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The Bible
AND THE
Catholic Claim



A sermon delivered by
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At the Franklin Road Church
801 Caldwell Lane
Nashville, Tennessee
March 11, 1956

The Bible

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Catholic Claim

FIRST let me extend a very hearty welcome to every person present and most especially to our many visitors. We are glad that you have come to study with us a lesson which pertains to the eternal welfare of our souls and which may therefore affect both heaven and hell for ever and ever.

As previously announced, we have been requested to review tonight a little tract entitled "The Catholic Church and the Bible." It is attractive in appearance, pointed in style, and well written from the standpoint of effectiveness. It has been widely distributed by the Catholics, being No. 5 in a series of such tracts called "Facing the Facts."

The facts are distorted. Truth demands that we take issue with the contents of the little booklet.

Title Misleading

The title "The Catholic Church and the Bible" is a little vague and might be misleading, because there are several different churches which claim to be Catholic. There are the Roman, the Greek and other so-called Catholic churches. The tract apparently has reference to the Roman Catholic Church and we shall discuss it accordingly.

Historically this church has been a gradual development, undergoing many changes, not the same from century to century. But the tract implies that there is only one Catholic Church, which has always been just what it is today. This is a big mistake.

Question of Authority

The difference between the Roman Catholic Church and Christians, who accept the Bible as the final and complete will of God to man, is a question of authority. We believe the Bible to be the Word of God and therefore final authority in all matters of which it treats. Whereas Roman Catholics believe that the organization which they call "the Church," with its head in the city of Rome, is the final authority.

The tract under review sets forth this issue and attempts to prove that the Roman Catholic Church rather than the Bible is the absolute authority in matters religious.

Wilfred G. Hurley, the author of the tract, effectively points out that we must have a final authority and that we must be able to depend on it with absolute certainty. To this we agree. But what is this authority? The Word of God in the Bible? Or the opinions of the men who compose the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church?

The Gist of the Contention

Hurley contends that it is the Roman Catholic Church and that even "non-Catholics" are ultimately forced to admit that it is so. This we deny.

He states that prior to 397 A.D. the Bible did not exist as we have it today but in that year the "Bishops and the Pope of the Catholic Church" held a con-

ference and presented the Bible to the world. He states, "And if you accept the Bible today as the Word of God, if you accept the New Testament at all, you accept the authority of that council of Catholic Bishops to speak in God's name with God's authority."

This is the gist of the contention set forth in the tract under review, and we deny it most emphatically.

Every principal point in it is based on a false statement of facts.

The Truth About the Matter

The truth about the matter is that the Bible, as we have it today, was in existence a long time before 397 A.D. and the Roman Catholic Church, as we have it today, was not in existence until several centuries after 397 A.D. Therefore, the Roman Catholic Church could not have given us the Bible on that date or at any other time.

My friends, in our own Congressional Library in Washington, D.C., there is a facsimile copy of an ancient manuscript of the Bible which was written 50 to 75 years before 397 A.D. If you will fly to the Library of St. Petersburg you can see the original.

The Sinaiticus Manuscript

This manuscript is known as the Codex Sinaiticus because it was found at the foot of Mt. Sinai about 1859 by a scholar named Tischendorf. The story of its discovery is stranger than fiction and far more interesting. It is believed to be one of the fifty copies of the Bible which Constantine ordered Eusebius to make in the first half of the fourth century.

Isn't it amazing for one to claim that the Bible was received on the authority of the Roman Catholic Church in 397 A.D.

when you can examine with your own eyes a copy which was written so long before that time?

Other Old Manuscripts

A manuscript of the Bible is a copy made by hand and in its original language. There are hundreds of ancient manuscripts. Besides the one already named, the most famous are:

1. *The Codex Vaticanus*, or *Vatican Manuscript*. The original is in the Vatican Library at Rome. Excellent facsimile photographic copies may be seen in our chief public libraries. Thus this great manuscript is public property and the scholars of the world have free access to it. It was in existence long before 397 A.D.

2. *Codex Alexandrinus*, or *Alexandrian Manuscript*. This ancient copy of the Bible was made in the fourth century and can be seen in the British Museum. Copies which exactly represent it are, like those of the other two, kept in the chief libraries of the world.

