedia*: "Absolution is an integral part of the Sacrament of Penance in Roman Catholicism. The penitent makes a sacramental confession of all mortal sins to a priest and prays an act of contrition (a genre of prayers). The priest then assigns a penance and imparts absolution in the name of the Trinity, on behalf of Christ Himself, using a fixed sacramental formula."

A Catholic Priest Cannot Give Absolution to a Dying Person

The Catholic Church believes that a Catholic priest can give absolution to a dying person but this is not biblical. Only God can forgive sins upon true repentance (see Luke 5:21 and Mark 2:7). We read that absolution, in the ecclesiastical sense, implies a remission of sin or its penalties. In the Roman Catholic Church, the power to absolve is vested in the priest as we read above, and he assigns a penance! However, we are NOT to confess our sins to a priest, but to God.

Also, this absolution is made in the name of the Trinity which is yet another non-biblical error. There is nothing biblical about this approach at all.

As we have seen, the Bible does not teach the Trinity. God is a Family, consisting of God the Father (the Highest in the Godhead), and of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Holy Spirit is NOT a Person or part of the Trinity, but the POWER emanating from the Father AND the Son, and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that both the Father and the Son can live and dwell in a converted Christian. God wants to enlarge His Family, and those who have received the Holy Spirit upon proper baptism are BEGOTTEN children of God. They will become BORN AGAIN children of God at the time of their resurrection or change to eternal life. THEN they will enter God's Family as immortal God beings. The Trinity, which is an unalterable and closed concept without the possibility of access into the Kingdom and Family of God, DENIES this important doctrine and is therefore blasphemous. (For more information, please read our free booklet, "Is God a Trinity?").

The above-cited website continues:

“The rewards on which the Church draws are infinite because Christ is God, so the rewards he accrued are infinite and never can be exhausted. The rewards of the saints are added to Christ’s—not because anything is lacking in his, but because it is fitting that they be united with his rewards as the saints are united with him. Although immense, their rewards are finite, but his are infinite.”

We don’t even try to “explain” this unintelligible babbling. Continuing:

“If the Church Has the Resources to Wipe Out Everyone’s Temporal Penalties, Why Doesn’t It Do So?”

“Because God does not wish this to be done. God himself instituted the pattern of temporal penalties being left behind. They fulfill valid functions, one of them disciplinary. If a child were never disciplined, he would never learn obedience. God disciplines us as his children — ‘the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives’ (Heb. 12:6) — so some temporal penalties must remain.

“The Church cannot wipe out everyone’s temporal punishments because their remission depends on the dispositions of the persons who suffer those temporal punishments. Just as repentance and faith are needed for the remission of eternal penalties, so they are needed for the remission of temporal penalties. Pope Paul VI stated, ‘Indulgences cannot be gained without a sincere conversion of outlook and unity with God’ (Indulgentiarum Doctrina 11).”

These “explanations” are likewise convoluted and confusing. As we pointed out before, the Catholic Church’s teaching on having to endure temporal punishment (the time a person is being tortured in Purgatory) is blatantly wrong. But what can be gleaned from these concepts is this:

Peter Not the First Pope

The Roman Catholic Church takes too much upon itself, erroneously thinking that it has power to do such things which it does not. The Catholic Church also erroneously believes that the apostle Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and the first pope. We certainly do not believe this, but even if he had been, he would not have been given that kind of authority which popes are claiming for themselves.

Christ said to Peter in Matthew 16:18: “... you are Peter, and on

this rock I will build My church..." This passage has been misused time and again to claim that the "Pope" has divine authority to abolish God's laws by replacing them with human concepts and traditions.

To be clear, the Pope has no divine authority to do anything of this kind. The word "Peter," i.e., "petros" in Greek, means "a little stone." The "rock," on which Christ would build His church, is "petra" in Greek, meaning a solid rock. Christ was not saying that He would build the church on "Peter," but on THE ROCK — Christ Himself. It is CHRIST who is identified as "THE ROCK" in passages such as 1 Corinthians 10:4. Peter, as well as the other apostles, in addition to the prophets, are part of the foundation, but Christ is the CHIEF cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). The Church is built on Christ, who is the LIVING Head of the Church (Ephesians 4:15).

