

Roman Catholicism

by Loraine Boettner



and

What the BIBLE says.



This material is
copyrighted and
used by
permission.

B. A. M. A. Bible Institutes, Inc.

(Baptist Asian Missions Association, Inc.)

133 Isarog Street, LaLoma, Quezon City 1114 R.P.

Roman Catholicism

Table of Contents

I. THE PRIESTHOOD	1
II. PETER	4
III. THE PAPACY	8
IV. MARY	10
V. THE MASS	18
VI. THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE	25
VII. BY WHAT MORAL STANDARD?	27
CONCLUSION	29

Study Questions For Roman Catholicism.....33 - 34

Additional Outlines in the back.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS BLOCK:

1. **Read all the material** for this block.
2. **Look up and read all the verses** in the material as you read through the material.
3. **Fill in the answers** to your **STUDY QUESTIONS** ahead of time so you will be better prepared for the EXAM during the final hour.
4. **T-H-I-N-K** as you read this material. **It will be a blessing to you.**
It will also change your life.

Roman Catholicism

I. THE PRIESTHOOD

A. The Office of the Priest.

In the Old Testament the work of Christ was prefigured under the three offices of prophet, priest, and king. Each of these was given special prominence in the nation of Israel. Each was designed to set forth a particular phase of the work of the coming Redeemer, and each was filled by those who were divinely called to the work.

The prophet was appointed to be God's spokesman to the people, revealing to them His will and purpose for their salvation. The priest was appointed to represent the people before God, to offer sacrifices for them and to intercede with God on their behalf. And the king was appointed to rule over the people, to defend them and to restrain and conquer all His and their enemies.

The essential idea of a priest is that of a mediator between God and man. In his fallen estate man is a sinner, guilty before God, and alienated from Him. He has no right of approach to God. He is, therefore, helpless until someone undertakes to act as his representative before God.

In ancient Israel the priests performed three primary duties: (1) they ministered at the sanctuary before God, offering sacrifices to Him in behalf of the people, (2) they taught the people the law of God; and (3) they inquired for the people concerning the divine will. Under the old covenant the men who held the offices of prophet, priest, or king were only shadows or types of Christ who was to come. With His coming each of these offices found its fulfilment in Him. And with the accomplishment of His work of redemption each of these offices, as it functioned on the human level, reached its fulfilment and was abolished. As regards the priesthood, Christ alone is now our Priest, our one and only High Priest. He fulfils that office in that He once offered up Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, thereby making unnecessary and putting an end to all other sacrifices.

All of this is clearly set forth in Hebrews 9: "Christ having come a high priest ..." (Read vs. 11, 12, 14, 24, 26). In Heb. 8:1, 2 it says that "We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens ..."

In accordance with this N.T. change in the priesthood, through which the old order of ritual and sacrifice which prefigured the atoning work of Christ has been fulfilled and Christ alone has become our true High Priest, the human priesthood as a distinct and separate order of men has fulfilled its function and has been abolished. Furthermore, all born again believers, having now been given the right of access to God through Christ their Saviour, and being able to go directly to God in prayer and so to intercede for themselves and others, themselves become priests of God. For these are the functions of a priest. This we term the universal priesthood of believers. And this is the distinctive feature of Protestantism (and Baptists too) as regards the doctrine of the priesthood.

"Ye also," says Peter, "as living stones are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood ... " (read 1 Peter 2:5, 9). In making that statement Peter was not addressing a priestly caste, but all true believers, as is shown by the fact that his epistle was addressed to Jewish Christians of the Dispersion (1:1), even to those are as "new-born babes" in the faith (2:2). In Rev. 1:5, 6 John says" ... made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father."

The sacrifices offered by the Christian are termed "spiritual", and they relate to worship and service:

- (1) **the sacrifice of praise, Heb. 13:15**
- (2) **the sacrifice offered through our gifts, Heb. 13:16**
- (3) **the sacrifice of ourselves, our bodies, our lives, Rom. 12:1, 2.**

Thus the N.T. sets forth a new and different kind of priesthood: first, Christ, the true High Priest, who is in heaven; and second, the universal priesthood of believers, through which

Roman Catholicism

they offer the "spiritual" sacrifices of praise, of gifts, and of themselves in Christian service.