3. *Codex Ephraem*. This one is in the National Library of Paris.

Each of these ancient copies of the Bible was in existence before the Roman Catholic Church, as it exists today, was born.

How could the Roman Catholic Church have given the world the Bible when the Bible was here several centuries before that denomination came into existence?

Three Sources of Information

There are three principal sources of information concerning the contents of the Bible as it came from the pen of its inspired writers.

1. Ancient manuscripts, hand-written copies of the Bible in its original language,

of which some of the most important have been named.

2. Ancient copies of the Bible in languages other than the original. These are called versions. Time forbids my going into detail concerning these tonight. We have ancient translations of the New Testament going back to the second century, approximately 250 years before the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D.

The Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew into the Greek more than a hundred years before the time of Christ. This is known as the Septuagint Version. This translation was begun in 285 B.C.

This proves that the Old Testament as we have it today was known and recognized a long time before the birth of Christ. Jesus and the apostles recognized and sanctioned it by referring to it and quoting from it frequently. Jesus read from it when he went to the synagogue in Nazareth to worship. (Luke 4:16-20.)

In the light of these facts, how can a man have the audacity to say that a group of men gave us the Bible in 397 A.D.?

3. Quotations from the Bible found in works of early writers of our era. With only a two-month period of research, Sir David Dalrymple, an Englishman of the nineteenth century, found all the New Testament except eleven verses quoted by secular writers before 300 A.D. Some of these writers lived in the days of the apostles. Others very soon thereafter. They ascribe the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as we have it today to the eight inspired writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, and Jude. They did this more than a hundred years before the Council of Carthage!

With these three sources of information available, any one with ordinary research ability, who will take the time to do so, may trace the existence of the entire Bible

as far back as the days of the apostles, when the New Testament was written as the Holy Spirit directed, and the Old Testament to a much earlier period.

In spite of all these facts, the tract which we are reviewing would have you believe that we accept the Bible solely on the authority of a few African bishops who met in 397 A.D. in what is sometimes called the "Council of Carthage."

Bible Here First

A second major error that Hurley makes is his assumption that the Roman Catholic Church as it is today was in existence in 397 A.D. This is entirely incorrect.

The Bible as we have it today has been among men since the days of the apostles of Christ. The Roman Catholic Church as it now exists was not on the earth when the Council of Carthage was held.

Furthermore, this council was only a local affair. It was merely a meeting of a few bishops of some of the churches in Africa. It was not a general council. Not a single person present was a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

The facts of history fully prove that these statements are true. Let us consider them with honesty and courage.

Origin of Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church has come into existence as the result of a process of drifting, covering a period of several centuries. The exact date of its birth is not easily determined but the manner and general period of its development are well known. Let us face the facts!

According to the New Testament, the church in the beginning practiced congregational independence. That means that each congregation was independent of every other congregation. There was

nothing like the Synods, Councils, Conventions, Associations or Conferences which are so common today.

Each congregation was served, when qualified men were available, by a group of brethren who were known as elders, pastors, or bishops. These names all applied to the same brethren.

According to the Word of God the organization of the church is thus very simple. But Paul said that the "mystery of iniquity" was already at work. (2 Thess. 2:7.) There was Diotrephes (and probably many like him) who loved to have the preeminence. (3 John 9.)

Mosheim and other historians who have written of that era show that following the apostolic period, many of the congregations departed from the simple organization authorized by the Word of God.

"Bishops"

In many of the congregations one of the overseers came to occupy a unique position by gaining the preeminence over his fellows. The name bishop was applied to him exclusively while the others continued to be called elders or presbyters. Thus the simple Bible plan was forsaken, an unscriptural office was developed, and the seed of complete apostasy was sown.

Soon the "bishop" managed to extend his control over a plurality of congregations in a small territory known as a diocese. From this time on, the word bishop was used to designate an officer entirely foreign to the Bible. In popular usage the word lost its scriptural meaning and took on an unscriptural one.