Continuing:

"How Does One Determine By What Amount Penalties Have Been Lessened?"

"Before Vatican II each indulgence was said to remove a certain number of 'days' from one's discipline—for instance, an act might gain '300 days' indulgence—but the use of the term 'days' confused people, giving them the mistaken impression that in purgatory time as we know it still exists and that we can calculate our 'good time' in a mechanical way. The number of days associated with indulgences actually never meant that that much 'time' would be taken off one's stay in purgatory. Instead, it meant that an indefinite but partial (not complete) amount of remission would be granted, proportionate to what ancient Christians would have received for performing that many days' penance.

"To overcome the confusion Paul VI issued a revision of the handbook (Enchiridion is the formal name) of indulgences. Today, numbers of days are not associated with indulgences. They are either plenary or partial."

Confusing Catholic Explanation About Indulgences and Purgatory

To be clear, the above "explanation" only attempts to confuse the Catholic Church's teaching even more. As we have pointed out, it is CLEARLY the Roman Catholic Church's teaching that indulgences are given for the purpose of shortening the TIME a sinner suffers in Purgatory. The above-cited "explanation" is hopelessly convoluted, and if it

is supposed to convey that indulgences are not meant to shorten the time of suffering in Purgatory, it is incorrect, but it shows that even Catholics do not understand their own teaching.

The Catholic Church and the Pope can continue to make explanations of an absurd doctrine which has no biblical basis and “blind” their faithful, but Purgatory and indulgences make a mockery of the Truth which the Bible reveals to those with eyes to see.

Continuing with the above-cited Website:

“What’s the Difference Between a Partial and a Plenary Indulgence?”

“An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin (Indulgentarium Doctrina 2, 3). Only God knows exactly how efficacious any particular partial indulgence is or whether a plenary indulgence was received at all.”

Again, the same false and blasphemous concept is conveyed here that God tortures a person who died and dwells in Purgatory.

“Don’t Indulgences Duplicate or Even Negate the Work of Christ?”

“Despite the biblical underpinnings of indulgences, some are sharply critical of them and insist the doctrine supplants the work of Christ and turns us into our own saviors. This objection results from confusion about the nature of indulgences and about how Christ’s work is applied to us.

“Indulgences apply only to temporal penalties, not to eternal ones. The Bible indicates that these penalties may remain after a sin has been forgiven and that God lessens these penalties as rewards to those who have pleased him. Since the Bible indicates this, Christ’s work cannot be said to have been supplanted by indulgences.

“The merits of Christ, since they are infinite, comprise most of those in the treasury of merits. By applying these to believers, the Church acts as Christ’s servant in the application of what he has done for us, and we know from Scripture that Christ’s work is applied to us over time and not in one big lump (Phil. 2:12, 1 Pet. 1:9).”

What the above-cited statement misunderstands is the concept of giving an account to God, which DOES occur after a person has been resurrected back to life. But this has nothing to do with remaining penalties after sins have been forgiven. For a thorough explanation,

please read our free booklet, *"Punishment for Our Sins."*

A key concept in the quoted statement above is that *"Indulgences apply only to temporal penalties, not to eternal ones"*. Apart from the fact that it is very difficult to decipher what this statement is supposed to mean, exactly, the Bible reveals, when properly understood, that *"temporal penalties"*, the sowing and reaping principle, is something that a true Christian has to be cognizant of in this life now. No intervention by a large church can countermand this. When we have fallen short and sin, as we often do, we repent personally, not through some human church representative, but to God to ask for forgiveness. It is a personal matter as repentance can only come from the individual concerned.

Continuing:

"Isn't It Better to Put All of the Emphasis On Christ Alone?"

"If we ignore the fact of indulgences, we neglect what Christ does through us, and we fail to recognize the value of what he has done in us. Paul used this very sort of language: 'Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church' (Col. 1:24).

"Even though Christ's sufferings were superabundant (far more than needed to pay for anything), Paul spoke of completing what was 'lacking' in Christ's sufferings. If this mode of speech was permissible for Paul, it is permissible for us.