Every believer now has the inexpressibly high privilege of going directly to God in prayer, without the mediation of any earthly priest, and of interceding for himself and for others. (Matt. 7:7; John 16:23; Acts 2:21).

Yet Rome would rob us of this privilege and would interpose her priests and dead saints between the soul and God. Rome's teaching and practice is heresy.

The Bible teaches that, "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 2:5). The church of Rome teaches that there are many mediators, the priests, Mary, a host of saints, and the angels. And that it is right and proper to pray to them. But to any honest priest in the church of Rome it must become more and more apparent that Christ is the only true Priest, the only true Mediator, and that in serving as a priest, in pretending to offer the sacrifice of the mass and to forgive sins, he is merely acting the part of an impostor.

B. No New Testament Authority for a Human Priesthood.

In the N.T. we are taught that the priesthood, along with the other elements of the old dispensation, including the sacrificial system, the ritual, the Levitical law, the temple, etc., has served its purpose and has passed away. It is very inconsistent for the Roman church to retain the priesthood while discarding the other elements of that system.

Paul enumerates the different kinds of ministers and agents in the Christian church, and the office of priest is not among them. (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28). The only mediatorial priesthood recognized in the N.T. is that of Christ, the great High Priest, and to Him alone is the title "priest" (*hiereus*) given. (Heb. 7:17, 24-27; 10:14).

In the epistle to the Hebrews several chapters are devoted to showing that the O.T. priesthood has been abolished (9:12; 10:12; 9:26; 10:10).

The sacrifice of Christ was therefore a "once-for-all" sacrifice which only He could make, and which cannot be repeated. By its very nature it was final and complete. It was a work of Deity, and so cannot be repeated by man any more than can the work of creation. Let all men now look to that one sacrifice on Calvary. Any continuing priesthood and any "unbloody repetition of the mass," which professes to offer the same sacrifice that Christ offered on Calvary, is in reality merely a sham.

The abolition of the priestly caste which through the old dispensation stood between God and man was dramatically illustrated at the very moment that Christ died on the cross. When He cried, "It is finished", a strange sound filled the temple as the veil that separated the sanctuary from the holy of holies was torn from top to bottom. The ministering priests found themselves gazing at the torn veil with wondering eyes, for God's own hand had removed the curtain and had opened the way into the holy of holies, symbolizing by that act that no longer did man have to approach Him through the mediation of a priest, but that the way of access to Him is now open to all.

Hence the continuing priesthood in the church of Rome is absolutely unscriptural and unchristian. It owes its existence solely to a man-made development that can be traced in detail in the history of the church, for it was not until the third or fourth century that priests began to appear in the church. But papal dominance has been built up on that practice and is dependent on its continuance. Without an hierarchical priesthood the papal system would immediately disintegrate.

The apostle Peter, far from making himself a priest or a pope, was content to call himself one of the many elders, a *presbuteros*. And he specifically warned the elders against that most glaring error of the Roman Catholic priests, lording it over the charges given to them. He rather urged that they serve as examples to the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Roman Catholicism

But the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers is not merely a negative teaching abolishing an order of clergy. For along with that freedom which makes the believer responsible only to God for his faith and life, there is an added responsibility (1 Pet. 2:9). As Christians, then we are not laymen, nor mere spectators of the Christian enterprise who may or may not engage in it as we choose, but "priests", and therefore responsible to God for the faith and lives of others. We are under obligation to make known this message of salvation. This priesthood applies to all believers, and consists of two things:

(1) Immediate access to God in prayer for one's self; and (2) The right and duty of intercession for others.

C. The Claims of the Roman Priesthood.

The Council of Trent, whose decrees must be accepted by all Roman Catholics under pain of mortal sin or excommunication, says:

"The priest is the man of God, the minister of God ... He that despiseth the priest despiseth God; he that hears him hears God. The priest remits sins as God, and that which he calls his body at the altar is adorned as God by himself and by the congregation ... It is clear that their function is such that none greater can be conceived. Wherefore they are justly called not only angels, but also God, holding as they do among us the power and authority of the immortal God".