Metropolitans

Through meetings at some central point, of representatives from various congregations in an ever widening area, the

bishops in the larger cities where the meetings were frequently held gained preeminence over other bishops. The presiding officers of such meetings came to be known as Metropolitan Bishops or Metropolitans, to distinguish them from the diocesan bishops. This developed during the second century.

These changes represented steps away from the Bible and in the direction of the Roman Catholic Church of today.

While these things were transpiring there were, we verily believe, many independent congregations, largely unknown to history, which continued to follow the Bible plan of congregational independence, refusing to go along with the popular trend.

Prior to the fourth century, each Metropolitan was independent of all the other Metropolitans in the government of his province. But the trend was toward centralization.

Patriarchs

The departure was carried still further in 325 A.D. at a meeting of representatives from drifting churches throughout the Roman Empire. According to the political pattern of the day, the participating churches in each of the large districts of the Empire came to recognize one man as their ecclesiastical ruler. He was called "Patriarch," meaning chief father.

There were five of them—at Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome. At first they were independent of each other. But naturally they were not content to remain on an equality.

The other three having become subordinated, the situation finally developed into a contest between the Patriarch at Rome and the Patriarch at Constantinople. When the Council of Chalcedon in 451 decreed

that the Patriarch at Rome and the Patriarch at Constantinople were equal, Leo of Rome protested vehemently.

Universal Bishop

John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople, assumed the title of "Universal Bishop of the Church" in 588 A.D. He was vigorously opposed and sharply rebuked by Gregory I, who was Patriarch of Rome from 590 to 604 A.D.

Rebuking John with very strong language, Gregory used such expressions as "shame for your ambition," "pride so profane and reprehensible," "erroneous title," "senseless as vainglorious," "bold presumption," "extravagant and vainglorious title," "vaingloriously wishing to be like God," "puffed up," "wicked . . . title." He even threatened John with canonical proceedings if he did not give up the offensive title of universal bishop.

In 606 A.D. Emperor Phocas used his power to get the title of "Universal Bishop" transferred from John the Faster to Boniface III, who in the meantime had become Patriarch of Rome. Please remember that date—606 A.D. That was the first time any man was acknowledged to be the universal bishop by the very church through which the present Roman Catholic Church vainly attempts to trace its history back to apostolic days. Prior to that time there was no acknowledged universal bishop.

Since the recognition of such an earthly head is an essential characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church, we can say with all emphasis, and with no fear of contradiction, that the Roman Catholic Church as it is today did not exist prior to 606 A.D., which was more than two-hundred years after the Council of Carthage.

Gregory Not a Roman Catholic

The church which existed prior to 606 A.D. was quite different from the Roman Catholic Church. Gregory I, who lived as late as the seventh century, whom the Roman Catholics claim as one in their line of "popes," and whom they have "canonized" as a "saint," could not even be a member of the Roman Catholic Church if he were on the earth today.

Gregory called the title of Universal Bishop "vain," "execrable," "anti-christian," "blasphemous" and "diabolical." He said that John the Faster sinned when he assumed such a title. Yet the man whom Roman Catholics call their father in Rome not only claims to be a universal bishop and supreme but even infallible.

How long would a Roman Catholic last today if he denounced the "Pope of Rome" as Gregory denounced John the Faster? He would be excommunicated at once.

Do you suppose that Gregory "the Great" could be a member of the Roman Catholic Church today while calling the Roman Catholic bishop in Rome, who claims to be "Lord God the Pope," "Universal Bishop," a blasphemer and a sinner against the church?

Gregory I, next to last bishop before Boniface III, would be thrown out of the Roman Catholic Church if he were in it today and made the statements which he made at the beginning of the seventh century.

This shows emphatically that the church to which Gregory belonged was not the Roman Catholic Church.

Surely, then, I am safe in saying that the men who attended the Council of Carthage in Africa two-hundred years before Gregory and before departure from the Bible plan had gone so far, were not

then and if they were alive could not now be, Roman Catholics.

The Roman Catholic Church did not exist then. The Bible *as we have it today* did exist then. It had been in existence since the days of the apostles.