"Catholics should not be defensive about indulgences. They are based on principles straight from the Bible. Pope Paul VI declared, '[T]he Church invites all its children to think over and weigh up in their minds as well as they can how the use of indulgences benefits their lives and all Christian society... Supported by these truths, holy Mother Church again recommends the practice of indulgences to the faithful' (Indulgentiarum Doctrina, 9, 11)."

We have already explained WHY much of what is written above is blatantly wrong. But one aspect needs our comment. The statement above claims that indulgences benefit all involved, as they somehow relate to completing what is lacking in Christ's suffering. At the same time, it is stated above that *"Christ's sufferings were superabundant (far more than needed to pay for anything)."* But apart from this obvious contradiction and the fact that this concept (*"completing what is*

lacking in Christ's suffering") would be totally contradictory from a Roman Catholic teaching's standpoint (as indulgences would prevent such completion), Paul is drawing an analogy, stating that as Christ suffered, so he must too, and that he has to complete the suffering allotted to him, also for the sake of the members—he would stay a bit longer with them rather than dying soon—but he refers to THIS life, not to some sort of an "afterlife."

Continuing:

"How to Gain an Indulgence

"To gain any indulgence you must be a Catholic in order to be under the Church's jurisdiction, and you must be in a state of grace because apart from God's grace none of your actions are fundamentally pleasing to God (meritorious). You also must have at least the habitual intention of gaining an indulgence by the act performed.

"To gain a partial indulgence, you must perform with a contrite heart the act to which the indulgence is attached. To gain a plenary indulgence you must perform the act with a contrite heart, plus you must go to confession (one confession may suffice for several plenary indulgences), receive Holy Communion, and pray for the pope's intentions. The final condition is that you must be free from all attachment to sin, including venial sin. If you attempt to receive a plenary indulgence, but are unable to meet the last condition, a partial indulgence is received instead."

We just interject here that it is the claim of the Catholic Church that it is the only church through which we can obtain salvation, and if you are not a Catholic, you could not obtain indulgences either.

Further Examples of Man-Made Rules and Regulations

"Below are indulgences listed in the Handbook of Indulgences (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1991):

"An act of spiritual communion, expressed in any devout formula whatsoever, is endowed with a partial indulgence.

"A partial indulgence is granted the Christian faithful who devoutly spend time in mental prayer.

"A plenary indulgence is granted when the rosary is recited in a church or oratory or when it is recited in a family, a religious community, or a pious association. A partial indulgence is granted for its recitation in all other circumstances.

“A partial indulgence is granted the Christian faithful who read sacred Scripture with the veneration due God’s word and as a form of spiritual reading. The indulgence will be a plenary one when such reading is done for at least one-half hour [provided the other conditions are met].

“A partial indulgence is granted to the Christian faithful who devoutly sign themselves with the cross while saying the customary formula: ‘In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.’

“In summary, the practice of indulgences neither takes away nor adds to the work of Christ. It is his work, through his body the Church, raising up children in his own likeness.”

The concept of indulgences CLEARLY DESTROYS the Work of Christ, by both adding to and/or taking away from the Truth. We can see how much ridiculous human thinking and reasoning has gone into coming up with a non-biblical doctrine. First, as mentioned, one must be a Catholic to gain any indulgence (It does not matter to us as indulgences are a human invention anyhow and in contradiction to God’s Word.) Apart from the ridiculous distinction between plenary and partial indulgences, just looking at the listed indulgences above is an apt testimony to (ungodly) requirements that have just been arbitrarily thought up by some human being without any underlying biblical instruction or godly understanding or authority.

For example, the place and circumstances of praying the rosary (an ungodly and pagan practice) is to decide whether one receives a plenary or partial indulgence. Also, the last requirement quoted above talks about signing with the cross [a pagan symbol and a pagan practice] while saying a prescribed formula. There is nothing in God’s Word that approves such an approach but is simply concocted out of the mind of man. In fact, Christ condemns such kind of “worship.”

In Matthew 6:7, Christ warns us against meaningless repetitions (like praying the rosary, which is also vain, and if it refers to praying to the “Virgin Mary,” it is also meaningless as Mary is dead and in the grave): “But when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many [repetitious] words.”

Christ also told us this, in Matthew 15:9: “And in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” In Mark 7:9, He added: “All too well you reject the commandment of

God, that you may keep your tradition.”