In a similar vein a Roman Catholic book, carrying the imprimatur of the **Archbishop of Ottawa, Canada**, says:

"Without the priest the death and passion of our Lord would be of no avail to us. See the power of the priest. By one word from his lips he changes a piece of bread into a God. A greater fact than the creation of a world. If I were to meet a priest and an angel, I would salute the priest before saluting the angel. The priest holds the place of God."

To millions of Christians who are outside the Roman Church such words are blasphemy.

The titles of "archbishop," "cardinal" ("prince of the church," as they like to be called), and "pope" are not even in the Bible. The term "bishop" *episcopos* and "elder" *presbyteros* were used interchangeably.

Christ bade His followers practice humility, acknowledge one another as equals, and serve one another (Matt. 20:25-28; 1 Pet. 5:3; 2 Cor. 4:5). But Rome denies this equality and sets up the priest as a dictator belonging to a sacred order, altogether apart from and superior to the people of the parish. **The loyal Roman Catholic** must heed what the priest says.

Romanism puts the priest between the Christian believer and the knowledge of God as revealed in the Scriptures, and makes him the sole interpreter of truth. It puts the priest between the confession of sins and the forgiveness of sins. It carries this interposition through to the last hour, in which the priest, in the sacrament of extreme unction, stands between the soul and eternity, and even after death the release of the soul from purgatory and its entrance into heavenly joy is still dependent on the priest's prayers which must be paid for by relatives or friends.

No matter what the moral character of a priest, his prayers and his ministrations are declared to be valid and efficacious because he is in holy orders. The Council of Trent has declared that, "Even those priests who are living in mortal sin exercise the same function of forgiving sins as ministers of Christ."

In our method of choosing a minister, which we believe is in harmony with the teaching of Scripture and practice of the early church, we choose a man not because he is of a superior order, but because of our belief that he is capable of ministering the things of the Spirit to his fellow men and because we believe he will live an honest, humble, sincere, and upright life. Ordinarily the minister marries and dwells in a family because this is the natural state of man, and hence he is closer to his people than is the celibate priest. He is chosen by the people, not, however, to govern according to the will of the

Roman Catholicism

people, but according to the will of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. He is among the flock as a spiritual leader, friend, and counsellor, not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

D. The Christian Ministry is Not a Sacrificing Ministry.

All pre-Christian religions, Judaism included, contained two common elements: (1) a human priesthood; and, (2) the teaching that salvation was not complete as provided. Their sacrifices were of limited value and therefore deficient; and so continued endlessly day after day.

However, because Christ was both God and man His sacrifice was of infinite value, and therefore complete, efficacious, and final. This is the clear teaching of Hebrews, (10:10-14). And again: "... (Christ), who needeth not daily ... for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself." (7:27)

The "one sacrifice," offered "once for all," by Christ paid the penalty for the sin of His people and so fulfilled the ritual and made all further sacrifices unnecessary.. There is, therefore, no place for a sacrificing priesthood in the Christian dispensation.

This same truth is taught when we are told that after Christ had completed His work, He "sat down" on the right hand of God, thus symbolizing that His work was finished, that nothing more needed to be added (Heb. 1:3; 10:12, 13).

The greatness and completeness and finality of Christ's sacrificial work is seen in His royal rest. The fact that He has sat down is of special interest since in the tabernacle and the temple there were no seats or benches on which the priests could ever sit down or rest.

It is interesting to notice that when Christ sent out His apostles He commanded them to preach and teach, but said not one word about sacrifice (Matt. 28:19, 20). The mass is the very heart of the service. In the first part of the ordination service for a priest he is addressed as follows: "Receive thou the power to offer sacrifices to God, and to celebrate masses, both

for the living and for the dead. In the name of the Lord. Amen."

In the book of Acts there are no references whatever to a sacrificing priesthood. Paul likewise through his epistles gave many directions concerning the duties of the ministry. But nowhere is there even a hint that the ministers were to offer sacrifices, nowhere even an allusion to the mass.

Our conclusion concerning the priesthood must be that Christ alone is our true High Priest, the only Mediator between God and men, the reality toward which the entire O.T. ritual and sacrifice and priesthood looked forward, and that when He completed His work that entire system fell away. Consequently, we reject all merely human and earthly priests, whether in the Roman Catholic Church or in heathen religions, and look upon their continued practice as simply an attempt to usurp divine authority.

