

INTRODUCTION: The following is a letter I recently sent to the pastor of a Baptist Church in Antioch. I have not heard a reply, and may not receive one for this unsolicited comment on one of his sermons. In the Pastor's sermon he gave credit to the early Church fathers for defending the Christian Faith. He acknowledged that without these Church Fathers, that there would be no Protestant denominations today. My letter suggests these Church Fathers did more than just preserve the Bible. They were all Catholic, and believed the same truths taught by the Catholic Church today.

This Pastor has begun to search out the teachings of these early Church Fathers in an attempt to justify that the Protestant services are a better reflection of the early church worship before the Catholics invented the Mass & Eucharist, along with Purgatory & Indulgences. If he honestly continues to search the teaching of the early Church Fathers, he will cease to be Protestant.

Dear Pastor Larry Adams,

Thanksgiving, 2006

In March 2006, my sister-in-law, gave me a CD of one of your sermons titled "Our place in the Unfolding History of the Church". It was an interesting sermon, and I learned some new protestant history of the last 300 years. I listened a second time now, and would like to comment on your sermon.

If you will permit me, I will add a few historical facts missing from your well-researched sermon. You mentioned the early apologists of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and rightfully gave them credit of defending the faith from the Gnostics. You then spoke of the Apostolic Fathers; Clement of Alexandria, Ignatius & Polycarp, who taught what the Apostles taught.

TERMS NOT IN THE BIBLE: A little later in your talk, you gave praise for the clear teaching of the Trinity, by the early church, despite the term "Trinity" not being used in the Bible. You said things starting going bad for Christ's Church in the dark ages beginning with Pope Gregory. You stated the Catholic Church began to change the Lord's Supper from a memorial of the Last Supper with a new teaching regarding the Eucharist, called Transubstantiation.

APOSTOLIC FATHERS & TRANSUBSTANTIATION: I suggest it is worth studying what these same early defenders of the faith taught on the topic of Transubstantiation. You credit them with preserving the Christian Faith. Like the word Trinity is not in the Bible, the same is true of the term "Transubstantiation". However, the concept is present. Since there is disagreement today over transubstantiation, it is only fitting we find out what the same Church fathers believed regarding the Eucharist. The following quotes demonstrate these early Fathers of the Church believed the Eucharist was transubstantiated into the actual body and

blood of Jesus! They definitely did not treat the Eucharist as only a memorial of the Last Supper.

EARLY CHURCH FATHERS: The following quotes from these early Church Fathers provide insights regarding the Faith as they received it from the Apostles.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, wrote in 110 AD in his letter to the Smyrnaeans "they abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ,....' 64

In his letter to the Philadelphians also in 110 AD Ignatius wrote: 'I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the Bread of God which is the Flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David and for drink I desire His Blood, which is love incorruptible.'" 54a

Justin the Martyr whom you acknowledged as an Apologist defended the Eucharist in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, in 155AD Justin wrote; "The offering of fine wheat flour offered on behalf of those cleansed from leprosy was a type of the bread of the Eucharist... It is of the sacrifice offered to Him in every place by us, the Gentiles, that is, of the Bread of the Eucharist and likewise of the Cup of the Eucharist, that He speaks at that time and He says that we glorify His name while you profane it."

Earlier Justin wrote an Apology where he stated: "We call this food Eucharist. No one else is permitted to take of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration (baptism), and is thereby living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by Him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus." 128

Clement of Alexandria before 202 AD writes; "...the Lord supplies us with these intimate nutriments. He delivers over His Flesh, and pours out His Blood; and nothing is lacking for the growth of His children."

Here is what St. Irenaeus wrote between 180 & 199AD defending against Heresies. "When, therefore, the mixed cup and the baked bread receives the Word of God and becomes the Eucharist, the Body of Christ, and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they say the flesh is not capable of receiving the gift

of God which is eternal life -.... And receiving the Word of God, becomes the Eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ; so also our bodies nourished by it..... 249

St. Cyril 350 AD wrote: 'Do not, therefore, regard the bread and wine as simply that, for they are, according to the Master's declaration, the body and blood of Christ.'