The gospel existed even before the church of Jesus Christ, the one you read about in the Bible, to say nothing of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Gospel Produced God's Church

In fact the gospel produced the church. The church did not produce the gospel. The gospel came from God.

You remember that Christ promised the apostles that he would send them the Holy Spirit who would guide them into all truth. This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2.)

It was on that day that the apostles proclaimed for the first time the gospel of Jesus Christ as a matter of historical fact. On that very day about 3,000 souls believed, repented and were baptized. Hence, according to the promise of Jesus, they were saved. (Mark 16:15, 16.) "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47.) Thus, the gospel produced the church; the church did not produce the gospel.

The gospel is God's power unto salvation. (Romans 1:16). It was safe enough for this gospel to exist in oral form as long as the men possessing it were inspired. The apostles were earthen vessels in which God placed this treasure. (2 Cor. 4:7.) He protected them so that they could make no mistake in their teaching. "... holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21.)

Before these men died the Holy Spirit directed them to commit the gospel to writing so that we have it in permanent

form—this Bible as I have it right here in my hand tonight and which can be traced right back to the days of the apostles themselves.

Think of the absurdity of someone's coming along 2000 years later and claiming that an oral statement which has been handed down through sixty generations is more binding than this written will!

Suppose a man writes a legal will and has it properly witnessed. Then when he dies some fellow attempts to break the will by saying, "Oh yes, I know that that is what the man said in his will but just before he died, he made a different statement. I know he did for he told John, John told Bill, Bill told George, George told Henry, and Henry told me."

Do you think the court would set the written will aside for such hearsay testimony? That makes you smile, doesn't it? And yet that is not as ridiculous as what this tract would have us do. It would have us set aside the written will of Jesus Christ for a tradition that has been handed down for nearly 2000 years. That, on the very face of it, does not make sense!

The tract under review is not a candid facing of facts, as it proposes to be. On the contrary, it is a clever distortion and abuse of facts.

Conclusion Doesn't Follow

Furthermore, the conclusion drawn in the tract does not logically follow from the premises stated, even though they were stated by the author of the tract to suit his own purpose.

To accept with proper discrimination the results of historical research performed by a Roman Catholic would not be (as the tract erroneously concludes) to regard the Roman Catholic as one who was authorized to speak for the Lord.

Many infidels have testified to the genuineness and integrity of the books in our Bible. To accept such testimony for what it is worth is not to share the unbelief of the infidels.

We Don't Use Roman Catholic Bible

Let me show you another proof that we do not accept the Bible upon the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. It is the well-known fact that we do not use the Roman Catholic Bible. The Roman Catholic Bible includes the 66 genuine books which have come to us from the days of the inspired writers; but it also contains some additional books called the Apocrypha. The word "apocrypha" means "of doubtful authenticity or authorship." These added books we do not accept, the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church to the contrary notwithstanding.

Time does not permit me to go into detail concerning the lack of evidence to support the Apocrypha. The fact that the Roman Catholics regard it as a part of the Bible and we do not is sufficient evidence that we do not accept the Bible upon their authority.

"Pope" Not Inspired

Since 1870 A.D. Roman Catholics have regarded the gentleman in Rome whom they call Pope as being infallible. If I were to accept the Bible upon the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, then I would accept the "pope" on the same basis. But the "pope" is a mere man, just as far from being infallible as the rest of humanity.

We have our own reasons for believing the Bible to be the inspired Word of God. The evidence is overwhelming. It is entirely independent of the Roman Catholic Church. If every word which has ever

been written by all the Roman Catholics who have ever lived should be destroyed and forgotten, our faith in the Bible as the Word of God would not be disturbed.

Catholics Would Have Written Different Bible

If the Roman Catholics had given the Bible to the world, surely they would have been smart enough to have left out some of those parts which so glaringly condemn their doctrine and practice.

This little tract says, on pages eleven and twelve, that the Bible as we have it today is not complete. But the Bible says, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) The Roman Catholic Church says a written standard is not sufficient; the Bible says it is. Don't you believe that if we had obtained our Bible from them they would have left that verse out?