How can one honestly deny the fact that the concept of indulgences is a human tradition which is contradicted by God’s Word and which rejects God’s commandment to worship Him in spirit and in TRUTH (John 4:24).

Chapter 6

What It All Means

We have already discussed the concept of partial indulgences (removing part of the “temporal” punishment due to sin), and of plenary indulgences (removing all temporal punishment due to sin).

Let us look at a further explanation in the following Catholic website, *douglasbeaumont.com*:

“Indulgences are not ‘Get Out of Hell Free’ cards, nor can one gain enough indulgences to earn entrance to Heaven. Rather, indulgences have to do with avoiding the sufferings of Purgatory for temporal sins prior to entering Heaven. Scripture supports the theology of indulgences in seed form, even though (like many doctrines) it is not stated as such. Finally, the Church has clarified the requirements for — and rewards of — indulgences throughout its history and tradition. By understanding this teaching more clearly, the animosity generated by 500 year-old misunderstandings can be avoided.”

In this short summary, we can glean the following information:

Entrance to Heaven, as we have proved, is not the reward of the saved. As Purgatory is a false supposition, avoiding the sufferings there “for temporal sins prior to entering Heaven” is a non-starter. Scripture does NOT support any theology of indulgences in any form. The requirements and rewards of indulgences are a figment of man’s imagination with no Scriptural basis whatsoever. As this teaching is not supported by Scripture, any “misunderstandings” are just not applicable.

For those dead and still alive in Purgatory, as is believed, it reduces the time spent there before entering Heaven. As we have proved previously, neither Purgatory nor people going to Heaven are biblical concepts, but as Catholics believe in these, they believe that they can pray for the dead and have an effect on the time they will spend in Purgatory. They also believe that they can pray for themselves, while still alive, and for others before they died, so that they will not stay in Purgatory for too long, if at all.

A vital part of understanding is that an indulgence, if it was true (which it is not), would negate for those alive, the sowing and reaping principle which we have already reviewed but is worth reiterating: We read in Galatians 6:7: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” In such circumstances, how would we ever learn lessons that God has in store for us?

The Consequences of King David’s Actions

Let us review the example of king David when considering the false concept of indulgences for the living. David became guilty of a terrible crime by committing adultery with Bathsheba and then having her husband, Uriah, killed. We can learn about this in 2 Samuel 12 where we read the story given by Nathan the prophet and king David’s admission of his guilt (verses 13–14). There were consequences to David’s action and the child died. The sowing and reaping principle was shown to be in action very quickly. Cause and effect cannot be negated just because someone undertakes some action. Had the child lived, it could have been misconstrued that it was perfectly fine to commit such an appalling action with no consequences, as David was the king and a man after God’s own heart, and that God condoned such outrageous behavior. Of course, God did not, and the reaping and sowing principle remained intact and is still applicable today in spite of Catholic indulgences giving a different and wrong impression of what can happen. In fact, David was punished further in that he would have wars until the end of his life, and in that he was humiliated publicly by the actions of his rebellious son Absalom who slept with David’s concubines in plain sight of the people.

Blessings for Obedience and Disobedience

We read in Leviticus 26 the promise of blessing and retribution, and in Deuteronomy 28, blessings on obedience and curses on disobedience are listed, showing that blessings would be given for living God’s Way, and curses for actions if they were disobedient. There is no hint that indulgences, or anything similar, would negate any wrong behavior by the children of Israel. It was cause and effect; it was sowing and reaping. As we explained, sincere repentance of a person or a nation can avoid punishment and can lead to God’s supernatural intervention

to diminish or abolish a certain effect, but “indulgences”—prayers for one’s self or others without any true repentance—cannot do that.

And even with true repentance, some effects will still take place, as we saw in the case of David who truly repented and was sorry for his crimes, but they were so egregious that God would not abolish the effects and the punishment. No amount of indulgences could have changed that. David fasted and prayed that his son would not die, but in this case, God did not change His mind.

Another example is Moses who sinned against God by dishonoring Him before the people, and God told him that because of that, Moses would not be able to enter the Promised Land. Moses pleaded repeatedly with God for a change of His mind, but God did not abolish the punishment (compare Deuteronomy 3:23–27).