II. PETER

A. The Roman Catholic Position.

The controversial passage in regard to Peter's place in the church is in Matthew 16:13-19. The late **Cardinal Gibbons**, a former archbishop of Baltimore, Maryland and one of the most representative American Roman Catholics, in his widely read book, *Faith of our Fathers*, sets forth the position of his church in these words:

"The Catholic Church teaches that our Lord conferred on St. Peter the first place of honor and jurisdiction in the government of His whole church, and that the same spiritual supremacy has always resided in the popes,, or bishops of Rome, as being the successors of St. Peter. Consequently to be true followers of Christ, all Christians, both among the clergy and laity, must be in communion with the See of Rome, where Peter rules in the person of his successor" (pg. 95).

The whole structure of the Roman church is built on the assumption that in Matt. 16:13-19 Christ appointed Peter the first pope and so established the papacy. Disprove the primacy of Peter, and the foundation of the papacy is

Roman Catholicism

destroyed. Destroy the papacy, and the whole Roman hierarchy topples with it.

Their system of priesthood depends absolutely upon **their claim** that Peter was the first pope at Rome, and that they are his successors. We propose to show that (1) Matthew 16:13-19 does not teach that Christ appointed Peter a pope; (2) that there is no proof that Peter ever was in Rome; and (3) that the N.T. records, particularly Peter's own writings, show that he never claimed authority over the other apostles or over the church, and that that authority was never accorded him.

B. The "Rock"

"And I say to thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18, Confraternity Version)

Romanists quote this verse with relish, and add their own interpretation to establish **their claim** for papal authority. But in the Greek the word "Peter" is *petros*, a person, masculine, while the word "rock", *petra*, is feminine and refers not to a person but to the declaration of Christ's deity that Peter had just uttered - "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Using Peter's name and making, as it were, a play upon words, Jesus said to Peter, "You are *petros*, and upon this *petra* I will build my church." The truth that Peter had just confessed was the foundation upon which Christ would build His church. He meant that Peter had seen the basic, essential truth concerning His person, the essential truth upon which the church would be founded, and that nothing would be able to overthrow that truth, not even all the forces of evil that might be arrayed against it. Peter was the first among the disciples to see our Lord as the Christ of God. Christ commended him for that spiritual insight, and said that His church would be founded upon that fact. And that, of course, was a far different thing from founding the church on Peter.

Had Christ intended to say that the Church would be founded on Peter, it would have

been ridiculous for Him to have shifted to the feminine form of the word in the middle of the statement, saying, if we may translate literally and somewhat whimsically, "And I say unto thee, that thou art Mr. Rock, and upon this, the Miss Rock, I will build my church." Clearly it was upon the truth that Peter had expressed, the deity of Christ, and not upon weak, vacillating Peter, that the church would be founded. The Greek "*petros*" is commonly used of a small, movable stone, a mere pebble, as it were. But "*petra*" means an immovable foundation, in this instance, the basic truth that Peter had just confessed, the deity of Christ.

The Bible tells us plainly, not that the church is built upon Peter, but that it is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20). And again, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Without that foundation the true Christian church could not exist.

The gates of hell were not to prevail against the church. But the gates of hell did prevail against Peter shortly afterward, as recorded in this same chapter, when he attempted to deny that Christ would be crucified, and almost immediately afterward, in the presence of the other disciples, received the stinging rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling block unto me, for thou mindest not the things of God but the things of men" (v. 23) - surely strong words to use against one who had just been appointed pope

Later we read that Peter slept in Gethsemane, during Christ's agony. His rash act in cutting off the servant's ear drew Christ's rebuke. He boasted that he was ready to die for his Master, but shortly afterward shamefully denied with oaths and curses that he even knew Him. And even after Pentecost Peter still was subject to such serious error that his hypocrisy had to be rebuked by Paul, who says: "But when Cephas came to Antioch (at which time he was in full possession of his papal powers according

Roman Catholicism

to Romanist doctrine), I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11). And yet, Romanists allege that their pope, as Peter's successor, is infallible in matters of faith and morals.