It is a well-known fact that Roman Catholics call their ecclesiastical leaders "Father." But the Bible says "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." (Matt. 23:9.) If we had received our Bible from the Roman Catholics, it seems that they would have omitted that verse for it condemns their doctrine and practice.

The Bible says "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, . . ." (1 Tim. 3:2.) The Roman Catholics say that a bishop must not have a wife.

The Roman Catholics make the false claim that Peter was their first "Pope" and yet the Bible says that Peter had a wife. (Matt. 8:14.)

The Bible teaches that baptism is a burial and resurrection. (Romans 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12.) The Roman Catholic Church teaches and practices sprinkling.

According to the Bible one must believe in order to be baptized. (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 8:37.) But Roman Catholics administer sprinkling (which they erroneously call baptism) to babies who are not even old enough to believe.

These are just a few of the places where the Bible condemns the doctrine and practice of the Roman Catholic Church.

The fact that these statements are in the Bible is itself enough to prove to me that the Bible did not come from the Roman Catholics and that it was not written by their authority.

If the Roman Catholic Church is an authority greater than and superior to the Bible, as Roman Catholics claim, then they ought to use their authority to revise the Bible and bring it into harmony with their own decrees and customs.

Cannot Serve Two Masters

It is foolish for one to try to claim allegiance to what Roman Catholics call "the Church" and to the Word of God in the Bible at the same time. The Bible condemns the Roman Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church disregards the Bible.

One can not serve two masters.

There is abundant proof, both external and internal, that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Many hours could be consumed in giving even an abbreviated statement of this evidence.

There is no such evidence that the organization called the Roman Catholic Church is inspired or that it has any authority whatsoever.

The author of this little tract makes only a very feeble effort to prove that his church is inspired. And how do you suppose he makes the attempt? He quotes, without giving references, three statements from the Bible and misapplies them. (Matt. 16:18; 28:20; John 14:16-17.) Neither of the statements mentions the Roman Catholic Church. Only one of them mentions the Lord's church, and it says nothing about revelation or infallibility. The only text he uses which says anything about revelation was addressed unto and applies unto the apostles and not to the church.

Roman Catholics Not Inspired

There is not even any authority in the Bible for the existence of the Roman Catholic Church. There is no proof either inside the Bible or outside the Bible that the Roman Catholic Church is infallible or constitutes any sort of authority in matters of true religion.

Tract Contradicts Itself

The fact that the author of the tract attempts to prove that his church is infallible by quoting from the Bible is very significant. You remember that the main theme of his tract is based on his expressed though false assumption that to undertake to prove that the Bible is inspired by the testimony of the Roman Catholic Bishops would be to acknowledge the Roman Catholic Church as the final authority in religion. Yet he undertakes to establish the authority of his church by appealing to the Bible. Thus he unwittingly contradicts himself and unintentionally, according to his own principle of reasoning, admits the Bible to be the final authority in Christianity. This is

perhaps the best thing in the entire tract and it was not so intended by the author.

Friends, we have better reasons for believing that the Bible is the Word of God and that the things recorded in it are true than we have for believing that George Washington was the first President of the United States of America.

The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus Christ, who himself said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28:19.) The words of this Bible have the power and the authority of Jesus Christ. Here I take my stand. I can do none other. This position I'm ready to defend anywhere, any time, with any sort of an opponent that may be brought forth.

If anybody thinks that I have misrepresented any fact in this lesson, I'll be glad to see you after we are dismissed and I'll either show you the evidence or take back the statement. I know whereof I speak. It is the truth of God.

Invitation

Tonight we beg you to become a Christian, not upon the authority of any man, nor upon the authority of any group of men, but upon the authority of Jesus Christ and his Word, which by the providence and goodness of God has been passed down to us in our own mother tongue which we can read and understand for ourselves. Upon that authority we beg you to believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess your faith in the Lord, and obey his commandment to be baptized. Then arise from the watery grave to live in newness of life. A different sort of life. A life dedicated to God. Spend the rest of your days in His service

and you will be building upon a foundation more secure than the rock of Gibraltar. When the heavens and earth have passed away God's word will still be with us. It abideth forever and by it we shall be judged when that great day comes. Will you come to Jesus while we stand to sing?

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