Examples for Us to Follow Today

In 1 Corinthians 10, we read about Old Testament examples showing that we are not to follow that wrong way and that “... all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (verse 11). Ecclesiastes 8:11 advises: “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Some may be encouraged to sin if they see others doing wrong if they feel that there will be no punishment for the evil committed. Without question, sowing and reaping is a principle that is fully operational, and indulgences to mitigate their effect are unbiblical and unworkable.

There is no Scriptural evidence about indulgences being available or that someone, in this case, the Pope, could make them available as and when he thinks it is appropriate. It is all founded on a lie and, unfortunately, so many are “taken in” by such proclamations.

As you will recall, this booklet introduced the following news information:

“Pope Francis invited everyone to receive the ‘Pardon of Assisi’, which can be obtained from the evening of 1 August until midnight on 2 August... ‘It is a plenary indulgence that may be received by partaking of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist and visiting a parish or Franciscan church, reciting the Creed, the Lord’s

prayer and praying for the Pope and his intentions,' the Pope pointed out. He recalled that the indulgence can even be obtained for a deceased person...

"The 'Pardon of Assisi' dates back to 1216, when Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and angels appeared before St. Francis. The apparition took place in the tiny Portiuncula, the chapel Francis had built in the Italian town of Assisi. When Jesus asked him [what] he desired for the salvation of souls, St. Francis asked for God to grant a plenary indulgence for all those who enter the chapel. The indulgence was later extended to anyone who visits a parish or Franciscan church on 1 August or 2 August."

Our comment was: "This is so blasphemous and idolatrous".

We have endeavored to cover the original question with other inter-related doctrines and beliefs. We know that at the end of this current age, a great false church will exercise much power.

We have shown in this booklet that we don't have an immortal soul; that the soul is the person; that the spirit in man goes back to God at death but that it does not have any consciousness when the person dies; that people don't go to Purgatory, Heaven or Hell when they die; and that indulgences are simply a plan concocted in the mind of man under Satanic influence.

Tradition As Important As Scripture to the Catholic Church

Further, "*Catholic Answers*" opines as follows:

"Catholics... recognize that the true 'rule of faith'—as expressed in the Bible itself—is Scripture plus apostolic tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic Church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles, along with the authority to interpret Scripture correctly.' We read in... *amazing-discoveries.org*: "The fact that Scripture and Tradition belong together accounts for two rules that direct the way the Church approaches God's revelation. The first of these rules is stated very simply by Vatican II in these words: It follows from what has been said that the Church does not draw its knowledge of all that God has revealed from holy Scripture alone. That is why both (Tradition and Scripture) must be accepted and respected with equal affection and honour. Secondly, the unbreakable bond between Scripture and Tradition accounts for

the fact that for Catholics, Tradition is the context within which the Scriptures are interpreted, just as Tradition itself has to be understood and lived with reference to Scripture.”

This further shows they believe that “Tradition” is on a par with the Bible which is ridiculous, but such an approach certainly enables them to inculcate into their religious system non-biblical beliefs.

Previously, we have quoted Christ’s condemnation that we worship Him in vain when we teach traditions and as doctrines the commandments or concepts of men (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:9), while at the same time rejecting God’s Word and His commandments.

The Great False Religious System

In our booklet *“Is That in the Bible? The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation”* in chapter 20, “The Fall of Babylon the Great – Revelation 18,” we state:

“While in Revelation 17 the religious nature of the last resurrection of the Roman Empire is vividly depicted, Revelation 18 focuses more, but not exclusively, on the economic nature of that last resurrection.

“Let us quote again these interesting comments by the *Ryrie Study Bible*, in their annotation to Revelation 17:5: ‘In chapter 17 Babylon represents the false religious system that will center in Rome... In chapter 18 it represents more the political and commercial aspect of the revived Roman Empire... Thus the term stands both for a city and for a system (religious and commercial) related to the city (much like “Wall Street,” which is both a place and a system).’...

“God warns His people not to participate in this Babylonian system, by accepting the mark of the beast and becoming RICH thereby (compare Revelation 18:3–4...) Its merchandise even included ‘the bodies and souls of men’ (Revelation 18:13). Also in it, the blood of the saints was found (Revelation 18:24), and through its **false teachings** and sorcery all the nations were deceived (Revelation 18:3, 23).