The Gospel written by Mark, who is described in early Christian literature as Peter's close companion and understudy, does not even record the remark about the "rock" in reporting Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mk. 8:27-30). No, Christ did not build His church upon a weak, sinful man. Rather the essential deity of Christ, which was so forcefully set forth in Peter's confession, was the foundation stone, the starting point, on which the church would be built.

That no superior standing was conferred upon Peter is clear from the later disputes among the disciples concerning who should be greatest among them. Had such rank already been given, Christ would simply have referred to His grant of power to Peter (Mk. 9:33-35; 10:34-44).

In 1 Peter 2:6-8 Christ is called a rock and a chief cornerstone. But **Peter** here **claims** nothing for himself. Indeed he is explicit in calling all believers living stones built up a spiritual house with Christ as the head of the corner.

"Christ is repeatedly called a Rock. The background for this is that around 34 times in the O.T. God is called a Rock or the Rock of Israel. It was a designation of God. In the Messianic passages, Isa. 8:14; 28:16; and Psa. 118:22, Christ is called a Rock or Stone upon which we should believe. These passages are quoted in the N.T. and for that reason Christ is called a Rock several times. It designates Him as divine. For that reason, every Jew, knowing the O.T., would refuse the designation to Peter or to anyone except insofar as we are children of Christ. He is the Rock. We are living stones built upon Him. Eph. 2:20 says this plainly. Paul says of the Rock from which the Israelites drank that it typified Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). In the N.T. there are 12 foundations and on them are the

names of the 12 apostles - none of them are made pre-eminent."

(*The Bible Presbyterian Reporter*, Jan. 1959).

And **Dr. Henry M. Woods** says:

"If Christ had meant that Peter was to be the foundation, the natural form of statement would have been, 'Thou art Peter, and on thee I will build my church'; but He does not say this, because Peter was not to be the rock on which the church was built. Note also that in the expression 'on this rock'; our Lord purposely used a different Greek word, *petra*, from that used for Peter, *petros*. He did this to show that, not Peter, but the great truth which had just been revealed to him, viz., that our Lord was 'the Christ, the Son of the living God,' was to be the church's foundation. Built on the Christ, the everlasting Saviour, the gates of hell would never prevail against the Church. But built on the well-meaning but sinful Peter, the gates of hell would surely prevail; for a little later our Lord had to severely rebuke Peter, calling him 'Satan'" (*Our Priceless Heritage*, pg. 40).

C. The "Keys".

"And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19, Confraternity Version).

It is important to notice, that the authority to bind and to loose was not given exclusively to Peter. In the 18th chapter of Matthew the same power is given to all of the disciples. (vs. 1, 18) Even the scribes and Pharisees had this same power (Matt. 23:13; 23:2-4).

Here the expression clearly means that the scribes and Pharisees, in that the Word of God was in their hands, thereby had the power, in declaring that Word to the people, to open the kingdom of heaven to them; and in withholding that Word they shut the kingdom of heaven against people. See also Luke 11:52.

Thus the "keys" symbolize the authority to open, in this instance, to open the kingdom of heaven to men through the proclamation of the Gospel. What the disciples were commissioned

Roman Catholicism

to do, given the privilege of doing, was the opposite of that which the scribes and Pharisees were doing, that is, they were to facilitate (make easier) the entrance of the people into the kingdom of heaven.

Christ alone - is He "that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth" (Rev. 3:7). It meant that Peter, and later the other apostles, being in possession of the Gospel message, truly did open the door and present the opportunity to enter in as they proclaimed the message before the people. This same privilege of opening the door or of closing the door of salvation to others is given to every Christian, for the command that Christ gave His church was to go and make disciples of all the nations. Thus "the power of the keys" is a declarative power only.

It can almost be said that the **RCC** build their church upon these two verses which speak of the "rock" and the "keys". They say that the power given to Peter was absolute and that it was transferred by him to his successors, although they have to admit that there is not one verse in Scripture which teaches such a transfer. Under this "power of the keys" the **RCC** claims that "In heaven God ratifies the decisions which Peter makes on earth" (Footnote, Confraternity Version, pg. 37).