St Ephraim 550 AD in his Homilies, wrote of the Eucharist: "One particle from its crumbs is able to sanctify thousands and thousands and is sufficient to afford life to those who eat of it. Take, eat, entertaining no doubt of faith because this is My Body and whoever eats it in belief eats it in Fire and Spirit. But if any doubter eats of it, for him it will be only bread 707

There are over 50 additional references by the early Fathers of the Church to the real presence of the Eucharist. The above few I have typed from Vol. 1 of William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*. The number at the end of each quote is a reference number from Jurgens text.

MEMORIAL OR MIRACLE: The above references document that the early Fathers never considered the Lord's Supper a memorial meal. They all attest it is the actual Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus. The Catholic Church has taught this miracle of the Eucharist in every age. The bread and the wine, through the prayers of the Priest, become the actual Body and Blood of Christ while remaining under the appearance of bread and wine.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION: The term Transubstantiation, used to describe the Eucharist, was defined in the 16th century in by the Council of Trent because the belief in the True Presence in the Eucharist was rejected by the Protestant's reformation for the first time after 1500 years of Church history.

Towards the end of your sermon, you gave praise to the Mystics such as St. Francis, John of the Cross, St. Bonaventure, and Catherine of Seina. If you believe God raised these mystics up to defend the Faith, you must also know they all professed the true presence of Jesus was present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist. None of them professed the Eucharist to be a memorial meal.

CANNON OF THE BIBLE: You stated in your sermon that beginning in year 180, the canon of the Bible was formed with the 66 books we have today. I believe if you check history in more detail, you will discover that the New Testament was beginning to take the form of 27 books of the New Testament by the 3rd century. The Old Testament used by the early Christians was not an issue. They used the Septuagint version written in Greek, since it was the same language in which they wrote the gospels. The Septuagint with its 46 books is quoted by the writers of the New Testament something like 300 out of 380 times they reference the OT.

JEWISH OLD TESTAMENT: The Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans rejected the Greek Septuagint in the year 100 when they met in Jamina. We can understand they were a little upset with the Romans who did not leave a stone upon a stone in Jerusalem in 70AD. The book of 1 Maccabees 15:15 contained praise, which alluded to the Romans as friendly allies. Considering Titus's actions in 70 AD when 2 million Jews died in Jerusalem, you can see the Jews in 100AD did not consider 1 Macc. an inspired book of God. Thus the Jews, who also opposed the early Christians, wanted nothing to do with the Greek OT Septuagint version, and elected to use to the Palestine OT written in Hebrew. Thus the Jewish OT, later adopted by Luther, rejected parts of 9 books from the OT which were not written in Hebrew and before the time of Ezra. (Historical evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls has revealed Hebrew copies of several of the rejected books.) In conclusion, the OT for all Christians for 1500 years contained all 46 books found in the Septuagint.

LUTHER'S NEED TO REJECT SOME OT BOOKS: It was not until Dr. Luther decided to reject the 9 OT books because they conflicted with his new doctrine of Sola Fide. For example, in 2 Macc. 12:38-46 it states; "it was a good and holy deed to pray for the souls of the dead soldiers who died with amulets around their necks." If Luther's new doctrine of Sola Fide was correct, prayers are of no use for the dead. Souls of the deceased are either in Hell, or in Heaven. 2 Macc. suggests departed souls must be in a third place if prayers can still help them. Today in fact, when a Jewish parent dies, the offspring are required to pray for the deceased for something like 8 months after death.

BIBLE INDEX: The index to the new Testament with 27 books was finally decided by the two Catholic councils of Hippo in 393 and Carthage in 397 and sent to Pope Siricius to ratify. There was much debate on what constituted the canon of scripture for the Christians. Some argued Revelations should be omitted. Others argued for inclusion of the Didache, or teaching of the Apostles. But it was the Catholic Church, which existed before the NT Bible that decided the index or canon of our Bible. This is in keeping with 1 Tim 3:15 which states "the Church is the Pillar and Foundation of Truth". Thus it was only fitting the books to be in the Bible be decided by the Church. At the same councils they affirmed the Greek Septuagint as the official OT canon. It was not until after the Luther rejected the Septuagint that the Church, at the council of Trent once again proclaimed the canon of the Bible to contain 72 books.

JAMES REJECTED: Luther also rejected the book of James from his version of the bible since verse 2:24 reads " a man is justified by works and not by Faith alone." James conflicted with Luther's adding the German word "alein" to Romans 5:1 so Luther's bible read; "Now that we have been justified by faith alein". Luther stated he knew the word "alone" was not in the text, but that it helped clarify the verse.