“Lehman Strauss comments on modern Babylon’s wealth and religious persecution, as follows: “The wealth of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations combined adds up to many billions of dollars (p. 298)... The unscriptural doctrines of **purgatory**, the last rites, and masses for the dead have brought untold wealth into the treasury (p. 310)... Sir Robert Anderson, of Scotland Yard fame,

estimated that Rome was guilty of the death of 50,000,000 Christians (p. 299)... She will be judged because of the untold number of victims whom she slaughtered in the inquisition and in St. Bartholomew's Massacre. She must pay for those shocking murders and for the many bloody persecutions which followed (p. 314)' [and which still will occur in the near future].

"God will destroy the modern city of Babylon (Revelation 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21) 'in one day' and 'in one hour' (Revelation 18:8, 10, 17). God will totally wipe out that city, as well as the religious, economic, political and military system it represents, to become a habitation and prison for demons (Revelation 18:2).

"The warning and the lesson for God's people is very clear: 'Come out of her, My people,' God says. Have nothing to do with her. Be and stay separate, and don't touch what is unclean. Don't participate in other men's sins. There are always some who think that they need to remain within an apostate religious system and perhaps try to 'reform' it. It never works—and it is against God's specific instructions!

"We will observe, very shortly, the final revival of the ancient Roman Empire in Europe. A most powerful world-ruling Empire will emerge, attempting to impose its religious and military 'values' on everybody. As we know these things, we ought to take very seriously Christ's warning in Luke 21:34–36: 'But TAKE HEED to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to ESCAPE all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man [at His return].'"

We pointed out at the very beginning of this booklet that it is so sad that millions upon millions of people believe these ideas regarding indulgences and their underlying concepts without even realizing the absolute absurdity contained in them; and we also emphasized that the Catholic Church will very soon influence political powers to impose the mark of the beast on unsuspecting people. We have much more information on that famous mark of the beast. If you are interested, please read our free booklets, "*Europe in Prophecy*," "*Is That in the Bible?*" "*The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation*," "*The Ten European Revivals of the*

Ancient Roman Empire," and "Obeying God Rather Than Men."

The purpose of this booklet has been to speak out for the Truth. We are not fighting against flesh and blood or any human organization, but against Satan, the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air, who has found an easy target in Roman Catholic and Protestant concepts which are really nothing else but pagan ideas which have been given a "Christian" mantle. In fact, these false religious concepts, claiming to represent Christianity, are amply depicted by the first rider of the Apocalypse, masquerading as Christ and His followers.

Satan has deceived the whole world, which does not know that it is deceived—for otherwise, it would not be deceived anymore. But God has opened your eyes and ears if you have read this booklet with understanding. Then, God expects your response in turning to Him with your whole heart and embracing His Word, while leaving behind the false ideas, concepts, doctrines and traditions of men.

Chapter 7

More Light Shed on Rome and the Apostle Peter

In February 2021, author and historian Simon Sebag Montefiore presented a three-part series on BBC UK television entitled “Rome – A History of the Eternal City,” uncovering the central role played by religion in creating and maintaining the power of the city of Rome. In this program, the presenter said:

“For 1,000 years, paganism had brought success and prosperity to the eternal city. The will of the gods decided every aspect of Roman society. Paganism had brought Rome domination of the ancient world.

“Peter’s crucifixion would transform Rome but Christianity was just one of many eastern cults struggling to survive in a city dominated by pagan gods.

“Where the tradition comes from (about Peter), nobody knows. ‘I am a successor to Peter’ gives them an enormous source of authority.”

He also presented a two-part series entitled “The Rebirth of God’s City” where he “charted Rome’s rise from the abandonment and neglect of the 14th century into the everlasting seat of the papacy recognised today.” In this program, the presenter said that “Rome was to cast aside its pantheon of idols to embrace a revolutionary new faith from the east that would change its classical skyline forever. Personal salvation and the worship of one God eclipsed the gods of old. Soon after the crucifixion of Jesus His message started to spread but there was nothing inevitable about its ultimate triumph. The followers of Christ were viciously persecuted. But the martyrdom of St Peter gave Rome a new founding story and a divine mission for its successors, the popes. Rome became a vibrant centre of Christian devotion but it was the necessities of power that really decided its sacred destiny.”