Rome terribly abuses this "power of the keys" to insure obedience to her commands on the part of her church members and to instill in them a sense of fear and of constant dependence on the church for their salvation. This sense of fear and dependence, with constant references to "Mother Church," goes far to explain the power that the **RCC** has over her members.

D. Papal Authority Not Claimed By Peter.

The **RCC** claims that Peter was the first bishop or pope in Rome and that the later popes are his successors. But the best proof of a man's position and authority is his own testimony. Does Peter claim to be a pope, or to have primacy over the other apostles?

(1 Peter 1:1; 5:1-3):

"Peter, an apostle ... a fellow elder, and a witness ... tend the flock of God ... neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock".

Here Peter refers to himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder (the word in the Greek is *presbuteros*), which of course had nothing to do with a sacrificing priesthood. He does not claim the highest place in the church as some would expect him to do or as some would claim for him. He assumes no ecclesiastical superiority, but with profound humility puts himself on a level with those whom he exhorts. He makes it clear that the church must be democratic, not authoritarian. He forbids the leaders to lord it over the people, to work for money or to take money unjustly. He says that they are to serve the people willingly, even eagerly, and that by their general lives they are to make themselves examples for the people. The fact is that the **RCC** acts directly contrary to these instructions.

Peter refused to accept homage from men - as when Cornelius the Roman centurion fell down at his feet and would have worshipped him, Peter protested quickly and said, "Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:25, 26). Yet the popes not only accept, but demand, such homage, even to the extent that men, including even the highest cardinals, prostrate themselves on the floor before a newly elected pope or when making ordination vows before him and kiss his foot. The popes accept the blasphemous title of "Holy Father".

Surely if Peter had been a pope, "the supreme head of the church," He would have declared that fact in his general epistles. Instead Peter refers to himself as only an apostle (of which there were at least eleven others), and as an elder or presbyter, that is, simply as a minister of Christ.

Roman Catholicism

E. Paul's Attitude Toward Peter.

Paul was called to be an apostle at a later time, after the church had been launched. Yet Peter had nothing to do with that choice, as he surely would have had if he had been pope. Paul was easily the greatest of the apostles, with a deeper insight into the way of salvation and a larger revealed knowledge concerning the mysteries of life and death. He wrote much more of the N.T. than did Peter. His 13 (not counting Hebrews) epistles contain 2,023 verses, while Peter's two epistles contain only 166 verses. Paul worked more recorded miracles than did Peter, he seems to have established more churches than did Peter. His influence in the church at Rome was much greater than was that of Peter.

On one occasion Paul publicly rebuked Peter. When Peter at Antioch sided with the "false brethren" (v. 4) in their Jewish legalism and "drew back and separated himself" from the Gentiles and was even the cause of Barnabas being misled, Paul administered a severe rebuke. (Gal. 2:11-14).

In other words, Paul gave the "Holy Father" a "dressing down" before them all, accusing him of not walking uprightly in the truth of the Gospel.

The other apostles as well as Paul seem totally unaware of any appointment that made Peter the head of the church. Nowhere do they acknowledge his authority. And nowhere does he attempt to exercise authority over them.

The doctrine of the primacy of Peter is just one more of the many errors that the **RCC** had added to the Christian religion. With the exposure of that fallacy the foundation of the **RCC** is swept away. The whole papal system stands or falls depending on whether or not Peter was a pope in Rome, and neither the N.T. nor reliable historical records give any reason to believe that he ever held that position or that he was ever in Rome.

III. THE PAPACY

A. The Rise of the Papacy.

The word "pope" and the word "papacy," are not found in the Bible. The word "pope" comes from the Latin *papa*, meaning "father." But Jesus forbade his followers to call any man "father" in a spiritual sense (Matt. 23:9).

The name was first given to Gregory I by the wicked emperor Phocas, in 604. This he did to spite the bishop of Constantinople, who had justly excommunicated him for having caused the assassination of his (Phocas') predecessor, emperor Mauritius. Gregory, however, refused the title, but his second successor, Boniface III (607) assumed the title, and it has been the designation of the bishops of Rome ever since.