History does acknowledge 93 out of 95 of Luther's grievances over the selling of indulgences were correct, and that bad priests and bishops were practicing simony. Unfortunately Luther went on to start his own church and invent new doctrines never before found in the Bible nor in the Church Jesus founded.

LUTHER'S GERMAN BIBLE: I would also like to correct your statement that Luther translated the Bible into German in 1522 for the first time. When Luther made his translation, there were already 14 complete editions of the NT in German, in addition to 11 Italian, 10 French, 2 Bohemian, one Flemish and one Russian version of the Bible. The first book printed in 1452 by Gutenberg was 200 copies of the Bible in the Latin Vulgate translation.

PURGATORY: You dismissed Purgatory calling it an invention. There are over a dozen scriptures where the concept, but not the term Purgatory, can be found in the bible. Consider two verses: 1 Cor. 3:15 which states a soul building with hay and wood would suffer loss as through fire, but would be saved. That verse sounds a little like a purification by fire similar to Purgatory. In addition 1 Pet 3:18 & 4:6 tells us that after the death of Jesus, He preached to the spirits in "prison". Where and what was this prison for righteous souls? We know the souls were not in Heaven or Hell. Were these souls in "Sheol" in the Aramaic language, translated as "Hades" in Greek, and is "purgare" in Latin, and "Purgatory" in English?

SPREAD OF ISLAM: Were the Crusades really a tragic embarrassment to Christianity? Today, I believe a lot of Americans are beginning to understand the need to confront the spread of Islam. The Moslem leader, Saladin at the time of St. Francis was extremely ruthless. While the Crusades were not all good, their intention was to reclaim the holy lands so Christians could once again visit the streets where Jesus walked. As Christians today we need to acknowledge the purpose of the Crusades. In all wars some bad things happen. I suggest the Crusades were more honorable than the current war in Iraq.

CHILDREN'S CRUSADE: You also mentioned the Children's Crusade. I have not studied this so called Crusade in great detail. It is the name given to a variety of fictional and factual events in 1212 that combine some or all of these elements: Visions by a boy; children marching to south Italy an attempt to free the Holy Land; and children being sold into slavery. Several conflicting accounts exist, and the facts of the situation continue to be a subject of debate among historians. According to more recent research there seems to have been two movements of people in 1212 in France and Germany. The similarities of the two allowed later chroniclers to lump them together as a single tale. No Children ever reached the Holy Lands, and the term "children" should more accurately be translated as "country boys".

CREEDS: Are they really long stifling prayers of little importance? The Nicene Creed summarized a correction of the Arian Heresy. Today, how many Americans believe God created the Universe and that Jesus was true God and True Man. Maybe we all need to be reciting the

Creeds more as they are as profound & concise statements of the Christian Faith more so than the Gettysburg Address, which you cited in its entirety during your sermon.

POPES: Was Peter the First Pope? Peter spoke Aramaic & Greek and was the first of what now constitutes a line of 264 Popes in the Church. Pope Gregory was the 62nd head of the Church after Peter and could have been the first to use the Latin term Papa or Pope, so of course Peter did not use this Latin term. The rise of 25,000 Christian denominations seems to cry out for a unifying leader for Christians on planet earth. Is anyone else applying to be the visible leader of Christ's Church today? Did Jesus intend an invisible grouping of believers, or did Jesus intend a visible world wide Church?

CONCLUSION: I thank you for taking the time to read these pages of Catholic Apologetics. As you asked in your sermon, what is our role in the unfolding of Church History in America today. I would answer that accurate Christian history is an essential starting place if one is wants to discern the beliefs held by the early Christian Church. Jesus promised the gates of Hell would never overcome his Church. My Mormon friend tells me the entire Christian Church went into a great apostasy at the end of the 1st century, and that Jesus had to start it all over 1700 years later in the new World with Joseph Smith. We both agree this is utter nonsense.

Your sermon however tells of serious error creeping in by 480 with Transubstantiation, the Mass, Purgatory, and the Pope and that Jesus had to start the Church again with Martin Luther and the reformers about 1000 years later.

I suggest that our understanding of the Bible must be coupled with accurate history of the teachings of the early church fathers. This assures that what the Church believed in the 1st century and every century following, can still be found in a few Church's today.

In Christ's Love,

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