We would like to mention here that it is very doubtful that Peter, the disciple of Christ, was even crucified in Rome and that he was buried there. For further information, please read our free booklet “*The Ten*

European Revivals of the ancient Roman Empire."

In addition, the presenter called Rome, "God's City" which it is not. Jerusalem is the city of God as many Scriptures show. Here are just a few of those references where God is shown to have chosen Jerusalem, not Rome, to be His chosen city. It is called "the City of the LORD" (Isaiah 60:14), the Holy City (Nehemiah 11:1, Isaiah 52:1, Daniel 9:24, Matthew 4:5; 27:53), the city of My God (Revelation (3:12), the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2) and holy Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10).

The website of *biblestudytools.com* states that "The name 'Jerusalem' occurs 806 times in the Bible, 660 times in the Old Testament and 146 times in the New Testament; additional references to the city occur as synonyms."

The presenter then went on to mention the selling of indulgences and said that "the church had turned sin into a business where they paid for sins they had already committed and sins that they had not yet committed" which is pretty much where we started off in this booklet.

As most people will know, the Roman Catholic Church claims the Apostle Peter as the first pope. We briefly addressed this claim before in this booklet. As mentioned in this chapter, the presenter said that "where the tradition comes from (about Peter), nobody knows."

In our booklet "*The Ten Revivals of the Ancient Roman Empire*," we read on pages 71–74 that "The Apostle Peter Was Not the First Pope." We will quote briefly from this booklet.

"While human tradition places the Apostle Peter in Rome as its first Bishop, Scripture fails to confirm that Peter even went to Rome to minister in that area.

"We read in Galatians 2:7–9 that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised (Gentiles, including those living in Rome who were physically uncircumcised), just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (Jews who were physically circumcised). Rome was essentially Gentile, even though some Jews resided there, and it was Paul, then, who went to Rome. We note that Peter was led to **OPEN** the way to salvation to be offered to the Gentiles, by baptizing Cornelius, following a miraculous vision (compare Acts 11). This does not mean that he went to Rome.

"Paul confirms in Romans 15:16–20 that he was a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, and that he made it 'his aim to preach the

gospel, not where Christ WAS named, lest I should build on another man's foundation' (verse 20). Paul is telling us here that he would not want to establish or lead a church that was already being led by another apostle, including Peter. He emphasizes the same principle in 2 Corinthians 10:13–16. When Paul was in Rome, he preached to the Gentiles there. He tells us in 2 Timothy 4:11, while imprisoned in Rome, that ONLY Luke was with him. Peter is not mentioned, which would be strange if Peter was in Rome at that time. The same can be said regarding Paul's additional 'prison epistles' that were written during his first imprisonment in Rome (about 60–62 A.D.)—Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. No mention of Peter can be found in these letters.

"In Romans 1:7, Paul addressed his letter to all of God's beloved in Rome, without mentioning Peter. In Romans 16, he again addressed greetings to 29 specific persons—in some cases their collective households—but again, he failed to mention Peter. Paul wrote the letter to the Romans about 57 A.D., probably from Corinth, and even though tradition tells us that Peter had established the church at Rome in the 40s A.D., we find no mention of Peter in Paul's letter to the Romans.

"Noteworthy also is what is stated in Acts 28:22 [and 23]. When Paul had been brought as a prisoner to Rome, the Jewish leaders residing there asked Paul about the gospel: "'But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.' So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the LAW of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening."

"When the Jews disagreed among themselves after they heard his message, Paul announced that he would now preach the gospel to the Gentiles in Rome, which he apparently did for two years (verses 24–31). This passage tells us that, even though they had heard about the 'sect' of the Christians, they had not been taught the gospel before Paul arrived in Rome. This shows that Peter could not have been there for 12 years prior to Paul's arrival; otherwise, they certainly would have known about the gospel already.

"It is for these reasons that Henry Chadwick concluded in his book, *The Early Church*, Volume 1, 1967, page 18, that the idea that Peter was

in Rome for 25 years is merely a third-century legend.”