The title "pontiff" literally means "bridge builder" (*pons*, bridge, and *facio*, make). It comes, not from the Bible but from pagan Rome, where the emperor, as the high priest of the heathen religion, and in that sense professing to be the bridge or connecting link between this life and the next, was called "Pontifex Maximus." The title was therefore, lifted from paganism and applied to the head of the **RCC**. **The pope also claims** to be the mediator between God and man, with power over the souls in purgatory so that he can release them from further suffering and admit them to heaven, or prolong their suffering indefinitely. But Christ alone is the mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5; Col. 2:9; Eph. 1:22, 23; and Col. 1:18).

Romanists claim an unbroken line of succession from the alleged first pope, Peter, to the present pope. The list has been revised several times, with a considerable number who formerly were listed as popes now listed as anti-popes. It simply is not true that they can name with certainty all the bishops of Rome from Peter to the present one. A glance at the notices of each of the early popes in the Catholic Encyclopedia will show that they really know little or nothing about the first 10 popes.

For a period of six centuries after the time of Christ none of the regional churches attempted

Roman Catholicism

to exercise authority over all of the other regional churches. The papacy really began in the year 590 with Gregory I, as Gregory the Great. He consolidated the power of the bishopric in Rome and started that church on a new course. **Says Professor A. M. Renwick**, of the Free Church College, Edinburgh, Scotland:

"His brilliant rule set a standard for those who came after him and he is really the first 'pope' who can, with perfect accuracy, be given the title. Along with Leo I (440-461), Gregory VII (1073-1085), and Innocent III (1198-1216) he stands out as one of the chief architects of the papal system"

(*The Story of the Church*, pg. 64).

And the Roman Catholic, **Philip Hughes**, says that Gregory I, "... is generally regarded as the greatest of all his line ... It was to him that Rome turned at every crisis where the Lombards (the invaders from the north) were concerned.. He begged his people off and he bought them off. He ransomed the captives and organized the great relief services for widows and orphans. Finally, in 598, he secured a thirty year's truce. It was St. Gregory who, in these years, was the real ruler of Rome and in a very real sense he is the founder of the papal monarchy" (*A Popular History of the Catholic Church*, pg. 75; 1947. Used by permission of the Macmillan Company).

B. The Claims of the Papacy.

When the triple crown is placed on the head of a new pope at his "coronation" ceremony the ritual prescribes the following declaration by the officiating cardinal:

"Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns, and know that thou art the Father of Princes and Kings, Ruler of the World, the Vicar of our Saviour Jesus Christ ..." (*National Catholic Almanac*).

The **New York Catechism** says:

"The pope takes the place of Jesus Christ on earth ... By divine right the pope has supreme and full power in faith and morals over each and every pastor and his flock. He is the true Vicar of Christ, and head of the entire church, the

father and teacher of all Christians. He is the infallible ruler, the founder of dogmas, the author of and the judge of councils; the universal ruler of truth, the arbiter of the world, and supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one. God himself on earth."

And pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical, *The Reunion of Christendom* (1885), declared that the pope holds "upon this earth the place of God Almighty."

Thus the **RCC** holds that the pope, as the vicar of Christ on earth is the ruler of the world, supreme not only over the **RCC** itself but over all kings, presidents, and civil rulers, indeed over all peoples and nations.

The **RCC** has been prevented from exercising such authority in the U. S. because they do not have control there and because the Constitution serves as a shield against such outside interference.

The pope thus demands a submission from his people, and indeed from all peoples in so far as he is able to make it effective, which is due only to God. Even the cardinals, the next highest ranking officials in the **RCC**, prostrate themselves before him and kiss his feet. The popes have gone so far in assuming the place of God that they even insist on being called by His names, e. g. "the Holy Father", "His Holiness", etc. We cannot but wonder what goes through the mind of a pope when people thus reverence him, carrying him on their shoulders, kissing his hands and feet, hailing him as the "Holy Father," and performing acts of worship before him. By such means this so-called "vicar of Christ" accepts the position of ruler of the world which the Devil offered to Christ, but which Christ spurned with the command, "Get thee hence, Satan."

The triple crown the pope wears symbolizes his authority in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld - as king of heaven, king of earth, and king of hell - in that through his absolutions souls are admitted to heaven. On the earth he attempts to exercise political as well as spiritual