The booklet goes on to discuss the following additional matters:

Where Was the Apostle Peter?; The Apostle Peter Not Buried in Rome?; Simon Magus – the Sorcerer; Simon Magus—the First Bishop of Rome.

The booklet is well worth reading (or re-reading) as it contains much information about the history of the ancient Roman Empire, and the end-time religious organization under the false prophet.

Conclusion

In this booklet, we have discussed the concept taught by the Roman Catholic Church that the “immortal souls” of departed ones may be in Hell or Purgatory, and that “indulgences” or prayers for the dead can allegedly remove, partially or completely (“plenary” or “in full”), punishment for sin, so that their souls can be freed from Purgatory (a temporary Hell) to go to Heaven.

We saw that indulgences are required, according to Catholic tradition and theology, to ensure that help and assistance is given in Purgatory (a place that doesn’t exist and has no validity from Scripture), so that humans can go to Heaven (which Scripture clearly shows is not the place for the dead, nor is Hell, as commonly understood in orthodox Christianity).

We also pointed out that the idea of indulgences applies in different ways: It addresses those who are in “Purgatory” and for whom prayers and “indulgences” are given by the living or the “saints in Heaven,” so that they can be freed from Purgatory; and it can apply to people in this life who give indulgences for themselves so that they do not have to suffer in Purgatory for as long as they otherwise would have to, or that they do not go to Hell.

We discussed the concept of partial indulgences (removing part of the “temporal” punishment due to sin), and of plenary indulgences (removing all temporal punishment due to sin). We also saw that the Catholic Church teaches that indulgences cannot remit the eternal penalty of Hell. Once a person is in Hell, no amount of indulgences will ever change that fact. The only way to avoid Hell is by appealing to God’s eternal mercy while still alive.

We have discussed all these concepts, and many more, based on the pages of the Bible, to open the eyes of our readers.

Momentous events lie ahead of us and the false church, which teaches so many wrong and unbiblical concepts as we have seen in this booklet, will be center stage.

You have been warned!

The following booklets are available, upon request:

And Lawlessness Will Abound...
Angels, Demons and the Spirit World
Are Jews and Christians at Odds with Jesus Christ?
Are YOU Predestined to be Saved?
Are You Already Born Again?
Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?
Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever
Do We Have an Immortal Soul?
Do You Know the Jesus of the Bible?
Don't Keep Christmas
Europe in Prophecy: The Unfolding of End-Time Events
Evil Empires and Evil People—Wild Beasts of the Bible
Germany in Prophecy—*The Mysterious Origin of German-Speaking Peoples and Their Prophetic Destiny*
God Is a Family
God's *Commanded* Holy Days
God's Law...or God's Grace?
God's Teachings on Sexual Relationships
Heavens and Earth...Before and After the First Man!
Hidden Secrets in the Bible
How Can We Know that Christ's Return Is Near?
How to Find the True Church of God
How to Keep the Sabbath
Human Suffering—Why...and How Much Longer?
Is God a Trinity?
Is That In the Bible?—Man's Holidays and God's Holy Days
Is That In the Bible?—The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation
Jesus Christ—A Great Mystery!

Middle Eastern and African Nations in Bible Prophecy
Obeying God Rather than Men
Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?
Paul's Letter to the Ephesians—*How to Understand It*
Paul's Letter to the Galatians—*How to Understand It*
Paul's Letter to the Philippians—*How to Understand It*
Punishment for Our Sins
Should YOU Fight in War?
Sickness and Healing—What the Bible Tells Us
Teach Us to Pray!
The Authority of the Bible
The Book of Zechariah—Prophecies for *Today!*
The Fall and Rise of Britain and America
The Fall and Rise of the Jewish People
The Gospel of the Kingdom of God
The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord
The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families
The *Meaning* of God's Fall Holy Days
The *Meaning* of God's Spring Holy Days
The Mysteries of the Bible
The Sacrificial System and the Tabernacle In the Wilderness
The Ten Commandments
The Ten European Revivals of the Ancient Roman Empire
The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?
Tithing—Today?
When and How Will Christ Return?
Why this Confusion about Life after Death?

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